

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 | Session 24

Series: 1 and 2 Thessalonians: Rightly Divided / Dr. Randy White

Command Against Disorderly Conduct (3:6–12)

2 Thessalonians 3:6 – Green

- Paul issues a direct apostolic command, framed by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The instruction is serious and authoritative, yet contextually bounded.
- The command to withdraw:
 - Is situational, not a universal rulebook.
 - Must be governed by discernment rather than absolutism.
- Separation can be appropriate, but is not the only faithful response.
 - Other passages emphasize restoration depending on circumstance.
- The standard for disorder:
 - Is not personal preference or cultural norm.
 - Is the tradition received from Paul.
- The singular pronoun (“he received”):
 - Allows for the possibility of a specific individual in view.
 - Does not demand that conclusion, but permits it.
- The broader context supports a situational offender, possibly tied to misinformation about the day of Christ.
- Textual considerations:
 - The Textus Receptus preserves the more difficult reading.
 - The principle of *lectio difficilior potior* favors this retention.
- The language suggests personal, face-to-face instruction rather than formal epistolary tradition.
- Application must respect grammar, audience, and situation.

2 Thessalonians 3:7 – Green

- Paul appeals to the Thessalonians’ personal knowledge and observation.
- His authority is reinforced by example rather than assertion.
- The model is lived conduct, not merely instruction.
- Paul and his companions did not behave disorderly among them.

- The term *ataktos* conveys:
 - Lack of order.
 - Undisciplined or inappropriate conduct.
- Paul may be narrowing the focus:
 - From general disorder.
 - Toward economic and behavioral irresponsibility.

2 Thessalonians 3:8–9 – Green

- Paul clarifies the nature of the disorder now in view.
- He emphasizes that they did not take support without compensation.
- Paul acknowledges:
 - They had the right to receive support.
 - Their refusal was intentional, not obligatory.
- Their labor served a purpose:
 - To avoid being a burden.
 - To function as a model to be imitated.
- The term “ensample” emphasizes imitation rather than admiration.
- Paul’s short stay in Thessalonica matters:
 - His strategy was situational and transitional.
 - This is not a universal economic blueprint for ministry.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 – Green

- Commonly treated as a timeless absolute, but context resists that reading.
- The command is explicitly tied to a past, specific situation.
- The imperfect tense indicates repeated instruction during Paul’s presence.
- The directive has enduring wisdom but situational force.
- Problems with absolutizing the command:
 - Ignores the historical context.
 - Likely addresses misuse of the Jerusalem communal model.
 - Conflicts with Paul’s organized support for needy believers elsewhere.
 - Flattens discernment into mechanical rule-keeping.
 - Forces Paul into internal contradiction.
- The issue addressed is **willful refusal to work**, not inability or hardship.
- Freedom from the Law does not imply subjection to a new legalism.
- As general wisdom, the principle remains sound for healthy individuals.

2 Thessalonians 3:11 – Green

- Paul identifies the specific behavior:
 - Refusal to work.
 - Meddling in others’ affairs.

- Such conduct is broadly condemned across cultures.
- A healthy society discourages rewarding disorderly behavior.
- This restraint is corrective rather than cruel.

2 Thessalonians 3:12 – Green

- Paul concludes with restrained and practical instruction.
- The goal is restored order, not punishment.
- The instruction emphasizes:
 - Quiet work.
 - Personal responsibility.
- The principle carries broader wisdom:
 - Not every problem must be fixed.
 - Not every error must be chased down.
- Quiet labor and personal provision are presented as a path to contentment.