

# Get to Work

## 2 Thessalonians 3:6–18

### I. INTRO

#### A. A little refresher on 2 Thessalonians

1. After writing 1 Thessalonians, while he was still in Corinth, Paul wrote this letter a few months later
2. He received a report that the church had responded well to Paul's first letter. So this letter is filled with encouragement for applying the things that he had taught.
3. At the same time, it seems that persecution had ramped up as the church grew and matured.
4. So Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to deal with 3 main things:
  - a) Persecution had increased so he wants to encourage them to persevere in faith, love, and hope
  - b) Despite his time in the city and his follow up letter, there is still a great deal of confusion surrounding future events (this is what we've been talking about most recently)
  - c) Today: Practically, since some people had come to believe that Jesus' already returned they just stopped working

II. *[6] Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. [7] For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, [8] nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. [9] It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. [10] For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. [11] For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. [12] Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.*

A. Situation: Idleness is a big problem. \*Explain mediterranean culture & our time w/ Alfonso and Lamia\*

B. Paul begins this section with a very clear command: **Keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness.**

1. Literally the word here is unruly, out of line, or undisciplined, but based upon the further clarification in vv8-11, the translators use "idleness"
  - a) They aren't busy at work, they are just busybodies
  - b) What could that look like?
2. There are people within Thessaloniki who aren't working. Instead, they are going from house to house and exploiting generosity.
  - a) Sit down have some coffee - talk about the Lord, little gossip

- b) Go over there. Have a fig cake - talk about the Lord, little gossip
  - c) Maybe stop by George's - have some tzatziki
  - d) You get the point.
- 3. Culturally, this part of the world is very hospitable and it would be very easy to take advantage of that and just hang out while other people pay for your food and drink.
- 4. Couple that w/ people who are claiming that the Lord has already risen and any day now he's gonna come marching on in and you realize this could be an issue.
- 5. Paul says to the church - stay away from them. Don't let them into your house. Don't let them sit at your table - just stay away. They're dangerous
- C. Why? Why does Paul speak so strongly about this? Because it's not in accordance with the tradition they received from him.
  - 1. Tradition can be a dirty word for some people, so what does Paul mean?
  - 2. When Paul is talking about tradition, he is referring to the gospel-centered lifestyle that he modeled for them.
  - 3. For Paul, tradition equals imitation
  - 4. What did Paul model as their "tradition" for behavior and what does he encourage them to do?
    - a) Imitate us
      - (1) We weren't idle
      - (2) We didn't exploit anyone's generosity
      - (3) We toiled day and night so that we wouldn't be a burden to anyone, but only be a blessing in word and deed
    - b) We did this voluntarily even though we could have demanded money. Why? Because we wanted to be a good example (hence imitating the tradition received)
    - c) We frequently said, "You don't work? You don't eat!"
  - 5. So for Paul, he and his crew intentionally modeled hard work. Even though they could have demanded money and lived off of support, they chose NOT to so as to be an example for the people they led to Jesus.
    - a) I can tell you that this is a PROBLEM on the mission field
      - (1) Especially in developing countries, money causes a divide within the church. People can easily view ministry as a means to have a good job with a stable income - especially if a western missionary will give a local a few hundred dollars a month to be a pastor
      - (2) On top of this, locals think you are weird. When we lived in Spain we frequently didn't know what to tell people when they asked what we did for a living. It didn't feel natural.
      - (3) I am sure Paul realized the room for division over money and knew that modeling a sort of self-reliance (not in a pick yourself up by your own bootstraps kind of way, but in a "do your part" way) was healthy

(4) After all, we were created to work! Work is good!

(a) Genesis 1-3 says that work is part of God's design, but unproductive, difficult, toilsome work is part of the curse.

(b) You will work in the new heaven & new earth but it will be a joy to your heart and not a burden

D. Paul has a solution for idleness: get to work!

1. Work quietly (without complaining & without gossiping)
2. Earn your own living (don't be a mooch)

E. Work quietly

1. Look, it's easy to complain about work. We all do it from time to time, but Paul says that's not honoring to God. In all things we should be thankful
2. Elsewhere Paul says to complain about nothing so you shine brightly in the midst of a crooked and corrupt generation
3. Complaining is not befitting God's people.

**a) Do you complain about work all the time? Paul's command:**

**Work hard. Be thankful. Spread the gospel, not complaints**

4. Also, there is something deeply respectable about a person who works hard. Nobody respects someone who loafers around.
  - a) When I worked for the State... Not saying all are like that!
  - b) When you are at work, do you work hard or do you take 50 water breaks at the cooler? Do you work as unto God and not man?
  - c) **Are you working hard, or are you hardly working?**
5. Working quietly is the opposite of being a busybody or a nuisance. Instead you are a blessing to your family, to your community, and to your employer.

F. Earn your own living.

1. We are still called to be a generous people. We should work hard so we have means for ourselves and to help others. It's always better to give than to receive.

*III. [13] As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. [14] If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. [15] Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. [16] Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all. [17] I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write. [18] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.*

A. For the rest of you, you aren't off the hook either. He gives a few commands.

1. This same principle applies to you too, even if you're a hard worker. Keep working hard at your job but also don't grow weary in doing good.
  - a) Sometimes, for men especially, it is easy to pour ourselves into our jobs. We love being workaholics.
  - b) In a lot of ways, it is easier to be a workaholic than a present father and husband.

- c) Don't just work hard. Work hard for the Lord.
- d) Work is a part of life, but it isn't life. We also need to work hard at doing good.
  - (1) We work hard so we can be generous
  - (2) We work hard so we can provide for our family and help others
  - (3) We also work hard at doing good
    - (a) Being a husband, a dad, good neighbor, servant of God's people, etc
- 2. Second, Paul says that we need to take this kind of toxic sin seriously.
  - a) Sin infects like a plague. It gets into the body of Christ and spreads like rot
  - b) When Paul says to stay away, what he means is this: Don't support or empower this kind of behavior.
  - c) So what do you do?
    - (1) Take note of it
    - (2) Warn them as a brother (not an enemy)
    - (3) If they won't listen, pull back
  - d) Warning them as a brother is key. You aren't trying to be vindictive, you want them to grow. The goal isn't you smacking them around - the goal is their maturity.
    - (1) So warn them. Challenge them. If they don't listen? Don't ignore it. Tell them they aren't welcome to eat your food if they are gonna just be a mooch.
  - e) Strong? Sure! Because it's a serious issue!
    - (1) The church doesn't need more reasons for the community around us to think we are nuisances.
    - (2) Work hard. Work quietly. Do good. Don't be an idiot.
- 3. And with this, Paul ends his letter.
  - a) He has encouraged them in their growth
  - b) He has corrected some false doctrine
  - c) He commands them to deal with the issues that plague them

#### IV. For Us

- A. Our country and our town says it's okay not to work hard.
  - 1. People pride themselves in milking the system.
  - 2. If that's you, Paul's words are pretty clear. Get to work.
    - a) Remember work in Paul's day and age meant everything from running the farm to working at the shop to taking care of the kids and home. All of those things are work - they keep you busy so you stay out of trouble and keep your head down.
- B. Work is fulfilling and that's okay. It is good to sweat and feel like you put in a hard day's work.
  - 1. It is healthy to look at the fruit of your labor, whether that is a document you wrote, a house you cleaned, a meal you cooked, or a deck you built.

2. These are good things and we shouldn't look down at them as somehow less than spiritual.
  3. Somehow we can get into the wrong mindset that the only way to honor Jesus is by sharing the gospel, but that's not 100% true
  4. Working hard in the sphere of life God has given you is honoring to him if it is done w/ the right attitude → All things are worship when done unto the Lord, not just "church things"
  5. On the flipside, you can share the gospel like a jerk and have it be completely dishonoring to Christ
  6. Our attitude, the posture of our heart, is often a key part of these things.
- C. So church - work hard.
1. Don't live off the government just b/c they are willing to send you a check
  2. Don't loaf around if there are things you could and should be doing
    - a) I am not saying not to relax, but know when to relax and when to work!
  3. Work hard. Work quietly. Be a blessing to others.

## TABLE TALK

- What struck you the most from today's message?
- Do you struggle more with not working very hard and being lazy (comfort idolatry) or working too much and making your work your idol?
- What could be a clear action for you to apply Paul's teaching this week?