

Series: 2 Thessalonians 2024
Title: Not Enemy but Brother
Text: 2 Thess 3: 6-15
Date: Sept 12, 2024
Place: SGBC, NJ

Before we read the next passage, let's focus on what prompted this to be written.

2 Thessalonians 3: 11: For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

This problem was so bad that the brethren had let Paul know and asked for help. Some were not working at all. Perhaps, this was due to the false doctrine that Christ was about to return. Plus, they were busybodies, interjecting themselves into the business of their brethren. So this was outward before all. It was known. This was disruptive to the preaching of the gospel. Therefore, it had to be addressed.

Next, let's focus on what our spirit should be toward one of God's saints who walks disorderly.

2 Thessalonians 3: 15: Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

Subject: Not Enemy but Brother

Proposition: When dealing with erring brethren, always remember what it took to make us brethren! That brother was chosen of God our Father, redeemed by Christ our Savior and born-again by the Spirit of God. We are not to treat him as an enemy but as a brother in Christ. Our aim is to restore him to Christ.

Always remember that Christ Jesus is the Prophet, Priest and King of his church. Our sovereign Savior is the Head of the church. The church is his body. Each member in particular is one with Christ, even the brother who walks disorderly. Christ dwells in each of his saints in Spirit, even the brother who walks disorderly. The Master alone is able to work his will and pleasure in his people. It is matters such as these that Paul referred to as "salvation." He said work out these things,

Philippians 2: 12...with fear and trembling. 13: For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure. 14: Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16: Holding forth the word of life;

For God's saints, the motivation in every precept of the gospel is Christ's love for us in laying down his life and making us perfect in him. Our aim is to do all without murmuring and disputing. Our goal is to be blameless and harmless and without rebuke in the midst of this crooked and perverse nation. By Christ our Light, our aim is to shine as lights in the world as we hold forth the word of life. With those things in mind, let's read one verse.

2 Thessalonians 3: 6: Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

We will look at three things. What we are to do first. Then what we are to do if that is not effectual. Lastly, we will look at what our Lord taught us to do if it comes the point of our text. Let's begin in Matthew 18.

KEEP PRIVATE MATTERS PRIVATE

Matthew 18:15: Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

This is the word of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we personally become aware of a brother walking disorderly but no one else knows in the church; it is not open before the public; only you and he know. Then go to that brother alone. Do not tell others. This is the word of our Savior, "*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: ...*"

False religion is prone to run to a passage like our text and use it to expose the sins of one who walks disorderly. They spread it through the congregation. It turns others against the brother. They call a great meeting in which all attend because everyone loves strife by nature. They do it with the aim of putting the man out of the congregation. It causes division, strife and distraction.

But the whole point of this admonition from our Lord is to prevent disorder. Our Lord's word is the best way to prevent a distraction from the preaching of the gospel of Christ. It is the way to restore a fallen brother.

More than anything else, each of us needs to hear the gospel of Christ and him crucified, especially a brother overcome with a fault. We need to hear of how Christ alone has saved his people through his broken body and shed blood. Our need is to hear how only Christ can work effectually in his people through the Holy Spirit. We need the gospel of Christ. When that is so in our hearts then we will obey our Lord's instruction.

So when you know of a brother's sin that no one knows, if we would love one another as Christ loved us, then we must remember how Christ laid down his life for his people. He took our offenses upon himself. The Son of God humbled himself and bore our burden, bearing the curse for his people. He covered our sin in his own blood. The Lord Jesus did not expose the sins of his elect. He covered our sins in his own blood. He gave his life to cover our sins. If we would fulfill the law of Christ—the law of love—the law of liberty which every blood-bought, regenerated saint is under—then bear ye one another's burdens.

Galatians 6: 1: Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2: Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. 3: For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

But if we make private matters known, uncovering another's sin to all, it will do the opposite. It will distract and end in division. Usually, we prove there is envy, strife, pride and malice in our own heart.

Remember, the two women who each claimed the newborn baby was their own? When Solomon called for a sword to split the baby and give each a portion, the one who loved the baby submitted to the other. The true mother said that the other woman could have her baby rather than see her newborn divided. When you love brethren you do not want to see brethren divided.

Another aim here is to not give the unregenerate world reason to reproach us. They will even if we do not give them a reason. But we do not want to give them a reason. So whatever has to be dealt with by the church must always be among brethren only. Keep private matters private and family matters within the family of God. When the unregenerate world is told then they will shame not only the fallen brother and the church but you who made the secret known to them.

Proverbs 25:9: Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself*; and discover not a secret to another: 10 Lest he that heareth *it* put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

Proverbs 11:13: A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

If men were as quick to speak the gospel of Christ as they are to speak of other's sins (or even simply rumors) then the gospel would run far and wide.

Proverbs 26:20: Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. 21: *As* coals *are* to burning coals, and wood to fire; so *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.

When the Lord first told Peter he would deny the Lord, our Master dealt with Peter alone. Then when Peter denied the Lord the third time, the Lord and Peter locked eyes; it was between the Lord and Peter alone. Even when the Lord restored Peter, after eating the Lord took him off alone. When Peter saw John walk up behind them, Peter said, "Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me" (Jn 21:21-22). Deal with a brother the same way Christ deals with you, that is, personally between you and him.

If you go to a brother alone and he hears you, and the Lord grants him repentance, then that is the end of the matter. The Lord Jesus said, “*Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother*” (Mt 18:15). That is the end aimed at when the motive is love. The motive of love is to gain thy brother without causing more sin by uncovering his sin and causing a tumult in the church.

James 5:19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

TAKE WITNESSES WITH YOU

Matthew 18: 16: But if he will not hear *thee*, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

What if the brother does not hear you? Our Lord says if he will not hear you alone then take one or two more witnesses with you. Remember, the aim is to gain thy brother. So take “*witnesses*” with you. It is not so much to bear witness against a brother, though we are to tell him his fault. But we are witnesses of Christ. Take brethren with you who are able to bear witness of Christ to the fallen brother.

We are earthen vessels. The excellency of the power is of God, not of us (2 Cor 4: 7). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, for therein is the righteousness of God supernaturally revealed from Christ into the heart of his child (Rom 1:16-17). The power is not in our sharp rebuke. The power is of God through the gospel of Christ. So bear witness of Christ to the fallen brother.

Select brethren to go who are gifted by God’s grace to speak the gospel and sprinkle it with the salt of admonition. Not everyone has that gift. God’s gifts some with a humble spirit who are able to admonish through the gospel of Christ so as to edify rather than destroy (Rom 12: 6-8; 1 Cor 12: 10; 1 Pet 4: 9-11). They are able to speak of Christ and his grace, seasoned with salt of admonition, rather than judgment and condemnation. Love is gracious and merciful to the erring brother because we know our own sins and how Christ has been merciful to us.

Never forget, always remember, when two or three go to an erring brother, Christ said I am there in the midst of you.

Matthew 18: 20: For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Christ said what we do to a brother we do to him. That is why he said that if a man offends one of these little ones who believe on me it would be better that a millstone be hung about his neck and he cast into the sea. Paul quoted our Lord Jesus from Matthew 18, when he said, “*[Work out these things] with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings*” (Php 2: 12-14).

ALWAYS SPEAK THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

But in our text, we know we have passed those first two steps. Now, the brethren had written Paul. He said, “*We hear.*” Someone had let Paul know they needed help with these brethren who were walking disorderly.

Take note how Paul went about this. This is how we are to deal with a brother, or brethren, who walk disorderly. By the Spirit of God, Paul wrote his first letter declaring the gospel of Christ. He comforted them with the gospel of how God elected them. Paul declared how Christ redeemed them. He said that he knew it because of how God worked in power in them through the gospel. Then Paul gave a word of admonition and exhortation concerning this problem. But he did so pointing them to God in Christ, encouraging them, motivating them with the gospel of how God had taught them to love one another.

1 Thessalonians 4: 9 : But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10: And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; 11: And that ye study to be

quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12: That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.

Then again, in this second letter, the Spirit of God made Paul spend three chapters preaching the gospel. For three chapters Paul exalted Christ's power and grace worked in them. He spoke of his prayer for them and his confidence in the Lord to keep them. Only then does he come to this third chapter where he seasoned the grace of the gospel with this admonition. He reminds them of the example he and the others set for them (vv7-9). Then Paul reminds them of the word he gave when he was with them "*that if any would not work, neither should he eat*" (v10). Then he addressed the erring brethren directly with the Lord's exhortation to us.

2 Thessalonians 4: 12: Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. 11: For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

In every epistle, the Holy Spirit moved Paul to preach the gospel of Christ before he came to instruction and admonition. He seasoned grace with the salt of exhortation and admonition. That is what we are to do one-on-one with each other. It is as necessary to preach Christ one-on-one as it is to preach Christ from the pulpit.

Colossians 4:6: Let your speech *be* alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

THE LAST RESORT

2 Thessalonians 4: 6: Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us....14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15: Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

This is rare. It is the last resort. This is to be done only after the other steps have been taken and much prayer and time has passed. If a brother ignores you, then ignores the other witnesses and continues walking disorderly then this step is to be taken.

But it must be preeminent in our own hearts, and we should make it known to the brother, that he is our brother in Christ, not our enemy. It is because of the constraint of Christ's love for his people and what Christ has already accomplished for us and in us. The motive to mortify our flesh and purge out sin and self-righteousness is that we already are holy in and by Christ our Sanctification.

1 Corinthians 5: 7: Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as YE ARE UNLEAVENED. For even Christ our Passover IS sacrificed FOR US:

Each one for whom Christ gave himself, and in whom he abides, is already holy, including my brother who is fallen. We do not become holy by purging out the old leaven. We already are holy by Christ our Sanctification. The willingness to purge out sin and self-righteousness is the effect of Christ having made us holy by Christ abiding in our new man. So our constraint and motivation to admonish, and to receive admonition, is not to make us holy but because ye already are! Always bear this in mind and it will help you remember that the one at fault is your brother, not your enemy!

It is necessary, before we ever make an attempt at speaking with a brother, that Christ must first break our own hearts. That is what Paul said to the Corinthians. "Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned..." (1 Cor 5: 2). Christ must first make us contrite in our own hearts. We must first be made to remember this brother who is being admonished is a member of my own body, along with every other member of Christ's body, and Christ is our Head. This is not to be done in a proud, haughty spirit, not in a public display, but in a meek and quiet spirit, with sorrow, between brethren alone, submitting to Christ and trusting Christ to save the brother. The aim is to see our brother converted from his error and to see Christ receive all the glory for granting him repentance.

This is to be done only when a brother is disruptive to the preaching of the gospel of Christ, disruptive to the unity and peace of brethren—“*withdraw yourselves*”—“*have no company with him.*” But we are not to count him as an enemy and we are not to cut off all contact with him. The Spirit of our Lord says, “*Yet, count him not as an enemy but admonish him as a brother.*” That tells us this is a step before the last step our Lord gives in Matthew 18. There he said if a brother will not hear the church then count him as a “heathen man and a publican” (Mt 18: 17). That is a step after the one in our text. Hear the Spirit of God teaches us to “*count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*”

Christ may withdraw his felt presence in our hearts. But Christ redeemed his people. He justified us. We are his possession. Our Savior shall never put us away or cut us off. We are simply to let a brother know we cannot have the same fellowship and company so long as he walks disorderly. But we are to have a merciful spirit that lets him know we are ready to receive him and forgive all offenses when Christ restores him and he desires to worship God in peace with his brethren.

If this one is one in whom Christ dwells then Christ will use this to bring him to repentance. He will be ashamed. But it will be by the grace and power of our Lord Jesus working in his heart. For one in whom Christ dwells, nothing awakens the child of God more than the thought of not being able to assemble with God’s saints and hear the gospel of Christ preached nor have fellowship with our brethren.

Then when Christ has renewed him inwardly and corrected him, we are to forgive him and receive him as a brother in Christ.

Matthew 18: 21: Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22: Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Luke 17: 4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. 5: And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

This is the true test of our faith in Christ. The trial of our faith is how we treat fallen brethren. “Hatred stirreth up strife: but love covereth all sins” (Pro 10: 12). It takes faith to trust Christ has granted repentance. It takes faith to remember the words of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8: 33: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is* God that justifieth. 34: Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Our Lord said if he trespass against you seven times in a day and seven times in a day turn again to you and say, I repent; you shall forgive him. That is why the next word out of the apostles mouth was, “Increase our faith!” When a brother falls or walks disorderly it is our Lord testing your faith to trust Christ to grant repentance and to restore so that you speak the gospel to the brother, you pray to Christ to work, you wait on Christ and then you receive the brother and forgive without limit.

The brother at Corinth had committed incest. He had taken his father’s wife. What a trial of their faith! According to Paul’s admonition, they had ceased to have company with this brother for a season. But then he came to them and said, “I repent.” They had to trust the Lord in order to forgive him and receive him again. This is what Paul told them to do.

2 Corinthians 2: 6: Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. 7: So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8: Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

Our fleshly, wicked nature loves to do what the Pharisee’s did to our Substitute. He said, “For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded” (Ps 69: 26) Christ is the Master of our brother. When Christ chastens, never add to it. Read how Christ prayed for the destruction of the Pharisee’s who did that to him. But the true child of God is effectually constrained in the

new man by God's love for us in Christ. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom 8: 15).

So above all things we are to keep our focus on Christ alone. He is our Righteousness and Holiness, and he is for the brother he chastens. Speak the gospel of Christ, seasoned with admonition. Pray to Christ for your brother. Trust your brother to Christ and wait on Christ to work. Christ is our Master and only Christ can save us from our sins. Yet, count not the fallen as an enemy but admonish him as a brother. It is by bearing one another's burdens, covering one another's sins, forgiving and restoring that we most resemble our Savior. That is what Christ did, and does, for us. So do it for the sake of Christ our Redeemer!

Amen!