

## ARE YOU LAZY OR SPOILT?

**Today's Text:** 2 Thess. 3: 1-13

### **Extracts:**

**But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly 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 disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labour and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread* [2 Thess. 3: 6-12]**

*A young woman recently wrote a desperate note to a marriage counsellor about "a husband who won't grow up." He barely passed one semester of college before he dropped out and he has never held a job. He was an only child for nineteen years before his parents had a daughter three years ago, about the time she married him. The young woman is a full-time student and works 20/23 hours a week to pay the bills of her household. Each day, when she returns home at 10.30 pm, there are dirty dishes in the sink, their one-year-old daughter is hungry and there is no dinner. Recently, she and her husband went for a medical check-up. While he was found quite normal, she was close to a hypertensive state! She was tired of being married to a spoilt child.*

*If you think that that young lady's problem is far-fetched, think again! In spite of the fact that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, He has guaranteed us salvation not by our righteousness but by His grace alone. All we have to do to gain heaven is to accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Therefore, we are not saved by works. What do you find in most churches today? We sit comfortably on padded pews, waiting for our priests/pastors to do everything for us when there is so much to do. Therefore, we are either spoilt brats or lazy like that lady's husband! In today's Bible verses, Paul told the Thessalonian church that those who would not work should not eat. Were they spoilt or lazy? Are we spoilt or lazy? Today's study should be of major interest to most of us.*

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<sup>1</sup> Based on "Lazy Husband: I married a spoiled child! What to do?"  
<https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20110103153607AApmsLV>

## 1. Background: Anatomy of laziness!

Have you ever imagined the idyllic state of the Garden of Eden, the original home of Adam and Eve, the first human parents on earth [**Gen. 2: 8-15**]? God had earlier given them dominion over every beast of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and every fruit-yielding tree for food [**Gen. 1: 27-28**]. In the Garden of Eden, God took the best part of the earth that He had created and gave it to man to “tend and keep it” [**Gen. 2: 15**]. Therefore, our first parents had more than they needed from Day One! Yet, God wanted them to work, that is, to tend the Garden. The lesson from that story is this: *that you have more than you need does not mean that you never have work to do. It should neither make you a spoilt brat nor a lazy person.*

As the saying goes, an idle mind is the devil’s workshop. Eve (with her husband by her side) was roaming in the lovely Garden instead of tending it. That was when she came across the devil (in the form of the serpent) that tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit [**Gen. 3: 1-6**]. Interestingly, when God punished Adam for that sin, pay attention to the words He used [**vv. 17,19**]:

*Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life... In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread.*

Clearly, that suggests that *people do not work unless and until they are driven to starvation and there is no help from anybody else.*

That point is driven home in the story of the four lepers when there was famine in Samaria as a result of the Syrian siege. They were regular beggars at the entrance of the city gate. As a result of the famine, there was nobody to give them alms. They said to one another, “Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, ‘We will enter the city,’ the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now, therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live, and if they kill us, we shall only die.” They went and stumbled on food and supplies [**2 Kgs 7: 3-8**]. *They worked because they needed to survive through their own effort.*

The most privileged human beings on earth are Christians, that is, those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ. Yes, God sent His only begotten Son to save all through His atoning death on Calvary [**Jn 3: 16**]. But salvation belongs to believers, that is, those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour [**Jn 1: 12**]. Therefore, salvation is by grace, not by our works of righteousness [**Eph. 2: 8**]. Many of us carry that too far. We behave like spoilt brats who believe that we do not have to do anything! Really? Is that why we are always whining and complaining- touching nothing that looks like work in the church but expecting the priest/pastor and everyone else to minister to our needs, material and spiritual? Is that why congregations have more beggars and favour-seekers than disciples of

Christ who are zealous to carry out His great commission [Matt. 28: 19]? *What will it take to drive home the need for everybody to work?*

That is where the last chapter of Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians becomes handy. He treats the subject of laziness, which was apparently also a problem in those early times, and there are helpful lessons therein for us in our congregations and homes. The following should be duly noted:

a) *Who is the lazy one?*

Paul wrote, "For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, ***not working at all, but are busybodies***" [2 Thess. 3: 11]. A busybody is a meddler in other people's affairs [1 Pet. 4: 15]. A busy person has little or no time to meddle in other people's matters. It takes idleness to be a good busybody. Who then is the lazy person? The lazy person has needs but "his hands refuse to labour" [Prov. 21: 25]. For example, in the Parable of the Talents, Jesus spoke of three servants whose master was about to travel to a far country. He called them and gave five talents to one, two to another and one to the third. On their master's return, the one that was given five talents had invested them and gained extra five. The one that received two had turned his into four. But the one that had been given one returned it, saying to his master, "I know you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed ... and I was afraid, and went and hid your talents in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours." While commending the hardworking servants that had wisely invested their talents, the master called the third servant "a wicked and ***lazy*** servant" [Matt. 25: 14-30]. ***Therefore, when we apply the talents that God has given us for less than His intended purpose or for the wrong ends, we are lazy.***

b) *Why is s(he) lazy?*

Paul wrote that he and his visiting team of missionaries did not "eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labour and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us" [2 Thess. 3: 7-9]. In other words, Paul was entitled to be taken care of by his hosts but he chose to fend for himself by working. He was not lazy. So, then, why are people lazy?

***One plausible reason is that some people just hate work*** for "the lazy man says, 'There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!'" [Prov. 22: 13]. The lazy person will not plough in bad weather like winter [Prov. 20: 4]. ***Another reason could be that s(he) is spoilt*** for "the lazy man buries his hands in the bowl, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again" [Prov. 19: 24]. That is somebody else's job- a servant or maid or

parent! In some cases, parents, under the guise of not letting their children suffer what they themselves have passed through indulge them by taking care of all their needs, including even what they do not need. ***As long as some people can get by on other people's sweat and toil, they will remain lazy!*** But lazy people are living on borrowed time; sooner than later, reality will strike home because those who refuse to plough during winter “will beg during harvest and have nothing” [Prov. 20: 4].

c) *How do you cure laziness?*

Paul was quite blunt when he told the Thessalonian church, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” [2 Thess. 3: 10]. Nonetheless, they should not count a lazy person as an enemy “but admonish him as a brother” [v. 15]. Sooner than later, laziness gets cured but usually the hard way. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is a good illustration of how laziness can be cured [Lk 15: 11-32], as we shall see presently. ***In general, it takes hardship and lack to bring lazy people back to their senses.***

From the foregoing, ***we see a clear link between being spoiled and being lazy. People remain lazy for as long as they can get away with it. However, when survival is threatened, they have to do something about it.*** What situation are you facing and how are you dealing with it?

## 2. Dealing with your own situation

Here is how we can attempt to deal with our situation, using the Parable of the Prodigal Son as a guide:

a) *Are you lazy or spoiled?*

An honest appraisal is required. Most times, we do not know that we are in that situation. Some of us were raised in homes where everything was available from birth- money, luxuries, opportunities, etc. As the saying goes, some of us were born with silver spoons in their mouths but the rest of us do not even have spoons. Therefore, we cannot empathise with people who lack. Some of us were lucky to be born into Christian homes and were raised from childhood on the word of faith. How about those children who were born into families that do not know Christ? Therefore, you need to assess your situation and determine whether you are lazy, spoiled or both. Look at the children of Eli the priest who were sleeping with women in the place of worship [1 Sam. 2: 22]. Look at the children of Samuel who could not be appointed judges because they were “after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice” [1 Sam. 8: 1-3].

The prodigal son was certainly a spoiled brat. He wanted to spend money that he did not work for. He asked his father for his own share of his estate

even before the man could write his will! He took his “loot” abroad and squandered it on prodigal living [Lk 15: 11-13].

When you run away from church into the world as soon as you are out of your parents’ control, you are squandering a rich legacy. ***When you are relying on your family’s name or fame to get by, instead of enhancing it, you are a prodigal child. When you only know your entitlements but not your contributions, whether at home or office or in the house of God, you are a prodigal child. It is time to wake up!***

b) *Do what you have to do*

Sooner than later, we reach the dead end. Opportunities may start drying up. For example, your parents may be dead and you have to take care of yourself from now on. You may now be married and you can no longer transfer your responsibilities to someone else. For the first time, you may begin to realise that there are always more things to have than money can buy- love, peace of mind, success.

In the case of the prodigal son, after squandering what his father had given him, there was a severe famine and he needed to survive by working. Even so, paid employment could not satisfy the greed that he had been used to. That was when it dawned on him to return home, apologise to his father and offer to serve as one of his servants [vv. 14-17]! ***It took hardship and lack to bring him back to his senses.*** He was lucky to have where to come back to because many would take to drugs or commit suicide at that stage.

Be humble enough to realise that ***any time you wake up is your early morning. Accept responsibility for your wasted past. Learn the right lessons of humility. Get ready to work!***

c) *Ask the Lord’s help for the rest*

Sometimes, God uses the period of hardship to open our eyes to the reality that we face. That is when we realise that a bed of roses also has thorns; that a rolling stone may not gather moss but bruises! You soon realise that alcohol and drugs will get you nowhere. Even help and advice from friends and fellow hoodlums will not bring any lasting peace of mind. Only God can do it for you.

The prodigal son said, “I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned ***against heaven*** and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hire servants” [vv. 18-19]. By acknowledging that he had also sinned against heaven, he was putting himself at the mercy of God. The word of God

says that if we confess our sins, God is “faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” [1 Jn 1: 9].

*It is time to get up from those padded pews and out of those big garments of church, social or political rank and use the talents that God has given you as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers [Eph. 4: 11], helpers and administrators [1 Cor. 12: 28] to take Christ’s commission to an increasingly demented world. Do not grow weary of doing good [Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3: 13]. So, on the day the Lord calls you home, you will be glad to hear, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” You had fed the hungry, given water to the thirsty, clothed the naked and taken in strangers for the Lord’s sake [Matt. 25: 31-40]. You have not behaved like a spoilt or lazy child. That is your calling. That is Paul’s message to us in today’s Bible verses.*

### **3. Conclusion: Even Jesus works!**

When the Jews persecuted Jesus for healing on the Sabbath day a man who had carried his infirmity for thirty-eight years, He told them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” [Jn 5: 1-17]. So, if God works who owns heaven and earth, why do we not also work? If Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, works and even lived among His disciples “as the One who serve[d]” [Lk 22:27], who are we not to work? Therefore, we need to assess ourselves so as to get rid of any form of laziness- physical or spiritual- still lurking in us.

Are you lazy or spoilt?