

1 THESSALONIANS



Day 282

“Let’s Check Our Motives”

October 9 - 1 Thessalonians 1:1 - 2: 16

Honest to goodness, I want the best for you. I want you to be rich in the things that are lasting. I want for you to love God, to serve Him, to know Him, to work through the difficulties of maintaining a good relationship with Him. I want that for you. Some of you I know well and others I haven’t even met but that doesn’t matter to me. I want to see good things in your life and I want you to experience the good grace of God. I know my heart well enough to be certain that I say these things truthfully.

We are all on a journey and are all growing at different rates. In this process, though, I believe the heartbeat we all share is love for God and others. That is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts (look again at Romans 5:5). We want to love and be loved. When we are loved in this way our lives become rich and fulfilled. When you compare this with the selfish pursuits many of us have been on, there is really no true comparison. We want God to grant us the kind of love that changes a person from hard to soft, from inflexible to flexible, from self-centered to Christ-centered and others-centered.

Remember, Jesus was a perfect man. He was inwardly immune from all of the effects of sin. I wonder if he ever had a cold. He had a perfect body, but I don’t know whether he got sick or not. My suspicion is that His perfection extended to His physical life, but I’m not totally sure about that. But inwardly, at the control center of His life, was only perfection. His motives were always true-blue. What He said never had to be taken back. Every word was a well-crafted word from God.

But let’s think practically too. If Jesus asked for directions, or stopped to use the facilities, or was having lunch at the local pub, or was bathing, he probably talked like everyone else. But even then He was acting and speaking out of pure motives. Paul said to Titus, “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but even their minds and consciences are defiled.” Jesus was always pure. One hundred percent. His motives were right and second to none.

After Paul left Thessalonica, his enemies began to fabricate an attack on his character. They were Jews who opposed the message of the gospel. They, like the religious leaders of Jesus’ day, were opposed to a Jew embracing the message of Jesus as the Messiah. They believed that Jesus was an imposter and didn’t deserve the designation “Anointed One.” Therefore, it’s no wonder Paul uses his letters to the fledgling church to vindicate his true motives.

Motives are so important. They are the “why?” of why we do things; the fuel of our lives. Most of the time we are aware of our motives, aren’t we? Whether they are pure or not, we know what they are. Sometimes, however, I think even our own motives belie where we really are because we are confused from time to time. Upsetting circumstances can do this, as well as a challenge from someone who catches us off guard. Maybe we were going along thinking everything was just fine and out of the blue someone comes along and challenges our intentions. We shake our heads and look baffled because we honestly can’t say what motivated our actions or words.

Someone recently asked me about something I had said to her a while back. She wanted to know why I said it. Honestly, I didn't remember saying anything of the kind. She even remembered what she said back to me. She was concerned that my comment was negative against her. Well, I knew that I didn't feel any negative feelings about the subject she had brought up. As a matter of fact, I was pretty much ambivalent about it. I'm sure you have had a situation like this. Guessing someone else's motives is a tricky business. It's better to ask if you think it's important, like my friend did. I just wish she had given me the benefit of the doubt.

Paul makes several comments about his motives. These words will help us to think about what propels us too. Paul says that his true motive is to please God and that he was not as concerned about man's applause. Paul lived for an audience of One—God. This, of course, will force his critics to think of Paul's work for God and will remind them of his miraculous conversion to Christ. It's important to note that Paul was aware that God was testing his heart. He didn't need man's approval, because the Lord was weighing

his heart from day to day. I think this knowledge led him too. What I mean by this is that Paul would trust that God was directing him to go here or there and to do this or that, based on how strongly he believed the Lord was working on his heart.

Then Paul talks about flattery and greed. He makes it clear that these twins were not members of his family. He knew that he was not driven by self-promotion or affluence. He was a Jesus man all the way. He was doing what he was doing for God and not for any man.

What can we learn from this?

Think about our own motives. Confess bad motives for forgiveness.

Open our hearts to God's work in them.

Don't worry so much what people think about us.

Expect criticism if you make God the Leader of your life.

Ask God to help with your motives, that they would be pure.

God's blessings help us to check our motives,
Pastor Steve

experience. I have sat under doctors of theology and have heard some of the premiere teachers in the Christian church, but no speaker or seminar has come close to rivaling the education I received as I sat week after week with Mrs. Peak and bowed my head in prayer. You see, prayer is not learned by theory but by practice.

The thing that took me most off guard was the way God entered into our times and directed the conversation. There was a real sense that the Holy Spirit began at some point to direct our prayers in certain directions. One minute we were praying about this or that, and then out of the blue one of us raised a topic that each of us felt was very appropriate for the times we were living in. I guess I'd say we were in sync and hitting the "will of God target" while we prayed. That had to have been God's work, because if we were to merely try and figure it out on our own I know I couldn't pull it off.

Like all other Christian schools we needed students to survive. I was the principal and Mrs. Peak was a teacher who had taught there for 30-plus years. Therefore, pretty regularly we'd pray for the progress of the enrollment situation. Well, one day while we were praying it seemed like the Lord was putting a particular number in my mind for the next go-around of registrations. So I prayed about that number. When we finished, Mrs. Peak thought that was quite a faith step to ask about such a number, but she was more than happy to agree with me about it. When the numbers started to roll in and the superintendent was pleased beyond compare, Mrs. Peak and I simply looked heavenward and gave thanks. We knew where

our bread was buttered.

Paul prayed throughout his life. He prayed as a Pharisee. And when the Lord sent Ananias to find Paul in Damascus, He told him that Paul was praying. I'm sure the tenor of his prayers had changed dramatically after he met Jesus on the road. Before, prayer was about form and ritual. Now prayer was his link with the living Lord. Real praying is from the heart; it connects us to the Lord in a living way.

Paul's prayer in our reading today is that he would be able to once again visit the Thessalonians and build their faith. He talks about praying earnestly night and day so that this hope would become a reality. He wanted to be an encouragement to those he had won to Jesus. He wanted God's will for their lives, and would do all he could to see their spiritual development.

Notice the motive of Paul's prayers. Prayer is always more meaningful when it is accompanied by ministry to others. Then we can most certainly pray in the will of God and be assured that our prayers are on target. Remember that God looks at the heart and He wants to give us the pure desires of our hearts.

Have your prayers been dragging lately? Do you want to spend more time in prayer, but feel interrupted by TV and the radio and the phone? Take some time today to simply bow before the Lord and let Him move you in prayer one way or another. The Spirit will pray for us on the inside with expressions too deep for words (remember that from Romans 8?).

God's blessings meet us at prayer time,
Pastor Steve



"Pray Earnestly"

October 10 - 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

Let's Pray Every Day and in Every Way, "Excuse me, Lord," she said and got up in mid-sentence from prayer to answer her classroom door for a student. Mrs. Peak knew the secrets of prayer. I had learned early on in our association that prayer for her was more than a discipline; it was her life. She lived to pray and she prayed to live. I saw the fruits of a life of prayer wrapped up in that old-fashioned little lady and I wanted to know more about prayer's depths.

Time in prayer is never wasted. Prayer is to God,

as conversation is to bosom buddies. Prayer unites. Prayer is the vehicle for relationship. Prayer is the greatest privilege a person has on earth, and it glues people together with the oneness Jesus prayed about in His model prayer of John 17. We can squander time in many areas of our lives, but in prayer we will always go away with a sense of time well spent.

I was so impressed by Mrs. Peak's faithfulness that I asked her if she'd like to get together with me for prayer. That request turned into a classroom of experience that has not since been equaled in my

**“Moral Boundaries”**

October 11 - 1 Thessalonians 4: 1-18

God Always Gives Us Much Hope,
I was once in a taxicab barreling through the streets of Cairo, Egypt. It would have been quite a positive and memorable experience, except for the fact that my life was flashing before my eyes. It seemed to me like there were no rules of the road whatsoever. Cars were coming and going from all angles; the cabbie slowed only momentarily when he reached an intersection where cars were blocking his pathway. I don't think there was a speed limit either. We were bookin' it!

When there are no boundaries, life is chaotic. Recently a hurricane ravaged the southeastern part of our country. What was so upsetting in the aftermath of the storm was the rampant looting of homes and stores and businesses. People thought that the things that belonged to others could be theirs because of the circumstances. Stealing is stealing though, and the laws against stealing were declared by God to reflect the justice of His nature.

We all live within certain boundaries from day to day. Some of us like to push the limits of those boundaries in the name of freedom, but the truth is that we often hurt others or ourselves when we cross the lines God gave us.

Could you imagine a sporting event with no lines? What would a baseball game look like with no foul lines, base lines, bases, or umpires? How about a football field with no sidelines, yardage markers, or end zones? What about a basketball court with no boundaries, free throw lines, shot clock, or rules about fouls? It would be mayhem. No, the lines in our lives are good and I think most rational thinkers would agree. We like to compete within the limits set us for us, so that we feel like there is an equal playing field.

In our reading today Paul brings us back to the importance of sexual morality. He gives us the boundary lines that will enable us to live in a sexually healthy

way. His approach is to warn the church not to act like those without God, who blur the lines so badly that anything goes, no matter what the consequences or who's hurt. He says that the Gentiles erase the lines and do whatever feels good at the time. They do not practice self-control or discipline their bodies to do the right thing. Not unlike the free love (actually free sex) movement in America in the '60s and '70s, Paul witnessed the moral bankruptcy of his culture in the first century. The lines may have been blurred by the culture around him, but in Paul's mind the standard for a child of God remained crystal clear, according to God's blueprint.

God created man to be either celibate or monogamous. He created man and woman in His own image so that they could experience meaningful relationships. This "intercourse," this "dialogue" was designed to be a microcosm of the relationship God desires with all of us. God wants us to treat one another with respect. We are not built to use other human beings for our own gratification. This includes images of humans that can so easily pull us into their web.

Remember the state of things before the flood and before the destruction of Sodom? Sexual immorality was out of control. People were using whoever they "needed" to fulfill their own base desires.

Make no mistake about it, the devil is on the loose and he has an eraser in his hand to try to get rid of the moral boundaries in your life. When he came to the first couple in the garden he spoke cunning words about how exalted they would feel once they disobeyed God. They would be like gods, he said. He encourages the same thing with sexual sin. He tempts you to do the sexually secret and naughty thing in order to give your life some pizzazz. He tells you that what you're missing out on is an extra-marital affair where you will experience adrenaline-producing power, and the sensation of being on top of the world.

What he doesn't tell you is that you will fall off that mountain so fast you'll wish you had never heard his hissing words. James says that we ought to resist the devil and draw near to God. Once near to God, we will be able to see the boundaries that keep us safely away from a world of hurt and regret.

Paul makes it clear that the principles he shares are not the words of men, but the words of God.

Therefore, if you reject them, you reject God. He also reminds us that we have the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the counselor, the helper, the comforter who makes Jesus distinct for us. He will remind us of the truth and bring the playing field back into focus.

God's blessings are within the lines,
Pastor Steve

**“Good Spiritual Advice”**

October 12 - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28

How are Things Going?

Do you ever take a power nap? The secret is not to fall asleep for too long. If you do you'll be in trouble because you'll wake up groggy and cranky. On the other hand, a 10-minute break for zzz's can give you the pick-me-up you need to keep going. Since my alarm on my watch broke I've been having trouble keeping it to only ten minutes though.

Paul is a master at giving us spiritual boosts, like little power naps for the day. At the end of 1 Thessalonians he strings together several poignant points for us to use. They're kind of like spiritual vitamins. The more regularly we take them the better. And before you know it, we'll feel much more spiritually fit. Another way to look at it is by using a dumbbell illustration. The heavier the weights we lift and the more often we lift them, the more progress we will make in our program. If we were to liken that fact to these truths in 1 Thessalonians, we can see that we need to practice them regularly before we will see any progress in our spiritual discipline. Just like the power nap gives us a new start in the day, we need spiritual refreshers too.

Let's catalog Paul's words and make a comment or two on each of his points:

Honor your leaders. Take the time to pray for your leaders and from time to time let them know

that you are supportive of them. Encourage them.

Live in peace. Practice being as peaceful toward others as you possibly can. Avoid arguments that are not constructive. Let Christ's peace dwell in you.

Be assertive in reaching out to others. Some people are idle, others are timid and some are just weak. Paul asks us to reach out and encourage each kind of person. Is there someone in your life right now whom you could encourage?

Practice kindness. Were you kind to others today? If not, there's always tomorrow.

Always be joyful. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Be full of the Spirit and practice being joyful. Remember, it takes focus on Christ to be joyful in difficult times or circumstances. Take a look at Acts 16 where Paul and Silas are in jail and still worshipping God.

Pray.

Give thanks. God wants this.

Listen to the Spirit. Be open to the Spirit talking to you and leading you. Take a moment right now to open your heart to the work of the Spirit. Paul qualifies this advice by saying we must be careful not to equate every impression we get with the Spirit. Test every impression with the solid Word of God. Anything contrary to the Word is not of the Spirit.

Do people ever ask you for spiritual help or ad-

2 THESSALONIANS



Day 286

“Take Heart, Judgment Is Coming”

October 13 - 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

God's Grace To You,
In the end no one will “get away” with anything. It would be better to come clean now, because a day of reckoning is on the horizon. No man can hide from the God who knows all and sees all. Second Thessalonians, like much of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, was written to clear up misconceptions about apocalyptic events that would shortly come to pass. Paul had it on good authority that the judgments of God would “soon” descend on those who rejected the Savior during his time here on earth. This explains some of the cryptic statements Jesus made right at the end of His life:

While being led to crucifixion, the Bible says, “A large number of people followed Him, including women who mourned and wailed for Him. Jesus turned and said to them, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then, “they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!” For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Luke 23: 26-31).

“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nurs-

ing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled,” (Luke 21: 20-24).

“As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, ‘If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you,” (Luke 19: 41-44).

After Jesus was crucified and resurrected, the Holy Spirit established the church. The gospel was then extended to the Gentiles, but the Jews as a whole rejected the message and the ministry of their former colleague, Paul. Wherever Paul went, the Jews opposed him. These opponents of his would follow up his visits with slanderous and misleading accusations. People were then forced to go with the flow by conforming to the general attitude of the Jewish leaders, or show themselves to be dissenters by going with Paul's message of salvation in Jesus.

Let's go back to the first letter to the Thessalonians and quote Paul there:

“You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all

vice? Take a look at the spiritual ammunition we just covered. Any of these areas would be a good place to take someone who was interested in spiritual insight. It's good to have this kind of help available so you can go to it in time of need. God will use these short thoughts at just the right time so that you can build someone up.

Have you ever been with someone who needed to find a Word from God to help them and your mind went blank? That has happened to me more times than I can tell you. Can you see yourself using this chapter to guide someone closer to the Lord? Think about how simple that might be.

For example, a friend is feeling upset because of her circumstances and she doesn't know what to do. I would ask her to carve out a bit of time to have a heart to heart talk with God. I would simply invite her to pray about her circumstances and commit them to God. I might ask her if she believed that God was in charge of her circumstances and at work in her life? If so, we could talk about the reasons to give thanks. Hopefully this would excite faith in her so that she could go away trusting the Lord rather than her circumstances.

What if a person thinks that God is telling them to do something? We can pull out of this chapter some very helpful advice. First of all, it needs time for

testing. Is it in line with God's Word? Does it correspond with the way God deals with people generally in the Word? Is it a good thing? Does it have any evil connotations? Do the good and avoid the evil. God is not telling you to leave your spouse for that guy at work. That's evil. Has someone been on your heart to help financially? That's good, go ahead. Should you take that step up at work even though it means stepping on someone else to get there? That doesn't sound good; avoid a move like that. Put it all to the test before you make a rash decision. People make unadvised decisions every day and the consequences can be very disastrous.

Which applications do you see? Take a few minutes today to apply something in your life to 1 Thessalonians 5. The truth is unified, but the applications are endless. Try them on for size and then share them with a friend.

The more we are in the Bible, the more we will feel comfortable giving it to others. First though, let's get in the habit of applying it to ourselves. We need to build ourselves up in the Lord so that we can build others.

Rejoice in Jesus Always.

God's blessings come in bite-size pieces,
Pastor Steve

men in their efforts to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last," (2:14-16).

I tend to believe that what Paul is talking about in 2 Thessalonians is a fulfillment of what Jesus said in the gospels. Paul is simply piggybacking on what the Lord has already said, applying it to the difficult times the church is having with the Jewish persecutors. In 70 AD the Romans fulfilled these prophecies of judgment, devastating the city of Jerusalem under the forces of Titus. The descriptions of that annihilation are very similar to the apocalyptic imagery given by both Jesus and Paul.

Let's quote the Jewish historian Josephus on the destruction of Jerusalem to give you a taste of what that time was like.

"Josephus then describes the Romans burning the temple and placing Jerusalem under the ban: 'While the holy house was on fire, everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught were slain; nor was there a commiseration of any age, or any reverence of gravity; but children and old men, and profane persons, and priests, were all slain in the same manner; so that this war went round all sorts of men, and brought them to

destruction..." (The Last Days According to Jesus, R.C. Sproul, p. 121).

If nothing else, the destruction of Jerusalem diverted the attention of those who were doggedly persecuting believers in Jesus. The devastation in the holy city traumatized the entire nation of Jews, no matter where they lived. Therefore, it ushered in a time of peace for the church, whereas before they were the target of much cruelty. You can go back to Acts 17 to read about Paul's missionary work among them.

Are you being mistreated in some way because of your beliefs in the Lord? Have your former friends been talking about you behind your back? Do you sometimes feel isolated because the people around you do not understand the spiritual changes in your life? Eventually the Lord will take care of all that. He is patiently giving room for the persecutors to turn.

Remember Paul. He too was once an ardent antagonist of the church. In his own words, he said that he ravaged it. So you be patient also. God will take care of the judgment part of things in His own good timing. In the meantime...

Rejoice in Jesus Always.

God's blessings will come after judgment,

Pastor Steve



"A Legend In His Own Mind"

October 14 - The man of sin, 2 Thessalonians 2: 1-17

The devil is real. He is at work in the world doing nothing but unbridled bad stuff. He figured in the Biblical story from the beginning and he will be there in the end. Then he will be thrown into the lake of fire alongside the beast and the false prophet of the beast. In that lake he will remain forever.

The devil has subjects. I'd call them friends, but I think they are merely subject to him because of

their decision to follow at one point or another. The Apostle John said, "...the whole world lies in the power of the evil one," (1 John 5:19). Wouldn't it be awful to switch sides and then realize it wasn't as good as you thought it would be, but there was no way back? Revelation 12 indicates that the devil was cast out of heaven with a host of demons; these were merely bad angels who went Satan's rebellious way.

The devil is full of himself. It was pride that got him in the beginning and it is pride that keeps him deceiving those under his control. In Daniel an evil being, probably the devil but maybe the Anti-Christ or Beast, is mentioned several times. He aspires to be God. He is puffed up and thinks more highly of himself than he really is. "By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great," (Daniel 8:25). In several places the Bible says, "He shall speak words against the Most High," (Daniel 7:25). In Revelation Chapter 13, which is full of info on the Beast, it says, "And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words..." (13:5). The devil is a legend in his own mind. He is the most self-absorbed individual in the universe.

Notice above that the Beast is given a mouth of blasphemy. Who is in control of the Beast? The devil, who else? He is the mastermind behind the rebellion against God up to the very end. Paul assures the Thessalonians that the coming of the Lord hasn't happened yet because before this event the apostasy (falling away) will occur and the man of lawlessness will be unveiled. Again, who is behind this man? That wicked devil who has caused so much death and destruction in the world. Jesus said that his purpose was to rob, kill and destroy (John 10:10). He's a bad apple through and through.

Believers ought to focus on Jesus Christ, not the devil. Victory over the devil is through Christ, through his cross and His power. At the cross Jesus disarmed spiritual wickedness and the devil. Now, we shouldn't be ignorant of the enemy's schemes, we just shouldn't major on dealing with the devil. Even James says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Resist the devil and he will flee from you," (James 4:8)

Paul makes it clear that when the devil moves powerfully in the world will be an indication of the end times. He is described as a "man of lawlessness." He makes his own laws and does things in his own way.

He acts like God. The problem for the devil is that his wickedness will be judged when the Lord comes, and then he will be consumed by the fire that proceeds from the Lord's mouth. In Revelation this judgment is described as coming as a sword out of Christ's mouth. These images are ways of describing the retribution that he will receive for all of the evil he is responsible for throughout history.

End times issues are like a patchwork quilt. In different books we get pieces to that quilt, each containing clues to many of the events of the end. But we do not get a full picture of the way all events will come down. Especially confusing is the chronology. The sequence of events is hard to discern. Maybe God doesn't want us to focus on this. I would think if He did, then He would have made the events more clear. One thing is for sure: in the end God will prevail, the devil will be judged, the people of God will be vindicated and the unbelievers will be judged according to their works at the Great White Throne Judgment.

The coming of the Lord hasn't occurred yet. It will occur, in God's timing. In the meantime we are called to be faithful and wait. Sooner or later it will happen or we will die and be with the Lord. The second coming is mentioned to motivate us to serve the Lord now—to occupy ourselves faithfully until He comes so that when He does come we may be found doing the things He wants us to do.

We should also learn from the devil's pride. He thought he could go it alone. He didn't need God. I hear people say that from time to time, indicating that they think God is a crutch. Independence from God is folly, because He is the one who holds all things together. When He wraps things up someday it will not be good to be disconnected from Him.

God's blessings come to those looking for His coming,

Pastor Steve

**“Not Busy...Busybodies”**

October 15 - 2 Thessalonians 3: 1-18

I believe that time is our most precious gift. Each of us has the same allotment and each of us decides what to do with it.

Do you use your time or does the clock control you? Do you have the time to do the things that you believe are the most important? That's a silly question. Of course we have the time to do the important things, but the problem is that instead we often elect to do the things that are of least importance because they scream for our attention. The tyranny of the urgent is a mean bully who manipulates us unwittingly to do the things that add up to...well...nothing.

It seems like the good life would be a life of idle ease, of constant relaxation and the freedom to do a whole lot of nothing. Imagine swinging in your hammock throughout the afternoon hours, snoozing and dreaming and unhindered. Now that would be “the life.”

People dream of a life like that, but when they reach retirement it usually isn't what they thought it would be. As a matter of fact, I often do funerals for men who die just after reaching retirement. A man like this will have worked all of his life to experience the “good life” and then when it comes, he realizes everything he's losing by saying goodbye to employment. He no longer has the discipline of the time clock or the camaraderie of his fellow workers or the purpose for which he worked all of those years. Grief for all that can hit a guy pretty hard.

It might be too easy to pick on the retired guy. What about the guy who lives for the weekend? What about the guy who feels like he deserves a diversion from the grind? He engulfs himself in the pleasures of weekend mania. Sports and movies and games and new toys dominate his weekly routine. Is that so wrong? Or the guy who spends the entire weekend on the couch mindlessly viewing whatever comes on the tube next. Doesn't he deserve that? I guess it depends

on whether you want to use your time for yourself and selfish pursuits or for what matters. It is really up to us to decide how we will use our time.

Among the Thessalonians were those who were idle and busybodies. They lived to meddle in the affairs of others, but really had no personal purpose. I'm sure many had adopted the attitude I sometimes hear today, which is that the coming of the Lord is so imminent that we ought to pull up a chair and forget about hard work. We'll get caught up in the clouds any day now for sure. They were using the coming of Jesus as an excuse to stop working. So they sponged off of others. Paul has some very harsh warnings for the person who adopts this attitude.

Look how the apostle appeals to the Lord's authority: “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anybody's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat.’”

Wow; now that is as plain as day. God does not want his church to be a breeding ground for leeches. He wants each of us to take responsibility for our own walk with Him and live in a purposeful way.

Paul told Timothy the same thing: “...they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to,” (1 Timothy 5: 13).

The old adage “idleness is the devil's workshop” is

very accurate. We must watch ourselves and examine the way we are going so that we do not get sidetracked from the Way. Yes, there is a way that seems right to a man but the end of that thinking is disaster. To go God's way is to live in the light of His Word and seek to honor Him with all of our lives.

Start with prayer. Make a time with God the first priority and then go from there. Prayer is the vehicle

by which we draw near to God and invite Him to guide and direct us. God Himself will teach us about love and walking in the light of His counsel.

Idleness leads to sin.

Purposefulness leads to God's honor.

God's blessings are wrought with calloused hands,

Pastor Steve