

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – Epistle

Now And Forever

2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
(Proper 28)

Analysis by Robin Morgan

6Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. 7For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us: we were not idle when we were with you, 8and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. 9This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. 10For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. 11For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. 12Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christi to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. 13Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

DIAGNOSIS: Idle Busybodies

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Weary Bodies*

Life in Thessalonica was tough for the Christians. They were

being persecuted, they were suffering for the faith (1:4) and in the midst of this turmoil, some of them had become idle. It's easy to understand how they might get weary of the strife in their lives and shout to the sky, "Come, Lord Jesus...or else I give up!" Yes, we continue looking for the Lord's return, but, no, we are not likely to just sit down on our suitcases and idly wait.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Disordered Hearts*

Ataktoi doesn't only mean "idle," it also means "disorderly." The faithful anticipation of the Lord's return is being suppressed by a kind of suspension caused by a disordered heart. The Thessalonians were trying to live outside the truth of the here and now with its struggles with persecution. They were trying to live outside the truth that the full glory of our resurrected lives isn't available yet. The disorderly and those who stay with them exchange the "already/not yet" reality of God's reign today for a kind of limbo. The disordered heart turns away from the truth to an existence of non-pain, but also non-joy.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Glory-less Eternity*

Such turning away leads not only to non-pain/non-joy, but also to non-life. To those who refuse to love the truth, God sends a powerful delusion so that all who have not believed the truth, but instead took pleasure in unrighteousness, will be condemned (2:10-12).

PROGNOSIS: The Living Body

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *Faithful Lord*

But, of course, God does not leave God's self at the mercy of our faithlessness. It is, indeed, the faithfulness of Jesus Christ that God relied on as the ultimate answer for humanity. Our Lord allowed himself to be condemned in our place, to take

our disordered hearts and weary bodies to himself on the cross and give us in return his grace, eternal comfort, and good hope (2:16).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Re-Ordered Lives*

When we turn to him, lift our previously idle hands and disordered hearts to him in trust, we are given his eternally ordered life. Our hands are strengthened, our hearts are comforted (2:17), and directed to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ (3:5).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Doing the Right Thing*

We no longer need be deceived by the power, signs and lying wonders of the lawless one. We are confused about neither the times nor how we ought to live in the already/not yet of God's reign today. We can, with the Thessa lonians, grow abundantly in faith, increase in our love one to another, warn each other of the perils of idleness, work quietly to earn our own livings and stand together saying, "Amen, Come Lord Jesus."