

1 & 2 Thessalonians

Church Discipline

2 Thessalonians 3:14-18 Scripture Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:13-18

4/30/2023

Introduction:

Have you ever had to have a difficult conversation with someone. I have been in team management for over a decade. I currently oversee 160+ employees. In that time, I had to have more difficult conversations that I can even count or remember. Those kinds of conversation are not fun, in fact I try to avoid them like the plague. Having said that, sometimes the outcome of those kinds of conversations are better than you could have ever imagined. You see, in general in the workplace people want to do a good job, there are exceptions, and usually when they are not following the rules or the program it is out of ignorance, and they just need to be coached or guided. Once they have this new information, we call it constructive criticism, they will typically begin to perform admirably. However, there is that occasion where the employee is malicious in their intent and they do not care what the rules or policies are, they are going to do whatever they want. This type of conversation typically ends with an employee's termination.

In this last passage of 2 Thessalonians Paul has just finished up talking about idle Christians, busybodies, people that do not obey what was written in the letter. He gives some very specific instructions on how to deal with those folks. However, we need to be cautious and understand the intent of Paul's writing and in fact the intent of God's whole program.

The Big Idea: The Gospel of Jesus brings restoration and unity.

We will come back to this idea and explore it further and in more depth after we discuss the passage specifically.

1. The Process

Identify the person that is disobedient

V. 14

Paul says "take note of that person" so this doesn't mean call them out publicly it implies that we are close enough relationally that we would notice this disobedience.

Have Nothing to do with them

V.14

This is a tough one. What does "nothing" mean. The idea behind the phrase is that we do not keep company with that person. Another translation of the phrase is "do not mix it up with them".

Don't Regard them as an enemy

V.15

This is where we can get into trouble. We will note this person most likely because their sin has impacted us in some way. As the Bible would say, they have sinned against us". That makes it personal, and we can begin to view them as our adversary and miss out on the purpose of the process.

Note: Jesus speaks about the specific details of the process in Matthew chapter 18:15-17.

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” Matthew 18:15-17 ESV

2. The Desired Outcome

You gain a brother

V.15

The purpose of “church discipline” is not to punish or protect or preserve. The purpose of “church discipline is restoration.

There is unity in the body of believers

v.16

When restoration occurs, we are all drawn closer to the Father. His desire for us is to be unified in Christ. When there is “sin in the camp” there is almost certainly conflict within the body. This conflict does not glorify God.

3. The Modern Danger

Take too much action

In our modern western church, we have a tendency to sidestep the process laid out for us in scripture and jump right to ostracizing. We must always remember the purpose is not punishment but restoration.

Take No Action

However, we can also be so gun-shy, so traumatized by past experiences that we are afraid to speak the truth of Scripture into someone's life for the purpose of helping them follow Jesus.

4. So What?

Have you welcomed the message of the Gospel?

Are you open to correction and instruction?