



Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

CHAPTER THREE

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER

- **Chapter One**

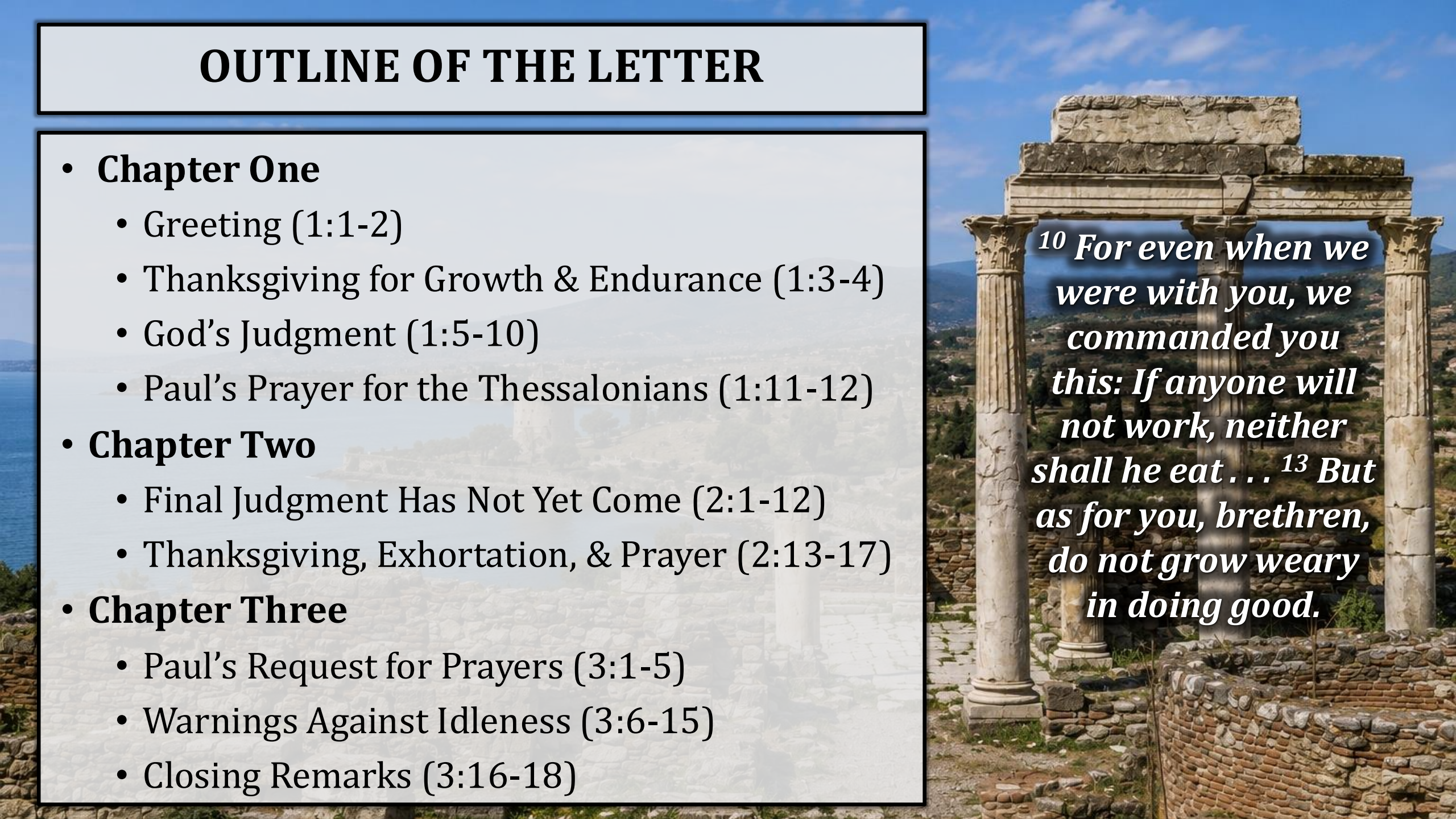
- Greeting (1:1-2)
- Thanksgiving for Growth & Endurance (1:3-4)
- God's Judgment (1:5-10)
- Paul's Prayer for the Thessalonians (1:11-12)

- **Chapter Two**

- Final Judgment Has Not Yet Come (2:1-12)
- Thanksgiving, Exhortation, & Prayer (2:13-17)

- **Chapter Three**

- Paul's Request for Prayers (3:1-5)
- Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)
- Closing Remarks (3:16-18)



¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat... ¹³ But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Paul's Request for Prayers (3:1-5)

¹ Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you, (RSV)

- Paul et al. recognized their dependence upon God & the prayers of fellow Christians (**Rom. 15:30-32; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-4; 1 Thess. 5:25**).
- Paul's prayed that "the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified."
 - God's word cannot be stopped (**Isa. 55:11; Psalm 147:15; 2 Tim. 2:9**), but opposition can hinder it (**Acts 6:7; 13:49-50; 2 Tim. 2:9**).
 - The word is glorified when people receive, believe, and obey it, allowing it to transform their lives (**Acts 13:48**), "just as" it did with the Thessalonians (**1 Thess. 1:3, 6-8, 2:13**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Paul's Request for Prayers (3:1-5)

² and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil people. For not all have faith. (NET)

- Paul asked for prayers of deliverance from “unreasonable and wicked men” so his evangelistic work could continue (**Phil. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:17**).
- These people were not merely mistaken. They actively attempted to obstruct the gospel and harm those who proclaimed it (**Acts 13:45, 14:2**).
- They did so because they did not have faith (**Acts 13:46, 17:5, 28:24; 2 Thess. 2:10-12**).
- This likely refers especially to the opposition in Corinth, which is where we believe this letter was written (**Acts 18:1-18**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Paul's Request for Prayers (3:1-5)

- ³ But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.**
- Not all have faith, but “the Lord is faithful.”
 - Men may reject the faith & oppose the gospel, but the Lord remains dependable (**Rom. 3:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23; 1 Cor. 1:9, 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 1 John 1:9**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Paul's Request for Prayers (3:1-5)

- ³ But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.**
- Not all have faith, but “the Lord is faithful.”
 - Paul earlier prayed that God would “establish” the Thessalonians (**2 Thess 2:17**). Here, he confidently affirms that the Lord will do it.
 - The Lord strengthens and “guards” us so we can resist persecution, temptation, and false teaching (**Matt. 6:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; John 17:15; Rom. 16:25**).
 - Satan (“the evil one”) cannot force us to sin or abandon our faith, and the Lord provides us with everything needed to resist him (**1 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 6:10-18**).
 - Divine protection is available, but it must be accepted through trust and obedience (**1 John 5:18; Jude 20-24; Jms. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-10**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Paul's Request for Prayers (3:1-5)

⁴ And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.

- The Thessalonians' faithfulness gave Paul reason to expect continued obedience (**1 Thess. 1:3; 3:6-8; 4:1, 9-10**).
 - This was not blind optimism. Paul knew they were presently obeying and expected them to continue.
 - Paul was likely affirming the faithful majority while preparing to correct the disorderly minority in the succeeding verses.
 - He gave the congregation proper credit for its general faithfulness before addressing its problems.
- "The things we command you" refers broadly to inspired instructions, both those already delivered and those about to follow (**2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6, 10, 12, 14**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Paul's Request for Prayers (3:1-5)

⁵ Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

- Paul prayed that the Lord would “direct” their “hearts” into:
 - “The love of God” (**Eph. 3:16-19**).
 - This includes a deeper understanding of God’s love (**Rom. 5:6-8, 8:35-39**).
 - This includes an increasing love toward God (**Matt. 22:37; 1 John 4:19**).
 - Understanding God’s love should produce love for Him and cause us to love others as He does (**Eph. 5:1-2; 1 John 4:9-11, 21**).

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- Paul prayed that the Lord would “direct” their “hearts” into:
 - “The love of God” (**Eph. 3:16-19**).
 - “The patience of Christ” (**Rom. 5:3-5; Heb. 12:2-3; 1 Pet. 2:21-23**).
 - The ESV, NASB, RSV, and LSB, translate it “the steadfastness of Christ,” while the NIV says “Christ’s perseverance.” These better reflect the original Greek.

“The genitive in the phrase ... (‘the endurance of Christ’) could be translated as either a subjective genitive (‘Christ’s endurance’) or an objective genitive (‘endurance for Christ’) ... The emphasis would be on believers being directed toward the endurance Christ showed which in turn produces endurance in them for him” (NET Footnotes).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

⁶ But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

- Four times Paul mentions their “command” (**2 Thess. 3:4, 6, 10, 12**).
 - The command was given “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” i.e. by Christ’s authority and for His purposes (**Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 3:17**).

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- Four times Paul mentions their “command” (**2 Thess. 3:4, 6, 10, 12**).
- The entire church (**2 Thess. 1:1**) was commanded to “withdraw” from “disorderly” brethren and those who did not walk “according to the tradition” received from Paul et al. (**Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:9-13**).
- “Every brother” implies church discipline must be employed without partiality (**1 Cor. 5:11-13; 1 Tim. 5:20-21**).
- “Walks disorderly” describes ongoing sin(s) rather than isolated mistakes (**2 Thess. 3:11-12**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

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“The Greek word translated ‘disorderly’ or ‘undisciplined’ literally means ‘to be out of order, be remiss.’ It refers to action that is undisciplined, disorderly, insubordinate, and irresponsible” (Mayberry, p. 55).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

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- The entire church (**2 Thess. 1:1**) was commanded to “withdraw” from “disorderly” brethren and those who did not walk “according to the tradition” received from Paul et al. (**Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:9-13**).
- Church discipline should follow clear teaching and persistent refusal to repent, not personal irritation, rumors, or differences of judgment (**Tit. 3:10; Matt. 18:15-17**).
 - Reminder – we must withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly, but not all issues are fellowship issues (**Phil. 3:12-16**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

⁶ But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

- The purposes of withdrawal include:
 - Correcting and restoring the sinner (**2 Thess. 3:14-15; Jms. 5:19-20**).
 - Protecting the congregation from corruptive influences (**1 Cor. 5:6-7**).
 - Refusing to enable irresponsible behavior (**2 Thess. 3:10**).
 - Preserving the church's reputation before outsiders (**1 Cor. 5:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:12**).
 - It is for these reasons why we must withdraw from "every brother" who walks disorderly, even those who figuratively "withdraw" from us first by ceasing to attend church.

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

⁶ But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

“This solemn exhortation is in the form of a command by the authority of Jesus Christ, Matt. 28:20. To ‘withdraw’ from a brother is not a pleasant task, but if it is done properly, it is an act of love. The purpose is to impress upon him the eternal ruin into which he is headed and to bring him to repentance, 1 Cor. 5:5. A corresponding purpose is to warn others lest they be influenced to follow his example, 1 Cor. 5:6-7. He is not to be treated as an ‘enemy’ (v.15), but he should be treated in a way that makes him ‘ashamed’ (v.14) of his conduct. The attitude of those who do the withdrawing must not be in self-righteousness, but with a spirit of meekness, Gal. 6:1-3” (Harkrider, p.123).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

⁷ You yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;

- “You yourselves know” emphasizes firsthand knowledge of Paul et al.’s conduct (**1 Thess. 2:9-10**).
- The Thessalonians needed to “follow” their example (**1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17, 4:9**).
 - Paul et al. “were not disorderly.”
 - Paul taught the necessity of responsible labor by both precept and example (**1 Thess. 2:9; Acts 20:34-35**).
 - Teachers should exemplify the standard they proclaim (**1 Tim. 4:6, 11-12**).
 - The particular example to imitate is working to provide for one’s self and not becoming an unnecessary burden on others (**2 Thess. 3:8-9**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

⁸ nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, ⁹ not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

- To “eat anyone's bread” is an idiom for receiving material support.
- “Free of charge” means as a gift or without payment (**Matt. 10:8; Rom. 3:24**).
- Paul did not depend upon the Thessalonians to provide for him.
 - Preachers have “authority” to be financially compensated for their labors (**1 Cor. 9:6-14; Phil. 4:15-16; 1 Tim. 5:18**).
 - Yet, Paul voluntarily burdened himself so that he would not unnecessarily burden the congregation (**2 Cor. 11:9**).
 - Paul supported et al. supported themselves through “labor and toil night and day” (**Acts 18:3, 20:34-35; 1 Thess. 2:9**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

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- To “eat anyone's bread” is an idiom for receiving material support.
- “Free of charge” means as a gift or without payment (**Matt. 10:8; Rom. 3:24**).
- Paul did not depend upon the Thessalonians to provide for him.
- Paul et al. set “an example” to be followed, putting them in a position to teach what is found in the succeeding verse (**Matt. 7:3-5; Rom. 2:21-23**).

“Paul's choice to deliberately forego this right serves as a rebuke to those whom he calls the ‘disorderly’” (Weaver, p.579).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

- This was not a new rule prompted by Paul's latest report. He had repeatedly taught it while personally present in Thessalonica (**1 Thess. 4:11-12**).
- Paul "commanded" this: "if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."
 - Note the text says "will not work," not "does not work."
 - The command concerns someone able to work who deliberately refuses to work, not someone who is disabled, unable to find work, etc.
 - "Neither shall he eat" means that neither individual Christians nor the congregation should aid one who refuses to work.
 - Work is not merely a means of personal support; it enables us to provide for families and assist others in need (**Acts 20:34-35; Eph. 4:28**).

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- This was not a new rule prompted by Paul's latest report. He had repeatedly taught it while personally present in Thessalonica (**1 Thess. 4:11-12**).
- Paul "commanded" this: "if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."
- This command does not oppose helping those genuinely unable to provide for themselves (**Acts 4:34-35, 11:29; Jms. 2:15-16; 1 Tim. 5:3-16**).
 - Biblical benevolence distinguishes between the helpless and the irresponsible. We should support the former without enabling the latter (**1 Tim. 5:8, 16**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

¹¹ For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.

For we hear that some among you are living an undisciplined life, not doing their own work but meddling in the work of others. (NET)

- Reports that reached Paul indicated that “some” (a small number), were walking “in a disorderly manner, not working at all.”

“There is a play on words in the Greek: ‘working at nothing, but working around,’ ‘not keeping busy but being busybodies’” (NET Footnotes).

- Most commentators assume that these Christians stopped working due to a misunderstanding that Christ’s return would be imminent. However, this is an assumption that cannot be proven from the text itself.

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

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For we hear that some among you are living an undisciplined life, not doing their own work but meddling in the work of others. (NET)

- Reports that reached Paul indicated that “some” (a small number), were walking “in a disorderly manner, not working at all.”
- By not working, these Christians became “busybodies.”

“Nothing to do increases the opportunity to meddle with other people’s affairs”
(Harkrider, p.126-127) [**consider 1 Tim. 5:13**].

- They were not completely inactive; they were active in the wrong things
(**Prov. 26:17; 1 Thess. 4:11; 1 Tim. 5:13; 1 Pet. 4:15**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

¹² Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. (ESV)

- “Command” emphasizes apostolic authority; “exhort” adds a personal, earnest appeal. Paul was firm without abandoning brotherly concern.
 - This is the second time Paul emphasized the command was given in / through “Jesus Christ” (**2 Thess. 3:6**).
- “Quietness” describes conduct that does not disturb others (**1 Tim. 2:2**).
- “Eat their own bread” means supporting themselves through honest labor instead of unnecessarily depending upon their brethren (**Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:11-12**).
 - The remedy for being a busybody was to become busy with legitimate work.

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

¹³ But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

... we can't allow ourselves to get tired of doing what is right. (GW)

- “But as for you” contrasts the faithful majority with the disorderly Christians described in the previous verses.
- The disorderly had seemingly abused the congregation's generosity, likely creating the temptation to stop helping anyone.

“Nothing discourages giving to the needy like having the lazy and meddlesome seeking support” (Lipscomb, p. 112).

- Paul warned them not to allow the irresponsibility of some to harden their hearts toward those genuinely in need (**Gal. 6:9-10; Heb. 6:10**).
- The misconduct of others does not excuse us from fulfilling our responsibilities (**1 John 3:16-18; Gal. 6:4-5**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

¹⁴ And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

- “Our word in this epistle” refers to the apostolic teaching communicated through this letter. Rejecting it meant rejecting inspired authority (**1 Thess. 4:8**).
- “Note” – the church would need to identify those who persisted in disobedience.
 - Paul does not prescribe a specific method of identifying the offender, but “noting” him must be clear enough for the congregation to act together.

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- “Our word in this epistle” refers to the apostolic teaching communicated through this letter. Rejecting it meant rejecting inspired authority (**1 Thess. 4:8**).
- “Note” – the church would need to identify those who persisted in disobedience.
- “Have no company” means not to mix or associate with the person. The same Greek word is used in **1 Cor. 5:9, 11**.
 - This requires more than a public announcement. The members must personally discontinue fellowship and social association (**Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:11**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

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- “Our word in this epistle” refers to the apostolic teaching communicated through this letter. Rejecting it meant rejecting inspired authority (**1 Thess. 4:8**).
- “Note” – the church would need to identify those who persisted in disobedience.
- “Have no company” means not to mix or associate with the person. The same Greek word is used in **1 Cor. 5:9, 11**.
- “That he may be ashamed” identifies the goal: to make the unrepentant Christian recognize the seriousness of his conduct and motivate him to repent (**1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:6-8, 7:9-10**).
- “Anyone” does not mean anyone in society, but any Christian (**2 Thess. 3:6, 15**), without partiality.

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Warnings Against Idleness (3:6-15)

¹⁵ Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

- Withdrawal must never be motivated by hostility, vengeance, embarrassment, or a desire to defeat the offender.
- “Admonish” means to warn, correct, etc. (**Acts 20:31; Rom. 15:14; Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:14**).
- “As a brother” governs the manner of correction. Church discipline must express sincere concern for someone who has wandered, not contempt for an “enemy” (**Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20**).
- Discipline must never be without love. Firmness and affection must be enjoined (**Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 3:19**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Closing Remarks (3:16-18)

¹⁶ Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.

- Peace is not maintained by ignoring sin. The discipline commanded was intended to remove disorder and restore fellowship (**Matt. 18:15; Jms. 3:17-18**).
- Paul prayed that "the Lord of Peace" would give them "peace always in every way."
 - Christ is the the Lord of peace (**John 14:27, 16:33; Eph. 2:13-17**).

"The Lord of peace signifies not only that he can bestow peace, but also and primarily that it is his own attribute" (Lipscomb, p.113).

- The Lord's presence is the foundation of peace (**Matt. 28:20; Acts 18:9-10; 2 Tim. 4:22**).
- This is an enduring peace – at all times and through every circumstance (**Phil. 4:7, 11-13**).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Closing Remarks (3:16-18)

¹⁷ The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.

- Paul's handwritten greeting served as "a sign" that the letter was genuinely from him (**1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; Gal. 6:11; Rom. 16:22; Phile. 19**).

"Up to 3:17 the letter was dictated by Paul ... But Paul took up the pen and wrote vv. 17-18 personally to authenticate that it was his" (NET Footnotes).

- This precaution was especially important because a letter falsely attributed to Paul had contributed to confusion about the Lord's return (**2 Thess. 2:2**).
- "So I write" = "the way I write" (ESV, NASB, RSV, LSB, ISV, etc.).

"He uses his own personal handwriting style to authenticate his letters" (Walton Weaver, p.603).

SECOND THESSALONIANS CHAPTER THREE

Closing Remarks (3:16-18)

¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

- Paul began the letter by invoking grace upon them (**2 Thess. 1:2**), and now closes the same way. Everything rests upon God's undeserved favor through Christ.
- Paul wished for the grace of Christ to be "with you all."
 - This includes those who were walking disorderly and needed correction.
 - Grace is instructive (**Acts 20:32; Tit. 2:11-14**).
 - Sinful conduct must be corrected, but sinners must still be loved and sought (**2 Thess. 3:15; John 1:14; Luke 15**).