**2 Thessalonians, Chapter 3**

Based on [2 Thessalonians 3:1-18](https://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th3.1-18)

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Advent Midweek Service 3

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The grace we have been given in our lord Jesus Christ gives us the confidence to call upon him as children call upon their father. We know he hears us, and will give us whatever we ask for. He has forgiven our sins and gives us new life. Sin has no claim on those of us who are in Christ Jesus. And you who are redeemed by the Lord are instructed by the Lord to lead holy lives, blameless and consistent with his example and teaching.

Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians is God-breathed scripture, and therefore profitable to us for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. It appears that this letter was written to correct misunderstandings that had arisen there about Christ and his return--his “second advent”. Chapter 1 teaches us that God’s punishment is still coming on the last day. His vengeance inflicted upon those who have afflicted the church, and He will be glorified in his saints. Chapter 2 teaches that the last day will not come until the apostasy happens and the man of lawlessness is revealed. This apostasy from sound doctrine will blasphemously happen in the name of God. And this antichrist will claim to operate from within Christendom and over Christendom, as is meant by the words “he will take his seat in the temple of God.” We considered this last week. Now in Chapter 3, Paul wraps up his letter with a teaching on shunning or public shaming, specifically of those who are walking in idleness.

Idleness is not just sitting around on the couch eating cheetos and playing video games. Idle people can actually be very busy people. Paul ironically calls those who walk in idleness “busybodies”—that is, people who are interfering in the business of others while neglecting what they are called to do. Certain Thessalonians were not living out their vocation, but instead busied themselves doing other things. The result is that their work was not getting done, and they were disrupting the work and the quietude of everyone else.

Paul identifies “idleness” with not **living “in accord with the tradition” that they had received.** Tradition simply means something that is “handed down”. We do not receive God’s Word directly, but handed down to us generation to generation, from Christ, to Prophets and Apostles like Paul, to our parents to us. Idleness, not living according to the tradition of the Apostles, is sin because it is a rebellion against God’s order.

Much of the modern world today is a rebellion against God’s order, his tradition. God says, “Male and female he made them”. The world says, “God didn’t call me to be male or female, I decide what gender I am and can even invent a new one”. Even within the LCMS in the states, a congregation received into membership a man who took hormone therapy and dressed like a woman. How much time and money an energy must it take to try to turn yourself into a woman? God called him to manhood, but he is too lazy to work at being a man. And how much conflict and division and confusion arise in a community because people aren’t happy with the calling God gave them. He is too busy trying to be a woman. Male or female; husband or wife—assigned by God in the womb, a calling not to be rebelled against but embraced as a holy calling from God.

Our modern world walks in idleness. It behaves as though there is no “created order”. So it busies itself making a name for itself while blaspheming the name of God. It rallies around the man-made gospels of “progress” and “advancement” while ignoring the Gospel of Christ. They are not busy in the work of the Gospel, but busybodies meddling to remake the world in their own image.

Paul was convinced that the revelation of Jesus Christ is the most advanced knowledge in the world, it was not discovered by man but handed down by God 2000 years ago already. We have it! It has always been available to this generation! It is our inheritance!

And Chapters 1 and 2 of this epistle make it clear, there is to be no progress in the spiritual condition of the world. There may be new inventions and technological discoveries that increase our comfort and treat our illnesses for a time. And you yourselves may be progressing in personal holiness in the Spirit. But do not be deceived. The Scripture is clear--the world is on a downward spiral, and no amount of human ingenuity or effort will reverse or mitigate that trend and set the world right. It is already written. Death will reign until the one who has the keys of death and hell returns.

Only the final coming of Christ will make all things new. And to break with tradition in the pursuit of advancing the material conditions of this life, is idleness. It is refusing to hold fast to God’s Word, while expending your effort in the world. To break with the biblical tradition in the name of social justice is a baldfaced denial of Christ, of his having already conquered death, and his promise to come again and set things right. And only those who have not presumed to “progress beyond” the example of Christ and his apostles who will be saved.

Paul doesn’t say what sort of idleness people were up to in Thessalonica. What is universal, though, is that anyone who is not busy with the work of God as he has assigned it and doing that work in quietness, is walking in idlness. But you are called to a spiritual calling in everything. Our God is a God who calls people to certain callings according to the gifts he has given them. He calls men to be men and women to be women. He calls husbands to be husbands and wives to be wives. He calls children to be children and parents, parents. He calls pastors to preach and teach, he calls hearers to listen and believe. He calls workers to work, managers to manage. He instructs widows as widows; to the unmarried he gives counsel. Do not presume to rise above God’s created order. Do not think outside the box, God gave us the box for our safety, for our certainty, for our sanctification. Be holy, as the Lord your God is Holy, holding on to the word as it has been taught, blessing one another and being a blessing through Christ who is the same yesterday today and forever.