

Keeping Order In The Church

3:6-18

What was the problem? Some members of the assembly had misinterpreted Paul's teachings about the return of Christ, left their jobs, and were living off the generosity of the church. They were idle while others were working. Yet they expected the church to support them. It is possible that this group of lazy saints was the source of the false teaching Paul mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:2. They were also spreading gossip about people in the church. They had time on their hands and gossip on their lips, but they defended themselves by arguing, "The Lord is coming soon!"

Misinterpretations and misapplications of the truths of God's Word can cause endless trouble. History records the foolishness of people who set dates, sold their possessions, and sat on mountains waiting for the Lord to return. Any teaching that encourages us to disobey another divine teaching is not Bible teaching.

The Pharisees figured out a way to rob their parents and yet obey the fifth commandment:

And He [Jesus] said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." He was also saying to them, "You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother;' and 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death'; but you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban (that is to say, given to God),' you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; thus invalidating the Word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many such things like that" (Mark 7:6-13, NASB).

Paul expected the whole church to work together in solving this problem. The church in love must deal with its own members and seek to help each one obey God. To assist them in this task, Paul gave four motives to encourage the careless believers to turn from their sins and start earning their own bread.

1. The _____ of the Word (3:6)
2. The _____ of the apostles (3:7-10)
3. The _____ of the church (3:11-15)
4. The _____ of the Lord (3:16-18)