

"A Godly Work Ethic"

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

Theme: A godly person will work hard to provide for himself.

Introduction: The biblical exposure to the topic of work provides an awareness that work is something that God has provided to bless us. Work is not intended to be viewed as "below the dignity" of any person regardless of how spiritual one may be. The Bible provides us clarity on the perspective of God re: work¹ ...

1. God exalted work by commanding it - cp. **Exodus 20:9**.
2. God sets the example of work - **Genesis 2:2**.
3. God mandated work at the time of creation - **Genesis 2:15**.
4. God gave work as a gift that is to be used to worship Him - **Ephesians 6:5-7**.

I. THE EXCLUSION OF THE DISOBEDIENT - 3:6

A. The Authority re: the Disobedient

1. Paul returns to a subject that He had addressed several times already with the Thessalonians - their responsibility to work - cp. **v. 10; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 5:14**.
2. As a result, through the leading of God's Spirit comes out with a clear commend - *"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ..."*
3. As a result, what He is saying was to be instantly and completely obeyed and not taken as mere "personal opinion."

B. The Avoiding of the Disobedient

1. His patience in providing instruction was up - the stakes of allowing such unruliness to continue were too high - *"... that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us."*
2. The responsibility to *"keep away"* [στέλλω] - to stand aloof; to shun; to seek to avoid and signifies that there is no way that such conduct is to be entertained within the church.
3. The *"unruly life"* [ἀτάκτως] - describes a "walk" or a life characterized by defiance of duty or what is considered "good order."

¹ MacArthur, pp. 302-303.

4. It refers to someone whose life characteristically fails to comply with clearly revealed obligations that are handed down from God's messengers in Scripture - the referent of *"... not according to the tradition which you received from us."*
5. Those who refused to work were guilty of rejecting God's word and ought to be excluded until such a time as they would submit to it.

II. THE EXAMPLE OF DILIGENCE - **3:7-9**

A. **The Provision of the Example** - **vv. 7-8**

1. Paul recalls for them how carefully he conducted himself while he was with them - *"For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you ..."*
2. Paul and company's productiveness provided a sharp contrast to the slothfulness of the idle members of their church.
3. They wouldn't presume on the benevolence of the Thessalonians but worked to support themselves - *"... nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you."*
4. Their work was diligent:
 - a) *"labor"* [κόπος] - a state of discomfort or distress - to toil and exert - indicating that they were not "taking it easy" in some "cushioned" job.
 - b) *"hardship"* [μόχθος] - a reference to exertion or strenuous toil and difficulty in accomplishing something.
5. Put together, these qualities show the tireless efforts that exhaust a person.
6. They modeled the expectation that we do not "take advantage" of the benevolence of others, but we do all we can to provide for ourselves.

B. **The Priority of the Example** - **v. 9**

1. Paul carefully notes that he could have expected them to provide for him because of his role among them as a spiritual leader - *"... not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example."*
2. Spiritual leaders are to be cared for by those they serve - **Galatians 6:6; 1 Corinthians 9:14.**

3. They refused such care for the purpose of enabling those in Thessalonica for whom slothfulness was already a problem to have an *“example to follow.”*

III. THE EXPECTATION RE: “DEADBEAT” - 3:10-12

A. The Command re: the Undisciplined - v. 10

1. Hence, after having provided the example and the biblical command that they work, Paul states that enough is enough - *“For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.”*
2. It is important that the condition of the person censured is a person who *“is not willing to work”* - not a person who is unable to work.
3. There is a responsibility by believers and by the church to care for those who cannot work and are in need.
4. The idea of taking from those who work hard and give it to those who do not work hard is a violation of what is biblical - communism and socialism are unbiblical philosophies that destroy everything they touch.
5. Here we are told to refuse aid to a person who can but will not work.

B. The Correction of the Undisciplined - vv. 11-12

1. Paul now provides the reason for this section - *“For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing not work at all, but acting like busybodies.”*
2. Instead of working, there were some who were expecting others to provide for them and were meddling in affairs in which they ought to have no time to engage.
3. *“busbodies”* [περιεργάζομαι] - describes being busy intruding into another’s affairs - working hard and keeping others from working by meddling or talking - cp. **1 Timothy 5:13**.
4. Paul commands that they stop working hard to avoid working and work hard at actually working - *“Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.”*
5. Essentially, he tells the church to refuse to provide for the undisciplined until they become so hungry that they shut up and go to work and earn their own way.

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