

## Lesson Fifty-three

# 2nd Thessalonians

	Affirmation amidst Affliction	Explanation of Prophecy	Clarification regarding Response
	"We ought always to give thanks to God for you." (1:3) "We . . . speak proudly of you . . . for your perseverance and faith." (1:4) "We pray for you always." (1:11)  CHAPTER 1	"Let no one in any way deceive you." (2:3) Secret power of lawlessness Restraint removed Man of lawlessness "So then . . . stand firm." (2:15)  CHAPTER 2	"We command you." (3:6) "If anyone does not obey" (3:14) "May the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace." (3:16)  CHAPTER 3
<b>Question</b>	Why are we suffering?	What will occur?	How do I respond?
<b>Contrasts</b>	Peace amidst pain	Lawlessness versus restraint	Work while waiting
<b>Statement</b>	The Lord knows!	The "day of the Lord" has not yet come!	"Do not grow weary of doing good." (3:13)
<b>Emphasis</b>	Commendation	Correction	Clarification
<b>Theme</b>	The hope of Christ's return encourages us in our suffering and motivates us to live responsibly for Him.		
<b>Key Verses</b>	1:11-12; 2:13-15		
<b>Christ in 2 Thessalonians</b>	Jesus is the coming Judge who will reward the righteous and destroy the wicked, including the coming man of lawlessness in the end times (1:6-2:12).		

Copyright © 1982, 1998, 2010 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights reserved worldwide.

**Author:** This letter was the second letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica. Most scholars believe that it was written while Paul was in Corinth, not long after he wrote the first letter to the church. The date of the letter is believed to be around A.D. 50, which would make it chronologically perhaps Paul's third letter – Galatians being the first, then 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians.

**Occasion of the writing:** It is likely that the messenger of the first letter to the church came back to Paul and brought a report regarding what he found. Most of the news was good: the church was continuing to grow and remained faithful to the Gospel in spite of persecution they were facing. There was, however, some bad news. Some false teaching concerning the day of the Lord and infiltrated the church and caused some people to quit their jobs in expectation of Christ's imminent return. Paul wrote to correct their doctrinal errors and essentially tell them to get back to work.

Paul did, however, also commend the church for their growing faith, mature love for each other and their strong faith in light of the persecution they were experiencing. Paul also used this opportunity to request the church to pray for him, that he would be delivered from evil men and that the Gospel of Christ would continue to spread rapidly throughout the world.

**Key Text:** "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter." 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:15

## *What The Bible Teaches Us About Work* *2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:6-15*

From its earliest days, the church was concerned about the neediest among them. The very first crisis the church in Jerusalem faced was how to distribute food to the poor widows in the church. It led to the apostles designating others who would be in charge of this distribution so they could focus their time on the preaching and teaching of the Gospel. So, the church has always been an aid station for those who were suffering. However, as is often the case, eventually people found ways to take advantage of the charity of the church.

This was happening in Thessalonica when Paul wrote his second letter to the congregation. Some people thought that Jesus was coming back immediately, so they quit their jobs and depended on others in the church to take care of them and meet their needs until the day of the Lord. Paul wrote to them to tell them to get back to work – and in doing so, gave us some valuable insight into how the Lord feels about work and the oxymoron that is *lazy Christian*.

### I. GOD VALUES HONEST LABOR

A. Paul reminded the church in Thessalonica that when he was there, he worked hard night and day and did not eat any food for which they had not paid. Paul was a tentmaker and he practiced that craft to support himself while he was there establishing the church. He tells us why he did that – “*in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.*”

B. Many people think that work is a product of the curse of sin, but that is not true. In Genesis 2, we find that God put man to work in the Garden BEFORE he sinned. The curse of sin was that the ground would produce thorns and thistles and make the man’s work harder, but he was charged with working in the Garden even before he disobeyed God.

C. Throughout the Bible, God commends work. When giving the commandment regarding the Sabbath Day, He still affirmed work. He said, “Six days you shall labor. . . .” If one worked in the way that God intended, then they would need the Sabbath day as a day of rest in order to have the balance they needed in their life.

D. There is a strong warning in this passage that Paul taught the church in Thessalonica and, presumably, other places where he served: *If a man will not work, he shall not eat.* (v. 10). That sounds incredibly harsh! However, notice that he is not referring to those who *cannot* work; but to those who *will not* work. Paul taught the early church that it is not the responsibility of the church to take care of those who refuse to work. The ministry of the church is to help the poor who have no other options.

### II. IDLENESS IS DANGEROUS

A. Paul pulls no punches in describing what is happening in Thessalonica – he said, *they are not busy; they are busybodies!* Those who were not working had time to sit around and create chaos and confusion within the church. It was these idle people who were spreading the message that Jesus was coming back immediately and that others should join them in giving up everything and waiting on him. It makes you wonder – who would support them if everyone else quit their jobs as well!

B. Paul saw the idleness of these believers as being dangerous to the church. So he instructed the readers of his letter not to even associate with those who were idle. He did not want more believers following their unproductive and destructive path.

C. The phrase, “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop” is NOT in the Bible. The concept, however, is. Proverbs 10:4 does say, “*Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.*”

Let us be faithful to help those who truly need help. However, let us hold those accountable who are idle by choice and remind them that they can honor God by the way they work.