



2 THESSALONIANS

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

November 3, 2024

1. What do I think about my work?

2. How did sin impact work?

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

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)

3. What does the Bible say about those who avoid work?

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

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

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)

4. How has the church historically viewed work?

A. The Jews saw ordinary work as unimportant.

“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

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

“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

C. The reformation helped people see the value of all work.

If you ask an insignificant maid-servant why she scours a dish or milks the cow, she can say: I know that the thing I do pleases God,...God does not look at the insignificance of the acts but at the heart that serves Him in such little things.
— Luther

What you do in your house is worth as much as if you did it up in heaven for our Lord God. — Luther

5. 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)

6. Why were some of the Thessalonians avoiding work?

- A. They might be avoiding work because of a Jewish scribal background.
- B. They might be avoiding work because of a Greco-Roman background.
- C. They might be avoiding work because they thought Christ was about to return.
- D. They might be avoiding work because they were lazy.

7. Why was Paul heavy-handed in this 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)

- A. This was the third time he instructed them on this.
- B. They were giving Christians a bad reputation in the community.
- C. They were an economic drain on other people.

8. What are the consequences of avoiding work?

A. 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)

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)

How should we handle interpersonal conflict or church discipline?

i. 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)

ii. Approach a person with a wise Christian 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)

iii. Tell it to the church.

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

iv. 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)

B. Those who refuse to work provide a bad example that others will follow.

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)

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

...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)

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)

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

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)

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)

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)

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)

9. Conclusion.

Why should we work?

1. **The Danger of Disfellowship.** Work is such an important part of life that those who refuse to work are in danger of being disfellowshipped from the church.
2. **The Power Of Our Example.** The example of our work will encourage others to work. Both laziness and diligence are contagious.

Life Group Questions

1. Since work is an act of practical worship, how should that truth change the quality of my work and my attitude when I work?
2. **Read Ephesians 6:5-8.** What does this verse teach us about work? What is one thing I can apply from it to bring more glory to God in my work?
3. **Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.** Focus on v. 6. Why was Paul so heavy-handed toward the Thessalonians? What does this teach us about the importance of work in our Christian life?
4. **Read 1 Thessalonians 3:7-9.** Why did Paul work with his hands in manual labor instead of exercising his rights to be supported as an apostle in Thessalonica and Corinth? What does this teach us about the importance of our example on the job and at home?
5. **Read Matthew 18:15-17.** What are the four steps in these verses that tell us how to handle conflict? What happens if we ignore these steps, jump over these steps, or avoid carrying out the steps?