

WHILE WE WAIT
(Living for Jesus Until We're with Jesus)
2 Thessalonians Conclusion

PRUNING WHILE WE WAIT

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is *the imminent 'blessed hope'* of all true Christians (*Titus 2:11-14*). When He will return exactly is unknown so all Christians and their church families must live on *spiritual stand-by* at all times. While we wait, we are to be busy reducing excess baggage of our old lifestyle to that which will be pleasing to the Lord when we meet Him in the air (*1 Thessalonians 4:16-18*).

We are also to be using our spiritual gifts in ministry to one another, helping our brothers and sisters in Christ who need extra attention prior to departure (*1 Peter 4:7-11*). And then of course there are those who don't even have a ticket of salvation who need our witness about how to go about being ready when their last call is given (*Colossians 4:5-6*). There is plenty to do while we wait for Christ, the Captain of our faith (*Hebrews 2:10*), to summon us to *fly the friendly skies* of the rapture (*1 Corinthians 15:50-52*). The last thing that needs to happen is for some of our companions to get slack in their Christian life, become an extra burden to the rest of the church family, and a bad testimony to those we are trying to tell that knowing Jesus as Savior and Lord is the greatest thing in the world.

Paul advises the new church family in Thessalonica what to do about the internal problem of lazy, perpetual welfare case people in the church that were an added grief to the external persecution they were experiencing. **There are disciplinary things that also need to be done by believers while they wait.**

Jesus taught that a fruitful Christian or ministry will constantly experience *pruning*. Grapevines, for instance, need constant cutting away of all branches that have turned into deadwood branches. Grape vines also need to have weeds that have intertwined to be pulled out and thrown away. John 15:1-17 is a teaching of Jesus that needs to be read, understood and believed by all growing disciples of Christ. In this extended metaphor, the Vine is Christ, the Vine-dresser is God the Father, disciples of Christ are the branches, and the fruit is spiritual virtues of a Spirit-filled believer.

It is worth noting that the fruit gets better and better throughout the passage (*fruit/ vs. 2-3*); *much fruit/ vs. 5, 8*; *lasting fruit/ v. 16*). But for this abundant harvest to happen, pruning by God is absolutely necessary:

- 1) Cutting away of unproductive branches (v. 2)
- 2) Cutting back of fruitful branches (v. 2); and
- 3) Casting away of disconnected branches (v 6)

Any growing Christian or Christ-exalting ministry should expect and be thankful for God's continual removal of people from their lives or churches that aren't positive, productive, converted, and Christ-like people from them. If people in our lives and churches are just hanging around disconnected from a biblical lifestyle and church fellowship, they are a distraction and drain on the serious Christians and ministry effectiveness. It's sad to say good-bye to anybody, but if there isn't going to be spiritual fruit and influence, God is kind to prune them from your life and church for new, more, better, and lasting fruit to come.

God prunes away unfruitful people through the shears of desertion (people who just disappear without a word), church discipline (biblical admonishment to change and grow), and death (people who God knows are never going to become fruitful, faithful Christians).

In a day where getting bigger and richer is the goal of the church growth movement, understanding that God prefers quality to quantity is important to remember. To avoid being *pruned* stay pure and connected to Christ and other dedicated Christians. Then, as God leads, become a member of a good, fruitful church family.

While You Wait...Get to WORK!
(Obedience in the Hard Things of the Faith)
2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

The All Church Retreat

(Separating from backslidden brethren)

*“But we command you, brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother (or sister) who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he (she) received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 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...And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and **do not keep company with him**, that he (or she) may be ashamed. Yet do not count him (or her) as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”*
(vs. 6-8, 14-15)

**Other New Testament passages about discontinuing fellowship with professing believers
who live worldly or are trouble to the church family:**

<i>Matthew 18:15-18</i>	<i>Romans 16:17-18</i>	<i>1 Corinthians 5:9-13</i>
<i>2 Corinthians 6:14-17</i>	<i>Ephesians 5:3-11</i>	<i>2 Timothy 2:20-22</i>
<i>2 Timothy 3:1-5</i>	<i>Titus 3:9-10</i>	<i>2 John 9-10</i>
	<i>Revelation 18:4-5</i>	

The All Church Role Models

(Simulating the most mature, godly leaders)

*“not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: **If anyone will not work, neither should he eat.** For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.”*
(vs. 9-13)

New Testament ‘role model’ scriptures:

<i>Acts 6:1-7</i>	<i>Philippians 3:17</i>	<i>1 Thessalonians 5:12-14</i>
<i>1 Timothy 3:1-13</i>	<i>Titus 1:5-11</i>	<i>Hebrews 13:17</i>
<i>1 Peter 5:1-5</i>		<i>3 John 11-12</i>

The All Church Revival

(Setting the stage for spiritual renewal)

*“Now **may the Lord** of peace Himself **give you peace** always in every way. The Lord be with you all. The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.** Amen.”*
(vs. 16-18)

4 ingredients to ongoing spiritual revival in a church family:

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| 1) effectual fervent prayer | 2) peace with God & each other |
| 3) priority on God’s Word | 4) presence of God’s grace upon the church family |