

**Works for Me, part 1**

(2 Thessalonians 3:6-9)

6/26/19; Wed PM Pine Grove

**Introduction**

Disfellowship, example, survival, harmony, shame, and love.

Last week on the CNBC website, an article was posted entitled, Work is Good for You..

In a culture of folks refusing to work, that is a great article to publish..

But that was the full title.

The full title was “Work is good for you — but only one day a week, scientists say.”

To be clear, the article’s main point is that people should only work one day a week.

According to a study at Cambridge that examined 71,000 working age people in the United Kingdom, scientists concluded that an 8 hour work week is best.

According to the scientists who conducted the study, quote..

“for everyone of working age to enjoy the mental health benefits associated with employment, the working week should be drastically reduced so available work could be redistributed and shared.”

Wow, that is utter and complete nonsense.

If you work less in order to share the work load more, there will be no one left to do the work.

Listen to their suggestions that resulted from the study..

***“five-day weekends, working for just a couple of hours each day, increasing annual vacation allowances from weeks to months, or having two months off work for every month spent working.”***

Now look, this isn't the National Enquirer reporting this.

This is global news network, CNBC, and this is a respected university, -Cambridge.

And yet, they are spouting such nonsense as this.

Now, the average person, they probably cheer at such news of a one day work week.

It is quite common for people to complain about their work.

IT is quite common even for Christians to complain about work.

Yet despite the complaints, the Bible never condemns work.

On the other hand, the Bible exalts work in many places.

The book of Proverbs is filled with the value of work.

The NT exalts work.

And besides that, Paul worked making tents and preaching and even Jesus sent the majority of his life as a carpenter in Nazareth.

That is not to mention all the other people in the Bible who worked, yet there is never one complaint about work.

Instead, work is exalted in the Scriptures.

Work is not even portrayed as drudgery.

Sure work is harder in a fallen and sinful world due to the curse, but it is also part of God's mandate to us.

Work is how we rule and subdue the world that God has given us dominion over.

With that said, we are going to be provided with a biblical view of work tonight in 2 Thessalonians 3.

In fact, we are going to find motivations to go to work tonight that we may not have ever considered..

But the greatest blessing tonight will be making sure that our view of work is in line with God's view of work..

So, let's begin by simply reading the passage tonight..

Take your Bibles and turn to 2 Thessalonians 3:6...

Paul is ended his 2nd letter to this church which is located on the Aegean Sea...

You can see it right here on this map..

We have spent a couple months with this church, and though they are a young church in terms of spiritual maturity, they are a very healthy church.

In Paul's first letter, he commended their faith and love and service to the Lord.

These people had given up much to come to Christ.

Most, if not all, had abandoned Judaism to come to Christ.

In fact, the church was founded when Paul went into the Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica and proclaimed Jesus to be their Messiah..

So it cost these people much to come to Christ, but they had done well as a church..

And we have learned much about them and from them as we have moved through these 2 letters..

But now as Paul finishes up his second letter to them, he has some instruction for them.

In fact, this passage will be Paul's harshest tone in either letter..

So let's read it and then we will begin to examine what God is saying to the Thessalonians and to us through it..

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you [f]keep away from every brother who [g]leads an [h]unruly life and not according to the tradition which [i]you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to [j]follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat [k]anyone's bread [l]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; 9 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 [m]follow our example. 10 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. 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. 14 If anyone does not obey our [n]instruction [o]in this letter, take special note of that person [p]and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but [q]admonish him as a brother. 16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every [r]circumstance. The Lord be with you all!

***17 [s]I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.***

As Paul wraps up his 2nd letter to this church, he ends with an admonition.

And the clear intention of this ending is to correct the laziness of some in the Thessalonians church.

Simply put, some in the Thessalonians church weren't working even though they were capable of working.

Now, the obvious question is why weren't able-bodied believers not working?

And to be clear, the text doesn't tell us.

Many commentators take the view that maybe all the end of the world talk in the church there had caused people to say what's the use?

In fact, I think that is quite possible for people who think that they are in the tribulation, which is what this church had been fooled into thinking..

Personally, I think may be the reason for their refusal to work.

Some in Thessalonica may have been saying that evangelism is more important than work since the return of Jesus seems imminent...

However, there are other possible explanations as well.

Some have suggested that leaving the synagogue resulted in these believers losing their livelihood, (which is highly likely)..

Therefore, they refused to work to prove that God could take care of them..

Which is also true but not a reason to refuse to work..

And it also possible that some in the church were just flat out lazy...

Clearly, that is a cause of many people not working, and that may have been the case in Thessalonica.

Ultimately, we don't know the cause and Paul doesn't tell us here.

And the reason for that is that it really doesn't matter.

In other words, there is no valid excuse for sin.



The only remedy is to repent of it.

So the Lord sets out through the pen of Paul to push these people to repent of their refusal to work..

And he does that by giving the Thessalonians and us 4 Reasons or Motivations to work..

And the first one of those, we find in verse 6..

## **I. Work for the Sake of Fellowship (6)**

Let's read verse 6 again..

***6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you [f]keep away from every brother who [g]leads an [h]unruly life and not according to the tradition which [i]you received from us.***

We live in such a world of inclusion.

We want everyone to feel like they belong.

No one today is an outcast and to call someone sinful will be the world's greatest wrath.

Sadly, the church has adopted the same mentality.

Here is a picture of services this past Sunday at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington DC.

They had PRIDE Sunday which was a celebration of homosexuality within the church.

Now clearly, this isn't a church, but it is a vivid of a church that feels the necessity to include everyone.

Yet, verses like 2 Thessalonians 3:6 is a command from God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that the church is to keep away from every brother who leads a life contrary to Scripture.

Now the context of this passage is not some really heinous sin.

The context of this passage is to stay away from believers who refuse to work.

We aren't talking about what we often think of as these great sins like homosexuality or adultery or murderers.

In other words, the Lord doesn't want us to fellowship with self-professed believers who are able to work but refuse to work..

But before I move to that idea, let me say this.

If God commands the church to stay away from the lazy Christian, surely staying away from Christians living in adultery would be expected.

Surely staying away from Christians who regularly engage in slander and gossip would be expected.

And surely staying away from Christians who are in homosexual relationships would be expected..

Now that shocks some in the church today.

In fact, I get crazy looks when I point believers to verse like this today.

You mean I can't fellowship with folks who call themselves Christians but live in sin?

Yes, that is what the Bible says despite your shock or refusal.

And in fact, this isn't the only verse that says that.

Time and time again, the Bible calls for believers to distance themselves from other believers who live lifestyles of sin.

Yet, so many so-called Christians and churches regularly disobey this principle in the name of inclusion.

I can tell you this.

The church is not called to be a broad road.

The church is to called to be the narrow gate.

Now, this is not to say that we don't welcome everyone in the name of Christ.

WE should do that.

We must do that.

But this does say that people who call themselves Christians but refuse to repent of their lives of sin must be shunned by the church.

Matthew 18 says to confront a brother or sister in sin.

If they refuse to repent, take two witnesses.

If they refuse to repent, tell it to the church so that more people can go and call them to repentance.

But if they refuse to listen to the church, they must be removed from the fellowship of the church.

Yet, no one obeys Matthew 18.

No one obeys the principle of 2 Thessalonians 3:6..

And what we end up with is a church full of people who call themselves Christians but live like the devil.

And the end result of that is world that is confused and puzzled by what a real believer looks like.

Let me also add that this is a growing problem in the church today.

In fact, it is out of control.

But the Bible is crystal clear that the church is not a big tent.

It is a tiny hut of those who repent and trust Christ and bear fruit of that repentance..

Now the issue at hand in Thessalonica was not a whole hosts of sins.

The issue at hand as I have said before were able bodies believers who were refusing to work.

Now before we go any farther, let's be clear.

Not everyone is able to work.

Some are too young.

Some are too old.

Some have mental and physical limitations.

And we realize that the church should care for believers who are unable to work.

Widows and orphans are two groups that fit into the non-working category very frequently.

And there are others who can't work.

Now, let's also be clear as well..

Some people say they can't work for physical or mental reasons, but they are simply lying.

Those cases require much care and examination but they are becoming very frequent in the church these days..

However, the text is aimed at the one who is capable of working but refusing to do it..

So why should the able-bodied believer go to work?

Simply put, they want to avoid being abandoned by the church.

Though no believer or church should seek to keep away from other believers, there comes a time when that may be necessary.

And that necessary time is when other believers refuse to obey the commands of Scripture.

Now look, we are so influenced by the sinful world around us that some would rather keep the sinner in the church than have to deal with it..

Yet, there is no option according to verse 6..

In fact, notice the first few words of the verse...

The church is commanded by God in the name of Christ to keep away from these people.

Simply put, a believer living in unrepentant sin is not a matter to be taken lightly.

Believers like this must be confronted with their sin until they repent or else they will be removed from fellowship.

God takes the purity of his church seriously.

Jesus wants his bride the church to be holy.

And that means that Christians who refuse to turn from the blackness of sin must be removed from the bride of Christ.

Now as always, the point of disfellowship is to encourage repentance.

And if repentance is evident, restoration must occur.

However in Thessalonica, some believers had not responded to the call to repent of their laziness.



In fact, Paul had already attempted to correct some of these lazy believers in his first letter to them..

1 Thess 4:10-12..

***But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,  
11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life  
and attend to your own business and work with  
your hands, just as we commanded you, 12 so that  
you will [i]behave properly toward outsiders and  
[j]not be in any need.***

In other words, Paul has allowed some time for the lazy people to repent..

But now after the first letter, there is still a refusal to work on the part of some believers in the church there that Paul must move to the final step of commanding the church to break fellowship with them.

And look this is sad and tragic when it happens, but it is necessary and commended by the Lord.

Needless to say, a believer should work so that he remains in fellowship with the church that he loves.

A second reason or motivation to work is found in verses 7-9..

## **II. Work for the Sake of Example (7-9)**

Let's look at verse 7..

***7 For you yourselves know how you ought to [j]follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat [k]anyone's bread [l]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; 9 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 [m]follow our example.***

Paul was essentially a traveling preacher.

yas

He went from town to town sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But we know from the book of Acts that Paul was also a tent maker and worker of leather.

In other words, Paul had a skill that he could use to provide an income as he traveled from town to town.

Now in some settings, Paul simply lived off the church's generosity to him as an apostle of Christ.

He would eat their food and receive their lodging and other necessities as gifts of the Lord.

But in other places he preached, he would also refrain from receiving the church's generosity.

Now, we aren't always clear on why that happened.

It is possible and likely that some churches were more financially able to help Paul and other weren't.

We simply don't know.

But we do know this.

Paul wasn't a lazy pastor and teacher.

He worked hard to preach and he worked at his craft.

Look at verses 8..

Paul says that he worked night and day in Thessalonica..

And he did that there for a couple reasons.

First, he worked hard in Thessalonica to set an example for them.

You see, there was teaching among some Jews that manual labor was a curse from the Lord.

In the eyes of some Jews, the highest form of service to God was total devotion to Him.

Some saw priests and scribes and Pharisees and having noble, godly professions, while laborers were often looked down upon in Judaism.

And that may have been the case in the Thessalonian synagogue.

So Paul didn't want to further that erroneous teaching by refusing to work, so he worked as both a teacher and tent maker in Thessalonica to set an example.

And the example is this.

Christians work.

We are not idle people.

But a second reason that Paul worked in Thessalonica was to avoid being a burden to the church..

Look at verse 7 and 8 again...

***7 For you yourselves know how you ought to [j]follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat [k]anyone's bread [l]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;***

In other words, Paul worked so that the church could do more with their limited resources..

Churches in this era were poor and often needy.

Budgets were tight and finances were limited.

There wasn't money collected and set aside for pastors and teachers and support staff.

So Paul worked in order to avoid being a burden to the church.

Sadly, that is not the case today.

We most certainly see the laziness of unbelievers.

We watch them each plenty of bread without paying for it.

But even more shocking than that is the number of professing believers who are also lazy and refuse to work.

Look, the verses are crystal clear.

Able bodied believers need to work.

Not only is work an example to the world of what it means to be saved, work also removes the temptation to unnecessarily rely on others for financial support.

In the end, Paul worked in Thessalonica because it was the best course of action.

Verse 9 makes it clear that he could have asked for financial support.

In fact, it was a God-given right to be supported as an apostle.

However, he could work and there was opportunity for work.

So he worked to provide for his needs and to provide an example for the church there.

Now, we will finish this up next week with two more motivation to work..

But let offer a couple principles for us before we leave...

## **Conclusion**

### ***#1 - We must protect the purity of the church.***

If perpetual laziness is a reason to break fellowship with professing believers, all unrepentant sin should require the same.

The command to keep away from professing believers who refuse to repent is ignored as much as any command in Scripture.

Sadly, churches become safe havens for people who call themselves Christians but live in sin.

I often wonder how much we truly love Christ when we let his church be filled with people who refuse to repent while claiming allegiance to Him?

Church, you are the guardians of the Lord's church.

You are tasked with the enormous responsibility of keeping the bride of Christ pure.

Though we are patient and kind and allow time for repentance and restoration, we cannot stick our heads in the sand and hope unrepentant sin magically disappears.

May God give us courage to lovingly confront self-professed Christians who live in perpetual sin.

Whether that is a lazy able bodied man or a self-professed lesbian.

The purity of the Lord's church is greater than someone's hurt feelings.

May we never offend Christ by trying to avoid offending others.

***#2 - We must set an example of work.***

Christians work.

That is our great privilege.

We are called to rule and subdue the earth, and that calling hasn't been changed.

Work is how we accomplish that, and that should bring us great joy in life.

My mission is not to get out of work, but to work for God's glory in whatever I am called to do.

Whether that is preached the gospel or clean the toilet.

Both actions bless my neighbor and both actions please my Lord.



May we be an example of hard working people in a very lazy world.

God's image is stamped on our lives.

And he worked 6 days of a 7 day week.

May we follow his example.

Let us pray.

III. Work for the Sake of Food (10)

IV. Work for the Sake of Family (11-18)