

“The Quiet Life”
1 Thessalonians 4:11-12
(Preached at Trinity, October 6, 2019)

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. In **Chapter 4** Paul begins a very practical section of his letter. He gives them instruction on how “to walk and please God.” In other words, he is holding the Law before them. He implores his readers to continuing walking in a manner pleasing to God. Paul presumes they love the Law of God and are seeking to apply it to their lives. This is true of all believers.
2. Paul instructs them in how to work this out practically. He begins with a focus upon the Seventh Commandment, the issue of sexual purity.
1 Thessalonians 4:3 NAU - "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality*"
3. Paul then applies it to our love for one another.
1 Thessalonians 4:9 NAU - "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another"
 - A. Although Sanctification is the progressive working of holiness and of obedience to the Law, it is not keeping a checklist of does and don'ts. In its most basic form, sanctification is simply putting our love on display—our love for Jesus and our love for our fellow man.
 - B. In the context of this passage love will not allow you to take the wife of another man or defile another man's daughter. Love will not allow you to take the husband of another woman.
Only the Gospel can put the Law in a proper context for the Christian.
4. Continuing in this context of sanctifying love, Paul adds that love affects how we live in community with others.
1 Thessalonians 4:11 NAU - "make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you"
 - Love directs our greatest energy towards a quiet life focused upon Christ
 - Love doesn't lead you to insert yourself into the business of others
 - Love will not allow you to become a burden to others by refusing to earn your own living.
5. Paul paints a beautiful picture of the Christian life. May it grant us clarity as we look at it and apply it to ourselves.

- I. The Christian life is a quiet life.
- A. "Make it your ambition . . ."
1. Paul uses a word that implies a great expenditure of energy—to strive after something, to make it your ambition. Usually, when we think of ambition our minds go to striving for personal gain or personal advancement. Being ambitious. But Paul is talking about a determination or a striving to live quietly. It is paradoxical. On one hand it is a great striving or ambitious energy. On the other hand, it is a reduction of energy. Leon Morris writes in his commentary: "We urge you ... to make it your ambition to have no ambition!"¹
 2. It means to be still. Paul is speaking of a life at peace, a life of contentment. We read in Psalm 46
Psalm 46:10 KJV - "Be still, and know that I *am* God"
 - a. It is a life that puts this world's affairs in the proper context and rests upon God.
 - b. The quiet life is a Christ centered life, a life that recognizes His supremacy in everything.
 3. Peter used the same word to describe the Godly wife:
1 Peter 3:1-4 NAU - "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ² as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. ³ Your adornment must not be *merely* external-- braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; ⁴ but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God."
 The Godly wife is content to live a quiet life, content to live an unassuming life in Christ, trusting Him in all things.
- B. In other words, a Christian life is a life of contentment.
1. This doesn't mean we don't care about the world around us. It doesn't mean we are unaffected by our circumstances. It just means we have a higher focus.
 The Christian's greatest aspiration is to direct all attention to Christ.
 2. Such a life does not seek to gain notoriety and personal recognition. It is non-pretentious. It is content to live quietly with his life drawing all attention to Christ.
 3. This is quite a contrast to the lives of most who seek to draw attention to themselves.
- C. It is this quiet life that can enter meditation upon Christ
1. Modern life is characterized by noise.
 We always seem to be listening to something or being engaged in endless chatter. Most find themselves completely unable to be silent.
 2. We find it difficult to enter into seasons of quiet in order to pray. We find worship difficult because our minds are flooded with earthly affairs.

¹ Leon Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 13:85.

3. How can we meditate and worship if our minds are filled with noise. We need to give careful consideration to our minds and learn to be quiet. This is one reason the Puritans were so rich and systematic in their thinking. They knew how to be quiet.

D. Quite simply, the quiet life is the life of peace and contentment in Christ

1. Paul says we should make it our ambition to live such a life.
2. Many today complain of hyper-busyness. They complain that there aren't enough hours in the day.

- a. Most of the time this happens when Christ is not the focus.

- b. Some boast that they are busier than others.

The truth is, everyone has the exact same number of hours in their day. Why is it some are so much more stressed with their time? Is it because they are actually busier than others?

Could it be that some have a different focus.

3. The solution for some Christians is to purge their lives of those very things that are essential. They cut back on their prayer life. They cut back on their Bible intake. They cut back on their attendance at their local church. And, amazingly instead of adding time to their week, they find they have less.

4. Few understand that God is the Lord of time. He is able to add to the length of our days.

Proverbs 3:1-2 NAU - "My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life And peace they will add to you."

Although this may refer to number of days and length of life, the writer is also describing the quality of this life.

5. Once again, we are too prone to use our human ingenuity to solve a problem instead of bringing it before God in prayer. Is He too weak or unconcerned to make our days fruitful?

When I was in seminary I commuted over an hour to campus, I pastored full time preaching three times a week, I had a young family with needs. And yet, God enabled me to cram the needful things into the day and still have time for my devotional life. It was by His grace that my days were blessed to amazing productivity.

Today, I'm still very much cognizant that some of my days are amazingly productive while others are dismally unproductive. Who makes them productive?

Ambition for a quiet life is a striving after a life that is focused upon Christ.

II. It is a life that looks to ones own business.

NKJ – “mind your own business”

A. This also portrays the sense of quietness – of being satisfied tending to our own affairs.

1. One of the dangers of the internet and social media age is a sense where we think we have the right to engage in the business of everyone else.
2. Paul warned of the danger faced by younger widows
1 Timothy 5:11-13 NAU - "But refuse *to put* younger widows *on the list*, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married, ¹² *thus* incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge. ¹³ At the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention."
3. We need to guard ourselves against inserting ourselves in the business of others. Of being a busybody, inserting yourself into the affairs of everyone else. This is one reason we should not receive gossip. It is none of our business.
4. Minding your own business also includes not sharing all of your business with others. The “need to know” principle is a valuable policy. Other people don’t need to know everything about your business. You should always ask yourself, is it necessary for me to share this? Do they need this information?

B. We all have our calling, our business

1. The grammatical construction is unusual - πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια πράσσω – it means “to be busy” “to practice, accomplish” ἴδιος – pertaining to one’s self, one’s own
 Literally: it means to practice one’s own – idiomatically it translates to practice your own business. “Do your own thing.”
2. We should determine what God would have us to do, and then spend ourselves in doing it.

III. It is a life that maintains a Biblical work ethic

A. Paul pressed this upon this local church – apparently it was a particular weakness at Thessalonica. But it is important for all of us to hear.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 NAU - "make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you,"

2 Thessalonians 3:6 NAU - "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us."

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."

1. The Thessalonians needed to be taught a theology of work.
Work is an important aspect of our life
 - a. Work is a creation ordinance. It is God's appointed activity for men upon the earth. It is essential to our being.
 - b. It was ordained at creation to be continued as long as man dwells upon the earth and we will remain productive throughout eternity.
 - c. Work is a divine mandate.
Adam was placed in the garden to work – he was its keeper
Genesis 2:15 NAU - "Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it."
The word for "cultivate" (עָבַד) is one of the Hebrew words for work or labor.
Exodus. 1:13 NAU - "The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously;"
Exodus. 20:8-9 NAU - "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ "Six days you shall labor and do all your work,"
 2. After the fall work was affirmed and designated as a life-long activity. There is no indication in Scripture that there is a period in life in which work would end, which we call retirement. It changes, but it does not end. We remain productive, producing and maintaining.
Genesis 3:19 NAU - "By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."
 3. Work involves the fulfillment of our Divine calling or vocation. This ties in with Paul's words, "attend to your own business and work with your hands" – "do that which pertains to your own affairs"
- B. Paul was confronting the false views and practices of the culture of these churches
1. Many would have looked down upon common laborers
 - a. The Greeks thought labor was unworthy of a cultivated person.
 - b. Roman citizens did not work. Slaves did all of their manual labor.
 - c. Thessalonica was a harbor city and many of the church members would have been manual laborers. They would have been looked down upon and their work would not have been seen as valuable.
 - d. In addition, there was a heightened sense of the return of Christ and it's possible some had given up working in anticipation of the event. In doing so they were becoming a burden on the rest of the church. Paul is saying love doesn't make others bear responsibility for our negligence.
 2. Contrary to the practices of their culture, Paul is teaching these new Christian converts the virtue of hard work, and he served as their example. Paul's hands would have been calloused from his daily work.
1 Thessalonians 2:9 NAU - "For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God."
 3. Work goes against the grain of our own culture. Our culture tends to hate work and it idolizes pleasure. We promote the pursuit of leisure and the concept of retirement that ends productivity.

Conclusion:

1. Paul is telling them to give careful attention to live a quiet, orderly life, giving attention to their own affairs and working diligently. This was their besetting sin, since Paul addresses it again in his second letter.
2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 NAU - "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."
2. May God grant us the grace to live our days before Him – coram Deo. May we find the grace of contentment living our days quietly before Him.