

“Weary in Doing Good”
2 Thessalonians 3:11-15
(Preached at Trinity, October 4, 2020)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Verse 6** began a new section. Paul speaks firmly regarding some in the church who were refusing to work and drawing upon the resources of others.
 - A. Paul referred to them as unruly and undisciplined. In their idleness they had become busybodies, inserting themselves into the affairs of others in the church. It was detrimental to their own spiritual health and it was having a negative impact upon the church.
 - B. Paul does not soften his words regarding their refusal to work. In **Verses 10-14** Paul gives direction to the church on dealing with those who were neglecting their duty as well as direction to those who were at fault.
 1. First, he charges the church on how they should deal with those refusing to work—to shun them, to withdraw fellowship from them until they repent. They were to cut off aid to them.
2 Thessalonians 3:10 NAU - "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."
2 Thessalonians 3:14 NAU - "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."
 2. In **Verse 12** he gives direct instruction and command to those who were neglecting their duty.
2 Thessalonians 3:12 NAU - "Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread."
Matthew Henry: “We must study to be quiet and do our own business. This is an excellent but rare composition, to be of an active yet quiet spirit, active in our own business and yet quiet as to other people’s.”¹
2. In his direction to the church Paul includes a charge in **Verse 13**:
"But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good."
We aren’t given the precise meaning. What does Paul mean? We have to read it in the context of the passage. There are several possible ways to interpret it.
 - A. We could read it as a general charge as Paul prepares to close his letter.
 1. He instructs the Thessalonians, don’t neglect good of all sorts. The word is a compound verb - καλοποιοῦντες – καλός, ποιέω
καλός – good, beautiful, praiseworthy, well, honorably, rightly
Literally “well-doing.” Don’t grow weary in doing what is right.

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2350.

2. The expression “doing good” is often used in the Old Testament to refer to faithful obedience to the Law.
Deuteronomy 6:18 NAU - "You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give your fathers,"
Deuteronomy 12:28 NAU - "Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God."
 3. We must never grow weary in obeying the commands of God, of doing what is right.
- B. Paul could be more precise regarding the context: Don't allow those in the church who are neglecting their duty keep you from giving attention to your own. There is always a danger in lowering the standard in the church.
1. A few living undisciplined, careless lives can cause others to lose their focus on holiness. Paul compares it to leaven in 1 Corinthians. A little leaven can infect the whole.
1 Corinthians 5:6 NAU - "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?"
 2. Others are always watching us. The Thessalonian Christians needed to make it clear that the behavior of these idle busybodies was not the characteristic of Christians.
 We too must be careful to maintain high standards.
- C. Some see this as referring to the need to remain steadfast in the good work of church discipline as commanded in **Verse 14** - "take special note of that person and do not associate with him"
- D. Finally, Paul has his focus upon the gracious care that the church had given for these members refusing to work. Apparently, they had been supporting them. While their mercy was to be applauded, they were actually enabling bad behavior. Paul corrects them on this:
2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 NAU - "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. ¹¹ For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread."
- Paul seems to be saying to them, “You have been faithful in caring for these poor members who are unworthy of your support. Don't let these unworthy ones hinder your care for those who are truly poor.
 - We must not allow the existence of an unbiblical welfare system and the existence of healthy individuals not working to turn our eyes away from those who are legitimately in need. Paul tells the Galatians, “Don't lose heart.”
Galatians 6:9-10 NAU - "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."

3. It is difficult to know the precise meaning but most likely this fourth application is closer to the context. They had been faithful in caring for the poor. Paul is telling them not to stop. We must not turn our backs upon those who are legitimately poor. Paul's words, "do not grow weary" imply a degree of difficulty in maintaining the good works they were doing. Caring for the poor sometimes takes great effort. Don't lose heart. Don't grow weary.
- Calvin writes in his commentary –
 "We are naturally reluctant to discharge the duties of brotherly love, and many unpleasant occurrences arise by which the ardour of the best disposed persons is apt to be cooled. We meet with many unworthy and ungrateful persons. The vast number of necessitous cases overwhelms us, and the applications which crowd upon us from every quarter exhaust our patience. Our warmth is abated by the coolness of other men. In short, the world presents innumerable hindrances, which tend to lead us aside from the right path. Most properly, therefore, does Paul admonish us not to relax through weariness."²
4. The question that should always be upon our hearts is our duty towards the poor. What is the extent to which we must have regard for the poor, especially in light of the difficulty we often face in caring for them? This is very convicting for most of us who are Americans because we have so much. We enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the history of the world. The Bible makes some pretty convicting statements:
Proverbs 14:21 NAU - "He who despises his neighbor sins, But happy is he who is gracious to the poor."
Proverbs 21:13 NAU - "He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered."
Proverbs 28:27 NAU - "He who gives to the poor will never want, But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses."
5. In our wealthy condition the reality of poverty around the world should be startling.
- 736 million earn less than \$1.90 per day.
 - 70 million are on the threshold of starvation, every day.
 - In the poorest third world nations the infant mortality rate is 14%
 - Average worldwide median income is about \$10,000. The median income in the poorest third world nation will earn about \$400 this year. In the Congo it is \$394. The median income in the U.S. is \$78,500
6. Poverty is not non-existent in the US where our poverty rate averages around 12%. This is defined by income of less than \$16,000 for a couple or \$25,000 for a family of four.
7. In reporting the conclusion of the Jerusalem Council Paul wrote:
Galatians 2:10 NAU - "*They only asked us to remember the poor-- the very thing I also was eager to do.*"
8. What does the Bible say regarding our duty to the poor?

² John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentary, Vol. 21*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003) pages 179-180.

- I. Our wealth makes the subject all the more difficult.
The Bible has much to say about the dangers of wealth
- A. The worldly man loves money - It has captivated his affections
1. Jesus taught that our heart will always be drawn to the thing we see as having the greatest value
Matthew 6:20-21 NAU - "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
 2. The worldly man is controlled by his possessions
His possessions lead him further and further from God
1 Timothy 6:10 NAU - "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."
 3. Jesus said that it is a great rarity for a lover of money to enter into heaven – indeed it is impossible for someone consumed by a love for money to possess everlasting life.
Matthew 19:23-24 NAU - " And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
 4. In the end a lust for material possessions will cause much sorrow. Money promises happiness but always fails to deliver.
Many wealthy men have testified to the deceitfulness of riches
 - a. John D. Rockefeller – “I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness. The poorest man I know is the man who has nothing but money”
 - b. Henry Ford – “I was happier doing mechanic’s work”
 - c. Elvis Presley died a wealthy but miserable man
 - d. Steve Jobs – “Being the richest man in the cemetery doesn't matter to me.”
- B. The Christian must not be motivated by wealth – It is important to search your heart.
1. Is your satisfaction in Christ alone? Have you found Him sufficient?
The man who has found Christ has found everything. Jesus describes such a man:
Matthew 13:44-46 NAU - "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶ and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."
 2. How do you see this present world?
1 John 2:15 NAU - "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."
 - a. The things on earth must only be seen in a utilitarian sense
 - b. The things on earth must be seen as only temporary

3. Do you find your contentment apart from this world?
You may not have many possessions, your income may be small, you may not have a large home or new car.
Can you be content despite earthly conditions?
- C. The Christian exercises great caution with regard to his money.
1. We understand the dangers that can accompany the acquisition of wealth
 1. Wealth has the potential of turning us from God – it risks countless distractions and makes endless promises to fulfill every desire.
 2. Wealth can rob us of time that could be used to benefit our soul—it has to be protected, increased, spent, invested.
 3. Wealth can blind us to our spiritual poverty. If wealth provides our desires what else do we need?
 4. Wealth can make us proud – can make us seek the recognition of men - the new car, the large house, the stylish clothes, food in the finest restaurants.
 5. You can begin to convince yourself that it all belongs to you, that you deserve it. This can result in a hoarding, selfish, stingy attitude.
 2. The Godly person understands that he or she is but a steward taking care of that which belongs to another. Only when we understand this will we begin to see our wealth from a proper perspective.
 3. Only then will we learn to discipline ourselves to spend less than we make
- D. The blessings of stewardship
1. When we understand we are only watching over God's wealth we are then free to give ourselves to the wise oversight of His wealth
 2. We can learn to give abundantly
 3. We begin to evaluate how our purchases might advance the kingdom of God
 4. We learn to distinguish between wants and needs. Few stop to consider the difference.
Our highest joy and source of greatest reward should be contributing to the work of the kingdom.
 5. Then we can give serious consideration towards the poor
We will be motivated so that we will not become weary in doing good.

II. Stewardship demands wisdom -

What are some principles as we consider doing good for the poor?

- A. We must never forget the high virtue of love
2 Thessalonians 3:5 NAU - "May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ."
1. This is the high duty of all men
Luke 10:27 NAU - "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."
 2. Jesus taught this principle of loving our neighbor
 The story of the Samaritan was instructive
Luke 10:36-37 NAU - "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' *hands*?" ³⁷ And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."
- B. We must follow the principle of gleaning – the work principle
1. The law gave strict orders regarding how the harvest was to be gathered
Leviticus 19:9-10 NAU - "Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God."
 2. This allowed the poor to come and glean from the field
 We can see this in practice in the Book of Ruth
 3. We find here the work mandate. God has created us to work and earn our bread. Charity must not encourage idleness.
2 Thessalonians 3:10 NAU - "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."
- C. We must follow the principle of alms giving
1. The Jews systematically gave alms for the poor – pleasing in the sight of God.
Acts 10:1-4 KJV - "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, ² A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. ³ He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. ⁴ And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."

2. This was the principle Paul was using when collecting for the poor in Jerusalem
2 Corinthians 9:6-9 NAU - "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. ⁷ Let each one *do* just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; ⁹ as it is written, "He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever."

D. We must follow the principle of priority

1. This demands great wisdom
2. Our first and primary priority is to help our brothers and sisters in Christ. This presumes we are able to discern who they are.
Galatians 6:9-10 NAU - "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."
 Even among our brothers in Christ, there are times it is not wise to support them.
3. We must also give attention to the poor who are outside the faith—but we must give first priority to those who are truly poor—those willing to work, but are unable.

Conclusion:

1. One of the marks of our righteousness is our generosity.
Psalms 112:6-9 NAU - "The righteous will be remembered forever. ⁷ He will not fear evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. ⁸ His heart is upheld, he will not fear, Until he looks *with satisfaction* on his adversaries. ⁹ He has given freely to the poor, His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted in honor."
2. We must not grow weary in doing good.