

2Thessalonians 12-11-02b

We pick up our study in 1 Thessalonians and then quickly over to 2 Thessalonians 3, resuming in verse 6. But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, you can expect that there is going to be some authoritative instruction given following that introduction, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. The word translated disorderly here in some versions is translated idle. For example, my Greek English New Testament here has the, it's a combination of the Greek text with the revised standard version, the RSV, and the RSV says, now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness, living in idleness.

And yet our new King James says disorderly. So what is the concept that Paul is telling us to separate from here? Well, the word here is a-tactos. It's got an alpha privative.

It starts with an A and then T-A-K-T-O-S, tactos, a-tactos, a-tactos is the word. And this is a-tacto and it has the idea of order. It means to stand in ranks.

This means sort of a formation. It has the idea of things that are put in place that are standing where they have been put and it's, they are ordered, they are sequenced, they are lined up. And it's often used in military situations where you've got a formation, might be a formation of troops standing in ranks, could be a formation of ships traveling across the sea.

But these things are lined up. They're where they are supposed to be doing what they're supposed to do. Parade rest, ten hut, right face, about face.

So when you put the alpha privative in front of it or the negative, this means not standing in ranks, not ordered, not doing what it's supposed to do. So you can get, you can see where the idea, well, idleness, but really idleness doesn't catch it. Idle means not active.

This means not ordered, disordered, disorderly. And what it really means is undisciplined, undisciplined. This is very helpful because this concept, let's just read these next few verses and watch for this concept.

Paul keeps returning to it. He's going to use this word two or three times. We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks atoctos and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not atoctos among you. We were not disorderly among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge. You know, eat somebody's food and just go from house to house and saying, well, who's going to invite us over tonight? Who's going to feed us tonight? He says, we didn't do that.

We didn't eat anyone's bread for free, but we worked with labor and toil night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, authority. Where did authority come into this passage? We command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word authority here is *exousia* and *exousia* is actually a word often translated power.

But this is the power of the court. This is the power of the state. This is the power of someone to say what you should or should not do.

Now, there can be a law that says, keep your grass cut, keep your junk car off the curb, keep your fence repaired, keep your dog on a leash, right? There's an authority that establishes these rules or these laws and that authority in and of itself doesn't really imply enforcement. It's a city ordinance, but what if nobody enforces it? What if you leave your junk car out there dripping oil for weeks and months or your neighbor does and there's an ordinance against it, but nobody enforces it? Well, the enforcement would be a different kind of power. There's one power that makes the rules and there's a different kind of power that enforces the rules.

You see the distinction? There's one authority that says we have the right to set these rules. This would be the city, the city government. But it would be the city police maybe that come and enforce it or the justice of the peace or the sheriff or highway patrol or somebody who, you know, the state can or the federal government can set speed limits.

They say 55, 65, 75, whatever it might be. But then the highway patrol does the enforcement. Two different kinds of power.

One has the authority to set the rule and there's a different authority that comes and pulls you over and gives you a ticket if you don't or gives you a citation for not abiding by the ordinance. This is *exousia*. This is the authority by which rules are set.

This is legal authority, not patrolman authority. Step out of the car, Mr. Hall. That's a different kind of authority.

That you withdraw from every brother that walks *atactos*, disorderly. He says we weren't to burden any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. And two times now we have the word follow.

Remember that? We yourselves know how you ought to follow us, how you ought to mimic us, how you ought to do what we did. You ought to follow our example. And he says it again in verse nine.

Even when we were with you, we commanded you this, if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. You can see how this idea we worked and we weren't a burden to any of you and if you don't work, you don't eat. That's how they read it back into *atactos* and say, well, he must be talking about idleness.

Well, it's not just any old failure to work. This is undisciplined. This is out of order.

Almost literally. You know the little sign, you go up to the candy machine, out of order. Atactos, disorderly, not functioning correctly.

And it goes beyond the idea of work and it means undisciplined, not functioning according to the plan and the example that Paul and Apollos and Silas and Timothy and the apostles who travel through the Greek world have set. And they set an example of self-sufficiency. I say again, the apostles, Paul and Silas and Timothy, specifically here at Thessalonica, set, consciously set an example.

They said we could have had you all support us. We could have had you all provide for our food and our needs, but we did not. We set an example for you to follow of self-sufficiency.

This tactos that you don't want to be failing to do, atactos, this order is I provide for myself. I don't require help from the outside to do what I am capable of doing. Now, this disciplined versus undisciplined obviously doesn't apply to someone who is no longer able.

So the widows and the orphans or those who, for whatever reason, are unable to care for themselves, unable to provide order for themselves, that's not what he's talking about. So when you say idleness, well, there can be lots of reasons for idleness. If I've broken both of my legs, I'm going to be idle, and I really can't help that.

It's not just any old idleness. This is disorderly. You are able, but for various reasons, you don't order yourself.

So we'll return to this in a second, but look at the rest of the passage. Even when we were with you, we commanded you that if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. Now, obviously, there are widows and orphans who aren't in a position to work, and this isn't in view with what Paul is saying.

We hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, in an ataktos manner, some who walk among you, not working at all, but are busybodies. We'll get to these words for working in a minute. This is ergadzumai, ergadzaminas, it's a participle, and it is the idea here, and you notice it's got the O-M-A-I on it, which has that middle, in form, active, in meaning idea, but you do this of yourself, or for yourself, or in your own interest.

The subject enters into the action on its own behalf, so you're working for yourself, you're working in your own interest, or on your own behalf. If anyone will not ergadzumai, he will not estio, he will not eat. We hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, ataktos, not working at all, but are busybodies, and busybody here, the word for busybody, is ergadzumai, but it's got a prefix on it, peri, you know what P-E-R-I means, right? It means around, the periphery, it means you're on the edges, the perimeter is the edge, it's what is around a thing.

Peripateo means to walk around, you pat, pat, pat your feet, peripateo, to walk, walk around, peripateo. Well this is peri ergadzumai, so there's work going on, but you're walking around the outside, and this is where they get the notion of busybody is that you're sort of sharpshooting the ones who are doing the work, you're commenting, you're kibitzing, you're sharpshooting, you're criticizing or you're talking about the work, you're standing outside the work, but you're not engaged in the work. Well, it goes beyond busybody, it means you're outside of it, you're literally on the periphery of the work, but you're not engaged in it.

You're ready to get the benefit of it, you're standing there and as soon as the work's done, you're going to dig in and get the fruit, somebody else is hoeing the garden and weeding the garden and watering the garden and cultivating the garden, and as soon as the fruit comes up, well you're standing right on the edge ready to grab it, but you didn't do the work. You want to reap the benefit, but you don't want to do the work. So it goes way beyond busybody.

Busybody sounds like, oh, you know, a little bit of a gossip and a little bit of a nosy person. No, this, you're standing on the edges of the work, you're waiting for the work to be done so that you can, you know, when the food is cooked, then you eat it, when the house is clean, then you sit down and enjoy it, when the laundry is done, then you put it on and wear it, but you don't wash the laundry, you don't fold the laundry, you don't cook the food. In other words, you're the husband.

This is how I look at it. No, you know, there's other work the husband enters into that the rest of the family does not, but this is talking about you should be doing a thing and you're not. You're leeching, you're sponging, you're sycophantically, parasitically drawing on the work of others when you ought to be doing your own work.

Now, there's nothing wrong with division of labor, there's nothing wrong with a man earning the bread by the sweat of his brow and coming home and somebody else cooking or cleaning or doing laundry, it's division of labor. But there's also a wonderful entering into work when you have the means, motive and opportunity and if you should be doing that work, if it is disorderly to not do that work, you are deficient, you are lacking, you're supposed to be going to work and earning the bread and you're not. I don't feel good today, I'm going to stay home.

I, oh, that's too strenuous, that's too tedious. If you're a student and you're supposed to be studying and you're supposed to be attending your classes and you lay out and you don't, you don't work hard. If you're supposed to be keeping house or you're supposed to be whatever it is you're supposed to be doing, supposed to be, the orderly path is to do this assigned task and you're not.

If you're a believer spiritually, you're supposed to be concentrating in Bible class and you're supposed to be meditating on it during the week and you don't, you are disorderly, you're out of order, you're not fulfilling your responsibility. Now, I could apply this to time of day. There is a time

of day when certain things ought to be done.

It's probably not orderly to sit around and watch soaps all day long and not get the housework done. It's disorderly for guys who go to work to surf the internet instead of doing their job, but it's a temptation, it's a distraction, it is a draw away from being tactos, being orderly, doing what you're supposed to do. We need, hear me now, we as believers are called and commanded to be disciplined, disciplined.

There is a time and a season for everything under God's heaven. Remember Ecclesiastes? There is a time for entertainment and there is a time for recreation and there is a time to work. There is a time to do what must be done and we are commanded to be disciplined.

And Paul says, if there are people who cannot discipline themselves to do what they're supposed to do, put distance, separate, withdraw from those who walk disorderly. Walk is lifestyle and we are not to associate. Well, this sounds kind of harsh, but that's what he says.

So what does it exactly mean? Well, look at the context. We hear there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, in an undisciplined way, who ought to be working and are not, who ought to be doing what they are called to do, what they are assigned to do and they're not. Not working, but in the edges of the work, waiting to receive the benefits of the work of others.

Those who are such, we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to how emphatically Paul is phrasing this, because what is the option? What if you do not withdraw? Paul knows that it's going to be tough for people. This is not an easy thing.

They're not going to say, oh, well, these worthless parasites, I wanted to get away from them anyway. I've already separated. I didn't need anybody to tell me.

Paul knows that this is something that people are going to have a hard time doing. So what does he say in verse six? We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw. What does he say in verse 12? Those who are such, we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

You are to withdraw from them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are to work and eat their own bread in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We command and exhort in the name of the Lord Jesus.

There's nobody, there's no higher authority to which you can appeal. And Paul says, people must fulfill their own responsibilities. If they are able to sustain and support and do their work, they must do it.

And if they don't pull away, don't support them. Don't let them sponge off of you. Don't let them be parasites.

Don't be complicit in their error. Do not become party of the second part. Don't be an accomplice to pari ergazomai.

They must work in quietness and eat their own bread. We're not talking about those who cannot support themselves. There is an extensive charity ministry, but charity is not to extend to those who are fully capable of doing their own work, supporting themselves.

And Paul says, I know it's going to be tough. This is why I'm invoking the name of the Lord Jesus. You must step back and force these people to stand on their own feet, do their own work, and eat their own bread.

Do not feed someone who is not doing work that they are capable of doing. And there's a reason why Paul twice invokes the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, kurios Iesu Christu. As for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

You continue to do what you are doing well, which is working with your hands, living in quietness, eating your own bread. And look at verse 14. Here's a third exhortation.

If anyone does not obey our word in this letter, note that person and do not keep company with him that he may be ashamed. You're not going to talk. You're not going to fellowship someone into compliance with this.

It is withdrawing. It is removing the crutch that is going to force this person to walk on his own feet. And it's hard.

And that's why Paul says, look, I'm not just... This is not a suggestion. This is a command. This isn't just a consideration.

This is a necessity. I command, I exhort. You must step away.

I command and exhort. They must stand on their own feet. They must work.

They must eat from their own efforts. Do not support and encourage indigence from those who are fully capable of walking orderly, walking pateros. Many times the reason someone is having difficulty getting their stuff done and supporting and sustaining themselves is they are not disciplined.

Well, filling in that gap does not exercise or allow that person to develop the muscles through exercise to discipline themselves. And many times the best thing a parent can do is let a child stand or fall on their own feet. And yes, it's hard.

They're going to get bumps and bruises. Many times there's micromanagement in the business world. Many times there's micromanagement in the student world.

And you cannot allow as a teacher your students, oh, well, you didn't really do the studying, so let me help you out here. Let me give you an extension of time. This is what's so difficult about homeschooling.

Those of us that have done homeschooling, you know, this is your child. And you know, in formal school, it's 40-minute test, pencils down. Pencils down.

You know, I don't care. Oh, but, you know, parent wants to have mercy. Oh, I know you know that answer.

Go ahead and fill in that last two or three there, you know, that'll, boy, you know, no mercy, at least when I was in school, no mercy. Pencils down. But, you know, I had to go back and I was, I know these, you know, the test is not an accurate reflection.

Hey, pencils down. I don't care. It doesn't matter how much you know, you have 40 minutes and you're done.

Well, this is what we have to do. We have to step back. We have to let people experience the pain of not being organized, of not being disciplined.

And filling in the gap, Paul says, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, step back. People who are able to work must work. People who are able to earn their bread must earn their bread.

You do not fill in. And you can see how difficult it is by the level of authority that he has to invoke three different times to straighten people out on this. Because there is a time for mercy.

There is a time for compassion. There's a time for grace. There's a time for lending a helping hand.

But your help can be a hurt. It's apocryphal, this whole thing about the little caterpillar and the pupa and, well, I cut it open and then it didn't pump its wings. And that's a nice story, but it's not really true.

But it is true that you can hurt someone with too much help. And it's a difficult concept. But this is what ataktas means, disorderly, lack of discipline.

Children have to learn to schedule themselves. They must learn that you've got to get sleep. You've got to organize your schedule.

And it is disorderly to stay up all night and sleep all day and, you know, wake up 20 minutes before class and go rushing around, dashing out with your hair uncombed and your teeth unbrushed and grabbing your stuff and, oh, my car won't start. Well, you're disorderly. Have an orderly schedule.

Plan ahead. Allow extra time for the unexpected. Leave in plenty of time that if you end up with a flat or a dead battery or some traffic jam, you're not out of luck.

That's something that we learn, you know, adults that are early middle age, middle age, late middle age, you don't see them getting burned and stuff like that. You know why? Because we've all learned the hard way that it doesn't pay to wait to the last minute and rush around and rely on your instincts and your luck and your fast driving ability to get to places and be there with what you need. We learn the hard way over time.

Leave early. Allow extra time. Organize yourself.

I learned a long time ago that I am very dysfunctional in the morning. So what do I do? At night, I lay my billfold and my comb and my parking and elevator access card and my ring and my watch and my phone, all of the stuff I need to get to work and function, I lay it all in one place. And in the morning when I get up with rare exceptions, once in a while my phone rings at night and I pick it up and I don't put it like this morning, I had to go digging around to find my phone because it wasn't in its spot because I just mindlessly pick up everything that's on the table, stick it all in my pocket.

My access card goes here. My billfold and comb go here. My pocket knife goes here.

My watch goes here. My ring goes here. My keys go here.

And everything is in one place. Well, if anything's not there from the night before, I'm not really, you know, elastic and thinking and functional in the mornings. So organize it ahead of time.

Routine is what saves old folks. You know, we don't think that well, so it's routine. Anything messes up your routine, heaven help you.

Well, this is what Paul says, be orderly. Now this is very practical for all of us. Whatever age, whatever assignment we have, Paul says, in the name of Christ, be orderly and do as much as you can do for yourself.

And do not be sponsoring disorderliness. Do not sponsor laziness and indolence and lack of work. Don't sponsor it.

Don't encourage it. Don't fill in the gap for it. Step away.

That gap is necessary. Those consequences are necessary, especially for our younger ones, to learn what those of us who are older already know. You've got to stand on your own two feet and make your own way and not be dependent.

Paul says, we came, we could have depended on you all, but we purposely set an example of independence and self-sufficiency as a model for you. And this is what you must do and what you

must encourage in others. It's a biblical principle.

And look at the emphasis that he gives it, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command you. Seldom do you get this much stress from the Apostle Paul as you get on this command. It's critically important because this is a spiritual value.

When we learn this in the material world and in the realm of schedule and function and work, we learn it in the spiritual area as well. We do our own application. We do our own taking in of the word of God.

This is not something that people can proxy for us. You can't hang around the periphery of spiritual people and soak up spirituality. We have to do it for ourselves, and it requires order.

It requires work. The application you do, you do for yourself. The learning you do, you do for yourself.

I cannot learn for you. Your parents cannot learn for you. Your children cannot learn for you.

We learn, we meditate, and we apply for ourselves. And these things in the physical world are a model and an illustration of what we must do, spiritually speaking. You can't stand at the judgment seat of Christ and say, well, you know, I was in a really good church.

You know, I was in a really spiritual family. That isn't going to wash. And just as you can't sponge materially off of others, you can't sponge spiritually off of others.

It does not work. It does not wash. It will not accomplish things.

It has to be our own. We take responsibility. We take ownership.

We organize. We discipline. We do our own work.

We feed ourselves. This idea of bread, think about spiritual food. You don't get spiritual food by proxy.

Each of us must work quietly with his own hands and eat his own bread. Gather your own manna. Invest in your own spiritual growth.

It's not enough that you know somebody or you're related to somebody or you live with somebody that's got a spiritual life. We have to do this for ourselves. And it is mirrored in the world of material things.

Well, thinking about this ought to motivate us to organize and discipline ourselves to do the work that is necessary to be responsible and be accountable and reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus. Did the Lord Jesus have to have somebody come remind him of who he was and why he was here and what he needed to get done? No. Did the Apostle Paul need somebody chasing him

around saying, Paul, you know, you really need to go and do some preaching.

You really need to go and spread the gospel. You really need to go write a couple of inspired epistles. Come on, get out of bed.

Let's get with it now. He didn't need that. He set the example and we should be examples both in our own interest and on behalf of others of this truth.

Well, we'll pick up here in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 next time. Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for how clearly and emphatically the responsibilities that we have before you are spelled out in your word.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will be our teacher, be our schoolmaster, and impress upon us the example of the Lord Jesus and the authority of the Lord Jesus to call us to order, to discipline, and to performing that work which is assigned to us. We pray that as a result, we will reflect your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus, that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work, and we will lay hold of righteousness by faith and be qualified to serve and to function in your kingdom in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.