LIVING SPIRITUALLY

2 Thessalonians 3

Awareness

Before listening, reflect:

- What is idleness?
- How do you know if you are doing God's work?

It's easy to think we need to be ministers, missionaries, or Sunday School teachers in order to do God's work, but the Apostle Paul would adamantly disagree. As he closes his second letter to the Thessalonians he makes it clear that faithfully following the commands we find in scripture, and keeping our minds and hearts focused on Jesus Christ, make it possible for even the mundane, everyday tasks of our lives to accomplish God's work. As you study 2 Thessalonians 3 let Paul's wise instruction, reminders of God's grace, and caution against idleness reframe your idea of what it means to live spiritually in your daily life.

Listen:*Living Spiritually*

Reflection

After listening, consider:

- If "grace activates obedience" as host Scott Hoezee says in segment 1, then how is obedience different than trying to earn your salvation through good behavior and good works?
- Reread 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5. Then consider N.T. Wright's interpretation of Paul's meaning in the passage: "Go on focusing heart and mind on Jesus himself, Paul says, and as you meditate on his patience, and his strength under suffering, something of that patience will be given to you" (*Paul For Everyone*, p. 154). In what areas of your life or faith could Christ's patience and strength encourage you today? What one thing will you do today to focus your heart and mind on Jesus?
- In a culture and society that tends to value busyness, we might easily dismiss Paul's caution against idleness as not applicable. How might Paul's critique of the Thessalonians' idleness also critique our busyness, and consequently provide us the tools to evaluate the purpose of our busyness?
- As segment 2 closes, host Dave Bast says, "...whatever work we may be able to do…however humble…however routine…in some way or another, it is contributing to the welfare of others, which is to say, it is contributing to the kingdom..." Read Matthew 22:37-40. How do the mundane, everyday tasks in your daily routine demonstrate your love and obedience to God and contribute to the welfare of your neighbors?
- In segment 3, Scott and Dave point out our culture's discomfort with confrontation and its effect on the body of Christ. Yet, Paul makes it clear that in the family of God, rebuke and correction must be faithfully given and received. If rebuke becomes necessary, what is important for us to do and remember before we try to offer it? What can we do to ensure our correction stems from love and not our own pride?

Related Passages

- **Romans 6:1-14**
- **Galatians 3:26-27**
- **Acts 18:1-4**
- **John 5:16-20**
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
- **Colossians 3:1-17**

Conclusion

Reflect again on your daily routine and how your responsibilities contribute to the welfare of others and God's kingdom. Then read and pray this closing prayer from *The Worship Sourcebook* from The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (p. 356).

> Father,
>
> As we go to our homes and our work
> this coming week,
> by the power and promise of your Holy Spirit,
>
> Open our ears
> **to hear what you are saying to us**
> **in the things that happen to us**
> **and in the people we meet.**
>
> Open our eyes
> **To see the needs**
> **of people around us.**
>
> Open our hands
> **to do our work well,**
> **to help when help is needed.**
>
> Open our lips
> **to tell others the good news of Jesus**
> **and bring comfort, happiness,**
> **and laughter to other people.**
>
> Open our minds
> **to discover new truth**
> **about you and the world.**
>
> Open our hearts
> **to love you and our neighbors**
> **as you have loved us in Jesus. Amen.**

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