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II Thessalonians 3:6-13

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

7. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,

8. 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;

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 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.”

In this passage we have a statement of the Biblical work ethic. Verse 10 bluntly states it this way: “If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.” I remember first memorizing this instruction out of the Old King James: “If a man will not work, neither should he eat.” Proverbs 16:26 anticipates this ethic with the statement: “A worker’s appetite works for him, for his hunger urges him on.”

Now this, of course, is the exact opposite of worldly wisdom and current government policy in our country. Everyday the grocery stores in our community accept food stamps from able-bodied men and women. For the world this is to be expected. The people of this world will always sell-out to the world. And we Christians are not to fret about this, it only leads to our falling short.

But for those who bear the name of Christ, we must live by faith; that is in the obedience to the word of Christ. In today’s passage, Paul and his companions were an example and model for the church to follow. Paul states, “We did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so we would not be a burden to any of you; 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.” II Thessalonians 3:7-9

Paul wrote to these brethren because he heard “that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.” To those who were messing around and not working Paul gives the following instruction: “Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.” II Thessalonians 3:12

To those Christians who were working and following Paul’s work (example) ethic, he gives the following command: “You keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.” II Thessalonians 3:6 In a very real sense this is a type of disfellowship; we are to distance ourselves from any brother or sister who refuses to work for a living. And especially those who expect a handout!

This, of course, regards those who are capable of working, but are not willing to do so. Personally, I salute those who endure hardship and overcome disabilities in order to work to provide for themselves, and especially those who go further to support the work of Christ as they can. These folks are my heroes, and I hope they are yours also.