

## 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 — Work As Worship — Part 1

**November 3, 2024**

Good morning. As a church, we are studying our way through 2 Thessalonians. This morning, we return to 2 Thessalonians 3. Last week, we studied the first five verses of the chapter. In those verses, Paul talked about practical ways the Thessalonians could help him as their pastor. 1. They could pray for him as he shares the gospel. 2. He was not able to be with him. He wanted them to remember that while he wasn't with them, God was always faithful to them. He would strengthen them for the difficulties they faced and protect them from the attacks of Satan. 3. They could be of great help to him by obeying the commands of God he gave. We will learn more about one of those commands this morning. 4. They could also help him by growing in their understanding of how much God loves them and how faithful Jesus will always be to them.

While those verses were about how the Thessalonians could help pastor Paul, I hope you were able to apply some of that this week and you could help me. I hope you were able to pray for me before this morning. The power of a pastor's preaching and teaching is usually directly related to the prayer of his people for his preaching. I need your prayers if anything of spiritual effectiveness occurs through our Sunday teaching. On Wednesday night, pastor Brayden needs your prayers to teach the Bible to our students effectively. If you are a high school student this morning, pray for pastor Brayden before he teaches on Wednesday. Your prayers will make a difference! They will soften hard hearts against Jesus and make them receptive to Jesus.

This morning, we start the second half of the practical teaching in chapter 3, verses 6 to 15. This section is interesting because it deals with the subject of work. It talks about work as a Christian duty, a Christian responsibility, and one of the ways we worship.

Before we look at the text, I want to take the first half of our study to look at the overall topic of work in the Bible to see what it says about it. We will spend most of our lives at work, so this discussion is important.

### **What do I think about my work?**

I don't know what you think about your work or school. Most of us think about work as a drudgery. We do it because we have to do it. It pays the bills. I owe. I owe. I owe. So, off to work I go. I go. I go. We look at work as a necessary evil in life. This is especially true regarding domestic work, such as cleaning, cooking, vacuuming, or doing the laundry. It just has to be done.

While some view work as drudgery, others go the opposite way, and work is a way they build their egos. It is a source of pride because they get larger paychecks than others. They accomplish more than others. They hold a position over others. Their success at work encourages them to look down on others at work.

There are a lot of ways we can look at work. Eventually someone will say their work is the way they serve God. That is usually not the first thing people say. The problem is that even if Christians mouth those words, their actions don't affirm them. When the hours get long at work, we become bitter and gripe about our boss or company. When the dishes stack up in the sink or when the dinner burns on the stove, we whine about all the kitchen work we do that nobody

appreciates. Even if we say our work is a way to serve God, our attitudes don't affirm it.

Yet, despite what most of us think or feel about our work, work is one of the most honorable and practical ways each of us can bring glory to God through our lives. The quality of our work, the way we work, and our attitude at work are among the most practical ways we worship God.

### How did sin impact work?

Some people think work came about because of sin. That is not true. Work existed before sin existed. Let me show you. Sin entered the world in Genesis 3. Look what we read in Genesis 2.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Genesis 2:15 (ESV)

Before sin was in the world, Adam had a job. He was a farmer. He was working in the garden and keeping the garden. Adam cared for the land. There was work involved.

Look what happened when sin came into the world in Genesis 3.

And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; Genesis 3:17 (ESV)

When sin came into the world, it made work painful. It made work difficult. Instead of the work being rewarding and enjoyable, now the land fought against a harvest. Thorns and thistles and weeds fought against Adam and Eve. Work is still a good thing. It is still something we do to bring honor to God. It is still practical worship, but because of sin, it is hard. It involves pain. Work has always been, and will be a good and rewarding thing, but sin made work a painful thing.

## What does the Bible say about those who avoid work?

Sin in the world didn't just make work painful. It made people lazy. Instead of pursuing work, sin leads people to avoid work. The Bible has a lot to say about laziness, and none of it is good. Some of my favorites come from the book of Proverbs. Remember that proverbs are principles about the way life usually works. They are not promises that guarantee the way life will always work. Check out some of these principles on laziness.

A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. Proverbs 10:4 (ESV)

If you are diligent, that means you work hard over a long period of time in the same direction, you will usually do well. If we avoid work and don't pursue work, over time, we will end up in poverty. That is the way life works.

The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied. Proverbs 13:4 (ESV)

Some people are all talk and no action. They know they should go back to school so they can get a higher-paying job. They talk about it all the time, but they never do the work of making it happen. It is rooted in laziness. Some people talk about going out independently and starting their own business. They know the payoff of working for themselves instead of someone else would be good, but they also know starting a company is hard. There will be lean years. They talk about starting their own business all the time, but they never do anything about it because it takes too much work. They want to avoid work rather than pursue it.

A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man. Proverbs 24:33–34 (ESV)

This is a great reminder that when you get out of bed matters. If you are always looking to rest and avoid work, it won't take long before poverty catches up to you. The only way to stay ahead of it is to work.

### **How has the church historically viewed work?**

One thing I found fascinating is the way Christians viewed work for the last 2,000 years. Despite the Bible teaching us about the value of work and the importance of how we work, for a good portion of the last 2,000 years, Christians had a low view of ordinary work.

#### **The Jews saw ordinary work as unimportant.**

To understand how early Christians viewed work, we must return to the Jews. The Jews viewed work as a secular thing, not a sacred thing. It was a necessary evil, not a sacred duty. They viewed common work as of little value, which was done by second-class people. They viewed religious work as superior, and it was done by first-class people. A great illustration of this comes from the Talmud. The Talmud was a collection of rabbinical teachings around the 5th century. In the Talmud, it has a prayer Jewish scribes were to pray.

Jewish scribes were supported by the community to devote their entire life to studying the Bible. They were involved in religious work. Look at this crazy prayer they were instructed to pray.

*"I thank Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou hast given me my lot with those who sit in the house of learning and not with those who sit at the street corners. For I am early to work and they are early to work. I am early to work on the words of the Law, and they are early to work on things of no importance. I weary myself and they weary themselves. I weary myself and profit thereby, and they weary themselves to no profit. I run and they run. I run toward the life of the age to come and they run toward the pit," — Prayer in the Talmud*

What a prideful group! That is not a good view of work. The idea that those who spend their entire lives studying the Old Testament are somehow better than other people is false, yet this view pervaded Judaism. All we need to do to prove that is to have the lady who made their dinner go on strike, and they would learn to value ordinary work in a hurry! This view that sacred work is superior to ordinary work found its way into the early church and persisted for many years.

**The medieval church saw ordinary work as second-class.**

If you visit Europe or other parts of the ancient world, you will find churches and monasteries. The idea came from the Jewish scribes that it was good to avoid regular work and be a monk or a nun to devote yourself purely to religious work and avoid common work because it was superior.

Eusebius, an early church father from the fourth century, promoted this. He said Christians who served God alone were pursuing a first-class Christian life, while those involved in common employment were pursuing a second-class Christian life. If you want to be a first-class Christian, you need to devote yourself to serving God alone. Let me quote him to you.

“There are two ways of life given by the law of Christ to His church. One is above nature and beyond common human living, holy and permanently separate from the common customary life of man. It devotes itself to the service of God alone. Such is the perfect form of the Christian life,” — Eusebius

This kind of teaching led to monks, monasteries, and nuns. These people spend their days contemplating religious things, trying to build their humility, trying to study the Bible, and being of little practical use to society, like the Jewish scribes before them had done.

This idea of a priestly first-class Christian who devotes himself to religious work being superior to second-class Christians who are involved in ordinary work is still seen in the Catholic Church today with priests and nuns.

**The Reformation helped people see the value of all work.**

When Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other reformers came along, they attacked this idea. Luther said there is no difference before God between one who preaches the word of God and one who washes dishes. The work of both can be equally pleasing to God. There is no such thing as a superior sacred duty that is better than working in our secular duties.

For example, someone can teach the Bible and do it to build their ego. In so doing, they don't bring much glory to God. Someone can wash dishes and do their job well, and with a good attitude, and in doing they bring much glory to God. Our course, if someone teaches the Bible, that is a good thing that we should value. We need that. But we bring glory to God in all of our work by the way we do our work and the attitude we have when we work.

It is important to remember that Jesus was a teacher for three years, but he was a carpenter for 20 years. Our savior was involved in ordinary work before he was involved in spiritual work. I am sure he did his ordinary work well. I am sure that even when things were difficult, he had a good attitude. I am sure he looked at his job as a way to serve others. He wouldn't make and sell a table if he weren't confident that it was the best table he could make. That is the way Jesus would work.

## What does the Bible teach about the importance of work?

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Ephesians 6:5–8 (ESV)

Let's deal with the mysterious word bondservants. Bondservants is simply another way of saying employees. How do Christian employees conduct themselves at work? First, they obey their bosses. Christian students respect and obey their teachers. As Christians, we don't just work for eye service as people-pleasers, but we do the will of God from the heart. Someone who works for eye service only works hard when the boss is looking.

Years ago, my oldest son worked in concrete while in high school. He came home shocked at how hard people worked when the boss was on the job site and how lazy they were when the boss was off the job site. People were only working for eye-service. They were people-pleasers. That is not the way the Christian works.

Paul says we render service with good will toward the Lord and not toward man. Whatever we do, we do it as if we were giving our product or our work to Jesus. If the way we work or the quality of our work is not what we want to give to Jesus, we need to rethink our attitude or product.

What does this mean to me personally? Some people have asked me why I put an outline in the bulletin with so many Bible verses. Why do you make so many slides? Why do you write life group questions? Why do you do so much work? So that you know, I am not doing it for you. I am doing it for Jesus. I could



give less than my best to you, and most people wouldn't notice a difference. The problem is Jesus would not if I am not doing my best. Jesus is the best. He deserves my best.

A few years ago, I learned that whatever I do, I need to do it for an audience of one. That person is Jesus. It doesn't matter what you think; it matters what Jesus thinks. If Jesus isn't pleased by my work, it doesn't matter if other people like my work.

This was driven home to me a few years ago. Do you remember the series we did on the Gospel of Mark? That was a long series. The last message in the series was especially difficult. The last passage in Mark is tough to preach. I worked hard for it for Sunday. I did a ton of work. It was January, and we were hit by a snowstorm. Hardly anyone showed up. That morning, my heart began to sink. Why did I work so hard? I knew we might be hit with a snowstorm. For a moment, I thought I should have bunted on the sermon. I should have saved my time and given a little devotional thought instead of doing so much research and preparation. Then it hit me. If I did that, Jesus would not have been happy. What mattered was that I did my best to honor Jesus. It didn't matter how many were in the room. As long as Jesus was pleased because I did my best. That is what mattered.

What is not just true for me, it is true for all of us. If you are in school, don't skate by; study your hardest. That honors Jesus. If you are in football, do your best in the game and on the field, preparing for the game during the week. Jesus is the best. He deserves our best.

I love what Paul says in Ephesians 6:8.

knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Ephesians 6:8 (ESV)

If you are working hard at work, your boss may not notice you or reward you, but Jesus notices, and he promises to reward you. Jesus may reward us for the way we do our work in this life. If not, he will surely reward us for the way we do our work in the future. Jesus will always reward us for the good work we do.

So all our work is sacred in the sense that we do it for an audience of one. We work as if we are working for Jesus. It doesn't matter if we are scrubbing dishes, mashing potatoes, taking care of children at home, cooking a meal for your family, driving a truck, serving as a policeman, working as a nurse, or developing a multimillion-dollar strategy for your company to save them money. Whatever we do, we do it to serve the Lord. The way we work is the practical worship of our work.

The problem is that the Thessalonians didn't get this. In that church, there were a bunch of people who didn't want to work. They were lazy. They avoided work. They completely misunderstood that we are created to work.

### **Why were some Thessalonians avoiding work?**

Paul doesn't tell us why. He just tells us they avoided work. There are several possible reasons why they might have avoided work.

#### **1. They might have avoided work because of a Jewish scribal background.**

Earlier, we learned the Jewish scribes devoted themselves to studying the Bible. They were paid by the community to do nothing but Bible study. It is possible some of the new Christians in the church were former Jewish

scribes. They expected people to pay them to be professional Christians like they were paid to be professional Jews. Paul was not buying it.

2. **They might have avoided work because of a Greco-Roman background.**

If you studied Greece and Rome in high school or college, you know the Greco-Roman culture disdained manual labor. In Rome, there were more slaves in the city than there were free men in the city. The slaves did all the work while the freemen did all the contemplation and talking. That might have been what influenced this church. Roman freeman in the church might be trying to avoid getting their hands dirty with ordinary work.

3. **They might have avoided work because they thought the return of**

**Christ was imminent.** Some scholars think they avoided work because they thought Christ would return anytime. What is the point of work if we should evangelize to save people before Jesus returns and it is too late? Paul addressed the wrongheadedness of this end-times view in the last chapter. Don't let your end-times theology keep you from becoming unproductive at work.

4. **They might have avoided work simply because they were lazy.** Proverbs

talked about laziness being a common problem in all of us. Maybe these folks were especially lazy. I don't know.

Let's read the text and find out what was happening.

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. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 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. It was not because we do not

have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. 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. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15 (ESV)

In these verses, Paul lays out six incentives for idle people to go to work.

This morning, we will cover only the first two. We will cover the remaining four next week.

### **Why was Paul heavy-handed in this letter?**

As we read this, you might have sensed a heavy-handedness in Paul's words on this topic. This is because this is the third time he has talked to them about the same thing. This is the third time, he told the loafers in the group they need to get a job. They refused to listen

Look with me at his first letter.

and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one. 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12 (ESV)

In his first letter to them, he talked about this issue. When he was with them, he told these folks they needed to get a job. He said to them, "As we instructed you." He addressed the need for them to get a job a second time in his first letter. Now, he is talking about it a third time in his second letter.

The first time he talked about this, it was a matter of instruction. The second time, it was a matter of correction. The third time is a matter of church discipline.

Why were they avoiding work? I don't know, but I suspect they were like panhandlers. They were making more money living off handouts from people than they were working for people. This took away their incentive to work. They made more money when they didn't work. Paul's response to this was, "I don't care! Get a job." Living off other people is a violation of what we were created to do, which is to work, serve, and add value to the lives of other people.

Paul is getting heavy-handed because this is the third time he has talked about this, and they were ignoring him!

Another reason this is important is because they were not walking properly toward outsiders. The lazy Christians in the church were creating a poor reputation in the community for the rest of the church. Christians were giving Christians a reputation for being lazy leeches. Christians should have a reputation for giving to others, not taking from others.

Secondly, Christians should be dependent on no one. If they weren't working and they were still eating, somebody was paying for their food and care. They were leeching off of somebody. Other people were forced to pay for them. That isn't what should be taking place.

I should mention that Paul is not here talking about people who would work if they could but don't have the physical ability to work. He is not talking about people who are ill. He is not talking about people who are elderly or those looking for a job who can't find a job. As Christians, we take care of those people. That is when benevolence is important. He is talking about people who could work but for whatever reason, they simply chose not to work. As I said earlier,

maybe they made more money by living on handouts than working Even if that was the case, Paul told them to get a job and provide for themselves anyway!

### **What are the consequences of avoiding work?**

**Those who refuse to work are in danger of being disfellowshipped.**

**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. 2 Thessalonians 3:6 (ESV)**

Paul instructed the church on how to handle these people. They were to separate themselves from them. This is not just cutting off their benevolence but refusing to spend time with them. Some of them may think they are noble because they spent time studying the Bible instead of providing for the needs of themselves and their family. Paul said, "That is not acceptable." Keep away from these folks. .No more communion. No more life group. No more after-church football games. Cut them off. The Greek term for this means to pull down your sails. Instead of extending your sails out to them, pull down the sails in and withdraw from them.

Notice Paul said that he commanded them to do this. The Greek word for *command* is a military term. It is an order. This command doesn't just come from Paul. It comes from our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said that he was standing on the authority of Jesus. In the name of Jesus, by the authority of Jesus, I give you a military command to be obeyed. Cut yourself off from these people.

Remember why Paul was so strong about this.

1. This is the third time he addressed the issue. They were not listening.
2. It was giving a bad reputation to church of Jesus.

3. It was getting infectious. When people are around lazy people who make more money living on handouts than working, it incentivizes them also to be lazy and live on handouts instead of working.

Look how strongly Paul felt about this.

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV)

This is church discipline in action. Why did Paul follow this method of church discipline? Jesus told us how to deal with issues of church discipline or conflict with other people in Matthew 18. There are four steps Jesus gave.

#### **1. Approach a person privately.**

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” Matthew 18:15 (ESV)

If someone sins against you, or you have a disagreement with someone, or you have a concern with someone, you talk to the person privately, one-on-one. You don't talk to all your friends before you talk to them. That is gossip. You love them, so you talk directly to them. Paul did this with the lazy folks in Thessalonica when planting the church. He talked to them about getting a job.

#### **2. Approach the person with a friend(s).**

But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. Matthew 18:16 (ESV)

If that doesn't work, you take with you one or two friends. The purpose of the friends is not for them to stick up for you. It is not for you to gang up on the other person with them. The purpose of the Christian friend is to be an objective mediator between you. Sometimes, the reason we cannot iron things out in a conflict is because we are too close to the situation. We are caught up in the

emotions of the situation. We do not bring a friend with us to join together in beating up a person but to try to mediate between us and the other person to resolve the issue.

### **3. Tell it to the church.**

**If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church... Matthew 18:17 (ESV)**

This is the point Paul was at with the lazy folks in his second letter. This issue of laziness was already addressed twice, and I am sure it was addressed by others besides Paul, yet the lazy individuals refused to listen. Paul brought the issue to the church. This is not a matter of my opinion versus your opinion. That part is over. Everyone in leadership agrees that those who refuse to work have the wrong answer. They just won't listen. To help them listen, the entire church cuts them off, so they get the message.

When you cut them off, it doesn't say you no longer love them. You still love and care about them, but you love them enough to cut them off so they get the message that they need to change. There is a final step.

### **4. Treat him as an outsider.**

**...And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Matthew 18:17 (ESV)**

The indolent folks in Thessalonica were not there yet, but this option was not off the table. They could be permanently cut off from the church.

Why is this such a big issue? God commanded us to work. It keeps people from being busybodies and spending time posting on social media. Frankly, I don't know how many people find time to put as much stuff on social media as they do. For most of us, work takes too much time. Our job is one of the



important ways we bring glory to God. Our work is one of the important ways we worship God in our lives. Our work is one of the ways we meet the needs of others around us and add value to society.

There is no such thing as a secular job. Church work is not better than ordinary work. Laziness is such a serious issue that those who refuse to work are in danger of being disfellowshipped from the church.

**Those who refuse to work provide the wrong example.**

For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 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. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. 2 Thessalonians 3:7–9 (ESV)

The key word in these verses is the word example. Paul told them that when he was with them he worked hard to give them an example to follow. You need to follow my example when it comes to work, not follow the example of the lazy people who refuse to work. When Paul told them to imitate us, the word imitate in Greek is the word *mimastos*. From it we get the English word mimic.

When Paul was with them, he realized the people who avoided work in Thessalonica were a serious problem because others were following their example. Their laziness was breeding more laziness. He went the other way. He worked hard while with them to be an example for them. He didn't do easy work, but he performed hard work. He worked with leather. He made tents by hand.

Remember Paul's identity. He was a highly educated man. He was brilliant. He was an apostle. He had seen the resurrected Jesus. If anybody didn't need to work for a living, it would be Paul, Yet he chose to work. He worked hard

to show them that even highly educated men like him engage in manual labor. He did not want people to say, “I want to be like Paul. All he does all day is talk for a living. He doesn’t work for a living.”

When Paul was with them, he said he didn’t eat anyone’s bread without paying for it.

...nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it,... 2 Thessalonians 3:8 (ESV)

In Acts 17:7, we see Paul, Silas, and Timothy stayed at Jason’s house. Jason was a wealthy man. While Jason provided them with a room to stay, they worked to provide their own food.

...but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. 2 Thessalonians 3:8 (ESV)

Paul made tents at night and sold them during the day. He fit sharing the gospel in around ordinary work. He toiled night and day. The idea of the word *toil* is that he worked to the point of exhaustion. He didn’t want to be a burden to anyone.

It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. 2 Thessalonians 3:9 (ESV)

The reason he did this was not that he didn’t have the right to be paid as an apostle, but he was concerned about the example he set for others. As a leader, people would look at his example. People would follow his example. If they were already avoiding manual labor, if Paul did not engage in manual labor, they would avoid it, too.

These verses remind us of the power of our example, especially when it comes to our work ethic. Over lunch, I usually go to a fitness class at the YMCA.

There are a number of us in the class sweating off the pounds. A few weeks ago, I went to class to find I was the only one in class. I tried to follow the workout, but I was completely motivated when working by myself in a room. I was surprised at how much influence people working out hard around me had on me. The same process was at work in Thessalonica. The idle folks in the church were influencing others to avoid work by their example, so Paul countered that by influencing people to engage in hard work by his example.

There is one more thing we should cover.

**If Paul was a pastor without pay, should app pastors be without pay?**

In verse 8, Paul said he had the right to receive support. He was simply choosing not to use that right. Many times, he received support from churches. That support allowed him to refrain from work to focus on sharing the gospel instead of working. In two churches in particular, Thessalonica and Corinth, he didn't use that right. He worked in manual labor. He did this to give them an example to follow. In those two churches, there were people who were sponging off the generosity of others. To turn the tide, he used the power of his example and went to work.

Look what the Bible says about supporting pastors.

**Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 1 Timothy 5:17 (ESV)**

**Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Galatians 6:6 (ESV)**

The most extensive discussion of this is in 1 Corinthians. Remember Corinth was a place where he chose to work because there were too many who were lazy and avoided work.

...or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? 1 Corinthians 9:6–7 (ESV)

Do I not have a right to refrain from working for a living as I share the gospel? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Nobody. The government pays them. Who plants a vineyard or grows a garden and does not eat its fruit? Nobody. Who cares for a flock yet gets no milk from the animals? Nobody.

For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? 1 Corinthians 9:9–11 (ESV)

The Old Testament law even says not to muzzle an ox when it is threshing out the grain. As the ox is working on the grain, it should be able to enjoy some of the grain that is the fruit of its labor. That was not written for oxen but for us. The same is true spiritually. It is appropriate for those who serve in the church to get their living from the church. This is also how it worked in the Old Testament for the priests. Those who served as priests were given income for their jobs.

In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:14 (ESV)

It is appropriate to pay your pastors. But in the case of the Corinthians and the Thessalonians, who were naturally disinclined to work. Paul went to work. He

didn't want to be accused of speaking about Jesus to avoid work, so engaged in manual labor and went to work.

## Conclusion

Why do we work hard?

1. **We work hard because our work is practical worship.** The quality of our work, the way we work, and our attitude when we work are all acts of worship to God who calls us to work. We work as if we are working for Jesus, not for men.
2. **We work hard because those who refuse to work are in danger of being disciplined by the church and even disfellowship from the church.**
3. **We work hard because avoiding work provides a bad example for others to follow.** Laziness is contagious. Even though Paul had a right to be supported, sometimes he chose to work to encourage people to work by giving them an example to follow.



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