

2 Thessalonians

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2 Thessalonians 3:14-18

Vss. 14-15

- Here Paul offers something of an ultimatum. If there are still people who will not obey his instructions then this person is to be “marked”. Be sure to “take special note” of this person. Used here as a verb, this is the only place in Scripture the word is used, although it was commonly used in general Greek writings at the time.
- We don’t use shame as a means of discipline any more. Putting a child in the corner and making them wear a dunce cap was once form of shaming for correction. But today we are so very sensitive about hurting people’s feelings that any kind of shaming for correction will immediately backfire. Shame is something our culture has largely lost. People say and do whatever they wish, no matter how outrageous or extreme, with no shame whatsoever. And woe to the one who calls them out. But for Paul and the early church, there was such a high moral standard that if you didn’t abide by it was to your shame and shaming is how you were corrected. For many early Christians, professing Christ and being baptized and publicly associating with the church was costly. For many it meant complete estrangement from the secular world, so having the church pull away from you because of your disobedience would be a very difficult thing indeed.
- Note here that such a person is NOT to be considered an enemy but a sister or brother (scripture regularly uses gender neutral masculine nouns, for certainly Paul had women in mind here as well as men). In other words, discipline is given out of love and never out of anger or enmity. Herschel Hobbs points out that, “within the Christian family the goal of discipline must always be to salvage, not to destroy or rid the fellowship of the undesirable person. Too often church people simply denounce and destroy those who seem not to do right. Every possible effort should be made to reclaim and strengthen the wrongdoer.”

Vs. 16

- Paul's heart is always for peace within his churches and for his churches. And note that here in the benediction to the letter, he prays for peace "in every circumstance". Remember he had told the Thessalonians we are to "rejoice always" (1 Thessalonians 5:16). This is that "peace that passes understanding" (see Philippians 4:6-7). Remember also that the Thessalonian church was a church under persecution, from the Jews surely and likely from the secular authorities as well. But in *EVERY* circumstance, no matter what, we are to rejoice for we have the peace of the Lord of Peace who is with us always.

Vss. 17-18

- Finally, literally as a post script, Paul wants them to know that he has written this letter with his own hand and he wants them to take note of his unique handwriting style so they will recognize it in the future.
- Some have wondered if part of the problem was that an enemy claiming to be Paul had sent a letter to the Thessalonians which partly caused the confusion and problems Paul had to deal with in this letter. "So this is what MY handwriting looks like, how MY letters are marked. So don't be fooled again by forgeries!"
- And having given them truth mixed with both praise and correction, he prays that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with them *ALL*. In 1 Thessalonians 5:28, as he closes that letter, he just asks that God's grace be with them. Here he wants to be sure that God's grace is with them *ALL*: the unruly ones, the gossips, the undisciplined and lazy ones, as well as those who were faithful and strong. It's one thing to ask for God's grace, it's something greater to actually show God's grace.