

**GEMS FROM THE ENDINGS OF THE EPISTLES**  
**Part IV: Gems From The Ending Of 2 Thessalonians, A. D. 50-54**  
**(2 Thessalonians 3:6-18)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. The epistle of 2 Thessalonians was written around A. D. 50-54 during Paul's second missionary journey (Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 434, 713).
- B. Shortly after writing 1 Thessalonians, Paul had heard that some of the Thessalonian believers thought the end times had arrived, leading some of them "to quit their jobs in expectation of the Lord's return." (Ibid., p. 713)
- C. Paul thus wrote to correct this error, teaching that the Church would be raptured before the revelation of the antichrist and the Tribulation, so they were to continue in every good word and work, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17.
- D. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18 then addressed the handling of the idle wrongdoers, so we view it for our application:

**II. Gems From The Ending Of 2 Thessalonians, A. D. 50-54; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18.**

- A. First, Paul addressed the handling of idle believers who were living off of other Christians, 2 Thess. 3:6-13:
  - 1. Paul gave his readers a forceful directive, asserting that his command was given in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that it carried the full weight and influence of the Lord Himself, 2 Thessalonians 3:6!
  - 2. The apostle supported his command with the example that he and his ministry team gave his readers when they evangelized the readers. The Thessalonian believers knew how they should follow the example of Paul's team by living orderly lives (2 Thess. 3:7) and by not eating anyone else's food without paying for it (2 Thess. 3:8a) as Paul's ministry team had worked night and day to earn their own livelihood that they might not be a financial burden to any of the Thessalonian believers (2 Thess. 3:8b).
  - 3. Paul's team had the right to receive financial help from the Thessalonians for their ministry as clarified elsewhere in Paul's epistles (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:3-16; 1 Timothy 5:8), "(b)ut they chose to forego this right in order to teach the importance of self-sacrificing love and industry." (Ibid., p. 723; 2 Thess. 3:9)
  - 4. Even when Paul's team was with the Thessalonian believers, they had commanded the readers that if any of them would not work, neither should he eat (the food of others), 2 Thess. 3:10. "The individuals in view were *not* those who **could not** work *but* those who **would not** work." (Ibid.; emphases ours) Helping those who **could not** earn a livelihood was the responsibility of able-bodied believers from the start of the Church (cf. Acts 4:34-35; Galatians 2:10) where able-bodied believers were to work for a living, Ibid.
  - 5. Paul explained the cause of this strong directive in 2 Thessalonians 3:11: his ministry team had heard that some of the Thessalonian believers were leading disorderly lives by not working but using their time to be "busybodies instead of being busy. Instead of tending to their own business of earning a living they were meddling in the business of others (cf. 1 Tim. 5:13)." (Ibid.)
  - 6. The apostle then repeated his order that the disorderly be exhorted by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself that they should literally "'be working with quietude' [not noisily or in disorderliness], *hesuchia*; cf. Acts 22:2; 1 Tim. 2:2, 11 . . . and engage in regular employment to earn a living." (Ibid., p. 724; 2 Thess. 3:12)
  - 7. "Turning to the faithful majority, Paul urged continuation in doing what they knew to be right regardless of the leeching of the disobedient . . . Though one may tire in doing what is right, he should never tire of doing what is right," Ibid.
- B. Second, Paul directed the upright to practice "second degree separation" from idle believers, 2 Thess. 3:14-15:
  - 1. If any of Paul's readers did not obey the Lord's command through Paul in this epistle on working to earn their own livelihood, upright believers were not to socialize with him until he repented, 2 Thess. 3:14.
  - 2. Upright believers were not to treat the idle believer as an enemy like an apostate as in 2 John 9-10, what is "first degree separation," but to "warn him as a brother" in "second degree separation," 2 Thess. 3:15.
  - 3. [By application, other matters of disobedience to apostolic writings that likewise create serious disorder among believers can also require the practice of "second degree separation" by the upright. Such issues have involved unbiblical tongues speaking, ecumenical evangelism, mid-tribulation rapture view, etc.]
- C. Paul then concluded the epistle at 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18, wishing that the Lord of peace might be with them, granting them peace at all times and in every way.

**Lesson:** *We must heed the teachings of Christ's apostles and practice "second degree separation" from believers whose disobedience to those teachings create unedifying disorder among believers.*

**Application:** *May we obey the apostles' teachings and practice "second degree separation" as biblically required!*