
Idleness and Discipline

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

⁴And we are confident about you in the Lord that you are both doing—and will do—what we are commanding.

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

– *2 Thessalonians 3:4-5 - NET*

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

—2 Thessalonians 3:6-9 - NKJV

Now We Command You

- Since those refusing to work had obstinately disregarded his instruction while he was there and his exhortation in his first letter (4:11-12,5:14), Paul here issued a stern command regarding them.
 - This time, the command was in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and carried the full weight of His authority.
 - The word translated as disorderly is *ataktos* and means an *unruly life*. In a military sense, *ataktos* refers to “*being out of rank*,” “*out of line*” or “*out of order*”.
 - Paul commanded the rest of the congregation to separate from and ostracize *every unruly brother*.
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Setting the Example

- You yourselves know appeals to the Thessalonians firsthand knowledge of the missionaries' exemplary behavior; they **did not act in an undisciplined manner.**
 - **Nor did we eat anyones' bread without paying for it.** Paul emphasizes that they should follow his example of having **worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.**
 - There were those in Thessalonica who had given up their work and and had abandoned the routine claims of each day to walk about in excited idleness waiting for Christ to come.
 - This was not the way to prepare for the Day of the Lord.
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¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. ¹¹ For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.

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.**

–2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 - NKJV

So, the Command Is Brief

- Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.
 - Stop being disorderly busybodies and and work in quietness and earn your own bread!
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The Christian View of Work

- First, God exalted work by commanding it. It is often ignored that the familiar fourth commandment not only prescribes the keeping of the sabbath on the seventh day, but work on the other six (Ex. 20:9). That is God's command as much as the day of rest.
- Second, God Himself sets the example of work for all to follow in creation.
- Third, work is a feature of the creation mandate and is therefore a normal part of man's existence. Work is not a result of the curse, since God commanded Adam to work in the garden before the Fall (Gen. 2:15).
- Fourth, work is a gift from God. Man's occupation with it provides development of skill and productivity, significant contribution, value, meaning and fulfillment in life. It also prevents idleness which, as clearly seen in the indolent of every society, is debilitating and destructive.
- Finally, the Biblical work ethic affirms that all work can be elevated above the mundane by being done for the Lord Himself. Ephesians 6:5-7.

John MacArthur, Thessalonians

¹³ But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. 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. ¹⁵ Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

–2 Thessalonians 3:13-15 - NKJV

Do Not Grow Weary Doing Good

- 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.
 - Note the person to the church body and part company with him, that shame may work on him and tame him.
 - This is a good thing to do for both that person and the congregation.
 - Yet as a brother, not an enemy.
 - So be gentle but firm. Repentance is difficult to promote in others, but with the help of brothers to hold one to account, it is painful, but obtainable. If that fails, discipline comes.
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“It is no coincidence that when Scripture speaks about trouble it never wallows in the despair of our hopeless circumstances, but always guides us to the Lord and then specifically prescribes achievable options that we by choice either embrace or reject.”

– Joseph M. Stowell, *The Upside of Down*, p.24

Application

- “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 is a very difficult command to obey, isn’t it?
 - Has the definition of “disorderly” expanded in recent years?
 - Say, to include that which goes against the natural order of creation?
 - What makes us more eligible for the rapture than those who fought and died in WWI and WWII? Are we any more deserving? Should we not also expect to fight when called?
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