



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Thessalonians 3: 6-18

Lesson 6

Summer 2020

"The Christian Work Ethic"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Seth. And good morning to all of you. It is good to see things kind of returning to normal, and increasingly having more people here on a Sunday morning. Good to have you, and hello to all of you out there—good to have you with us, too. We're finishing up our study this morning in 2 Thessalonians. We began chapter 3 last week, a rather short passage. This is much more lengthy, but we're going to look at verses 6-18. 2 Thessalonians 3 verse 6,

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, <sup>8</sup> nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; <sup>9</sup> not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to

work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. <sup>13</sup> But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

<sup>16</sup> Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!

<sup>17</sup> I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. <sup>18</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

## 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-18

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of studying it together. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

Father, it is a great privilege and pleasure to be with Your people on this Lord's day. What a blessing it is, and we pray that You would bless us in our assembly this morning; here and those who are watching on the live feed. We're all together, if not in body, certainly in Spirit. And we pray Your special ministry to each one of us. We pray that You would bless us, that Paul's instruction here, which is a very practical instruction, would be made very clear to us and the application would be made to us by the Spirit of God.

So may we learn to follow the instruction that's here and be witnesses for You in this world. We look to You to bless. Lord, Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 14 that You are not a God of confusion. You are a God of order and You want us to live fruitful and orderly lives. And we learn that from our passage this morning. And so bless us with that. May we honor You in our behavior. The world is watching us, and we are living in dark and confused and disorderly times; rebellious times. May we be witnesses in the things that we do. We pray Your blessing upon us in that way. Bless us spiritually.

Bless us with a greater knowledge of You. Bless us with a greater likeness to Christ. Sanctify us, Father.

Bless us spiritually; but Father, we pray that You would bless us materially, physically as well. We know all of us have issues, and there are some who have protracted problems, physical problems. We pray Your blessing upon all. We pray that You keep them safe and healthy. We pray that for the entire congregation. Keep us healthy.

We're taught today by the apostle about work. That's our subject, and we want to work. So we pray, Lord, You'd bless our workers, the workers in this body, those who have jobs, those who provide for themselves and for their families. We pray that You would bless those who own businesses. We pray that You preserve their business, prosper them, bless those men and women who are providing for themselves, who have jobs. And we pray that You'd keep those jobs, preserve those jobs. And there are some who are in between jobs, some are without work at this time. And we pray that You would provide for them open doors of opportunity. So we pray You'd bless us. Bless our land. Give our leaders wisdom to make the best decisions for our country, and do so in this very critical time in which we live. So we pray that You would provide.

Lord, in this time You can do a great awakening among us. And I pray for that. That's really great need we have. It's not physical, it's spiritual. Awaken people to the need of the Savior. And may we be lights in that way.

Lord, all the praise goes to You, our Triune God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. So we pray now You'd bless us as we sing our next hymn, and prepare our hearts for a time of study together. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

I am an occasional reader of spy novels. I've mentioned that before. Exclusively the books of John le Carré. One of his characters is the spy master, George Smiley. He's an unlikely hero. There's nothing dashing about him. His hobby is collecting old books. He seems more suited for an Oxford lecture hall than the lurid world of espionage.

His strength is his mind. On one occasion he spoke of how he would handle an enemy agent that he compared to a rogue elephant, charging out of the thicket. He said he would bring it down; but with minimum of force. In other words, with as little collateral damage as possible.

I thought of that statement as I was studying our passage, because that was Paul's approach to problem solving. It's a wise one. He restored sinners gently—with concern and without a heavy hand. We see that in our text and in the counsel he gave for the right way to correct bad behavior. It's a good lesson for us. It's the last lesson in our study of 2 Thessalonians and so I would summarize the book and Paul's reason for writing it in three ways. He wrote first to comfort the saints in their suffering. Secondly, to correct false teaching that was confusing them. And thirdly, to command the lazy among them to work.

That last is our subject and Paul spilled a lot of ink on it, from verses 6 through 15. That's almost as much space as he gave to correcting the false teaching on “the day of the Lord” back in chapter 2. Now that shows the importance of this subject of work, and the deadliness of laziness—idleness. Now we know the importance of that just by reading the Proverbs, which extol industry and rebuke sloth. "Go to the ant, O sluggard. Observe her ways and be wise.", Proverbs 6, verse 6.

And here Paul gives a proverb of his own, "If anyone would not work, neither should he eat." Now you might think that seems pretty heavy handed, depriving people of food. Paul was firm, but he was not unkind, and he was not unreasonable. His purpose was always to restore. And his means were always just.

William Bradford, the first governor of the Pilgrims colony in Plymouth, Massachusetts, used that verse, famously, I think, to his great advantage during an early crisis in the settlement. They had a bad economic system to begin with. Everything they produced was put in a common store. Everyone got the same amount, whether they worked six days or worked three days. And you can imagine that affected the motivation of those who were working diligently. And the result was production was low.

Then some new settlers joined the colony who were lazy, who didn't work at all. And so the governor enforced Paul's rule. If anyone would not work, neither should he eat. And it didn't take long, just a few days, and they started working. He also changed the economy. He divided the common field among the families, to give them ownership. So they owned private property, and they supported themselves. As a result they worked harder, they produced a surplus.

Now that's basic capitalism. But that's not Paul's lesson here, at the end of 2 Thessalonians. He had a higher motive for his work ethic than profit. It was 'adorning the doctrine.' It was 'glorifying God' in one's behavior. He begins by telling the earnest Christian in the church to withdraw from the idle believer. Here they are called, "those who lead an unruly life." Maybe a number of them, there may be one of them, but they're described as leading an unruly life. But the word *unruly* really means 'idle' or 'lazy'. I think this is the only place where this word is used, and the context makes it clear. These are idle people. These are lazy people.

And another possible translation of this verse is, "stand aloof from them." And the purpose of the instruction is to give these people who are in error in their behavior, give them no support in their error. Because what they were doing is very serious; it is a moral failure. I would say, as I think about this, that for the apostle Paul, doctrinal error always had first priority and correction. Now that's probably true to say of all the apostles. Doctrinal error is of first importance, because it was spiritually deadly. And it always affects behavior, affects it in the negative way.

"As he thinks, so he is," Proverbs 23, verse 7. The way a person thinks affects the way he or she behaves. And that goes back to the importance of doctrine. In fact, many commentators see this problem of not working as due to their belief in that error that Paul corrected in chapter 2 about "the day of the Lord." And they're thinking, "Well, why work? It's "the day of the Lord", and the Lord's coming soon. The second coming was about to arrive. It's near. There's no point in working."

And that's possible. That's a possible interpretation. But the fact is, laziness is always a potential problem. Work is hard. Work is good. It's a blessing. We were created

to work. In fact, in the garden, Adam, his work was really considered worship. And we worship God in the way we work. But after he fell, things changed. The ground was cursed. It promised to bear thorns and thistles, so that he would eat his bread only in the sweat of his face. And so it is for mankind. All work takes effort. It's hard. So everyone is tempted to take the easy path. Some less than others. Some are self-starters, some are just diligent, some are workaholics, some may swing to the other side. But everyone, to some extent, is tempted to take the easy path.

But however we see this problem here in Thessaloniki, there is always the temptation to cut corners; to slack off. Paul treated this as very important. Moral error, for him, was deadly; like doctrinal error is. And here he deals with it firmly. He told them to keep away from those people. —"Stand aloof."

Now he didn't cut them off completely from fellowship. He considered them believers. In verse 15 he says that these people are to be treated as believers. He considered them believers. He says, "They are not an enemy." And so they were to admonish these people; he says, "admonish him as a brother," maybe with a particular person in mind. But in order to do that they had to have some social contact with this individual, or these individuals. But they were not to engage in close fellowship. They were to impress on him or on these offenders, these idlers, the seriousness of their error.

Paul had given them instruction before. He refers to it here as, "the tradition which you received from us." In 1 Thessalonians 4, he gave instruction on work. So this evidently was an ongoing problem.

But in addition to this instruction, Paul also set an example. And in the next verses he reminds them of his conduct and how he and his friends lived when they were among them in Thessaloniki. Verse 7, "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you..." That means they were not idle when they were there. Their conduct was not lazy. "...nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you..." (vs8).

Very likely they stayed in the home of Jason. And we can gather that from the circumstances of that first visit to Thessaloniki that's recorded in Acts 17, in verse 5. Because after Paul left the synagogue with some Jews and Gentiles who had believed, after they were really driven out of the synagogue, those of the synagogue and some others that they gathered from the city square, attacked Jason's house, where people were staying. So evidently they thought Paul was there, and Silas and Timothy were guests, probably because he was there or he'd been there.

So the Thessalonians knew all of that. They knew Paul's life, and that of Silas and Timothy, how they behaved among them while they were staying there with Jason, and how Paul and the others conducted themselves. They didn't accept any free hospitality. They paid for everything. They paid for their rent, they paid for their food. It would not have been wrong to have accepted hospitality. In fact, Jesus taught, "...the worker is worthy of his support.", Matthew 10, verse 10. And Paul knew that. He says it in verse 8. In fact, he accepted a gift from the Philippians while he was there in Thessaloniki. He refers to that in Philippians, chapter 4, verse 16.

So Paul was not against taking help or assistance. But things were different in Thessaloniki. He did not want to give any impression that he was there for personal gain. He wasn't trading on the Gospel. And he didn't want to be a burden to any of them. Remember, (and we know this from 2 Corinthians), that these were poor saints. These churches in Macedonia, northern Greece, were very poor, and he was very mindful of that. But he wanted to impress upon them this great truth, and that is, 'the Gospel is free'. —There are no strings attached. And to give that message very clearly, Paul and the others worked, and they worked night and day to support themselves.

It was a model for them, for these Thessalonians. That's what Paul said, a model of the Gospel that 'grace is free' and a model for them—for the Thessalonians' behavior, —it is good to work and not be a burden on others. So Paul's instruction has the weight or authority of a consistent example behind it. He practiced what he preached. He and the others worked hard, night and day.

Again, they had seen this problem of indolence before when they were there. Paul says in verse 10, that's when they had laid down the rule, "...if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either." Now there's been some speculation on this statement that he makes here in verse 10. It has the sense of a proverb about it, so some have wondered, did Paul invent this statement? Is it his proverb, or did he get it from someplace else? And it seems, from the study that's been given on that, that this is the oldest version of it, so it seems it was Paul's expression. He coined this proverb. But still, the principle behind it is found in other places, such as Proverbs 16, verse 26. "A worker's appetite works for him, For his hunger urges him *on*."

God created us with an innate mechanism to move us to work. That's our appetite. Self-preservation. So here Paul was saying, "We'll let that work. We'll let that principle work. We'll let hunger have its way. Their appetite will guide them to the right behavior." But on the moral side of it, it is right to work. It's wrong to live off other people's hard labor. Idleness should not be rewarded. It's not healthy. It's not healthy psychologically for the person who doesn't work. It doesn't elevate a person, it doesn't ennoble a person. In fact, it causes a person to become dependent, and that is not proper in and of itself for the person.

But Paul's real point here is it's wrong to do that; "Don't support them in bad behavior", is what he's instructing the Thessalonians here. That's Paul's main meaning here. It is a moral issue.

And bad behavior not only is bad in and of itself, for it, of course, breeds further bad behavior. Paul gives an example of that in verse 11 to support the action he has directed them to take; Idlers become meddlers. Verse 11, "For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies."

Now they were not doing that because of external circumstances, such as health issues or persecution. These were internal reasons—bad choices. Sometimes people can't work for legitimate reasons. That wasn't the case here. This is laziness. We are not

made to be inactive. So if people don't have work to fill their time, then they will fill it with something else.

And the idle in the Thessalonian church had become busybodies. They'd become meddlers. Paul used a play on words to make his point in the Greek text and it doesn't really translate over into the English text. But some have tried to produce this play on words with the translation that, "they had become busybodies instead of being busy."

What made this essentially problematic is, as Paul indicated in verse 10, they had given instruction on work and laziness earlier, when they were there at Thessaloniki on that second missionary journey. And still the problem continued. These people weren't responding to Paul's instruction. The problem had only gotten worse. People were filling their time with useless and harmful activity, interfering in people's lives, gossiping. So due to the disobedience, Paul had to take this stern action against them. Given in verse 6, "Keep away from the brother who leads a lazy life. Stand aloof from him."

But he also gave some positive instruction for the idler, some positive direction. He gives that next in verse 12, "Now such persons, we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion, and eat their own bread." This command and exhortation is, "in the Lord Jesus Christ", meaning it was given in the full authority of Christ. So this is not just Paul, the man, giving instruction but the Lord's instruction. But it's not new. It is essentially the instruction that he gave back in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, verse 11. And there he told them, "...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." So he had commanded them that when they were there. Then he wrote the first epistle, because this was still a problem. And that's the instruction that he reminded them that he had given—and here he's having to do it again.

Now that itself suggests to me that this was not the response of these Thessalonians to the false teaching about "the day of the Lord." It was already a problem before that confusion occurred, maybe before they even heard the Gospel. More likely, this was a kind of cultural problem. They were Greeks. And Greeks believed that labor was degrading. Manual labor, working with their hands, was beneath a Greek

to work in that way. Paul corrected that in 1 Thessalonians 4:11. Labor is not beneath them. Labor is noble. Adam worked with his hands in the garden. That was established before the fall. And while we are able, we are to engage in it. While we have the ability, while we have the opportunity, we are to do it. We are to engage in work.

That's essential to the Christian life. In fact, in my mind this is the basic Christian life. We think of being an obedient Christian, a bold Christian. We think of that in terms of giving the Gospel, witnessing, and traveling to foreign lands maybe—this kind of thing. And, of course, that is. That's sacrificial, and it's bold, and it's good. And we need to be men and women who exhibit the Gospel. But this is really the basic Christian life, summed up in these two simple verses. 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 11, 2 Thessalonian 3, verse 2. "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life. Attend to your own business. Work with your hands." That's an orderly life. Be faithful in the basics—in the fundamental things. Lead a quiet life. Here Paul says, "Work in quiet fashion." Don't get involved in other people's business.

I heard some good advice once, not all that long ago. I don't remember who gave it to me, but the advice is, "Don't give advice unless you're asked." Now sometimes we need to do that. We have to intervene. Paul was doing that here. They didn't ask him for advice. He's giving what they needed to know. But generally, I think that's a good rule.

But a quiet life is more than silence. It is a tranquil life—the opposite of a restless life. It's also an active life, and an orderly life, a life that involves the home life and the work life. —Family life and business life. That's what Paul is speaking of in 1 Thessalonian 4, verse 11. He urged the Thessalonians to attend to their own business and work with their hands. Be productive. Be a good neighbor. Be a friend. And support their family. Don't be dependent on others to do that. That's our first responsibility.

And take care of others. You could ... as a corollary to this is Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 28, where Paul tells those who are thieves "to steal no longer, but labor, work with your hands, so you can provide for yourself." But you'll have something to help others with who are in need. So we're to help others. People are in need, and we need

to assist them. This is a different problem that Paul is dealing with here. He's telling them to be responsible individuals, with their own personal lives.

So, live responsibly. Within the home, we're to be faithful to one another. Husbands and wives to each other. Fidelity is fundamental to a good home, to the proper home life that Paul was describing here. It's fundamental to godliness. Fidelity, faithfulness. We need to speak the Gospel, as I mentioned. Be missionaries, be evangelists. Wherever we are to give the Gospel. Speak it when we have the opportunity.

But listen, our words will fall on deaf ears if our life is disorderly and not consistent with the grace of God—not consistent with the very message we preach. And so after giving that advice to the indolent among them, Paul tells the rest of the congregation, in verse 13, to continue doing good. In other words, don't be influenced by the lazy.

That, it seems, was a big part of the problem for the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Those who didn't work hard received as much as those who worked hard. So the diligent, as I mentioned earlier, began to slack off. Paul, here, was saying, "Don't be influenced like that. Don't be influenced by the lazy. Follow our example, not the example of those lazy people. Continue to do good", meaning, "continue to work hard to the glory of God. God honors that."

People who are disobedient in any number of ways can have an adverse effect on others. Disobedience is contagious. So Paul's counsel to the vigilant was resist. Persevere. Do not grow weary in doing good. His counsel is clear and strong. But again, as we've seen, there was some history with this problem. Paul gave this instruction before without compliance from these idle Christians.

So anticipating that some might not obey, he reinforces his instruction on how they were to be treated. And while he is firm, it's worth noting how, as Leon Morris said, "He kept a brotherly tone." We see that here, in verses 14 and 15. "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. *Yet* do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

Paul was not eager to punish people or exile them. In fact, just the opposite. His goal was to restore the wayward, to win back and put that person or those people on the right path—the righteous path. Again, they were to be firm. They were to withdraw fellowship to make their shame, (that is the shame of these lazy individuals), clear to them. It was punishment. It was discipline. But the person was still regarded as a brother.

This person or persons had ignored Paul's instruction in the first letter. He was stubborn. Still, verse 15 shows warmth and concern for him on the part of the apostle. He was guided by a spirit of love in the way he dealt with these individuals. Paul even defends this person, or these people. He states that he's not an enemy.

Here's the reality: Believers go astray. Human nature is weak. We're not at that place of perfection yet. We are being sanctified, and the Lord is changing us, and ideally we are on a progressive road upward, and we are developing and becoming increasingly like Christ. But we are still weighed down with sin, the sin that's in us. That's what Paul speaks of in Romans 7 and Galatians 5.

Sin is enticing. But it is also a web, and one that's hard to extract ourselves from; easy to become entangled in it because it's so enticing, but very difficult to get out of. So the wayward need help; but help that avoids a lot of collateral damage. Christians can be critical. Christians can be severe. Paul didn't want this individual, or these individuals so wounded by the church that it would have been hard for him or them or her to rejoin the fellowship. So to reconcile him with the best result, he counseled these believers, these Christians in Thessaloniki to treat him with the best motives—from love and with minimum of force.

This is serious business, correcting the sinner. —Takes wisdom to do this properly. And takes love, and it takes concern. And that means it takes a lot of prayer and a lot of thought. Takes maturity to do that. And Paul guided the thinking of the

church here by reminding them that the offender is not an enemy, but one of the family, a brother. That means he or she was one for whom Christ died..."So help him."

What all of this tells us is there was evidently a division within the church. Not only with those who, here in chapter 3, wouldn't work but those in chapter 2 who were confused about doctrine. So, Paul ends his letter with a prayer that he offers to them. And this is typical of Paul's letters, but certainly he had their situation in mind when he gives this prayer in verse 16, "Now, may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!"

Christ is the Lord of peace. He desires peace in His family. Not peace at the expense of truth. Truth is paramount. Without it we lose the Gospel. And when we lose the Gospel we'll lose everything. We must be very precise in our understanding of the truth, and rightly divide it. We need to battle for the truth. But He desires harmony in the church. And peace is more than simply the absence of hostility. It's also prosperity. That has a positive aspect to it. And He wants His people to have that prosperity, spiritual prosperity, growing in grace and knowledge, the knowledge of Christ, the knowledge of the Triune God.

They had to look to Him. That's what they need to do. And Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the great promise that Christ gave to His disciples when he prayed, "The Lord be with you all!" And that's the promise that the Lord gave, more than once, but gave at the end of Matthew, in Matthew 28 verse 20, is that, 'He is always with His people, and He will never forsake us to the end of the age.' So they had every reason to seek correction and expect peace through obedience to the Lord.

Now he ends the letter with his autograph, which is what authenticates this letter as genuine. That's what he says, verse 17, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write." Paul typically dictated his letters, (and that was typically done in antiquity.) The book of Romans, for example, was written down by Tertius. Maybe Silas was his amanuensis

here, his secretary. But toward the end, he would typically take the pen in hand, and he would write the last few verses himself. For example, he wrote a number of verses at the end of Galatians. In Galatians 6, verse 11, he wrote, "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand." Literally that is more, "See with what large letters I wrote to you with my own hand." And some feel he's not referring to the last verses but the entire letter of the book of Galatians, and he wrote with large letters. And that may be. But typically he would write the last few verses. And apparently he wrote with large, sprawling letters. And that was the unmistakable style of the apostle. He calls it, "a distinguishing mark in every letter."

His reason for pointing that out to them probably goes back to chapter 2, verse 2, where he made reference to a message or a letter as if from us. But it wasn't. It was a forgery, and it had disturbed the people with false teaching. Because everything in that letter had contradicted everything that Paul had taught to them. It was false. And so he's making the point here that he has this distinguishing mark, that this is his personal signature, as it were, with this evidently peculiar, distinctive style of his handwriting. And it showed that this letter, this letter that we've been studying, 2 Thessalonians, is genuine and authoritative.

Paul ends his letter, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." I think the 'all' at the end of the verse includes those brothers and sisters who were in error and disobedient. And it shows his concern and affection for the whole flock of God there in Thessaloniki. That was a typical conclusion to Paul's letters, but not a mere formality. It expressed his desire and prayer that the Lord continued to supply them with grace. There would be no reconciliation and peace apart from the grace of God.

That was true then, it is true now. We constantly live on God's grace, for our relationship with Him, and our relationships with one another. Marriages cannot survive apart from the sovereign grace of God. Children will not grow up to be faithful servants of the Lord apart from the sovereign grace of God. And churches cannot survive in this

world apart from grace. We are always under attack, whether we realize it or not. That's the reality.

We're under attack from the evil one. We live in a very material world, and we're impressed with that from the world that that's what this world is, it's simply material. But the apostle's make it clear. Paul makes it very clear in Ephesians 6, we live in a very spiritual world. There is a spiritual dimension that we do not see, and we are always under attack from it. And so we need the grace of God.

Well, Paul knew this very well. He knew about the condition of the church very well. He knew about the attack that the church was under constantly. And we learn about his concern from this from 2 Corinthians 11, where he gives a list of the trials and the difficulties that he, as an apostle, had suffered. And in a long list of labors and hardships, he wrote of "...the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches." (vs28). Paul was painfully aware of the constant dangers the church and that the Christians faced at all times. "Who is led into sin, he said, without my intense concern?" (vs29).

Would that we had that kind of concern for this church, and for other churches, and for one another. "Intense concern". That was Paul. He loved the church. He prayed daily for the churches. And his final prayer is an example of that. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." And he meant it.

It reminds us, we are never in such a safe place that we don't need to look to the Lord and seek His help. We are always in a time of need, and must look to Him alone for grace and peace. And by His grace He will use us to help each other if we, or if one of us, should ever drift off into error. And if that is the case, may we be a help, as Paul counseled here, with the spirit of love, to reconcile and restore a wayward brother or sister.

But to do that, to be a church at peace, and be a person at peace, we must be a church and a Christian in subjection to the Word of God. That means thinking according to the teaching of the apostles, to avoid doctrinal error, and living according to the morality of the Bible. Here, that is stated in this one principle, "work in a quiet fashion."

We can multiply the different types of commands and instructions that are given to us. Here it's work. Be diligent in that.

Our church, and we individually, will only prosper in God's eyes to the degree that we know and obey scripture. Because as John Stott rightly wrote, "To despise the Word of the Lord is to despise the Lord of the Word." May God give us obedience to His Word, and give us peace, the peace that always follows that obedience.

If you're here without Christ, if you've not believed in Him as the Son of God and Savior of the world, then you have no peace. "There is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord God." That's what Isaiah wrote. (48:22). Well, if you think you do have peace, consider what John wrote at the end of the third chapter of his gospel, "...he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.", (vs36). It's not that the wrath of God will fall on him—but presently, at this moment, right now, "The wrath of God abides on him". Flee the wrath. Come to Christ. Believe in Him. May God help you to do that.

And you who have, I hope it's everybody here, rejoice in what you have in Christ, and live in every aspect of your life. May we all do that to His glory. Let's bow in a word of prayer, and thank the Lord for what He's given us. And then, I'm going to give, at the same time, thanks for the Lord's Supper, and ask the Lord to prepare our hearts. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we do thank You for Your goodness and Your grace to us, and what a blessing it is to work. That's such a large part of the subject that Paul dealt with at the end of this book. And I pray that You would give us a joy in it, and be thankful for the work that we have. And we do pray for those that are presently without work. We pray that You would bless them with diligence in seeking employment, that You open doors for them. It's a daunting task. Give us all the desire to live to Your glory every day in everything that we do, and to work diligently, and give people opportunity to do that.

We thank You for the life You've given us in Your Son. We turn our thoughts now to the Lord's table, and we pray that You would prepare our hearts to take these elements, remembering Jesus Christ and what He did for us, remembering our Triune God, and what God has done for us. Father, what You did in choosing Your people and sending Your Son to die for us, and the willingness of Christ to come for us and the Spirit who draws us by His great power to faith and obedience. It's a work of the Trinity.

Bless us now, Lord. Prepare our hearts. We pray these things in Christ's name.  
Amen.

*(End of Audio)*