

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

Work

1

Introduction

People in Paul's day, like our own have a improper view of work. It is viewed as a necessary evil so one can pay their bills.

From the times of ancient Israel to the present, people have seen menial labor as inferior to studying God's law. As a result, many have divided work between the sacred and the secular.

2

Introduction

It must be remembered that God created work. He worked for 6 days in Creation and rested on the seventh. He commanded man to work in the Creation Mandate (to be fruitful and multiply and tend the Garden).

This passage contains six incentives to motivate those sinning to repent and get to work: disfellowship, example, survival, harmony, shame, and love.

3

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

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.

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. 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.

4

Disfellowship

2 Thessalonians 3:6

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Since those refusing to work had obstinately disregarded his instruction while he was there (3:10) and his exhortation in his first letter (4:11–12; 5:14), Paul here issued a stern **command** regarding them. The Greek verb translated **we command** is in the emphatic position in the sentence; Paul was not offering a suggestion but issuing an order. This **command** was not based on his, Silas's, and Timothy's authority; it was issued **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ** and carried the full weight of His authority. Therefore, it was to be obeyed instantly and unquestioningly.

5

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When Paul ordered the Thessalonians to **withdraw from every brother** who refused to work, he was commanding them to shun them. And there were to be no exceptions. There is no valid excuse for anyone who is able to work and has the opportunity to do so to be idle. The verb translated **withdraw from** means, "to avoid," "shun," or "pull back from." Paul commanded the rest of the congregation to separate from and ostracize **every idle brother**.

6

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Those who refused to work were placed in the category of those guilty of **walking disorderly**. In a military sense, **disorderly** refers to “being out of rank,” “out of line,” or “out of order,” but it can also refer to apprentices being truant from work. Such idle, lazy, out-of-line behavior was **not according to the tradition which the Thessalonians had received**.

Remember that **tradition** means “something handed down.”

The seriousness of being cut off (Matthew 18 principle) should be enough to change behavior. The drastic step of church discipline was also necessary to protect the church’s reputation with outsiders. The world must also know that God does not tolerate indolence and laziness.

7

Example

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9

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.

The phrase **you yourselves know** appeals to the Thessalonians’ firsthand knowledge of the missionaries’ exemplary behavior, they **were not disorderly among** them. The **disorderly** relates back to verse

6. Paul’s and his coworkers work industriousness stood in sharp contrast to the behavior of some in the congregation.

Paul declared, **Nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge.**

Though they stayed at Jason’s house (Acts 17:7), the missionaries did not eat at his expense, **but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.**

8

Example

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9

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Paul made it clear that his reason for doing manual labor was **not because** he, Silas, and Timothy did **not have authority** to receive support for their intense work of preaching and teaching. They worked hard to support themselves as **an example of how you [the Thessalonians] should follow.**

Since Paul humbly labored to meet his needs in addition to his ministry, how could anyone else justify not doing so? But despite all of Paul's hard work to be a godly model for them, some still refused to work. For them, stern measures were in order.

9

Survival

2 Thessalonians 3:10

For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

To the missionaries' example, Paul added a pointed command. "**If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.**"

Ignorance was not their problem, **for even when** the missionaries **were with** them, they **used to give** them that **order**. Paul had also discussed this issue in his first epistle (4:11; 5:14). His point is simple: if people get hungry enough, they will work to get food.

10

Survival

2 Thessalonians 3:10

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It is important to note that Paul addresses here the issue of those **not willing to work**, not those UNABLE to work. Both individual believers and the church have a responsibility to care for the poor (Matt. 6:2, 3; Gal. 2:10; 1 Tim. 5:4; Heb. 13:16; James 2:15–16; 1 John 3:17). But neither the world nor the church owes a living to those too lazy to work. Our society is used to “entitlements.” This is the idea that those who will not work hard are entitled to be paid money taken from those who do. The results of the welfare culture and ultimately into socialism and communism. These do not work and result in immorality, crime, hopelessness, meaninglessness, and bitterness.

11

Harmony

2 Thessalonians 3:11-13

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. ¹³ But *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good.

Word had come to Paul that there were **some who walk among you in a disorderly manner**. “Disorderly” is the same word in verse 6. These people were **not working at all, but are busybodies**. There is a play on words in the Greek - “not busy, but busybodies.” Not content with refusing to work productively, they used their unoccupied time to wander around interfering in the lives of others in the church (cf. 1 Tim. 5:13). The nonworkers were an irritant, creating disunity and discord by being a burden on those who did work. That was beginning to affect the loving harmony and effective witness of the assembly of faith.

12

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Now those who are such, writes Paul, **we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.** To preserve unity, the disorderly members of the flock were commanded to work in quiet fashion and eat their own food. They were to settle down, stop meddling in other people's affairs, and begin leading an ordered life of quiet, consistent work. By so doing they would cease being a burden and become a blessing, thereby promoting harmony in the church.

Paul encouraged the rest of the **brethren** who were faithfully working **not to grow weary in doing good** (cf. Gal. 6:9). The danger was that they would **grow weary** of the **disorderly** and become indifferent to real needs.

13

Shame

2 Thessalonians 3:14

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.

Since Paul had dealt with this issue multiple times, he states that **anyone** who still refused to **obey** his **word in this epistle** was being sinfully obstinate. Therefore, he commanded the rest of the assembly to take **note of that person**. He was to be marked out for serious attention—the rest of the congregation was **not to keep company with him**.

The purpose of this third step in the church discipline process is that those who refuse to work **may be ashamed**. The Greek literally means, "**to turn in on oneself**." The idea is that isolation from the fellowship would cause the sinning believers to reflect on their condition, see themselves for the sinners that they were, be ashamed, and change their behavior. **The repentance and restoration of the sinning member is always the goal of church discipline.**

14

Love

2 Thessalonians 3:15

Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

The assembly must **not count him** (the one being disciplined) **as an enemy**. Rather, they were to **admonish him as a brother**.

This point provides a much-needed balance to the discipline process, noting that the motive for disciplining sinning believers is love. Galatians 6:1 gives the proper attitude for those engaged in the discipline process: “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

15

So What ...

Our culture’s work ethic has eroded, but the biblical work ethic remains constant. When Christians diligently pursue the vocation to which God has called them, God is honored. Therefore, “Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be blasphemed” (1 Tim. 6:1).

16