

**THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION**  
**2 Thessalonians: Comforting Troubled New Christians With Correct End Times Theology**  
**Part IV: Calling For Second Degree Separation From Financial Leeching Due To Errant Eschatology**  
**(2 Thessalonians 3:6-15)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. If a believer holds errant beliefs that lead to errant acts, he produces relationship problems with other godly Christians that must be addressed at least by the godly to whom he relates.
- B. These facts are seen in Paul's comments in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, and we view them for our application:

**II. Calling For Second Degree Separation From Financial Leeching Due To Errant Eschatology.**

- A. We have learned in this study that Paul wrote this letter to Christians on an embarrassing problem that had risen in the Church due to errant theology: some had adopted the false view that the "Day of the Lord," or the Great Tribulation, was upon them, meaning the end of the world was near, so they stopped working in hope of Christ's return and had come to live off of the income of other working believers, cf. Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1704, "Introduction To The Second Letter Of Paul To The Thessalonians: Purpose."
- B. 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2:17 corrected the error and 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 told of the worldwide spiritual war that fueled the error, directing Paul's readers to rely on the Lord for victory over this war's evil influence.
- C. Finally, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 addressed the **result** of the errant theology, the tendency of some believers who had stopped working to be financially dependent on believers who still earned a living (as follows):
  - 1. Paul commanded his readers in the strong appeal of "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" to withdraw themselves from fellowship with every fellow professing Christian who lived a disorderly life in violation of Paul's command to do otherwise, 2 Thessalonians 3:6.
  - 2. This step is theologically known as "second degree separation", and we explain it as follows:
    - a. "Second degree separation" involves withdrawing fellowship from a fellow believer unlike "first degree separation" that involves a total break with an unsaved apostate who is familiar with Christian beliefs, but who has rejected and actively opposes them (as in 2 John 9-11).
    - b. Thus "second degree separation" is **partial** separation seen in not viewing the believer from which one parts company as an enemy, but as a fellow brother who needs to be admonished by the separation step that he repent of his particular waywardness, 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15.
    - c. The goal of "second degree separation" is **reconciliation** with a repentant believer (2 Corinthians 2:6-8) where the goal of "first degree separation" is a total, lasting break with a hardened unbeliever to protect one's own walk and service from sin and error (unless the apostate ever trusts in Christ).
  - 3. The sin Paul addressed in calling for "second degree separation" was that of a believer who had ceased earning a living only to leech financially off of the earned income of other Christians, 2 Thess. 3:7-13:
    - a. Paul began addressing this sin by reminding his readers how his team had set an example of orderly living by not eating any other believer's food for nothing, but that they had worked night and day to earn their own livelihood and to minister so as not to be a financial burden to others, 2 Thess. 3:7-8.
    - b. The Apostle clarified he had the right to expect remuneration from his readers for his ministry due to God's program for this in the Church (2 Thess. 3:9a with 1 Cor. 9:9-14), but that he had refrained from accepting support to be an example of a financially self-supporting lifestyle, 2 Thess. 3:9b.
    - c. Paul added that he had also taught his readers that if anyone would not work for a living, he should not eat, namely, not receive livelihood provisions from other Christians, 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
    - d. This recollection of Paul's past teaching was meant to address the tendency of some to quit work and to live off of the income of other working believers while also being busybodies, 2 Thess. 3:11.
    - e. Paul thus directed his readers who were guilty of this wrong to work to earn a living in quietness versus being a busybody, and eat their own self-earned bread, 2 Thessalonians 3:12-13!
    - f. If any did not heed this, "second degree separation" was to be practiced against him, 2 Th. 3:14-15.

***Lesson:*** Paul called for second degree separation from believers who lived off of the livelihood of other Christians versus earning their own livelihoods that they might be directed to live an orderly life.

***Application:*** (1) May we heed God's will that we earn our own livelihood. (2) May we avoid as error all beliefs that direct us away from a quiet, orderly life that is also a financial self-supporting lifestyle!