



2 Thessalonians

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For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. 2 Thessalonians 3:11

The words “For we hear,” are an indication that some were at the church in Thessalonica, and they were personal witnesses of those who were being lazy and sponging off of others. It was probably the carriers of his first letter back to the church. They took the letter and had a visit, probably a bit horrified that those who had accepted Paul’s gospel presentation and instruction were already departing from it and receiving false words from others.

The source may have been someone from the church itself as well, dispatched to get Paul’s thoughts on what was going on. Either way, he has been giving direction, instruction, and correction based on this saddening news, which is “that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner.”

He has already instructed that the church members were to “withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly” among them (verse 3:6). Now he shows that this wasn’t just an arbitrary statement of instruction, but a preparation for specific accusation, which is now given. Those who were disorderly (and they were already there in the church) were to be withdrawn from. Here they were, repeating false doctrines which had been received from unreliable sources, and they were spreading them around like a growing virus. The way to end this was to end any contact with them.

While most in the church were being productive, living their lives out in a sound and reasonable manner, these sensationalists were “not working at all.” Instead, they were “busybodies.” In the Greek, there is a play on words which is wholly lacking in the English translation. The word “working” is *ergazomai*. The word “busybodies” is *periergazomai*. It is used only here in the Bible, and it is a superlative word. *Peri* means “all around,” and so one gets the idea of “working all around,” and thus meddling.

Instead of doing what should be done, they had their noses in the work of everyone else, fixating on what they were up to. In this, one can almost see then what they would do next. "Gee, you are too busy making a living. Don't you know that the Day of the Lord has come (or the rapture is going to happen on 23 September). Why are you wasting your time? But, seeing as how you have your wages coming in, why don't you give me a bit for lunch..."

Whatever attitude was demonstrated in these people, it included a theological misunderstanding (or intentional falsification) of the sequence of events concerning the return of Christ and the tribulation period. In their mishandling of what was to occur, they were not being productive, and they were leeching off of those who were. And doesn't this sound like the rapture date-setters of today! They put out video after video, monetizing those videos, robbing people of their time which would otherwise be spent more productively, and leading those uninformed in Scripture down unsound paths of doctrine. And with the link to the DONATE button, they rake it in at the expense of people who are too unclear in their life and doctrine to see they are being duped.

Paul has set the timeline of events in his writings, but because people are unwilling to study the word, they get caught up in the false teachings of these people who should otherwise be, as Paul directly commands, stayed away from. How sad it is that people won't take the time to simply learn the Bible. In this, they will stop speculating, and they would learn to devote their time, work, and resources to productive things. Rapture-schmapture. It will happen when it happens, and so we can cherish the thought in our heart without becoming duped into false hopes by these abhorrent people.

Life application: Still watching videos and reading commentaries about a particular date for the rapture? Try reading your Bible instead.

Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. 2 Thessalonians 3:12

It is of note that Paul uses the word translated as "command" a total of 12 times in all of his letters, and yet four (one-third) of them are in 2 Thessalonians, and all four are in this chapter. It is, therefore, a clear indication that he is not just a bit miffed about the attitude of those sponging off of others in the church, but he is highly upset about it. These, the forerunners of "rapture date-setters," are uninterested in hard work and sound doctrine, and they are an annoyance to the body. Each time they believe someone who says, "The day of the Lord has come," and then pass it on to others, they cause harm. Each time they say, "The rapture will be on this day because..." they cause people to stop their productive lives, and to hope on that which is not based on any type of reality.

Paul had already told the church the things he knows of concerning the end-times when he was with them (2:5), and then he repeated that in this letter. No “word from the Lord” will come along and change these things, and no special insights into when these things will occur will ever be forth-coming, thus contradicting Paul’s words of this letter. Therefore, it is a waste of time and energy to focus on them. Instead, he directs his words to this particular group saying, “Now those who are such...”

It is those who are not willing to work, but are spending all their time being unproductive and passing on unsound theology that he is writing to. Instead of living productive lives, they sponge off of those who do, and sway them with words which have no basis in authoritative words of the apostles (today, those words of the apostles which have been recorded and saved are a portion of the Bible).

It is to these that he says, “we command and exhort.” A command is a directive – “You are to do this thing.” The words require attention and action. However, he immediately follows up with “and exhort” in order to lessen the chance of angry rebellion by those he is commanding. These are, after all, date-setters who are easily miffed over being told their doctrine is unsound. Thus, the word “exhort” is given as a friendly, hopeful way of them taking the “command” in a positive way instead of stomping off in an angry huff.

Remember that it is the same group of people whom he commanded to be withdrawn from in verse 6. Those words were for the people of the congregation who weren’t caught up in the idle speculation. These words are for those who are. “The congregation is to withdraw from you, but you can be brought back into a right relationship with them if you stop this nonsense, get to work, and earn your own bread.” This is still applicable today. We are to withdraw from rapture date-setters until they stop their disturbing posts and learn to be productive. They can then be brought again into a right relationship with the church.

And to bolster his words, Paul continues on with the note that the command and exhortation is “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Some manuscripts say “in” instead of “through,” but the title is where the main focus is. Whether Christ directly gave this command (which He in fact did in Acts 1:7, 8), or whether Paul is simply giving it under inspiration as an apostle, the words are given by authority of the name of the Lord. And the command and exhortation is “that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”

“Folks, it’s time to stop listening to non-biblical things, to stop spreading those things, and to get to work. At the end of the day, you’ll have your pay, and you can go buy your own food with it. Stop interrupting the church. Stop idly speculating on the day of the rapture. Get wisdom. Get sound instruction. Stand approved before the Lord.” All of this and so much more is tied up in Paul’s words. There are souls who need to hear about Jesus, and it won’t get done

while people are watching videos about the rapture coming up on Friday. There are people who see Christians watching those videos and who laugh at them each time another date passes by without anything happening. And there is the name of the Lord which is brought to shame each time this occurs.

Life application: If you see what appears to be a really interesting looking video about the prophetic timeline pointing to the coming tribulation and the rapture of the church, don't watch it.

But *as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.* 2 Thessalonians 3:13

Here we have a subtle jab at those referenced in the previous two verses. Paul has said that he who "will not work, neither shall he eat." He then built upon that, pointing out these sluggards and what they should do in verse 12. Now, he gives a contrast to them with the words, "But *as for you, brethren.*"

In other words, he is making a distinction between the two. He has cumulatively called all (both hard worker and sluggard) "brethren" quite a few times already, but he has told those who are diligent and industrious to "withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us" (verse 6).

He acknowledges that they are brothers, but now in this verse he gives them a poke by using the term "brethren" as applying to those who aren't like them. There are brothers, and then there are brothers! The intent here is to convict those who are sitting around watching crazy YouTube rapture videos all day, and who then pass on this false information to the church, to stop doing this, to get to work, to be examples of Christ, and to be obedient to His will.

After this direct and convicting opening, he then tells the "brethren" that they are to "not grow weary *in doing good.*" The word translated as "weary" is used once by Luke and five times by Paul. It gives the sense of fainting. Paul is exhorting the brethren to not allow anything to interfere with doing good, even exhaustion itself. The word translated as "doing good" is used just this once in the Bible. It comes from two Greek words which together give the sense of "doing good that inspires others to rise up and do what is noble" (HELPS Word Studies).

This exhortation is tied back to the "patience of Christ" of verse 5. Just as Christ continued in His ministry, never faltering in His work, so we are to likewise act. And, we are to do so by inspiring others in the process. The contrast between the sluggardly rapture/Day of the Lord date-setters and those who are acting properly is crystal clear. While they are doing nothing of value, wasting time, and harming the walk of others, those who are obedient to the word are

productively working, making the best use of the time they are allotted, and their work is inspiring others on to their noble work as well.

Life application: Are you a rapture date-setting sluggard, or are you a person interested in the whole counsel of God, and in sharing your interest in the word with others? Paul has set a distinction between the two. If you are the former, he tells the rest to withdraw from you. If you are the latter, he tells others to emulate you. Which will receive commendation from the Lord on that Day? Hmmmm... I wonder which.