

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO 2 THESSALONIANS 3

In this chapter the apostle requests of the Thessalonians, that they would pray for him, and other Gospel ministers; and he puts up prayers for them, gives them rules about dealing with disorderly persons, and concludes the epistle with his usual salutation. The request to pray for ministers is in (~~STRIB~~2 Thessalonians 3:1) the petitions to be made for them are, that their ministry might be succeeded, and their persons preserved and delivered from evil minded men, destitute of faith in Christ, (~~STRIB~~2 Thessalonians 3:1-2) and, for the consolation of the saints, observes the faithfulness of God engaged in their behalf to establish them in the faith they had, and to preserve them from everything and person that is evil, (~~STRIB~~2 Thessalonians 3:3) and expresses his confidence in them with respect to their walk and conversation, (~~STRIB~~2 Thessalonians 3:4) and then prays for them that their hearts might be directed into the love of God, and patience of Christ, (~~STRIB~~2 Thessalonians 3:5). And next follows an order to withdraw from every disorderly walker, particularly idle and slothful persons, (~~STRIB~~2 Thessalonians 3:6) and from such a lazy idle life the apostle dissuades by his own example, who behaved not disorderly, nor ate the bread of others, but wrought with his own hands, though he had a right to a maintenance without it, but did this to set an example to them, (~~STRIB~~2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). He puts them in mind of a precept of his when among them, that such who would not work should not eat, (~~STRIB~~2 Thessalonians 3:10) and the order he now gave, and the precept he reminds them of, were not without reason; seeing there were disorderly idle persons, and busy bodies, among them, whom the apostle exhorts and beseeches, in the name of Christ, to be industrious, and eat their own bread, as the fruit of their labours, (~~STRIB~~2 Thessalonians 3:11,12) and as for the other members of the church, he exhorts them to diligence and constancy in well doing, and to mark those that were incorrigible, and have no conversation with them, yet dealing with them not as enemies, but admonishing them as brethren, (~~STRIB~~2 Thessalonians 3:13-15). And closes all with prayers, that the Lord would give them peace, and grant his presence to them, and with his usual salutation, written with his own hand, as a token of this being a genuine

epistle of his, and by which every epistle of his might be known, (^{SC16}2 Thessalonians 3:16-18).

Ver. 1. *Finally, brethren, pray for us, &c.*] The apostle now proceeds to the last and closing part of the epistle, which respects church discipline, and the removing of disorderly persons from their communion; and introduces it with a request to pray for him, and the rest of his fellow ministers, particularly Silvanus and Timothy, who joined with him in this epistle: he signifies that nothing more remained; this was the last he had to say, that they, “the brethren”, not the preachers of the word only, but the members of the church, would be solicitous for them at the throne of grace; as it becomes all the churches, and the several members of them, to pray for their ministers: with respect to their private studies, that they might be directed to suitable subjects; that their understandings might be opened to understand the Scriptures; that their gifts might be increased, and they be more and more fitted for public service: and with respect to their public ministrations, that they be brought forth in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ; that they have a door of utterance given them to preach the Gospel freely and boldly, as it ought to be spoken; and that their ministry be blessed to saints and sinners: and with respect to the world, and their conduct in it, that they be kept from the evil of it, and so behave as to give none offence, that the ministry be not blamed; and that they be not allured by the flatteries, nor intimidated by the frowns of the world, but endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ: and with respect to their persons and state, that their souls may prosper, and that they may have much of the presence of God, and much spiritual joy, peace, comfort, and strength of faith; and that they may enjoy bodily health, and their lives be spared for further usefulness. This request is frequently urged by the apostle; which shows his sense of the importance of the work of the ministry, the insufficiency of men for it, the necessity of fresh supplies of grace, and the great usefulness of prayer. The particular petitions he would have put up follow,

that the word of the Lord may have free course. By “the word of the Lord”, or “of God”, as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read, is meant the Gospel; which is of God, and not of man, comes by the Lord Jesus Christ, and is concerning him, his person and offices, and concerning peace, pardon, righteousness, life, and salvation by him, as the subject matter of it: and the request is, that this might “have free course”: or “might run”: be propagated and spread far and near: the ministry of the

word is a course or race, and ministers are runners in it, having their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; which is the message they are sent with, and the errand they run upon: which comes from heaven, and is to be carried into all the world, and spread: Satan and his emissaries do all they can to hinder the progress of it; God only can remove all obstructions and impediments; when he works none can let; all mountains become a plain before Zerubbabel. Wherefore the apostle directs to pray to him for it, with what follows,

and be glorified, even as it is with you; the Gospel is glorified when it is attended upon by large numbers, and is heard with a becoming reverence; when it is received in the love of it, is greatly prized and highly esteemed; when it is cordially embraced, and cheerfully obeyed. It is glorified when sinners are converted by it, and the lives of the professors of it are agreeably to it; and thus it was glorified in these several instances at Thessalonica; and therefore the apostle puts them upon praying, that it might be so elsewhere, as there; even “everywhere”, as the Syriac version adds.

Ver. 2. *And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men,* &c.] Either from the unbelieving Jews, (see ^{<515>}Romans 15:30,31) who were the avowed enemies of the Gospel, and did all they could to hinder the spread of it; and who were the implacable and constant adversaries of the apostle; who often lay in wait for him, and opposed him, and gave him trouble in all places, stirring up the people against him: or from the false teachers, and those of their party, who are the false brethren by whom he often was in perils; who were enemies of the cross of Christ, and great hindrances to the spread of the Gospel; being men of absurd principles, and of wicked lives and conversations, whereby they perverted the Gospel of Christ, brought a reproach upon it, stumbled some, and overthrew the faith of others; and from these the apostle desires to be delivered:

for all men have not faith: no man has faith of himself, it is the gift of God, and the operation of his Spirit; and it is only given to the elect of God, who are ordained unto eternal life, and therefore it is called the faith of God's elect; all mankind have it not, none but Christ's sheep; and the reason why others have it not is, because they are not of his sheep. This is a truth; but rather the true sense of the words is, that all that are professors of religion, and members of churches, and even all that are preachers of the word, have not faith. They may have an historical and temporary faith and the faith of

miracles, and even all faith but the true faith; they may profess to believe, and yet not believe, as Simon Magus, and his followers seem to be intended here; for this is given as a reason why the apostle desired to be delivered from the above men. The Jews say^{f14}, that

“he that studies not in the law, *atwnmyhm hyb wal*, “there is no faith in him” — and it is forbidden to come near him, or to trade with him, or to walk with him, “because there is no faith in him”.”

The apostle seems to allude to this custom.

Ver. 3. *But the Lord is faithful, &c.*] Or “God” as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read, as do also the Alexandrian and Claromontane copies. This is said for the comfort of the saints, lest they should be discouraged upon hearing that all professors of faith in Christ had it not, who might be ready to take it to themselves, and fear, that either they had it not, or if they had, that they might lose it, and fall from it. Wherefore the apostle observes to them the comfortable attribute of God's faithfulness, which he will not suffer to fail. He has promised many things, and he is faithful that has promised, who also will do them, nor will any good thing he has promised ever fail.

Who shall stablsh you: in the doctrines of the Gospel, so as not to be moved away from them, or be finally and totally seduced by those unreasonable and wicked men; and also in the grace of faith, which though it may be weakened, and there may be a falling from a degree of the steadfastness of it, as to its act and exercise, yet it shall never finally and totally fail, he who is the author will be the finisher of it; and likewise in the profession both of the doctrine and grace of faith, which true believers shall hold fast unto the end; for God will not suffer the righteous to be moved, or to depart from him; he has promised them perseverance, and he is faithful to give it to them.

And keep you from evil: from the evil of sin; not from the being and commission of it entirely, which is not to be expected in this life; but from the dominion of it, at least from its reigning unto death, and from the damning power of it: and also from that evil one Satan; from his snares and temptations, so as to be entangled and overcome by them; for God is faithful, who will not suffer his to be tempted beyond their strength, but will enable them to bear it, and make way for their escape, and deliver out of it; and likewise from evil men, unreasonable and wicked men, so as not

to be drawn aside by them, by their principles and practices, by their frowns or flatteries.

Ver. 4. *And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, &c.*] The ground of confidence concerning them was not in themselves, in their grace, and strength, and wisdom, and conduct, and good behaviour; but in the Lord, in his grace and strength, and in the power of his might, without whom they could do nothing, but through him strengthening them, could do all things.

That ye both do, and will do the things which we command you; referring both to the commandments, which they had already given them by Christ, and they had showed, and continued to show a proper regard unto, (see ^{<SMB>}1 Thessalonians 4:1,2) and also to what would be observed to them, as in (^{<SMB>}2 Thessalonians 3:6,12).

Ver. 5. *And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, &c.*] By which may be meant either the love with which God is loved. This is the sum and substance of the first and chief commandment in the law, and is what every man in a state of nature is destitute of; it is implanted in the heart in regeneration, and is a fruit of the Spirit of God; and where it is it oftentimes grows cold, and needs to be stirred up and rekindled, by the Spirit of God, which may be intended, by a directing of the heart into it, that is, to a lively exercise of it: or else the love with which God loves his people is designed, which is free, sovereign, unchangeable, and from everlasting to everlasting; and to have the heart directed into this, is to be led into it directly; or by a straight line, as the word signifies, and not in a round about way, by works and duties, as the causes or conditions of it; and to be led further into it, so as to wade into these waters of the sanctuary, from the ankles to the knees, and from thence to the loins, and from thence till they become a broad river to swim in; or so as to comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of this love, and to be rooted and grounded in it, and firmly persuaded of interest in it; and that nothing shall separate from it; and so as to have the heart sensibly affected with it. The phrase of directing the heart to God, and to seek him, is used in the Septuagint, in (^{<HQB>}2 Chronicles 19:3 20:33). And this is not to be done by a believer himself, nor by the ministers of the Gospel: the apostle could not do it, and therefore he prays “the Lord” to do it; by whom is meant the Spirit of God, since he is distinguished from God the Father, into whose love the heart is to be directed, and from Christ, a

patient waiting for whom it is also desired the heart may be directed into; and since it is his work to shed abroad the love of God in the heart, and to lead unto it, and make application of it; and which is a proof of his deity, for none has the direction, management, and government of the heart, but God, (~~3200~~ Proverbs 21:1), and in this passage of Scripture appear all the three Persons; for here is the love of the Father, patient waiting for Christ, the Spirit and the Lord. For it follows, as another branch of the petition,

and into the patient waiting for Christ; or “patience of Christ”, as the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions render it; and may intend either that patience, of which Christ was the subject; and which appeared in his quiet submission to all that outward meanness he did in his state of humiliation; in bearing the insults and reproaches of men, and the frowardness of his own disciples, in suffering himself to be tempted by Satan; and in bearing the sins of his people, the wrath of God, and strokes of justice in the manner he did: and for the saints to have their hearts directed into this patience of Christ, is of great use unto them, to endear Christ unto, them; to lead them into the greatness of his love, and also of his person; and to make them more patient under the cross, when they consider him, and have him for an example. Or else it may respect the grace of patience, which he is the author of, for all grace comes from him; and he from hence may be called the God of patience, as his word, which is the means of it, is the word of his patience; and it is by his strength that saints are strengthened unto all patience, and longsuffering: and to be directed into this, or to the exercise of it, is of great use under afflictions from the hand of God, and under the reproaches and persecutions of men, and under divine desertions, and want of an answer of prayer, and under the temptations of Satan, and in an expectation of the heavenly glory. And the heart is never more in the exercise of this, than when it is directed into the love of God; (see ~~880~~ Romans 5:2-5). Or this may refer to that patience of which Christ is the object, and be understood, either of a patient bearing the cross for his sake; for every believer has a cross to take up and bear for Christ, and which is to be borne constantly, cheerfully, and patiently; and nothing more strongly animates to such a patient bearing of it, than a sense of the love of God; so that a being directed into that, leads also to this: or as our version points out the sense, it may be understood of a patient waiting for the second coming of Christ. Christ will certainly come a second time, though when he will come is uncertain; and his coming will be very glorious in itself, and of great advantage to the saints: hence it becomes them, not only to believe it,

hope for it, love it, and look for it, but to wait patiently for it; which being directed to by the Spirit of God, is of great use unto them in the present state of things.

Ver. 6. *Now we command you, brethren,* &c.] The apostle is now come to the main thing itself he has in view in this part of the epistle, which is to encourage a regard to the discipline of God's house; and to exhort this church to excommunicate, or remove from communion, all disorderly persons; and those who are to do this he points out, and calls upon, and even commands; and these are the fraternity, the "brethren", the society of believers, all the members of the church; for to them to whom belongs the power of receiving members, to them only belongs the power of excluding offenders: the executive power lies in the hands of the elders or pastors of churches; they are the persons by whom the church receives or casts out members; but the power of judgment, or of determining who shall be received into, or who shall be removed from communion, lies in the church, and not in the pastors and elders only; whoever therefore take upon them to receive, or refuse, or cast out members of themselves, and at their own pleasure, act the part of Diotrephes, (~~600~~3 John 1:9,10). The authority for removing disorderly persons from communion is an apostolical command, "we command you"; who are the apostles of Christ, immediately sent by him, who had their mission and commission from him, and which were confirmed by miracles; these had a greater power and authority than the ordinary ministers of the word; they were the ambassadors of Christ, stood in his stead, represented him, and acted in his name; what they said, he spake by them; and it was all one as if he had spoke it himself: and that this might appear not to be of them, but of him, it is added,

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, by his power and authority, if they had any regard to that, or to his honour and glory:

that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly; by a brother is meant, not one in a natural or civil sense, who is so by blood, or by neighbourhood, by being of the same country, or of the same human species, since all are of one blood; but one in an ecclesiastical sense, a church member, who is called a brother, though he may not be really a child of God, one of the brethren of Christ, or born of the Spirit; yet being a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God externally, he bears this character; and such an one only is cognizable by a church, who

have nothing to do to judge them that are without, only them that are within: and “every brother” in this sense falls under their notice; everyone that is a member, whether male or female, for this word includes both; and as the sisters, as well as the brethren, stand in the same relation, are in the same church state, partake of the same ordinances, and enjoy the same privileges, they are obliged to regard the same rules of the Gospel, and duties of religion, and, in case of disorder, to be withdrawn from: and this also regards every brother, of whatsoever state or condition, bond or free, high or low, rich or poor; no partiality is to be used, no preference to be given to one above the other; a poor member in a disorder is not to be bore hard upon, while a rich one is winked and connived at: and it also respects the brethren, whether private members, or officers of the church; for not only the former, but also the latter, when they walk disorderly, whether in the discharge of their office, or in any other part of their conduct, are liable to the notice and censure of the church: and which is only to be done when any of them “walk disorderly”; not for every disorder they are guilty of; there is no man lives without sin; and church members have their infirmities, and will have, as long as they are in the flesh, or in the body; and they are not to be made offenders for a word, or for a single disorder, or for the common infirmities of life; nor are the just to be set aside for a thing of nought, or a small offence, and that not continued in: it is one thing to be guilty of a disorder, and another thing to walk disorderly; which denotes a way, a course, a series of disorder, and proceeding on in it, a going from evil to evil, an increasing to more ungodliness; for walking is a progressive action, and disorderly persons do not stop, but grow worse and worse; for they take pleasure in their disorders; they choose their own ways, and delight in their abominations; the paths of sin are pleasant paths to them: and they are disorderly walkers, who pertinaciously and stubbornly continue in their disorders, notwithstanding the admonitions of private persons, and of the whole church; and of this sort there are such that walk disorderly in the world, in the commission of notorious and scandalous sins, such as uncleanness, intemperance, covetousness, &c. and that walk disorderly in families; as husbands that are not affectionate to their wives, and provide not for their household; and wives that are not in subjection to their husbands; parents that provoke their children to wrath; and children that are disobedient to their parents; masters who give not that which is fit and equal to their servants; and servants that despise their masters because they are brethren, when they should serve them the more cheerfully, because faithful and beloved: and also that walk disorderly in

churches, that fill not up their places, but neglect attendance with the church, on the word and ordinances; and who are contentious and quarrelsome, and will not submit to the sentiments of those who are superior to them in number and sense; and likewise such who entertain bad notions and principles, derogatory to the grace of God, the person and offices of Christ, and the operations of the Spirit; who walk, not in the truth, nor according to the standard of the word of God; and especially such are designed here, who are busy bodies, and idle persons, who work not at all, but live at the tables, and upon the substance of others, as appears from (^{scrib1}2 Thessalonians 3:11). These act contrary to the order and decorum of nations, towns, and families, and to that which God has fixed among mankind; and to the example of God, and Christ as God, who work hither to and jointly together in Providence, and in the government of the world; and to the example which Christ, as man, has set, and to the example of the apostles, and to their commands: wherefore it follows,

and not after the tradition which he received of us; meaning either the Gospel of Christ, which being, preached was received, but the walk and conversation of some was not agreeably to it; or the ordinances of the Gospel, and the precepts of religion which the apostles delivered, and were received, and yet due attendance to them was not given; (see Gill on “^{scrib2}2 Thessalonians 2:15”), or rather that particular injunction concerning quietness, and doing their own business, and working with their own hands, (^{scrib1}1 Thessalonians 4:11). The Vulgate Latin version reads, “which they received of us”: the sense is the same; and the Ethiopic version, “and not according to the constitution we appointed them”. Now what is commanded to be done to such disorderly persons, by the church, even the whole fraternity, is to “withdraw” themselves from them; by which is meant, not only to distinguish themselves from them by an orderly and regular conversation, and a strict observance of Gospel discipline, which to do is very right; nor barely to curb and restrain the affections towards such persons, lest by carrying it as heretofore, in a kind, tender, and affectionate manner, they should take encouragement from hence to continue in their disorders, as tender parents keep in their affections, and from showing them to their children, when in disorder, and under their corrections, that they might not seem to countenance them in that which is evil, though this is also very proper; nor also merely to contract or shut up the hand to such persons, and refuse to distribute to them, living such an idle life, and in such a disorderly way, though this is what ought to be done; nor does this

phrase only intend a forbidding such persons their houses and their tables, not suffering them to sit at the one, nor even to come into the other, not allowing any company and conversation with them, that they may have no opportunity of indulging their laziness and tale bearing, though so to serve them is highly just and reasonable; nor does it design only a suspension, or a debarring of them from the Lord's table, which ought not to be done to any persons, while they continue in relation to the church, and members of it; but a removal of them from church communion, or an excommunication of them; which is sometimes expressed by rejecting persons, casting them out of the church, and putting them away, and here by withdrawing from them; which are all synonymous phrases, and intend exclusion from the communion of the church. And so the Ethiopic version here renders it, "that ye remove every brother", &c. From this passage we learn who they are that are to be excommunicated or removed from the communion of churches, all disorderly walkers; what the act of excommunication is, it is a withdrawing from them, a separating them from the church, and its communion; and who they are that have the power to do it, the whole fraternity or body of the church; and also the authority for it, an apostolical command, in the name of Christ.

Ver. 7. *For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us*, &c.] The apostle goes on to dissuade from that which denominates persons disorderly walkers, and exposes them to the censure of the church, and that partly by the example of the apostles, and partly by their command. He appeals to them, to their knowledge and judgment, it being a thing well known to them, that they ought to walk as they had the apostles for ensamples; for who should they follow but their spiritual fathers, shepherds, and guides? and especially so far as they were followers of Christ, as they were, in the case referred unto, working with their own hands:

for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; they could appeal to them as witnesses, and God also, how holily, justly, and unblamably they walked among them; (see ^{<120>}1 Thessalonians 2:10) and particularly, that they did not live an idle and inactive life among them.

Ver. 8. *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought* &c.] Or freely, at free cost, without paying for it; he signifies, that what they ate, they bought with their own money, and lived on no man, without giving him a valuable consideration for what they had; though if they had not paid in money for their food, they would not have ate it for nought, since they laboured

among them in preaching the Gospel to them; and such labourers are worthy of their maintenance, (~~2007~~Luke 10:7) though the former sense is the apostle's here:

but wrought with labour and travail night and day: not only laboriously preaching the Gospel to them, as often as they could have opportunity, but working very hard and incessantly with their hands, at the occupations and trades they had been brought up to; and that of the Apostle Paul's was a tentmaker, at which he sometimes wrought, thereby ministering to his own, and the necessities of others, (~~4107B~~Acts 18:3 20:34), nor was this inconsistent with his learning and liberal education. It was usual with the Jewish doctors to learn a trade, or follow some business and calling of life; (see Gill on "~~4107B~~Mark 6:3"). The apostle's end in this was,

that we might not be chargeable to any of you; or burdensome to them, they being for the most part poor; and the apostles being able partly by their own hand labour, and partly by what they received from Philippi, (~~5046~~Philippians 4:16) to support themselves, chose to that they might not lie heavy upon them, and any ways hinder the spread of the Gospel among them, at its first coming to them. And so Maimonides says the ancient Jewish doctors behaved, and with a like view: wherefore, says he ^{f15},

“if a man is a wise man, and an honourable man, and poor, let him employ himself in some handicraft business, even though a mean one, and not distress men (or be burdensome to them); it is better to strip the skins of beasts that have been torn, than to say to the people, I am a considerable wise (or learned) man, I am a priest, take care of me, and maintain me; and so the wise men have ordered: and some of the greatest doctors have been hewers of wood, and carriers of timber, and drawers of water for the gardens, and have wrought in iron and coals, and have not required anything of the congregation; nor would they take anything of them, when they would have given to them.”

Ver. 9. *Not because we have not power*, &c.] To forbear working, or require a maintenance from the churches to whom we minister, since Christ has ordained, that they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel; (see ~~4304~~1 Corinthians 9:4-6,14). This the apostle says to preserve their right of claim, when and where they should think fit to make use of it; and lest other ministers of the word, who could not support themselves as they did, should be hurt by such an example; and lest covetous men should

make use of it to indulge their sin, and improve it against the maintenance of Gospel ministers: wherefore the apostle observes to them, that they did not do this, as conscious that they had no right to demand a supply from them,

but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us; for it seems there were many idle lazy persons among them, who either had no callings or trades, or did not attend to them; wherefore the apostles wrought with their own hands, to set an example, who could not for shame but work, when they saw persons in so high an office, and of such a character, working with labour and travail, night and day, among them.

Ver. 10. *For even when we were with you, &c.*] At Thessalonica in person, and first preached the Gospel to them,

we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat; the Ethiopic version reads in the singular number, “when I was with you, I commanded you”; using the above words, which were a sort of a proverb with the Jews, and is frequently used by them, *lyka al yad*, or *sygn al y[]*, “that if a man would not work, he should not eat”^{f16}. And again^{f17},

“he that labours on the evening of the sabbath (or on weekdays), he shall eat on the sabbath day; and he who does not labour on the evening of the sabbath, from whence shall he eat (or what right and authority has he to eat) on the sabbath day?”

Not he that could not work through weakness, bodily diseases, or old age, the necessities of such are to be distributed to, and they are to be taken care of, and provided with the necessaries of life by the officers of the church; but those that can work, and will not, ought to starve, for any assistance that should be given them by the members of the church, or the officers of it.

Ver. 11. *For we hear that there are some, &c.*] This is the reason of the order or command given in (^{STR6}2 Thessalonians 3:6) for withdrawing from disorderly persons. When the apostle was with them, he observed that there were idle persons among them, and therefore gave orders then, that if they would not work, they should not eat; and in his former epistle, having intelligence that there were still such persons among them, he exhorts them to their duty, and puts the church upon admonishing them; and still information is given him, that there were some such persons yet among

them; for as the apostle had the care of all the churches upon him, so he kept a correspondence with them, and by one means or another, by sending messengers to them, or by receiving letters from those he corresponded with, he learned the state of them; and his information was generally good, and what might be depended upon; (see ^{<4011>}1 Corinthians 1:11) as it was in this case relating to some persons: which walk among you disorderly; and who they were, and which also explains (^{<5106>}2 Thessalonians 3:6), are immediately observed: working not at all; at their callings, trades, and businesses in which they were brought up, but lived an idle and lazy life: and this was walking disorderly indeed, even contrary to the order of things before the fall, when man was in a state of innocence; for before sin entered into the world, Adam was put into the garden of Eden to keep and dress it; man was created an active creature, and made for work and business; and to live without, is contrary to the order of creation, as well as to the order of civil societies, and of religious ones, or churches, and even what irrational creatures do not.

But are busy bodies; though they work not at all at their own business, yet are very busy in other men's matters, and have the affairs of kingdoms, and cities, and towns, and neighbourhoods, and churches, and families, upon their hands; which they thrust themselves into, and intermeddle with, though they have no business at all with them: these wander from house to house, and curiously inquire into personal and family affairs, are tattlers, full of prate and talk, and, like the Athenians, spend all their time in telling or hearing new things; and they also speak things which they should not; they carry tales from one to another, and privately whisper things to the disadvantage of their fellow creatures and Christians, and backbite and slander them. These are the pests of nations and neighbourhoods, the plagues of churches, and the scandal of human nature; (see ^{<5453>}1 Timothy 5:13 ^{<4015>}1 Peter 4:15).

Ver. 12. *Now them that are such*, &c.] For this was not the case and character of them all. Did such practices generally obtain, no community, civil or religious, could subsist. And the apostle wisely distinguishes them from others, that the innocent might not be involved in the charge.

We command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ; using both authority and entreaty; taking every way to reclaim them, commanding in the name of Christ and beseeching for the sake of Christ

that with quietness they work: with their own hands, at their proper callings, and so support themselves, provide for their families, and have something to give to them that are in need; by which means they will live peaceable and quiet lives, in godliness and honesty, and not disturb the peace of neighbourhoods, churches, and families:

and eat their own bread; got by their own labour, and bought with their money, and not the bread of others, or that of idleness.

Ver. 13. *But ye, brethren,* &c.] The rest of the members of the church, who were diligent and industrious in their callings, minded their own business, and did not trouble themselves with other men's matters, took care of themselves, and their families, and were beneficent to others:

be not weary in well doing; which may be understood generally of all well doing, or of doing of every good work; which is well done when done according to the will of God, in faith, and from a principle of love, and in the name and strength of Christ, and with a view to the glory of God: or particularly of acts of beneficence to the poor; for though the idle and lazy should not be relieved, yet the helpless poor should not be neglected. This the apostle observes, lest covetous persons should make an handle of this, and withhold their hands from distributing to any, under a notion of their being idle and disorderly; or lest the saints should be tired, and become weary of doing acts of charity through the ingratitude, moroseness, and ill manners of poor people; (see ^{<RB>}Galatians 6:9).

Ver. 14. *And if any man obey not our word,* &c.] Of command, to work quietly, and eat his own bread, now signified “by this epistle”, particularly in (^{<RB>}2 Thessalonians 3:12),

note that man; some read this clause in connection with the preceding phrase, “by this epistle”, or by an epistle; and so the Ethiopic version, “show”, or “signify him by an epistle”; that is, give us notice of it by an epistle, that we may take him under our cognizance, and severely chastise him, according to the power and authority given us by Christ; but that phrase rather belongs to the preceding words: and the clause here respects the notice the church should take of such a person; not in a private way, or merely by way of admonition and reproof, such as is given before rejection from communion; but by the black mark of excommunication; lay him under censure, exclude him from your communion, put a brand upon him as a scabbed sheep, and separate him from the flock; and so the Syriac

version renders it, **ꝥꝛꝑꝝ**, “let him be separated from you” and this sense is confirmed by what follows,

and have no company with him; as little as can be in common and civil conversation, lest he should take encouragement from thence to continue in his sin, and lest others should think it is connived at; and much less at the Lord's table, or in a sacred and religious conversation, or in a way of church fellowship and communion:

that he may be ashamed; that he may have his eyes turned in him, as the word signifies, and he may be brought to a sight and sense of his sin, and be filled with shame for it, and loath it, and himself on the account of it, and truly repent of it, and forsake it; and this is the end of excommunication, at least one end, and a principal end of it, to recover persons out of the snare of the devil, and return them from the error of their ways: so the Jews say ^{f18},

“in matters of heaven (of God or religion), if a man does not return privately, **ꝥꝛꝑꝝ km**, they “put him to shame” publicly; and publish his sin, and reproach him to his face, and despise and set him at nought until he returns to do well.”

Ver. 15. *Yet count him not as an enemy*, &c.] As an enemy of Christ, and the Christian religion, as the Jews and Pagans were; or as an enemy of all righteousness, as Elymas the sorcerer was; as one that has an implacable hatred to good men, and a persecutor of them, and has an utter aversion to them and their principles; nor deal with him in an hostile, fierce, furious, and passionate manner, as if you were seeking his destruction, and not his restoration. This seems to be levelled against the Jews, who allowed of hatred to incorrigible persons: they say ^{f19},

“an hater that is spoken of in the law, is not of the nations of the world, but of Israel; but how shall an Israelite hate an Israelite? does not the Scripture say, “thou shall not hate thy brother in thine heart?” the wise men say, when a man sees him alone, who has committed a transgression, and he admonishes him, and he does not return, lo, it is **wanwꝥl hwꝥm**, “a commandment to hate him” until he repents and turns from his wickedness.”

But admonish, or “reprove” him

as a brother; as one that has been called a brother, and a member of the church, and who, though criminal, has no bitterness in him against the church, or against the name of Christ, and the doctrines of Christ; and therefore should not be treated in a virulent manner, but with a brotherly affection, meekness, compassion, and tenderness; and who indeed is to be reckoned as a brother, while the censure is passing, and the sentence of excommunication is executing on him; for till it is finished he stands in such a relation: though this also may have respect, as to the manner of excommunicating persons, so to the conduct of the church to such afterwards; who are not to neglect them, and much less to treat them as enemies, in a cruel and uncompassionate manner; but should inquire, and diligently observe, what effect the ordinance of excommunication has upon them, and renew their admonitions and friendly reproofs, if possible, to recover them.

Ver. 16. *Now the Lord of peace himself, &c.*] The Prince of peace, who is peaceable himself, and the author of peace in all his churches, and who requires peace, calls for it, and encourages it:

give you peace always by all means; both a conscience peace, through the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, and faith in them, which passes all understanding, and which, when he gives, none can take away; and a church peace, being freed from all such disorderly persons and their abettors, the disturbers of it: and indeed, the way to have true peace and prosperity in churches is to keep up the discipline of God's house. The apostle prays for it in faith, upon an observance of the rules he had given; he prays for constant and perpetual peace, which is greatly to be desired; and that it might be had by all means, and in every way through praying, preaching, administering the ordinances, laying on censures, when necessary, and Christian conversation. Some copies, and the Vulgate Latin version, read "in every place"; as well as at Thessalonica.

The Lord be with you all; by his presence, to comfort and refresh; by his power, to keep and preserve; by his grace, to assist; and by his Spirit, to counsel, advise, and direct.

Ver. 17. *The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, &c.*] In writing his epistles, the body and substance of them he used an amanuensis, but the salutation he wrote with his own hand:

which is the token in every epistle; by which they might be known to be true and genuine, and be distinguished from counterfeit ones: and the rather he mentions this, that they might be troubled neither by word, nor by spirit, nor by epistle, as from them, as they had been, (~~sim~~2 Thessalonians 2:2) for it seems that this wicked practice of counterfeiting the epistles of the apostles, or carrying about spurious ones, under their name, began so early; to prevent which, the apostle took this method,

so I write, as follows:

Ver. 18. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*] This was the sign or token; (see Gill on “~~sig~~Romans 16:20”) The subscription to this epistle is, “The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens”; though it seems rather to be written from Corinth. In the Syriac version it is said,

“the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is written from Laodicea of Pisidia, and sent by the hands of Tychicus.”

FOOTNOTES

- Ft1** -- Synopsis Sacr. Script. Tom. 2:p. 129.
- Ft2** -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 63. 2.
- Ft3** -- T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 11. 1.
- Ft4** -- T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 24. 1.
- Ft5** -- Jarchi in ~~Genesis~~ Genesis 36:43.
- Ft6** -- Abarbinel in Daniel fol. 42. 3.
- Ft7** -- Gratian. Decret. dist. 96. can. "satis".
- Ft8** -- Extrarag. "cum inter".
- Ft9** -- Tzeror Hammor, fol. 148. 2.
- Ft10** -- Apud Buxtorf. Lex. Talmud. col. 221, 222, 223.
- Ft11** -- Abkath Rochel, par. 1. sign. 7. p. 52.
- Ft12** -- In Ohel Moed. fol. 19. 1.
- Ft13** -- T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 88. 2.
- Ft14** -- Zohar in Leviticus fol. 33. 2.
- Ft15** -- Hilchot Mattanot Anayim, c. 10. sect. 18.
- Ft16** -- Bereshit Rabba, sect. 14. fol. 13. 1. Echa Rabbati, fol. 48. 4. & Midrash Koholet, fol. 65. 4.
- Ft17** -- T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 3. 1.
- Ft18** -- Maimon, Hilch. Deyot, c. 6. sect. 8.
- Ft19** -- Maimon. Hilchot Rotzeach, c. 13. sect. 14.