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**A1133 – August 14, 2011 – 2 Thessalonians 3:7-15**  
**Admonish Disorderly Brethren**

We've been discussing the doctrine of separation last week and if you'll turn to 1 Cor 5 we'll continue that discussion today. This is a doctrine that the vast majority of Christians have never heard of and if they ever heard that there was a group of Christians that was separating themselves from another group of Christians they'd about have a cow and then they'd go into all the common litany, well that's just not Christian, how could they judge others, Jesus said thou shalt not judge and he who is without sin let him cast the first stone and all the other hot air and baloney *misinterpretations* of the Scriptures. The Scriptures teach very clearly that we should judge fellow believers. So if the Scriptures plainly say it then maybe they ought to re-look at those other passages. 1 Cor 5:11, "But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother," so this is a man who proclaims to be a Christian, he's telling them to separate from him "if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one." So that's clearly judging a fellow brother. Verse 12, "For what have I to do with judging outsiders?" That's the unbelieving world. Paul says the world is not ours to judge, the world is judged by God, verse 13, "But those who are outside, God judges." But not those in the church, notice verse 12, "Do you not judge those who are within the church?" And verse 13, the quote from the OT, "REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES." Now this is probably a more severe case than the one in 2 Thessalonians. This is a clear cut case of excommunication. 2 Thessalonians is a less severe case. But our point is that there is a doctrine of separation in the Scriptures and it may not seem very nice to ostracize yourself from these kinds of believers but it is the very best thing for them. This is how you love them. You don't love people by enabling them to keep on sinning. Sin enslaves, it has always enslaved and it will always enslave, people who are sinning are not enjoying freedom, they are suffering from an

acute case of slavery. And by separating from them you are communicating that their behavior is not acceptable. The goal is not to be a big meany but that they would repent of their sin and be reconciled and restored to walking in freedom; freedom being defined as walking in terms of the word of God, which is truth. Jesus said in John 8:32, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” The truth sets men free. Sin doesn’t make men free. You’re free to sin but you’re not free from the slavery that captures you when you do sin. Jesus said in the same passage, he who commits sin is the slave of it.<sup>i</sup> So you cannot, in the church, allow sin to go un-judged, to allow sin to go un-judged is to continue to allow believers to be enslaved to sin and God doesn’t want his children to be enslaved, He wants them to be free, so by separating from them you are doing them a favor, you are putting social pressure on them to convict them of their sin so they’ll repent and be restored to freedom in the assembly.

Now in 2 Thessalonians 3 we have a situation, less severe than the situation in 1 Cor 5, but if it does not get corrected then the next step is excommunication. Here it’s not, verse 5 is Paul’s command, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads a disorderly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.” This is an order from God. And if you don’t obey it then the bottom line is that you fear men more than you fear God and now you are sinning. That basically is the message of the passage. Separate from disorderly brethren.

The specific disorder at Thessalonica is described in verse 10, the Jewish proverb, “If anyone will not work, then he is not to eat either.” We want to look at the background of this proverb in the Book of Genesis. So before we press on in the passage I want to pick up where we left off last time. There are two or three texts in Genesis that stand behind this proverb which comes from *The Bereshith*. The Bereshith is Jewish midrash on Genesis. It says, “God designed man for work—work for his own sustenance; he who does not work shall not eat.” Paul knew this saying and he had his way of stating it. Let’s break it down. God designed man for work. What does that mean? It means that man is a specific form and that form has a specific function, to work.

Now, to explain this I want to use an analogy from biology. In the biology courses on the university campus we were taught over and over that form determines function. This was drilled into us over and over and over. That form determines function. That the way something is formed is directly related to its function. So that if something goes wrong with the form then something goes wrong with the function. So for example if we were studying proteins we would learn that the instructions for building these proteins is stored in your DNA. Think of DNA as a language, it is a language that carries information for how to build things, it's a blueprint. And if you change the blueprint for how to build these proteins then they get built wrong and then they malfunction. So you have the DNA code, it gets translated into another language called RNA and from there it is built into a protein. Proteins are long strings of amino acids, there are 21 different amino acids, and they each have their specific chemical properties and when they are built from the RNA they link together in a big long chain. That big long chain is a protein but before it is useful it has to fold into a specific shape and it does this depending on the various chemical interactions that occur between the amino acids on the chain. And you have hundreds of different proteins in your body and they all form into different shapes, very specific shapes and they are very important for your body chemistry. Now the various proteins fold into various shapes and they have little docks, different shaped docking areas that are designed to accept only chemical enzymes that fit, like a hand and a glove, and your body regulates these, or it's supposed to, and your body can increase the number of enzymes that fit in that dock if you need more of it or if you need less it can pump out some inhibitors that block those little docks. And if everything is operating as it was designed to operate then you have fitness or health. The problem is that if you get a mutation in the DNA, back in the original instruction manual, then that gets translated over into the RNA and when the protein comes out its built wrong, it's the wrong shape. And that means that the little docks aren't the right shape and that means the enzymes and inhibitors that are designed to fit in those little docks won't fit in those little docks anymore. And that means sickness. And that illustrates the point that form determines function or malfunction, whatever the case may be. And that's what this Jewish proverb is capturing in the first saying. God designed human beings for work, for labor, our specific design is one that has as its purpose that we work. Which is why retirement is unbiblical, and it's why when people retire they usually go downhill real fast, they were designed to work, so to not work is to

malfunction. That is very simply what Paul is upset about at Thessalonica, there is a disruption to the order of things that God has designed, these lazy bums are living contrary to their design, they're disorderly, *ataktos*.

Now this is the essence of sin, to live contrary to how you were designed to live, to violate your form and not perform your function. Your proper function is to work, to labor for the glory of God, this is DI #1: responsible labor or dominion. A lot of Christians have the false idea that we have to work because of the Fall. And that's not true, we have to work because God created us to work. He's the first worker, His work of creation is the archetype of all labor. And man was created in His image to follow His example of work, to labor as He labored, to produce something good. So labor is a part of who we are as originally created.

What happened at the Fall is that God cursed the ground and now there are impediments to labor. It's inefficient, it's a battle because some idiot at the office made a royal mistake yesterday and it took 48 hours to fix that and it cascades into all kinds of messes that take more labor to fix. It's really amazing we can produce anything at all after the Fall, there's such an inefficiency there. You put in a tremendous amount of labor and at the end of it all is very little product. But the Fall is not the beginning of labor, labor began at Creation, the Fall is the when our labor was cursed but I'm going to show you, or Paul is, that hard labor is good for man, that we're still designed for it.<sup>ii</sup> God designed us for this function and if we fail to fulfill this function for His glory then we are malfunctioning.

Now look at the last part of this saying, "work for his own sustenance; he who does not work shall not eat." This was based on Gen 3:19. Gen 3:19 is the curse upon man. Starting in verse 17, "Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life." What's the implication there? The implication is already that if you don't work you don't eat. Verse 18, "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;" it's very interesting it says "for you," almost like it's beneficial for us to have this inefficiency introduced into nature. Somehow this is good for us. Verse 19, "By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground," that right there is what led to this saying. That in a Fallen world if you don't work you don't eat and the implication is you will die!

So this was the problem at Thessalonica, you had a group of malfunctioning believers within the larger group. And it had grown into a serious problem. So Paul repeats the order he gave them when he was with them in 2 Thess 3:10, "If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat either." Verse 11, **For we hear that some among you who are leading an undisciplined life**, an *ataktos* life, that's our word from last week, a disorderly life, they are upsetting the order of things because they're not working, they're malfunctioning, **doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies**. Now here's the thing, work, hard work is for our own good as fallen human beings. You can see that implication in the Genesis text. Most people can see this. If you have too much time on your hands you'll use it for evil. There's something good about hard manual labor. I like how John Wayne puts it in the movie *McLintock!* If you remember John Wayne had a big ranch, he had worked hard and he had saved his money to get that ranch. One day his daughter Becky came home from college and she was looking for her dad and he was out hunting with the scatter gun and so she rides out to talk to him. In that little dialogue John Wayne says Becky, you're going to have every young buck west of the Missouri around here trying to marry you, mostly because you're a handsome filly, but partly because I own everything in this country from here to there. And they'll think you're going to inherit it. Well, you're not. And he explains why not and the bottom line is not because she had done anything wrong, the bottom line is he loved her. And he wanted her and some young man to have what he had." He wanted her and some young man to have to work hard to earn a living because there is something about working hard that you can't get any other way. We're made for it, it's good for us. It teaches us labor, it teaches us respect, it teaches us to appreciate assets, and it teaches us economics and a hundred other things.

And I imagine that 9 times out of 10 if parents throw riches at their children the children will waste it, and the reason is they never had to earn a thing in life, it was all thrown in their lap and now they're handed a million dollars or something. They don't have responsibility, they don't appreciate it, and they're going to waste it. Each man has to earn his own way and learn what it means to work hard to earn things. That's what we call a meritocracy, a culture that gives rewards based on merit; unfortunately a large part of our society rejects that culture and has adopted an entitlement mentality. In this kind of society those who work hard for what they earn have it stolen from them by legalized theft and given to these lazy, entitlement- minded people.

After awhile the way that works out is the people that work hard realize that it doesn't pay to work hard and the whole society begins to disintegrate. And the reason is because labor is a divine institution and if you fool around with divine institutions there are always serious consequences to pay, you cannot get around it.

The Bible teaches a system of meritocracy, and if this works out in some people having more and others having less, well, so what? When we are rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ there will be some people that have more rewards than others, so God evidently works on a meritocracy system when it comes to reward status in His kingdom and beyond.

But in any case if a person who is capable of working won't work then they shouldn't eat and logically then they'll just have to starve to death. You'll say well that's not nice and I say, so be it, I'm not worried about it being nice, I'm worried about being biblical. And actually the English word "nice" comes from the Latin for naïve and ignorant. So if I'm not nice then I'll take it as a compliment.

And so is Paul, "If someone isn't willing to work, he's not to eat either," And Paul had heard there was a small group within the larger group that was not working at all, just acting like busybodies. That word actually is a very interesting word - it means someone who is intrusively busy, someone who is butting into every body else's business. Always butting in. While you're trying to get your work done some lazybones is interfering.

**Verse 12, Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.**

Another way to say that is, "Get a job." Now the reason they weren't working is hinted at in this one word **quiet**, we don't know for sure but the word means stillness and if Paul is telling them to be still then the implication is that they were all excited about something, they were bubbling over and they needed to settle down. What they were overexcited about is probably the Rapture, they were not able to relax and work because of their overexcitement about the any-moment return of Christ. So Paul is telling them to calm down and get a job. Even though the Rapture may come at any moment that does not mean that it will come at this moment. It may be several lifetimes before He comes. And even if He were to come tomorrow

that does not mean that we should stop working today. We should work hard for His glory until He comes. This is at least one aspect of what it means to wait expectantly for Him. It means to work hard, it means to do everything for His glory as an example to other believers and the world, knowing that such labor will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. It doesn't mean be a slacker.

Today we have a serious labor problem among Christians but for different reasons. Hardly anyone is overexcited about the Rapture, it's been 2000 years and the attitude today is He probably won't come today. But we have a labor problem nonetheless and the reason is because of something Benjamin Franklin said, "When the people find they can vote themselves money that will herald the end of the republic." That fundamentally is the problem. Why work for money when you can get it for free. So we have this problem that of all sectors of society we, as Christians, should oppose. The problem is that as productivity decreases and unemployment increases people are going to finally suffer to the degree that they will have to realize that if I don't work I'm not going to have anything to eat and I am going to die. Because when you mess with these divine institutions there are consequences to pay, and often very heavy ones. So v 12 is a command to believers to get to work.

Verse 13, **But you, brethren**, now speaking to the larger group who are working, **do not grow weary of doing good**. You know, it can get old setting an example for others to follow. Over and over you do what is good and right and go out and labor hard to make a living and over and over these people seem not to notice. However, the Bible insists that by being an example it is a constant rebuke to those who are lazy. Their consciences are being pricked. So don't grow weary of doing good. The Greek word for **grow weary** means lose heart, don't get discouraged.

Now this verse has come to my aid on many an occasion. When I'm getting tired, when I'm discouraged, when it seems like I work, work, work and there's no evidence of fruit, I always come back to this verse, do not grow weary of doing good, do not grow weary of doing good. This verse has sustained me so many times and I think it has a number of practical uses for any believer. Do not grow weary of doing good because for one you're not working for men, to be men-pleasers, you're working for God, to please Him, for His glory, and He's watching. He's evaluating and even if everyone else

thinks your work is worth a sum total of zero, it doesn't matter what they think, it matters what He thinks. Men may put a value imputation on your labor but God's value imputation is infinitely more valuable. So even if others don't think you're work is very valuable, it's God's valuation that matters. What this means, practically speaking, is that if everyone else in the world thinks that what you are doing is a waste of time, if God thinks it is good, then everyone else is wrong and you should keep on doing it.

I'm reminded of Dr Ignaz Semmelweiss who researched the importance of washing your hands when you go from patient to patient at the hospital, he said stop and wash your hands in between. And even though he worked for years and years and published many papers proving his work it was rejected by the people in the medical community. It made him crazy and he ended up in an insane asylum. It wasn't until years later that his research was accepted and now you know how serious it is to wash your hands. So keep on doing good, there is still much to discover, people may not pay attention, they may think you're a nut, you may die knowing that what you have to contribute is good and everybody thinks you're a mental case, but if it is good it will be accepted by God and rewarded properly. What you do here has eternal ramifications, keep on doing good, don't get discouraged.

Verse 14, **If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.** So now we're going to discriminate. Remember, this is within the group of believers, within the church. We are to judge those within the church. We have a law or a standard and that law or standard is the order in verse 10. If you don't work you don't eat, if anyone does not obey that order then the other believers are commanded to take special note of that person. It's a command to follow and if you don't follow it then you're sinning. So you take special note of that person and make it a point **not to associate with him.** That means separate from fellowship, don't mix with him, you're trying to communicate to this person that I am not going to put up with this behavior, you are trying to communicate to this person that they are not acting like a Christian and you do this by keeping them at arms length so they'll know very clearly that their mooching is not acceptable behavior. Now people in Christian circles do not like to do this, they feel ungodly when they do. But it doesn't matter how you feel, it matters what's right, and what's right is to disassociate yourselves from them. Now, if you



refuse to do this then you are condoning their sin, just by associating with them you are endorsing the sin and in fact you are sinning yourself. So you must separate and the most you can do at this point is keep a line of communication open for the express purpose of admonishing him as we'll see.

And then the purpose clause is given, this is the whole reason you're doing it, and unfortunately a little bit is lost in translation; the word **shame** actually means "to cause to turn." It's the idea that he realizes he has to change, that he cannot go on living this way; he is cut off from the fellowship until he turns his life around. So the reason for not mingling with this person and joking around and having a good old time is so that they will turn and change.

Now I realize that today what normally happens is the person gets shunned and they feel this pressure and they know they should change but they don't want to so they run down the street to the next church. So be it. I don't want them to do that but I can't stop them. If they run away so they can live in their sin then they run away. It's a great loss, which I am aware of and it doesn't make me happy because that's not the goal. The goal is that they would turn back to the truth and get on the right path. And if that happens you've won your brother, that's a victory for Christ. If they run down the street then that's a victory for Satan, that brother is now going headlong into sin and it's going to be a tortuous path. I have seen this numerous times and it is just sickening to see it happen, I've even warned people not to do it and they did it anyway thinking everything is going to be so wonderful, and I hate to have to stand here and say, I told them so, but I did and they didn't listen and now they are suffering a lot of misery because sin never brings blessing. You cannot, no matter how hard you try, get blessing out of sin. Sin always leads to misery and you're a fool to think you can get away with some sin and not suffer the consequences, a fool.

Finally verse 15, **yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother**. The idea is that he's still your brother in Christ and so at this stage in the discipline you haven't excommunicated him, you're keeping him at arms reach, there's still a window of opportunity, there's still a door of communication, but that doorway is only open to admonishing him as a brother. And the word admonish means to counsel them to stop doing what

they're doing, hey, just stop it and this shunning can all be over with and we can be back in fellowship, we can continue to grow in Christ,.

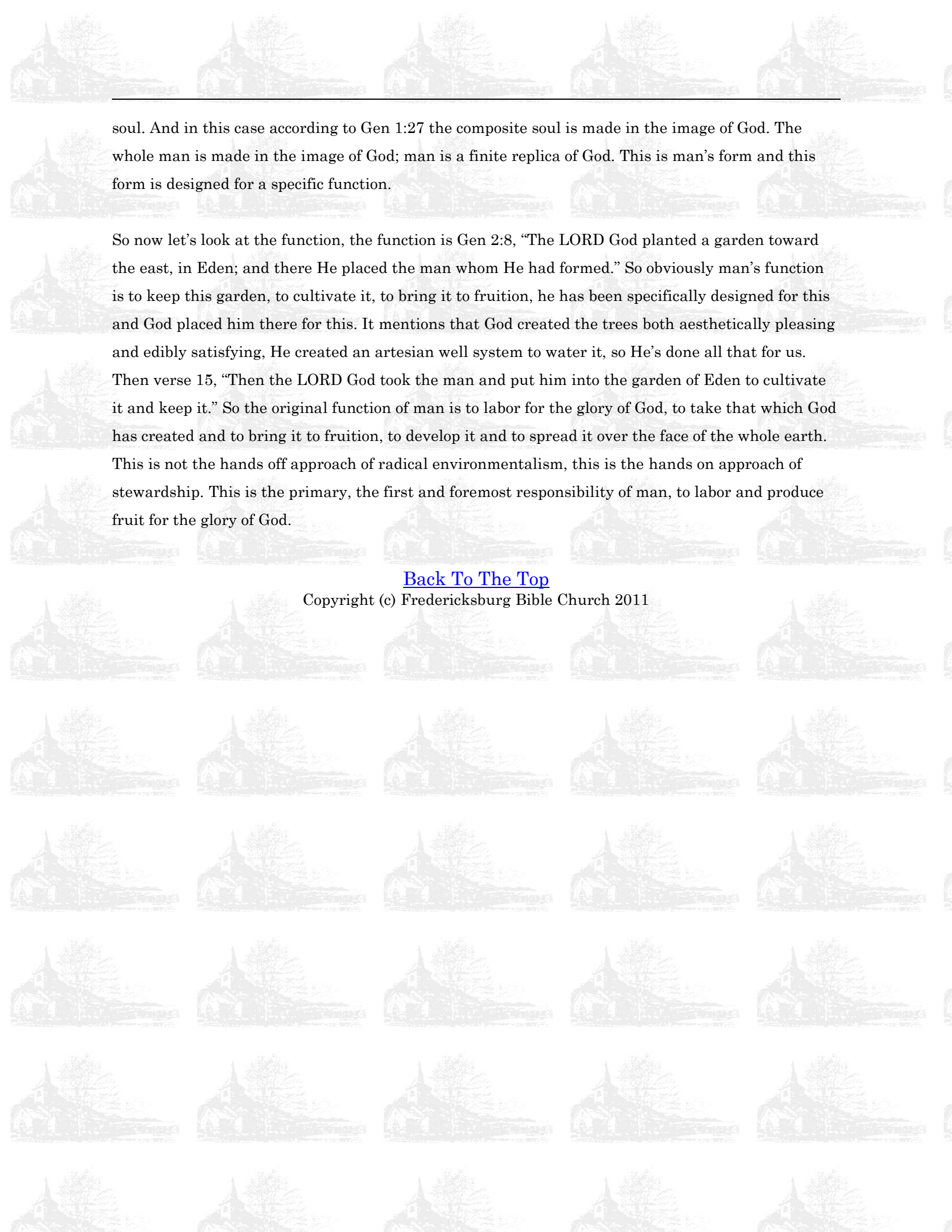
Now why must we separate from these erring brothers? Why can't we just allow it to go on in the congregation and not judge like most churches do today? The answer is that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. If you let a little sin go then you are endorsing that and then sin will increase and as this goes on eventually the church is no different from the world and that's where most of the church in the West is today. For the most part they are no different from the world and the few churches that are not like the world, well, they're the problem people over there, they're fanatics, and they judge us. But I wouldn't let it bother me, if they want to be unbiblical then they can stay over there and be unbiblical. A general rule is that if you're in the minority then you're close to the truth, if you're in the majority you might do some close checking because something is wrong. The people on the truth track are one in a million, the people on the false doctrine track are a dime a dozen.

And finally let's mention that the great loss in not following this doctrine is that there is loss of purity in the church. Unfortunately the church has an imperviously high level of tolerance for sin and by inverse proportion a low level of respect for God and His word. May we in this age strive for purity in God's church that we might be a light unto the world.

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<sup>i</sup> That's why if this country does not turn back to this book then there's no hope for freedom, no hope at all, with all the programs and gimmicks if this book is left out then you can forget it. Men have got to get right with God through Jesus Christ first, then they have to study this book if we are ever to gain freedom in this country. And that principle goes for any and every country in the world. God defines the form and the laws which result in freedom within the form. Any violation of those will always result in slavery.

<sup>ii</sup> But before we look at that let's finish our form-function analogy proper function let's look at the form, Gen 2:7, "Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground," notice the ground, we are taken from the ground, from the chemical structure of planet earth and this ultimately points to where we will labor. We are taken from the earth and we will labor in the earth to make it productive, to cultivate it, to develop it. Then God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;" that's the human spirit, it came directly from God, so it ultimately points to whom we are laboring for, we are laboring for God, "and man became a living being." That's the soul and the soul is a resultant, it's a composite of body and spirit. So who is man? man is a composite of body + spirit which equals a



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soul. And in this case according to Gen 1:27 the composite soul is made in the image of God. The whole man is made in the image of God; man is a finite replica of God. This is man's form and this form is designed for a specific function.

So now let's look at the function, the function is Gen 2:8, "The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed." So obviously man's function is to keep this garden, to cultivate it, to bring it to fruition, he has been specifically designed for this and God placed him there for this. It mentions that God created the trees both aesthetically pleasing and edibly satisfying, He created an artesian well system to water it, so He's done all that for us. Then verse 15, "Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." So the original function of man is to labor for the glory of God, to take that which God has created and to bring it to fruition, to develop it and to spread it over the face of the whole earth. This is not the hands off approach of radical environmentalism, this is the hands on approach of stewardship. This is the primary, the first and foremost responsibility of man, to labor and produce fruit for the glory of God.

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