



BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

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There are those who are idle in the Lords work

2 Thessalonians 3

~ Brent Russell ~

- Start sermon by staring at ceiling for some time.....
- I suppose I better get to work
- It seems that some of the Thessalonians where so intent on waiting for Jesus that they had stopped working for the Lord
- Literally so heavenly minded that things of this world including the work of the church had taken a backseat to their focus on waiting for Jesus...
- Initially there where some misunderstandings about the coming of Christ
- The style of preaching made it seem as if Jesus return was imminent
- And so Paul found some people beginning to loaf and become lazy because with no future here...well what was the point
- There was a town in the US that was to be flooded when the Hoover dam was being built
- And once the people knew that within 10 months their town would be no more they simply gave up and the town turned to ruin
- In Thessalonica the same thing had happened
- Seemingly with no future here, some had allowed their Christian work to wither away
- Knowing Jesus was coming soon their thinking was why waste energy doing anything here
- Our distractions these days are obviously markedly different to life in the Thessalonian church
- As excited as some of you are about the things of the Lord, I have never heard of anyone not doing work because Jesus was coming soon
- I have never heard of or seen any member of any church sitting idle because Jesus could come any moment – thinking to themselves "what is the point"

- So our distractions stopping us doing the Lords work are obviously nothing like those faced by the early believers in the Thessalonian church
- We just are not that focused on the imminent return of Christ
- We have had 2000 years to deal with this and it is no longer such an imminent event
- Although it should be
- The truth is as we have taught that Jesus could come at any time
- Paul's writing in this chapter with regards to work seems to point both towards the Lords work as well as secular work or jobs
- Now none of you have left your secular jobs because Jesus may come soon
- However some of you are probably a little lazy at work too and perhaps need a kick in the pants there too...
- But I am not going to concentrate on this aspect of the teaching of this passage of scripture
- I really want to focus on the principals Paul speaks of with regards to our work in the Lord
- If you remember the words of 1 Thess Our Christian work produced by faith, your labor prompted by Love
- I really want to focus on these things - the work of the Lord
- And whilst our diversions from work are different, but I believe that the same principals apply for us here at Bellville in 2005
- There are those who are just not living up to the expectations of the scriptures of the church

THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE IDLE IN THE LORDS WORK

- There are those in every church who are just lazy when it comes to the lords work
- And BPC is no exception
- There are people here who when it comes to doing the things that Jesus would have them do have become idle
- The Thessalonians worked hard because of deep faith
- Many today have become lazy because they work out of obligation
- And the Thessalonian church laboured because of Love for Jesus and others
- We become apathetic because of the comfort of our lifestyle
- Now don't get me wrong most people are very busy
- Far more busy now than they where 50 or a hundred years ago
- Time just flies by because of our busyness
- But be careful here business does not mean you are working

- You can very busy but also very lazy and unproductive
- Any of you that have a job will know that there are days when you look and you just know you have not done much work today – although you have been busy
- And so even in the church you may look busy but in fact be unproductive
- Shoooh sounds rough doesn't it
- It is however the truth for many people in the church these days
- Their lives are filled with things that stop them doing the lords work
- They look busy, that have very little time over at the end of the day
- But they are neglecting the Lord work
- Now let us be careful here there are things that we do that may not seem like the Lord's work but in fact is Lords work
- The work of God is not always something others always may recognize as such
- Let me share with you three that came to mind immediately in the family context

Parents

- If you are a mother to small children or teenagers the time you spend with them investing time, energy and creativity into their lives
- Trying to help them grow into the best people that they can be is the Lords work
- In fact it is probably the most import of some of the Lords work
- **Eph 6:4** Parents, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
- Being a good parent is doing the Lords work
- This means love, discipline and education and it is the Lords work
- If you neglect these you are being idle

Working parents

- If you are a working parent who is trying to make ends meet so that your family can have the necessities for life
- Food, clothes, education
- You are doing the Lords work
- By looking after and providing for the needs of your family you are doing what the Lord expects of you for those who depend on you
- And it is His work make no mistake

Looking after relatives

- If you are looking after an ill relative or loved one
 - Hospital or old age home
 - The time and effort you spend on them is energy spent working for God
 - The scriptures tell us that we are not to let our loved ones become burdens for others but we are to care for them and love them ourselves
 - And yes this is the Lords work
 - The time you spend with them is time spent doing Gods work
- So there are things that may not seem to be the Lords work at first glance
 - But in fact are clearly the work that Jesus would have you do
 - And in this Thessalonian church it seems that because Jesus was coming soon some had just neglected their basic duties

SOME APPEAR LIKE THEY ARE DOING WORK BUT THEY ARE NOT WORKING WITH THE TEAM – OR WITH GOD

- So some of people will look very busy but will not in fact be busy with the work that God has set out for them
 - They will battle to find hours in the day to fit in all their plans
 - But they will be wasting that time if it is not what God would have them do
- I clearly believe that God has a plan and a purpose for each and every one of your lives
 - If psalm 139 speaks of our days been set out by God then it is clear that there is a purpose for our lives
 - A divine destiny of you like
 - A plan set in time by God for you to fulfil
 - Some higher, eternal purpose for which you exist
- Let me clear: if you are not achieving that purpose or you are not trying to find exactly what that purpose is you are being idle
 - You are dead weight
- Unless you are doing the things of God you are wasting your time
 - And as Paul writes you have become lazy and idle
- In a book on management and leadership one author wrote this about work in organizations and I believe it is true for us:
 - It is like a team of people trying build a ladder up a tree in the jungle

- They can spend days, weeks, years building a ladder up a tree
 - But unless it is the right tree it is all wasted effort
- It may hard work to find out what your God given purpose is – what the work of the Lord is for your life
 - It may require many hours of prayer, reading, fasting and reflecting
 - It make take some hard mistakes as you try find out
- But God forbid that you should get to the end of your life and find that you had achieved little or nothing of God's plans for you
 - Simply because you where to lazy to find out what his plans where for your life
 - To have Jesus come tomorrow and be found to have wasted your time will be a frightening thing
 - Even more frightening would be to face the risen Christ and know that you had allowed so many immaterial things to take up so much of your time
 - To have spent so much energy and effort on things of no eternal value
 - That you look back and see how little you have done for God
- If you are not working with Jesus or for Jesus you are dead weight and you are in fact working against Him
 - In Matthews Gospel chapter 12: Jesus tells us that if we are not with Him we are against Him
 - Too many people in this world will get to the end of their lives and will have achieved nothing of substance
 - Nothing of everlasting value
- **As1 Co 3:10-16** But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.
- If your work is of little value in God's eyes it will be revealed for what it is when Jesus comes again like a thief in the night
 - But you may still be saved as one leaping through the flames
- You understand this well - Sometimes the Lords work does not feel that spiritual and we may not even recognize it when we do it
 - But you also understand: anything that is not the Lords work is a waste of the talents, gifts and abilities that Jesus has given to you

SUCH AS THESE NEED TO BE DISCIPLINED

- So what do we do?
- How does the church deal with those who claim to have faith
- But who lifestyle denies it by their laziness
- Every new testament book speaks of faith and action hand in hand
- There can be neither without both
- So how do we get people who claim to have faith – but who do not act it out to avoid the idleness that is so common in these days of busyness
- These times when so much else seems to suck away our time
- Let me first state that many people have some difficulty with the Apostles writing here
- He does come across at times as a little brash and certainly in places harsh in his condemnation or criticism of some in the life of the church
- And this is one of those moments
- Paul is bluntly unsympathetic in dealing with idle and lazy Christians
- And His words are a clear COMMAND, not a request, proposal or suggestion:
 - 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
 - If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed
- This holds some difficulty for me
- This is tough love in extreme
- If you are one of those who do not do what it is that they should be doing for Jesus
- We should avoid you until you do what it that God has given to you to do
- As some of our teenagers are apt to say
- "Speak to the hand because the head ain't listening"
- This is discipline and tough discipline at that
- Paul's aim is not to kick people out of the church
- His aim is not to hurt or demean people in any way
- Neither is his aim to drive people away from Jesus
- His intention with this discipline is to draw those who have drifted FROM Jesus back to Him
- In all things church discipline always has at it's heart the restoration and return of those idle people to Jesus
- Paul's objective here is to restore those who are not doing God's work back into the fold
- It is a simple truth: if you are not doing God's work you have drifted form Christ
- And so he wants those who are being lazy to be ashamed so that they might get back to the Lord's work

Conclusion

- And so perhaps if you are one of those who has not been doing things the way God has planned you may be feeling a little guilty and ashamed
- Or perhaps you feel a little ashamed because you know that you have become lazy and idle in God work
- Perhaps it's because you have been wasting time and energy on pursuits that have no eternal value
- It may be because you just could not be bothered
- You may be feeling ashamed because you have no excuse but know in your heart that you are lazy and idle in doing things for God
- The role of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of Sin
- To make us feel guilty and ashamed of sin so that we will turn to Christ and find grace and forgiveness
- And so if you are feeling guilty or ashamed then trust that what you feel is the Spirit of God drawing you back to where he wants you to be
- Trust that this is the Holy Spirit prompting you to seek forgiveness from Christ
- Trust that this is the Holy Spirit trying to restore you and lead to all holiness and righteousness before God
- I am preaching these things to you because you are brothers and sisters in Christ and because I desire you to align your lives with Him and his will
- I preach this message because some of you need to hear again the call of Christ to work in faith and to labour in love
- So make yourselves right with Him – put into place an action plan to get down to doing the work of God
- And: **2 Th 3:16** Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.