

## Message #11

## II Thessalonians 3:6-12

When it comes to the return of the Lord, there are some fanatics who think that they should just hide out in some commune type of existence and do nothing. Drift around from place to place and hit people up for money. Collect their welfare checks every month and sit around doing nothing and accomplishing nothing. Well, that philosophy does not come from the Bible.

When Jesus Christ returns, if that has been our thinking, we are going to be ashamed because this kind of thinking is in direct violation of a Grace Age command of God. As we wait for the Rapture, God wants His people alert, active and working.

**Now Paul begins verse 6 by saying “we command” (παράγγελλομεν). This verb is present tense meaning that this is a continual command for the Grace Age.** This is to be viewed as a direct military order coming from God for those in the Grace Age. This specifically is a command aimed at the “brothers,” which refers to believers of the Grace Age.

Notice this command is made “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” So the name of Jesus Christ is at stake in our lives and in the life of the church. So the reason why we must be willing to follow these specific admonitions is that they are commands that come from the Lord Jesus Christ and following them is a display of His precious name. He is God (Lord); He is Savior (Jesus) and He is the Messiah (Christ). We must obey these commands because His name is on the line.

Now whenever something is said to be a command, it is very serious. The problem was that some people who were being saved decided just to quit work and quit society and responsibility. There are believers who think they don't have any responsibility to be a good citizen to work hard at their job or to pay their bills or their taxes. So when Paul writes these verses, he wants to stop that kind of thinking.

**BECAUSE OF THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT GOD'S PEOPLE BE DISCIPLINED HARD WORKERS AT WHAT THEY DO AND NOT A BUNCH OF NON-WORKING MOOCHERS AND IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT THAT GOD'S PEOPLE STAY AWAY FROM AND NOT SUPPORT THOSE WHO ARE NOT.**

God wants His people respectable and responsible. He does not want His people to be lazy loafers or those known as moochers or spongers. He wants them disciplined and hard working.

**RESPONSIBILITY #1 – Keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life. 3:6b**

The challenge is given in view of “every brother.” Any believer at church who leads an unruly life should not be people we support in any way. It doesn't matter how long we have known them or how long they have been in the church, if they are unruly, we are to stay away from them.

Now the word “aloof” means to withdraw, avoid and stay away (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 416). The charge is “stay away” and “avoid” brothers who are continually walking in an unruly way. That word “unruly” (ατακτος) refers to one marching out of order with the rest of the rank. They are failing to perform their duties and are disorderly (*Ibid.*, pp. 66-67).

William Hendriksen said that Paul specifically had in mind the brother or sister who was involved in “disorderly conduct” (*Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus*, p. 199).

So here is the charge; when you spot those affiliated with the church who are not marching with the rest of the church family, and are not faithfully involved with the church and the people, and the Word, we are to avoid them and stay away from them, not rally around them.

**RESPONSIBILITY #2** – Keep away from every brother who does not walk according to Pauline grace instruction. **3:6b**

The traditions to which Paul is referring are the apostolic Grace Age church instructions that he and his apostolic team gave to the church either verbally or in writing (2:15). So this is not referring to religious traditions invented by a denomination or group of religious men. These were apostolic instructions for the church. This is not referring to a bunch of church codes or rules invented by some man or denomination. This is in regard to inspired Grace Age instruction.

Now the “for” of **verse 7** explains what some of that practical Grace Age apostolic instruction was:

**Practical Apostolic Instruction #1** - Paul never acted in an undisciplined way with the people of God. **3:7**

Paul and his team always maintained a dignified discipline about themselves. They set a pace worthy of following. They lived their lives in a sacrificial way and in a very dignified way.

Now when Paul says that they did not live their lives in an undisciplined way (ατακτεω), he uses a verb that would indicate that at no point did Paul ever fail to perform his duty in carrying out the Word of God and will of God in his life (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 66). He was never some disorderly soldier for Jesus Christ. He always maintained the highest level of discipline, dignity and integrity in his ministry.

**Practical Apostolic Instruction #2** - Paul never ate anything without paying for it. **3:8a**

Paul was not the kind of man who wanted handouts. He wanted to have his own money so he could pay for things. Certainly there were times when Paul was given some wonderful generous gifts and he graciously accepted those gifts. But Paul’s policy was he wanted to pay for things because he did not want to get a reputation that he was some moocher looking for a handout.

**Practical Apostolic Instruction #3** - Paul worked very hard for his money. **3:8b-9**

Paul never wanted to be a burden to anyone. So he worked. He worked hard with the skills he had. Now at the time Paul is writing this letter, it is very early in his apostolic career. God would eventually make it so that he would not have to work anymore. In fact, that actually happened shortly after the time he wrote this letter (Acts 18:1-5). When Silas and Timothy came to Paul from these churches, they had so much support he no longer had to work. But he was willing to work if it was needed.

Now according to **verse 9**, Paul had every right as an apostle to demand financial remuneration. Let's face it; this was the one man on earth who truly did understand the grace Gospel. This was the greatest teacher alive. If you are a good teacher, you typically receive great remuneration, tenure and, ultimately, a good retirement package. Paul would have had every right to demand that, but he never did.

Paul never wanted to be a burden to anyone and so to be a model and good example, he worked with his own hands. It is hard work to preach the Word of God accurately but Paul and his team did that work and they worked at a trade to earn money.

Now we know that the trade he had learned was the trade of being a skilled tent maker. He could always find some work almost everywhere he went because tent making was a big business. So whenever he needed some money, he would work with his own hands and earn it.

Paul's philosophy flies in the face of those who say they will not go to their calling until they have full support. Paul never had that. Sometimes to do a work for God, you must work a different job other than the work for God. It has been my observation that if you are willing to do that, God will eventually see to it that you will be blessed in many ways and eventually be supported full time.

Tim Miles was the first missionary sent out by Tent Makers mission. He and his family went to Saint George, Utah, to plant a church. I have been to that church. Today it is a great church. But when Tim and Joy first went there, there was no church so Tim went and started washing people's windows. He started a window washing business to earn money to support himself and his family. God blessed his efforts and today he does not have to do that because the church is able to take good care of him. But his philosophy was exactly that of Paul.

**Practical Apostolic Instruction #4** - Paul taught if one does not work he should not eat .  
**3:10**

There is no other place in the Bible where you will find a parallel to this statement. The church is not to permit a person who is not willing to work to even eat. If he refuses to work, let him go hungry. Paul was no ogre. He was a generous man who taught others to be generous to the needy. But Paul had no sympathy for a person who refused to work at an honest job.

Now carefully notice what this says, “if anyone is not willing to work”; it does not say “if anyone cannot work.” There are some people who would love to be able to work. They are willing but cannot find a job. They need help. There are also some who cannot physically work. They do not have the physical ability to work. But the key here is the “willingness.”

This is an order that needs to be clearly understood and applied by every true church of God. If you are a person capable of working and you do not work, or you refuse to work or you refuse to try and find a job so you can buy your own food, then you should not eat. The church owes you nothing.

The church should not see you get a meal nor should the government nor should a rescue mission. Here is where many Christians miss the point—**the world does not owe the Christian anything, we owe the world something.**

A few weeks ago, someone called the church and wanted money. He claimed he would be willing to work for it. So I asked him what he did. He said he could build things. I asked him who he worked for in this area. He said he had just come from the Detroit area. So I asked him who he worked for in the Detroit area. He gave me the name of some company and we decided to call the company. Come to find out, there is no such company and he never worked anywhere. He was trying to hit churches up for money. I told him go to the mission. He said, “well down there are a bunch of low life’s.” I thought, and you are one. You refuse to work and you are a liar.

I highly respect the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission, but I am not even sure that the mission is always right in what it is doing and all it is serving. There are some people down there who have just willingly, of their own volition, dropped out of life and walked away from responsibilities and they refuse to work. They are lazy bums and there is no way they should be supported by anyone. I am certainly supportive of helping someone who is trying to get back on track with life, especially as it relates to God, but there are moochers down there at that mission which probably would make Jake Hildebrand cringe if he were still alive.

Back in 1927, Jacob Hildebrand, a former alcoholic and gambler, trusted Christ at age 29. In 1935, he opened a mission on the corner of Kalamazoo Avenue and Burdick Street where meals were first served. When the mission started, it served between 100-150 meals per night to all kinds of people—men, women and children. Jake held a chapel service every night and if you were going to eat a meal you had to attend. Most meals consisted of soup, bread and coffee. Just a couple of months ago, in September, the Kalamazoo Mission served 19,782 meals which turns out to be about 670 meals per day.

Now we support the Kalamazoo Mission and we thank God for the work they are doing. We have people in this church who are actively involved in that work. Our ladies have gone down there and worked in various ministries, from painting to cutting hair. We have men who pick up food and take it down there. So we applaud what the Kalamazoo mission does.

But the truth is there are some people who should not be getting a meal because it is not that they cannot work, it is that they will not work. I personally know of college graduates who have just dropped out of life and responsibility and refuse to work, who are living at the mission.

The Scriptures are clear on this point—if one will not work, neither let him eat. Now it seems to me that the assumption is that the guy is hanging around the church and the church is in a position to make a decision.

By the way, there are those who take the position we should not ever judge anyone. Well, according to this text, it is the responsibility of the church to judge people. If one is a brother in Christ and is not willing to work when he has the ability, a judgment is to be made.

**Practical Apostolic Instruction #5 - Paul commanded that people be disciplined workers .  
3:11-12**

Paul had heard things about some people and it is obvious that he believed what he heard because the people he heard the things from were reliable people. There were no telephones, or emails or face book communication, but God saw to it that Paul still heard things. He heard things about “some,” not about “many.”

**What Paul heard is that in the Thessalonian church there are some who are not busy workers , but they are busy bodies .**

There were some who did not do their work, but they did try to find out everything they could about everyone else. I have known of some men and women who fit this description. I have known of a couple of women who did not clean their house or cook a meal and yet they could be on the phone for hours listening to the latest gossip. I have known of some men who go around and waste people’s time with their empty speech, rather than work at a job.

God never wants His people to be a bunch of lazy undisciplined busybodies. God wants His people to be quiet, hard-working people. We are not to be loud, obnoxious or lazy.

Notice that Paul gives a command from the Lord Jesus Christ—get off welfare and go to work. By the way, notice carefully one of the purposes of work is so that you can buy your own food and own things.

Paul never taught give it all to the church and form a commune. He never taught God’s people to go to work and meet other people’s needs, he said go to work and meet your own needs.

This goes against the grain of a philosophy that says the world owes me a living or the government owes me money. We have the responsibility to work because we owe the world a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ.