

November 26, 2023

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 NIV

6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." 11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.



Laboring for the Lord
2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

BIG IDEA: Living a life worthy of Christ's calling to salvation includes a life of faithfulness to our vocational calling.

OUTLINE

1. The Problem

2. The Solution

3. Do Not Grow Weary in Doing Good

A. Basic Theology of Work

1. Work is good
2. Work is sacred

B. Reasons to Work Hard

1. Provide for the needs of our family and others
2. Glorify God
3. Do good to others
4. Good witness
5. With a good attitude
6. Spread the gospel

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As they awaited the return of Christ, some of the professing believers at Thessalonica had fallen into the sin of laziness. They were unwilling to work (v. 6). Paul urges them not to be idle but to imitate him and his companions, who worked day and night when they ministered among the Thessalonians (vv. 7–9).

Idleness is a serious matter; it affects not only the idle person but also his family and community. Most importantly, idleness dishonors the body of Christ and the name of Christ before the eyes of the watching world. Paul thus admonishes the Thessalonians to give brotherly warning to anyone who does not heed his word.

-ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible

Praise to Jesus. Praise the Lord for the work He has given you, for He loves you and has appointed your work. It matters greatly no matter how it may appear to you or others. Praise the Lord for confidence in facing the trials of this life, which will not have the final word or controlling influence on your heart. Praise Jesus for the peace he gives “at all times in every way” (2 Thess. 3:16). Praise Jesus that you can walk with and rely upon him with abundant compassion and grace, who stabilizes you amid the storms of life as you await his return in power and glory.

Repentance through Jesus. Confess the times when you have grown weary of doing good. Confess when you have not pulled your weight on your team, family, or in the church. Confess the times when you have meddled in the affairs of others or freely critiqued the work of others while not attending well to your work.

Consecration for Jesus. Because Jesus worked for the glory of the Father, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain; may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. May your faith, hope, and love abound still more and more. The Lord be with you all. (1 Cor. 15:58, and 2 Thess. 3:1).

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. When did you work on a group project in middle, high school, or college? Describe your best group project experience and your worst.
2. Read the 2 Thess. 3:6-15 “*A busybody is a nosy, meddling person who's very interested in what other people say and do. If you're a busybody, you can't help offering advice to friends, whether they want it or not. Busybodies are known for trying to help with situations in which they're not necessarily welcome or needed.*” -Vocabulary.com. Imagine the impact of someone who is not doing their part on the team and is offering unsolicited advice to the other members of the team.
3. Please take a look at 2 Thess. 3:11. How would busybodies impact a church suffering persecution and affliction like the church in Thessalonica?
4. Role-play a conversation between a frustrated teammate and an idle busybody. Please take a look at 2 Thess. 3:6 & 12-15. Paul gives the church instructions to troubleshoot the immediate problem of idleness, and he gives a long-term solution. Read 2 Thess. 3:7. What solutions does Paul offer?
5. Please read the following verses: 1 Cor. 4:15-17, 1 Cor. 10:32–11:1, Phil. 3:17, Phil. 4:9, 2: Thess. 3:7-9 and 12. Where do you find the motivation to work hard? How can the truth from these verses transform how you approach your work?

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1 What does it mean in verse 6 that some in their church are described as “any brother who is walking in idleness?” (*To be idle is to not work or could be described as lazy. It is helpful to also point out that some translations describe these folks as “unruly” (NASB) or “disruptive” (NIV), or “who doesn’t want to work and makes trouble” (NIRV). Make sure to read verse 11, which describes these folks as “some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.”*)

2. Why would God want us to stay away from folks like this? (*The Bible teaches that God created us to work since we are made in His image. We read in Genesis 1-2 that God worked in creating the heavens and the earth. With the fall of humanity into sin in Genesis 3, we learn that our work becomes frustrating. But we are still called to work. Paul must have been worried that the Christians in Thessalonica could’ve been tempted to give up their work and follow the pattern of those that are idle and making trouble.*)

3. This would be a good time to tell your children about how you ended up in your job. Ask them about jobs they may want and talk with them about what they enjoy doing or do well.

4. In verse 13, we read “do not grow weary in doing good.” Have you ever had a time when you were ready to give up helping or loving others?

5. Read verse 15. What difference would it make for the Thessalonians to treat those who were idle not as enemies but as “a brother?” (*The difference would be the condition of our heart and how that would lead to how we treat others. When we are acting out of love to our spiritual family, then we will have more patience and care. If we treat them as enemies, then we may end up being harsh and have a desire to punish them. This might be a good time to talk about how you as parents feel when you have to discipline your children while loving them deeply.*)

Scriptures for further study:

Colossians 3:17,23-24

Galatians 6:9

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Genesis 2:1-3

John 1:1-3

John 5:17

1. Have you ever thought about the idea that doing good works makes you more like Jesus?
2. How should the way you work point people to Jesus?
3. As a Christian, what is the connection between work and worship?
4. Paul told other Christians to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Cor 11:1). Who are some people that you have followed as you've grown in your faith? How have these people helped you to be more like Jesus?
5. When are you tempted toward idleness? What will it look like for you to "work heartily, as for the Lord" (Colossians 3:23)?
6. How do you respond when you see people around you persisting in sin? How does it affect your own faith? How does this passage help you in this kind of situation?
7. Explain a Christian work ethic as described in verses 6-12. How might we see this ethic applied practically?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Many have rejected Christianity on the grounds that it is boring, untrue, and irrelevant. Dealing with just the third of these objections, it could be easily shown that Christianity is in fact quite relevant. Much of this particular passage today deals with the matter of work or vocation. The Bible consistently deals with topics such as work, marriage, sex, health, attitude, character, speech, conduct, dealing with worry, parenting, interpersonal relationships, death, etc.

Question: If you have ever found yourself thinking Christianity is irrelevant, ask yourself honestly if you have ever truly read and explored the teachings of Scripture.

2. Our passage (2 Thess.3:6-15) might initially come across as harsh.

Question: But why do you suppose that the biblical practice of Christians who are in close-knit communities challenging each other in sin might actually turn out to be the most loving thing we could do?!

3. Paul lovingly commands these Christians to never tire of doing what is right (v.13).

Question: Why do you think working hard is such an important quality for Christians to have?

4. Too often we categorize work (wrongly) as being either sacred or “secular.”

Question: Would you say that you think of your work as being sacred? Why or why not?

5. The Bible says God has uniquely gifted each one of us to work.

Question: In what ways are you glorifying God through the work that you do?

A Sustaining Gratitude: The Abundant Growth of Faith, Love and Hope in Thessalonica



Sunflowers, Vincent Van Gogh, 1888

About the artist and painting: In 1888, the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh moved to southern France with a dream. He wanted to establish an art community where painters could live, work, and inspire one another. One of his mentors, a man he deeply respected, Paul Gauguin, agreed to come and live in this community. As a symbol of his thankfulness and happiness, Van Gogh painted a series of sunflower paintings and hung them in his room. The sunflower meant to reflect his surprising joy towards achieving a dream.

The apostle Paul was probably not an artist but he did produce a letter expressing his surprising joy, his thankfulness, and happiness. This letter was his “sunflower” to the church Thessalonica. It’s Paul’s verbal painting of Gospel Gratitude. What are things you are most grateful for in your life? Has the Gospel taken root in your heart? If so, what fruits of gratitude are being produced and overflowing in your life as a result of Jesus?

In his opening words from Paul to the Thessalonians, he writes:

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,
3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. The same faith, hope, and love that made a difference in the lives of believers then can make a difference in your life now. **“I’m excited for what God has in store for us First Presbyterian Church, as the Spirit washes us in these words of Gospel gratitude. May Christ be our hope for the world to come, our faith for today, and our love for a lifetime”** Pastor Bill Pardue

A Sustaining Gratitude: The Abundant Growth of Faith, Love and Hope in Thessalonica

About 2 Thessalonians: Paul writes to express his GRATITUDE for the church's continued growth in faith and love. At the same time, he encourages them to stand firm amidst persecution, seeks to correct a false teaching concerning the return of Christ, and addresses an idleness problem.

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to commend them for their continued spiritual growth while encouraging them to progress. He deals with misinformation about the 2nd Coming and an emerging problem of idleness. The letter's focus is eschatology, or the theology of end times. While this is a prevalent theme in 1 Thessalonians, instead of continuing a discussion about what will happen to the dead, the Thessalonians were confused and disturbed by false teaching that said Jesus had already returned invisibly and the church missed it. Paul provides much-needed clarity about when Jesus will return.

About the artist and painting: In 1888, the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh moved to southern France with a dream. He wanted to establish an art community where painters could live, work, and inspire one another. One of his mentors, a man he deeply respected, Paul Gauguin, agreed to come and live in this community. To symbolize his thankfulness and happiness, Van Gogh painted a series of sunflower paintings and hung them in his room. The sunflower reflected his surprising joy towards achieving a dream.

The apostle Paul was probably not an artist. Still, he produced a letter expressing his surprising joy, thankfulness, and happiness. This letter was his "sunflower" to the church Thessalonica. It's Paul's verbal painting of Gospel Gratitude. What are the things you are most grateful for in your life? Has the Gospel taken root in your heart? If so, what fruits of gratitude are being produced and overflowing in your life due to Jesus?

In his opening words from Paul to the Thessalonians, he writes:

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,
3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. The same faith, hope, and love that made a difference in the lives of believers can make a difference in your life now.

May Christ continue to be our hope for the world, our faith for today, and our love for a lifetime.

- Pastor Bill Pardue