

THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES: DIRECTION FOR THE LAST DAYS

XI. Living Industriosly In View Of The Rapture

(2 Thessalonians 3:6-13)

I. Introduction

- A. Though Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians was written to correct an errant, troubling view about the rapture, his readers still needed to live responsible lives even if the rapture might occur soon.
- B. Accordingly, in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, Paul wrote about the need for believers to live industriously while waiting for the rapture, and we view the passage for our insight, application, and edification (as follows):

II. Living Industriosly In View Of The Rapture, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13.

- A. Paul's admonition concerning those who were living disorderly lives in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 addressed the problem of some believers at Thessalonica who were not working to earn a living (2 Thessalonians 3:11a), but who were living off the income of other believers (2 Thessalonians 3:12b) and who were using their idle time to become troublesome busybodies (2 Thessalonians 3:11b).
- B. Such disorderly lives were not only bad testimonies before the word, but they also led to financial hardships in the group that could harm relationships and cause divisions in the church. Indeed, back in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, Paul had already addressed this matter, directing that his readers make it their ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind their own affairs, and to work with their own hands so that their lives might win the respect of unbelievers while they also earned a living, becoming financially independent!
- C. Accordingly, Paul again addressed this problem of irresponsible living in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13:
 - 1. Demonstrating the great seriousness of this matter, Paul appealed to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to admonish his readers to keep away from every fellow believer who did not live according to the tradition they had received from Paul's ministry team, 2 Thessalonians 3:6.
 - 2. Paul reminded his readers of the example of his ministry team in working to earn their own livelihoods to avoid being a financial burden to his readers, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8. Paul and his coworkers had the right before God to receive income from his readers for their ministry to them, but his team had not used that right that they might be good examples on working to meet one's own livelihood needs, 2 Thess. 3:9.
 - 3. Indeed, when Paul and his team were with the Thessalonians, he had commanded that if any one of them did not work for a living, he should not eat, 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
 - 4. However, since Paul had heard that some of his readers were not working for a living but were spending their time being busybodies in other men's matters, he urged them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread that they ate, 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 NIV.
 - 5. Paul added that his readers should never tire in doing what was right, which in this case involved committing themselves to fulfilling their responsibility to earn a living by working for it instead of living off the income of others and idly meddling in the matters of others, 2 Thessalonians 3:13 NIV.

Lesson: *Though Paul's readers had been informed of the pretribulation rapture of the Church when believers in Christ will be caught up by God to heaven, that hope did NOT give them an excuse irresponsibly to cease working for a living simply because they assumed that the rapture was imminent, only then to get involved in meddling in the matters of others. Rather, God expects us believers on the one hand to anticipate the rapture at any moment but also to stay industrious as if the rapture were hundreds of years away, that we might maintain a good testimony before the onlooking world and not be in any material need.*

Application: *(1) Since none of us has been informed by the God of Scripture as to what day and year the rapture will occur, we cannot decide to quit working for a living in expectation of the rapture. Our ignorance of God's timetable requires that we hope for the rapture to occur any day but to work and plan as if it will occur after our lifetimes. (2) Since our testimony before the lost world is affected by how we live, for the sake of unsaved people who watch us, God holds us responsible to live quiet, responsible lives and to earn our own living while also not meddling in the affairs of others. (3) Since earning an adequate livelihood requires training either in higher education or in apprenticeships, God holds even maturing children and young adults accountable to focus on preparing themselves to earn a living by fulfilling their educational requirements! (4) Since sustaining ourselves beyond our wage-earning years also affects our testimony, those of us who are currently in the workforce should plan, save, and invest for a self-sustaining future in our declining years when we will no longer be able to work! This may involve some self-education or use of financial planners, etc., but we are responsible to address this need.*