**Faith in Uncertain Times - Part 13**

**Work Matters – 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18**

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – May 2nd, 2021

**Intro:**

* “Faith in Uncertain Times” has been our working title for this series – showing us where we are to keep our focus and what we are to do when uncertainties abound. The main focus of our attention is to be on continuing to grow in love and persevere in our faith. These are the two main concerns of the apostles and of the Lord. In turn, these are to be the two areas of our lives we are to be focused on as well.
* We are to live in a way that always looks to please God regardless of the circumstances. We are to honor His word and live according to it. We are to know what it says so we will not be deceived. We are to pray for the message of the Lord, for the messengers, and for God’s ministry among us, and we experience His grace and peace and continue to do what is good and pleasing to Him.
* This morning, God, through the words of the apostle Paul, gives us our final instructions from this letter. He returns to the theme of how people in the church respond to the message of the Lord as evidenced by how they live and what they do. This passage reminds us and encourages us to respond to the gospel by being people who work and how we are to respond to those people who are unwilling to do so, so that God’s grace and peace may be experienced and evidenced among us.

**Keep away from those who will not work and will not listen**

**2 Thess. 3:6 NIV**

**In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.**

* The issue of people being idle and disruptive has become an ongoing issue within the church of Thessalonica. In his first letter back to this church, Paul tells them to “*warn* those who are idle and disruptive” (I Thess. 5:14 NIV), and now he tells them to “keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive” with the underlying problem being that they do “not live according to the teaching” that the apostles give them.
* The real problem in the hearts of these believers is that they did not honor the word by living according to it. And because they refused to listen and obey what it says, they became idle, not doing anything of value and worth, not fulfilling their responsibilities to God and others, and because of this behavior, this disrupted the ministry and mission of the church.
* The first instruction was to warn these people, and then if those who were warned did not repent and realign their behavior to the word and continue in this path, the believers were then instructed to keep away from them.
* You may be wondering how this is a loving course of action? By taking these steps, it is both loving to the individual and loving to the church. It is loving toward the individual to warn and correct, then to return to a healthy and beneficial pathway.
* First, if they refuse to fully honor the word of the Lord, it will lead to other areas of further disregard. Thinking your way and your wisdom is better than that of the Lord is pride, and when left unchecked, continues to grow and harden one against God and people. Being idle and causing disruption seems to be pleasing to the person at the moment, but ultimately will not bring satisfaction, peace, and joy.
* Second, it is loving to the church, by protecting them from the burden of having to carry a heavier burden of picking up the slack of those who are being unresponsive and irresponsible in their life personally, and in the work of the Lord through the collective church. It shows love to people who are being responsible and working hard by not burdening them with people who do not do so.

**Follow the example of the apostles**

**2 Thess. 3:7-10 NIV**

**For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.”**

* The apostles did not give them a rule that they were unwilling to follow themselves. On the contrary, they set themselves up as the example to follow, going even above and beyond what was required of them. They were not idle; they worked both night and day, laboring and toiling so they would not be a burden to this new church. They did not even eat anyone’s food without paying for it. Even though they had a “right” to receive support from them, they refused it. This is especially true in the case of missions. (Ill. of missionaries, and the Apostle Paul). Paul did receive support from the churches, and asked for it, so that they did not have to charge those whom they were ministering among.
* The right to “such help” comes from scripture itself; “For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain, and, The laborer deserves his wages” (1 Tim 5:18 ESV) and “those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Cor 9:14, ESV) and it is right to support those who work in ministry.
* The rule, “the one who is unwilling to work shall not eat” applies to everyone. There is a difference between being “unwilling” and “unable.” Unwilling is that you will not work, unable is that you cannot work due to circumstances. It will take a lot from you to convince me that you are unable to work.
* Book recommendation: *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

**Settle down, earn your living, and continue to do good**

**2 Thess. 3:11-13 NIV**

**We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.**

* There is a difference between working and keeping busy in efforts and activities that are essential, first priority, and are pleasing to the Lord (like taking care of your own work responsibilities and attending to the needs of your life and those around you), verses being a person who is a “busybody.” This person is busy as well, but they are into everyone else’s business, meddling in the lives of others and not doing anything that is productive and beneficial. There is a lot of motion, but very little movement (like a car stuck in the snow). Doing so makes life miserable for others and limits them as well to accomplish items of value.
* The command is to “settle down,” and some of you need to do this. You get up in arms all the time over things that you can influence, don’t concern you, and take you away from areas that you can really make a difference (like a puppy that is distracted by everything that moves). Settle down, earn your living – this is a noble thing to do, provide for yourself. Some of the most dangerous people in the world are those who are not focused on some type of work, or places they can make a difference. Work is a gift of God (Eccl. 3:22), and work was given before the fall (Gen 2:15). Ask God to give you meaningful work to do. And those of you who are doing good, continue to do so. Don’t be discouraged, continue to go “M.A.D” (make a difference) knowing that when you work, you work for the Lord and He will pay you back, you will receive an inheritance as your reward (Col. 3:23-24).

**Warn and disconnect with those who do not obey the word**

**2 Thess. 3:14-15 NIV**

**Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.**

* Pay attention to those who are not following what is written in the word. We have a responsibility to warn them of the consequences of their behavior because we love them. If they refuse to align their lives with the word of God, disconnect with them (go to the next level), with the hope they will examine themselves because of the intentional distance and reconsider their choice and change their direction. The phrase, “feel ashamed,” means to “cause them to turn.” This is not “shaming,” but disconnecting and disassociating with them with the hope that they will change. And in doing so, you will not aid them by giving them a “pass” on their behavior. Some behavior is not okay, and the reputation and effectiveness of the church have been damaged by allowing this type of behavior to persist.

**Receive the peace and grace of the Lord**

**2 Thess. 3:16-18 NIV**

**Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. 17 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.**

* What Paul prays for them is the two things that each of us need: peace and grace. Both of these things come from the Lord of peace and grace. Ultimately, He is the one who provides them to us, and He is the one we should seek for them. In order to live in peace and with His grace we have to honor His word and live by it. Peace and grace will not come other ways. Follow Him and draw close to Him (like following one who is holding an umbrella in the rain). Don’t expect to have these things when you are walking in a different direction and without the protection of the risen and returning Lord.

**Conclusion**

* What are we to do in uncertain times? Focus on continuing to grow in faith and love. Honor the word of God, which will protect you from being deceived and keep you productive and at peace. Understand that it is the grace of God that works in you, and He will give you what you need to continue to do good until the day that He returns. Seek to honor the word of the Lord, and the Lord of the word will be with you and honor you. Make sure your time is spent on earth in a way that best honors and pleases Christ. Invest yourself in Him, and you will reap an eternal reward.