

March 17

Scriptures: Read 2 Thessalonians 3

Key Verse: "... If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

Overview

One commentator entitled verses 6-15 as "Off come the gloves." Paul very bluntly confronts the members in the Thessalonian church who are living "disorderly and not according to the tradition which [they] received from us" (v. 6). The "disorder" is very clear — they're idle spongers, living off the honest work of others.

Paul refers to the example he, Silas, and Timothy had set, "we [didn't] eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labour and toil night and day" (v. 8). They had a strict and consistent work ethic and expected the Thessalonians to have the same. In fact, Paul (probably quoting a Jewish proverb) says, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." Off come the gloves.

He goes on to rebuke "busybodies," those ubiquitous souls who do everybody's work but their own; negligent of their own responsibilities but utterly opinionated about everyone else's responsibilities and/or irresponsibilities. You can spot these types very quickly; in fact, Paul says we are to "note that person" (v. 14) and "not keep company with him."

But he then compassionately gives a wise word. He tells the readers not to over-react. Sometimes displeasure is guilty of overkill, and someone who is a "brother" is given the impression he's an "enemy" (v. 15).

Nevertheless, the point is clear. Commit yourself to productive work. Idleness will smother you. Work will liberate you, both from dependence on others and from the sickness of insignificance.

Prayer

Lord, again we pray as Paul prayed that You will direct our hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. Keep us in Your peace always.