

Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ.

You know that old song by the Beatles, "With a Little Help from My Friends"? It captures something deep in our hearts—we all get by with a little help from our friends. Sometimes we're the one who needs a hand. Other times, we're the friend stepping up. But more than any human bond, what a friend we have in Jesus! He took on the heavy work of our salvation all by Himself, and now He calls us to lend a hand to our neighbors when we can, as opportunities come our way. That's the heart of our text today from 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13. Let's dive into God's Word and see how it speaks to us.

Paul writes: "Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us." Right away, Paul gets serious. He's commanding them—and us—to steer clear of folks in the church who live in "idleness." That Greek word for idleness is "ataktos," which doesn't just mean lazy. It means disorderly, like someone marching out of step in a parade, causing chaos for everyone else. Paul says avoid those who ignore the teaching handed down, the example he set.

Think about the Lewis and Clark expedition back in 1804. President Thomas Jefferson sent Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the vast Louisiana Purchase, all the way to the Pacific Ocean. They gathered a team of about 40 men, plus a young Shoshone woman named Sacagawea and her husband. It was no easy stroll—these folks faced raging rivers, grizzly bears, harsh winters, and unknown lands. Early on, the tension started building. Their boats nearly capsized in the Missouri River's wild currents. Food ran low, and sickness hit hard. One man, Sergeant Charles Floyd, died just months in from what might have been appendicitis. The group could have fallen apart right there, with everyone looking out for themselves, disorderly and idle in the face of danger. But they didn't. Lewis and Clark set the tone, working tirelessly to map routes, hunt for food, and keep order. They knew that if anyone slacked off, it could doom the whole mission.

Paul continues in verses 7-9: "For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate." Paul reminds them of his own hard work. He could have demanded support as an apostle—that was his right. But instead, he toiled as a tentmaker, paying his way so he wouldn't burden anyone. Why? To be an example worth following. That word "toil" echoes the Greek "kopos," meaning exhausting labor, the kind that wears you out but gets the job done.

Back to Lewis and Clark—the tension ramped up as they pushed west. In the Bitterroot Mountains, snow fell early, and their horses slipped on icy trails. Starvation loomed; they had to eat their own candles at one point. Clark wrote in his journal about the men's growing despair, how some grumbled and wanted to turn back. Imagine the disorder if idleness took hold—men sitting around, complaining instead of chopping wood or scouting ahead. But Lewis stepped up, sharing his own rations, encouraging the team. Sacagawea, with her baby on her back, pointed out edible plants and translated with tribes. They helped each other, imitating the leaders' grit. No one ate without contributing; everyone pulled their weight, even in the pain.

Paul drives it home in verse 10: "For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat." This isn't about those who can't work due to hardship—Paul's talking about those who won't, the able-bodied who choose idleness. It's a firm rule: No work, no food. It's meant to protect the community, to keep things orderly.

The expedition hit rock bottom on the Columbia River. Fierce storms battered their canoes, waves crashing like angry giants. Lewis noted how the men were soaked, hungry, and on the verge of mutiny. Tensions boiled—arguments flared, trust frayed. One wrong move, and the whole group could splinter, lost in the wilderness. Idleness wasn't an option; it would mean death. They had to work together, repairing gear, fishing in the rain, pushing forward inch by inch.

Clark's leadership shone as he labored alongside them, refusing to be a burden, just like Paul.

Then Paul reports the problem in verse 11: "For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies." These folks aren't just lazy—they're meddlers, stirring up trouble. Instead of working quietly, they're poking into others' business, creating disorder.

In the expedition, as winter set in at Fort Clatsop, the rain poured for days on end. The men were cooped up, and boredom could have bred busybodies—gossip, fights over small things. The tension peaked; morale plummeted. Lewis and Clark had to enforce discipline, assigning tasks to keep hands busy and minds focused. No room for idlers when survival hung by a thread.

Paul commands in verse 12: "Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living." He mixes command with encouragement—in Christ. Get to work, settle down, provide for yourselves. It's for their good and the church's health.

Finally, verse 13: "As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good." Don't give up. Keep at the good work, even when it's tough.

Now, picture the resolution for Lewis and Clark. After all that tension—the near-starvation, the brutal mountains, the stormy seas—they reached the Pacific in November 1805. Clark carved on a tree: "Ocean in view! O! The joy!" They built a fort, traded with tribes, and mapped the way home. What pulled them through? A little help from friends. Lewis relied on Clark's steady hand; Clark on Lewis's vision. Sacagawea saved them more than once, guiding through her homeland. The men pitched in, hunting, building, supporting one another. No one succeeded alone; they imitated the leaders, worked without burdening, and earned their keep through shared toil. Their success opened the West, a delight after so much struggle.

Friends, our lives echo that expedition. We face our own wild rivers—job loss, family strife, health battles. Tension builds when idleness creeps in, when we become disorderly, burdening others or meddling instead of working. Maybe

you're the one feeling weary, ready to quit doing good. Or perhaps you're watching a brother slip into ataktos living, out of step with Christ's teaching. We all need help sometimes; we all must be the helper too.

But here's the joyful resolution that touches our hearts deepest: What a friend we have in Jesus! He didn't idle or burden us with our sins. No, He took on the ultimate toil—the cross. Jesus worked night and day in His ministry, healing, teaching, never shirking. He paid the full price for our salvation, not with gold, but with His blood. Though He had every right as God's Son to demand our service, He became our servant, our example to imitate. In Him, we're not left to struggle alone in the wilderness of sin. Jesus commands and encourages us in His name to work quietly, to do good without weariness. He equips us by His Spirit to help our neighbors—lending a hand at church, supporting a friend in need, providing for our families.

As we wrap up, remember Paul's points: Avoid disorderly idleness, imitate hardworking examples like his, work to not burden others, and don't grow weary in good. Through it all, Jesus is at work in us, forgiving our failures, strengthening our hands. He's the faithful friend who explored the path to heaven for us, resolving every tension in His resurrection victory. In Him, we find joy, getting by—and thriving—with His endless help. Amen.

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in Him.

Pastor Ron Breight

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