

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 Commentary

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JESUS IS COMING AGAIN
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Chart by Charles Swindoll

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| Written from Corinth Approximately 51AD | | | | |

1 Thessalonians 4:11 and to **make** it your **ambition** to **lead** a **quiet life** and **attend** to your **own** business and **work** with your **hands, just** as we **commanded** you, ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [kai philotimeisthai \(PMN\)](#) [esuchazein \(PAN\)](#) [kai prassein \(PAN\)](#) [ta idia kai ergazesthai \(PMN\)](#) [tais \[idiais\] chersin umon, kathos umin pareggeilamen.](#) (1PAAI)

Amplified: To make it your ambition and definitely endeavor to live quietly and peacefully, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we charged you, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you

NLT: This should be your ambition: to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we commanded you before. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Be busy with your own affairs and do your work yourselves. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: that you make it your ambition to be living a quiet life, that you are cultivating the habit of attending to your own private affairs, and that you are working with your hands, even as I gave you a charge, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

Young's Literal: and to study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we did command you,

AND TO MAKE IT YOUR AMBITION TO LEAD A QUIET LIFE AND ATTEND TO YOUR OWN *BUSINESS* AND WORK WITH YOUR HANDS, JUST AS WE COMMANDED YOU: [kai philotimeisthai \(PMN\)](#) [hesuchazein \(PAN\)](#) [kai prassein \(PAN\)](#) [ta idia kai ergazesthai \(PMN\)](#) [tais \[idiais\] chersin humon, kathos umin pareggeilamen,](#) (1PAAI):

- Pr 17:1; Eccl 4:6; Lam 3:26; 2Th 3:12; 1Ti 2:2; 1Pe 3:4
- Ro 15:20; 2Co 5:9 (Mk 13:34; Lk 12:42,43; Ro 12:4, 5, 6, 7, 8; Col 3:22, 23, 24; 2Th 3:11; 1Ti 5:13; Titus 2:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; 1Pe 4:10,11,15
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

And (2532) (kai) joins this to the preceding subject in which Paul emphasizes the **love of the brethren** in which he desires the saints to superabound toward one another. Note that Paul's exhortation is three fold (make it your ambition to lead a quiet life... attend to your own business... work with your own hands)

Bible Knowledge Commentary - Everyday habits of living manifest love of the brethren as do more special demonstrations of affection. It is these habits that Paul suggested the Thessalonians ponder in the light of brotherly love. He suggested these goals as worthy objectives for their maturing love. His words may reflect less than ideal conditions in their church.

Why would Paul speak about work at this point? Although the text does not specifically answer this question, most commentators agree that the truth about the imminent return of the Lord Jesus had led some believers in Thessalonica to begin to lead unruly lives, not even working because of their sense of urgency. It is good to be urgent but Paul says we are to remain orderly in our manner of life and obedient to the command to work with one's hands. This would assure a proper witness to non-believers and would also make sure the needs of all the believers would be provided for.

Be ambitious to mind your own business!

Make it your ambition (5389) ([philotimeomai](#) from **philos** = friend, loved + **time** = honor) means literally to be fond of honour, to be actuated by love of honor and hence to strive or seek for honour and hence to be ambitious. In later Greek it came to denote restless eagerness in any pursuit, hence, "to strive eagerly, to be zealous."

Findlay holds that even in the latter sense

there clings to it the connotation of some desire to shine or pursuit of eminence. (The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians)

Hiebert comments that...

It is not certain just which sense Paul intended the term to have here. If he meant "and to be ambitious, to be quiet" (Rotherham) he urges that the restless energy and activity associated with ambition for eminence be channeled into the task of living a quiet and calm life.

More probably, in harmony with later usage, it has the meaning "to seek earnestly to be quiet" (Darby), urging them to be zealously active in endeavoring to live quiet lives. In either case the advice is paradoxical. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

Philotimeomai thus evolved to picture one who was to earnestly aspire to something, implying strong ambition for the goal in view. The idea in the present context is to be zealous, strive eagerly and even consider it an honor to do so. The emphasis is on yearning that a particular thing will be accomplished and fully give oneself to do the task.

Paul says to continually (**present tense**) aspire or direct your hopes or ambitions towards minding your own business and working.

In his second epistle **Paul** gives us a clue as to why he addresses this issue writing...

For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. (2Thes 3:11-12)

BDAG explains the etymology of this word and how it relates to the Greek word for honor noting that...

special honor (time) was accorded persons who rendered exceptional service to the state or other institutions, and many wealthy persons endeavored to outdo one another in philanthropic public service... have as one's ambition, consider it an honor, aspire, with focus on idea of rendering service.

There are only 3 NT uses all by Paul...

Romans 15:20 (note) And thus I **aspired** to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation

2 Corinthians 5:9 Therefore also we **have as our ambition**, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

Moulton and Milligan explain that **philotimeomai**...

in all three (NT) passages seems to have lost its original idea of emulating ("am ambitious"), and to mean little more than "am zealous," "strive eagerly", in accordance with its usage in late Greek ("remember how **zealous** you were at Tristomos to remain with me")

A quiet life -

One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind. (Eccl 4:6)

Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. (2Thes 3:12)

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. (1 Ti 2:1-2)

To lead a quiet life - Hiebert comments that this exhortation...

implies that there was a spirit of restlessness in the young church. It was due, apparently, not to political influences, but rather to the new religious experiences and hopes that had gripped their minds. Although there is nothing to prove that this restlessness was caused by their excited anticipation of the impending return of Christ, such a connection, nevertheless, seems probable. The inspiring expectation of Christ's return, whereby earthly interests were reduced in importance in their eyes, had become the center of their excited interest. This connection seems justified from the fact that Paul immediately follows this exhortation with his treatment of the second advent, thereupon to return to further practical exhortations concerning daily living. Paul urges that this "eschatological restlessness" be turned into the proper channel. Instead of allowing their excited expectation to lead them to neglect their daily duties, let them use this enthusiasm faithfully to fulfill those duties. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

F F Bruce favors the view that the restlessness was due to undue eschatological excitement, and comments

The frequency with which this sort of thing has happened over the centuries, makes it quite probable that it could happen in Thessalonica around A.D. 50. ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary](#))

To lead a quiet life (2270)(**hesuchazo** from **hesuchos** = quiet, still) means to be still or to be silent, with different connotations suggested by the context (see the 5 NT uses below).

Hiebert notes that **hesuchazo**...

basically means "to be at rest" and was used of silence after speech, rest after labor, peace after war, and the like; it was also used of tranquility or peace of mind; here it is used to urge the living of a calm, restful life. The present tense ... stresses that they must constantly strive to lead such a life. They must eagerly endeavor to be eminent in the effort "to be quiet," live tranquilly and restfully. Instead of allowing them to succumb to fanatical excitement, Paul desires to recall them to restfulness of mind and a balanced outlook upon life. If they will develop a quiet, restful attitude, the outward manifestations of restlessness will cease. ([Ibid](#))

The idea include to be quiet, inwardly calm, living quiet peaceable and orderly lives.

Thayer says

not running hither and thither, but staying at home and minding their business

Paul's point in the present verse is that in light of the certainty of the Lord's return, the Thessalonians are to lead peaceful lives, free of conflict and hostility toward others, which serves as a witness to the transforming power of the gospel.

[Bible Knowledge Commentary](#) says that "Paul was telling the Thessalonians to be less frantic, not less exuberant."

BDAG adds that in the present context the idea of **hesuchazo** is to manifest...

conduct that does not disturb the peace. Christian leaders endeavored to keep their members free of anything that might be construed as disturbance of public order. ([Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#))

Green writing on the meaning of **hesuchazo** adds that...

At times the theme of "being quiet" appears in the literature of the era in the description of those respectable people who do not cause problems in the community. Philo, for example, contrasted the "quiet" person with someone who was evil...

Besides, the worthless man whose life is one long restlessness haunts market-places, theatres, law-courts, council-halls, assemblies, and every group and gathering of men; his tongue he lets loose for unmeasured, endless, indiscriminate talk, bringing chaos and confusion into everything, mixing true with false, fit with unfit, public with private, holy with profane, sensible with absurd, because he has not been trained to that silence (*hēsuchian*) which in season is most excellent. ([Green, G. L. The letters to the Thessalonians. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Leicester, England: W. B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos.](#))

Hesuchazo is used 5 times in the NT...

Luke 14:4 But they **kept silent**. And He took hold of him, and healed him, and sent him away. **Comment:** Obviously in this context **hesuchazo** means to be silent saying nothing and holding one's peace)

Luke 23:56 And they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they **rested** according to the commandment. (**Comment:** To be at rest, ceasing from labor as prescribed by the Sabbath)

Acts 11:18 And when they heard this, they **quieted down**, and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

Acts 21:14 And since he would not be persuaded, we **fell silent**, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"

1 Thessalonians 4:11 and to make it your ambition to lead a **quiet life** and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you

There are 37 uses of **hesuchazo** in the **Septuagint** (Ge 4:7; Ex 24:14; Jdg. 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28; 18:7, 9, 27; Ruth 3:18; 2 Ki. 11:20; 2 Chr. 14:1; 23:21; Neh. 5:8; Est. 1:1; Job 3:13, 26; 11:19; 14:6; 32:1, 6; 37:8, 17; Ps. 76:8; 107:30; Prov. 1:33; 7:11; 15:15; 26:20;

Isa. 7:4; Jer. 46:27; 47:6f; Lam. 3:26; Ezek. 32:14; 38:11; Zech. 1:11) Below are some representative uses...

Genesis 4:7 If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well (**Lxx** reads **be still** = hesuchazo = a command in the aorist imperative to be still or silent), sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.

Exodus 24:14+ But to the elders he said, **Wait** (**Lxx** = hesuchazo = a command to continue to be still = present imperative) here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them.

Judges 3:11 (note) Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Ruth 3:18 (see note) Then she said, "Wait, my daughter, until you know how the matter turns out; for the man will not **rest** (**Lxx** = hesuchazo) until he has settled it today."

Psalms 76:8 ([Spurgeon's Comment](#)) Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; The earth feared, and was **still** (**Lxx** = hesuchazo).

Proverbs 1:33+ "But he who listens to me shall live securely, And shall **be at ease** (**Lxx** = hesuchazo) from the dread of evil."

MacArthur explains that...

In anticipation of the Lord's return, believers are to lead peaceful lives, free of conflict and hostility toward others, which is a witness to the transforming power of the gospel. ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

McGee has an interesting comment writing...

"That ye study to be quiet." That is an interesting commandment for Christians. We have all kinds of schools today to teach people to speak. Every seminary has a public speaking class. Perhaps they should also have a class that would teach their students to be quiet. A lot of saints need such a course! A lady went to a "tongues meeting," and the leader thought she was interested in speaking in tongues. He asked her, "Madam, would you like to speak in tongues?" She answered, "No, I would like to lose about forty feet off the one I have now!" We need to study to be quiet. That is a commandment. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

Guzik's comment brings this verse home to where we live in America writing that...

The quiet life contradicts the hugely successful modern attraction to entertainment and excitement. This addiction to entertainment and excitement is damaging both spiritually and culturally. We might say that excitement and entertainment are like a religion for many people today.

- This religion has a god: The self.
- This religion has priests: Celebrities.
- This religion has a prophet: Music video channels.
- This religion has scriptures: Tabloids and entertainment news and information programs.
- This religion has places of worship: Amusement parks, theaters, concert halls, sports arenas; and we could say that ever television is a little chapel.

The religion of excitement and entertainment seduces people into living their lives for one thing - the thrill of the moment. But these thrills are quickly over and forgotten, and all that is important is the next fun thing. This religion conditions its followers to only ask one question: "Is it fun?" It never wants us to ask more important questions such as, "Is it true?" "Is it right?" "Is it good?" "Is it godly?"

We need to live the quiet life so that we can really take the time and give the attention to listen to God. When we live the quiet life we can listen to God and get to know Him better. ([1 Thessalonians 4](#))

In his devotional **Our Daily Walk**, F B Meyer writes of **Three Ambitions** based on the following three passages...

We make it our aim (we are ambitious) to be well-pleasing unto Him. (2 Cor 5:9)

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands... (1 Thes 4:11)

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. (NIV, see note Romans 15:20)

THERE IS scope for ambition within the sphere of the Christian Faith, and to be without it is to miss an influential incentive to high and holy endeavour. Our Lord does not destroy any natural faculty, but directs it to a worthy object. Instead of living for material good, or the applause of the world, we must stir ourselves to seek those things which are the legitimate objects of holy ambition. In two other passages the Apostle Paul uses this same word. (See passages above)

There is the ambition of daily toil,—"Be ambitious to be quiet, to do your own business, to work with your own hands." In the age in which the Apostles lived there was much unrest, and in the case of the Christian Church this was still further increased by the expectation of the approaching end of the world; many were inclined to surrender their ordinary occupations, and give themselves up to restlessness and excitement, all of which was prejudicial to the regular ordering of their homes and individual lives, But the injunction is that we are not to yield to the ferment of restlessness; we are not to be disturbed by the feverishness around us, whether of social upheavals or for pleasure or gain.

The ambition to be well-pleasing to Christ. At His judgment-seat He will weigh up the worth of our individual mortal life, and He is doing so day by day. Not only when we pass the threshold of death, but on this side, our Lord is judging our character and adjudicating our reward. Let us strive to be as well-pleasing to Him in this life, as we hope to be in the next.

The ambition of Christian work—"Being ambitious to preach the Gospel." The great world lies open to us, many parts of it still unevangelized; and all around us in our own country are thousands, among the rich and poor, who have no knowledge of Christ. Let us make it our ambition to bring them to Him, always remembering that the things we do for Christ must be that which He works through us in the power of the Holy Spirit (see **notes** Romans 15:18; 15:19).

PRAYER - Give us grace, O Lord, to work while it is day, fulfilling diligently and patiently whatever duty Thou appointest us; doing small things in the day of small things, and great labours if Thou summon us to any; rising and working, sitting still and suffering, according to Thy word. AMEN.

Attend to your own business - The idea is to "*mind your own business*". This duty and the one following explain how the Thessalonians are to go about leading **quiet lives**. **Your own** (Greek idios) places emphasis on one's own affairs, not those of others

McGee quips "Tend to your own knitting" is the way I used to hear it as a boy. Keep your nose out of the affairs of other people. This is good advice for Christians. (Ibid)

MacArthur notes that "The admonition to **attend to your own business** was a common one in secular Greek writings but used only here in the New Testament. (Ibid)

Attend to (4238)(**prasso**) means to be occupied with, to accomplish or to practice. The **present tense** calls for them to be making this their daily practice or lifestyle to take care of their own business.

Jesus addressed this same concern asking...

"Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. (Luke 12:42,43)

Hiebert says...

They are to serve God by a faithful performance of their own individual tasks. It is a warning against meddlesomeness in the affairs of others. While having a proper concern for the needs of the brethren, they must avoid the neglect of their personal affairs. Let them have the habit of attending to their own interests and responsibilities. (Ibid)

Barnes comments that the idea is to...

attend to their own concerns, without interfering with the affairs of others. See [see note Philippians 2:4]; Comp. 2Th 3:11; 1Ti 5:13; 1 Peter 4:15 [note]. The injunction here is one of the beautiful precepts of Christianity so well adapted to promote the good order and the happiness of society. It would prevent the

impertinent and unauthorized prying into the affairs of others, to which many are so prone, and produce that careful attention to what properly belongs to our calling in life, which leads to thrift, order, and competence. Religion teaches no man to neglect his business. It requires no one to give up an honest calling, and to be idle. It asks no one to forsake a useful occupation unless he can exchange it for one more useful. It demands, indeed, that we shall be willing so far to suspend our ordinary labours as to observe the Sabbath; to maintain habits of devotion; to improve our minds and hearts by the study of truth; to cultivate the social affections, and to do good to others as we have an opportunity; but it makes no one idle, and it countenances idleness in no one. A man who is habitually idle can have very slender pretensions to piety. There is enough in this world for every one to do, and the Saviour set such an example of untiring industry in his vocation, as to give each one occasion to doubt whether he be his true follower if he be not disposed to be employed. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Wiersbe has an interesting comment observing that...

"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life" (1 Thes. 4:11, niv) seems like a paradox; if you are ambitious, your life will probably not be quiet. But the emphasis is on quietness of mind and heart, the inner peace that enables a man to be sufficient through faith in Christ. Paul did not want the saints running around creating problems as they earned their daily bread. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

AND WORK WITH YOUR HANDS, JUST AS WE COMMANDED YOU: kai ergazesthai (PMN) tais [idiais] chersin humon, kathos humin paregeilamen, (1PAAI):

- Acts 20:35; Romans 12:11; 1Corinthians 4:12; Ephesians 4:28; 2Th 3:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; Titus 3:14
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

And (kai) introduces the second duty that will facilitate leading a quiet life.

Work with your hands - Note that the phrase **with your hands** indicates that Paul is referring to manual labor. It seems that the majority of the saints in the church at Thessalonica were "working class".

Plummer points out that the Thessalonian epistles contain

no exhortations to the wealthy, and no warnings as to the deceitfulness of riches, although there was much wealth in Thessalonica. (A Commentary on St Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians).

Why address this issue? The Scripture is not definitive but in view of the emphasis on the Lord's return it could have been that some were saying "Why work? The Lord's coming back soon!" This is a reasonable thought but is still speculation.

Paul had given the Thessalonians his example...

For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. (see **note** 1 Thes 2:9)

Wiersbe adds that...

Idle people spend their time interfering with the affairs of others and getting themselves and others into trouble. "We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies" (2 Thes. 3:11, niv). "But let none of you suffer... as a busybody in other men's matters" (see note 1 Peter 4:15). Believers who are about the Father's business (Luke 2:49) do not have the time—or desire—to meddle in the affairs of others. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

One must also keep the cultural context in mind for in Paul's day (not much different then our modern times) **manual labor** was regarded as degrading, befitting the status of slaves and free men should never "stoop" to this level. Thus mundane work was generally despised by aristocrats and those of higher social status.

The Greek writer **Plutarch** said that

while we delight in the work, we despise the workman, as, for instance, in the case of perfumes and dyes; we take a delight in them, but dyers and perfumers we regard as illiberal and vulgar folk.

On the other hand the Jews upheld the dignity of all forms of labor and regarded work as obligatory and every Jewish boy (even

those in wealthy families) was taught a trade. The Jewish rabbis also worked at a trade to earn their livelihood (cf Jesus working as a carpenter).

Christianity advanced the thought of Judaism and elevated work to a holy occupation as seen in Paul's exhortation to the saints at Colossae writing...

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (see note Colossians 3:17)

James Denney said it well writing that...

If we cannot be holy at our work, it is not worth taking any trouble to be holy at other times.

Work (2038) (**ergazomai** from **érgon** = work) means to work, labor or engage in an activity that involves effort. The opposite of inactivity or idleness. The **present tense** calls for this to be their continual duty.

Paul reminded the leaders of the church of Ephesus of his example in this area declaring that...

In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35)

Writing to the saints at Rome, **Paul** exhorted them to be...

Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#)) (Ro 12:11-note)

Paul was not afraid to work writing to the church at Corinth...

we **toil** (kopiao = to the point of exhaustion), **working** (ergazomai) with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure (1Cor 4:12)

In a very similar instruction to the Ephesian church **Paul** issued the following commands...

Let him who steals **steal** (present imperative) no longer; but rather **let him labor**, (kopiao = present imperative) performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need. (see **note** Ephesians 4:28)

In his second letter to the Thessalonians **Paul** wrote at some length about this topic which apparently was a persistent problem...

For you yourselves know how you **ought** (must, it is necessary) to **follow our example**, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner (out of order as soldiers breaking rank) among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with **labor** (ergazomai) and **hardship** (kopos = labor involving toil, weariness, intense effort to the point of fatigue) we **kept working** (mochthos = toiling, referring to afflicting, wearisome labor) night and day so that we might not be a burden (heavy upon) to any of you; not because we do not have the right (exousia - as apostles) to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a **model** (tupos) for you, that you might follow our example (mimic or imitate their example). For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies (everywhere doing everything but doing nothing). Now such persons we command (paraggello) and exhort (parakaleo) in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion (hesuchia - tranquil, not unruly) and eat their own bread. (2 Thes 3:7-12)

Paul writing to **Titus** on the isle of Crete filled with "lazy (argos = not working) gluttons" instructed him to

let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful. (see **note** Titus 3:14)

Just as we commanded you - Paul had instructed them on the topic of work in his initial presentation of the Gospel. To work was not just meant to inform them or to make a suggestion but was an authoritative, apostolic command! Surely, Timothy had brought back news that some were not fully obeying this command.

Just as (2531) (**kathos** from **kata** = down, according to + **hos** = as) means is so far as, inasmuch as, according as. Hiebert points out that **just as**

insists upon the exact correspondence between those orders and the present demands. Those who were succumbing to these undesirable practices had no excuse for their misconduct. (Ibid)

Here Paul reminds them that this charge to carry out "manual labor" was not something new (cf note 1 Thessalonians 4:2). Paul had

not only given the Thessalonians explicit instructions but he (along with Silas and Timothy) had also given them an example of hard work, as indicated in chapter two...

For you recall brethren our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. (see note 1Thessalonians 2:9)

Commanded (3853)(**paraggello** or **parangelo** from **para** = beside, alongside, near by, at the side of +**aggelos** = messenger, **angelo/aggello** = to announce) means to hand on or pass on an announcement from one to another who is at one's side, such as to what must be done, usually with the idea of a command or charge.

Paraggello often was used in the context of a military command and demanded that the subordinate obey the order from the superior and required unhesitating and unqualified obedience. (cp Lk 5:14, 8:29, Lk 9:21KJV, Acts 1:4, 4:18; 5:28KJV; Acts 15:5KJV; 1Th 4:11). It is like a mandate (an authoritative command) or a call to obedience from one in authority.

In other contexts the main idea was that the announcement was in the form of an **instruction** (cp Lk 8:56, 1Cor 7:10, 11:17). **Instruction** can simply represent the impartation of knowledge as to how something should be done, but when this English word translates **paraggello**, it indicates directions calling for compliance.

See study of related noun - paraggelia

MacArthur writes that in all the uses of **parangelo**...

the idea of binding a person to make the proper response to an instruction. The soldier was bound to obey the orders of his superiors; a person involved in a legal matter was bound by the court's orders; a person of integrity was bound by moral principles; a patient was bound to follow his doctor's instruction if he wanted to get well; and a successful writer or speaker was bound by the standards of his craft. ([MacArthur, John: Matthew 8-15](#), [Matthew 16-23](#), Matthew 24-28)

Vincent adds that **paraggello** was...

A strong word, often of military orders. Aristotle uses it of a physician: to prescribe. Originally (**paraggello** meant) to pass on or transmit; hence, as a military term, of passing a watchword or command; and so generally to command.

Paraggello in some contexts was like our modern subpoena, and to disregard it made a person liable to severe punishment. It was used for a doctor's prescription or instruction to their patient.

Every use of **paraggello** includes the inherent idea of binding the hearer or recipient in a way that they make the proper response to the charge or instruction.

Paraggello was used by persons in various positions of authority, and thus could represent military commands or instructions of the philosophers (Epictetus), doctor (giving a prescription or instructions - for the patient's good!), judge (issuing a "subpoena" - to disregard it made a person liable to severe punishment), etc. The essential element was that someone was placed under an obligation.

To transmit a message giving **instructions** (Mt 10:5, Mk 6:8, Acts 23:30, 1 Ti 1:3, 1 Ti 6:17).

To pass on an **order** from one to another, in sense of issuing a directive from an authoritative source.

To **charge** (entrust with a task or responsibility; place a burden upon or assign responsibility to).

To **command** or give a commandment. To command conveys the sense of to order (as when giving an authoritative order), require, or compel.

Xenophon used **paraggello** of a military order (cp Acts 16:24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.) It represents a directive from an authoritative source. As a military command it demanded that a subordinate obey the order from the superior exhibiting unhesitating and unqualified obedience.

Paraggello was commonly used in the Ptolemaic papyri to describe the official summons before a court, the equivalent of a modern subpoena, which to disregard made a person liable to severe punishment.

There are 31 uses of **paraggello/parangelo**...

Matthew 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent out after **instructing** (commanded Mt 10:5KJV) them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans;

Matthew 15:35 And He **directed** (commanded Mt 15:35KJV) the people to sit down on the ground;

Mark 6:8 and He **instructed** (commanded Mk 6:8KJV) them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff--no bread, no bag, no money in their belt--

Mark 8:6 And He **directed** (commanded Mk 8:6KJV) the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people.

Mark 16:8 They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (See comment for use of paraggello)

Comment: Some manuscripts end at this verse, as some of these earlier manuscripts do not include Mark 16:9-20. The following shorter ending is found in some MSS: "They reported briefly to those around Peter all that they had been **commanded**."

Luke 5:14 And He **ordered** him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Luke 8:29 For He had **commanded** the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

Luke 8:56 Her parents were amazed; but He **instructed** them to tell no one what had happened.

Luke 9:21 But He **warned** them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,

Acts 1:4 Gathering them together, He **commanded** them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;

Acts 4:18 And when they had summoned them, they **commanded** them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Acts 5:28 saying, "We **gave** (paraggello) you strict orders (noun - paraggelia) not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

Acts 5:40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and **ordered** them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.

Comment: Some "orders" are to be disobeyed, because other orders supersede them, having come in this case for the Captain of our salvation - Read what the disciples did in Acts 5:41, 42. Would God grant all of us such Spirit enabled boldness to proclaim Jesus regardless of the shame it might bring us from those who do not believe! Amen.

Acts 10:42 (Peter speaking - the Gospel goes now to the Gentiles [Cornelius]) "And He **ordered** us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

Acts 15:5 (The Jerusalem Council) But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to **direct** (commanded Acts 15:5KJV) them to observe the Law of Moses."

Acts 16:18 She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "**command** you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

Comment: In contrast to much writing on "exorcism", here we see the words of Paul (surely under the control and empowerment of the Holy Spirit) were sufficient. Paul was speaking as Jesus' ambassador, in His place, and giving a command the demons must obey. Unfortunately this area of demonic possession and so called exorcism has been greatly sensationalized and is fraught with much false teaching. Be a Berean! (Acts 17:11) Stick to the Scriptures, lest you be drawn into aberrant teaching!

Acts 16:23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, **commanding** the jailer to guard them securely;

Acts 17:30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now **declaring** (commandeth Acts 17:30KJV) to men that all people everywhere should repent,

Acts 23:22 So the commander let the young man go, **instructing** him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things."

Acts 23:30 "When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also **instructing** (gave

commandment to Acts 123:30KJV) his accusers to bring charges against him before you."

1 Corinthians 7:10 But to the married I **give instructions** (command 1Co 7:10KJV) , not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband

1 Corinthians 11:17 But in **giving** this **instruction**, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.

Comment: In using paraggello, Paul is not simply giving random instructions, that they might or might not follow as it were merely "personal advice." Instead, like a military commander he was giving them apostolic instruction which they were commanded to accept and follow.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-[note](#) and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we **commanded** you, (see the noun paraggelia in 1Th 4:2 where it describes strictly commands received from a superior and transmitted to others)

2 Thessalonians 3:4 We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we **command**.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 Now we **command** you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we used to **give** you this **order** (commanded 2Th 3:10KJV): if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

2 Thessalonians 3:12 Now such persons we **command** and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

1 Timothy 1:3 As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may **instruct** certain men not to teach strange doctrines,

1 Timothy 4:11 **Prescribe** (present imperative) (command 1Ti 4:11KJV) and teach these things.

John MacArthur: Everything God commanded Timothy to be he was to command others to be. The excellent minister's preaching is to be authoritative, done in a command mode. Such preaching imitates God Himself, of whom Paul wrote in Acts 17:30, "God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent." Jesus commanded His hearers to repent and believe, as John the Baptist had done. The Father commanded all to hear His Son and obey. Every call to believe the gospel with repentance is a command. Every call to saints to obey the Word is a command that is to come with authority. To Titus Paul wrote, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you" (Titus 2:15).

1 Timothy 5:7 **Prescribe** (present imperative) (command 1Ti5:7KJV) these things as well, so that they may be above reproach.

1 Timothy 6:13 I **charge** you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate,

1 Timothy 6:17 **Instruct** (present imperative) those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

There are 13 uses of **paraggello** in the **Septuagint (LXX)** (Jos. 6:7; 1 Sam. 10:17; 15:4; 23:8; 1 Ki. 12:6; 15:22; 2 Chr. 36:22; Ezr. 1:1; Jer. 46:14; 50:29; 51:27; Dan. 2:18; 3:4)

1 Samuel 23:8 So Saul **summoned** (Lxx = paraggello) all the people for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

Ezra 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he **sent a proclamation** (Lxx = paraggello) throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,

1 Thessalonians 4:12 **so that you will behave properly toward outsiders *** and not be in **any need**. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [hina peripatete](#) (2PPAS) [euschemonos pros tous exo kai medenos chreian echete](#). (2PPAS)

Amplified: So that you may bear yourselves becomingly and be correct and honorable and command the respect of the outside world, being dependent on nobody [self-supporting] and having need of nothing. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NIV: so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody. ([NIV - IBS](#))

NLT: As a result, people who are not Christians will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others to meet your financial needs. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: The result will be a reputation for honesty in the world outside and an honourable independence. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: in order that you may be conducting yourselves in a manner becoming to you [as children of God] toward those who are on the outside, in order that you may not be having need of anything. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

Young's Literal: that ye may walk becomingly unto those without, and may have lack of nothing.

SO THAT YOU MAY BEHAVE PROPERLY TOWARD OUTSIDERS AND NOT BE IN ANY NEED: hina peripatete (2PPAS) euschemonos pros tous exo kai medenos chreian echete. (2PPAS):

- 1Thes 5:22; Romans 12:17; 13:13; 2Corinthians 8:20,21; Philippians 4:8; Titus 2:8, 9, 10; 1Peter 2:12; 1Peter 3:16,17
- Mark 4:11; 1Corinthians 5:12,13; Colossians 4:5; 1Timothy 3:7; 1Peter 3:1) (2Corinthians 11:7, 8, 9
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

So that (2443) (hina) introduces the purpose for the preceding charge to **work with your hands**. As the NLT says, the purpose is so that "people who are not Christians will respect the way you live."

Milligan explains that "By avoiding undue interference with the affairs of others, and paying diligent attention to their own work, the Thessalonians would not only present a decorous appearance to their unbelieving neighbours, but themselves enjoy an honourable independence. (St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians. 1908)

Behave (4043)(peripateo [word study] from **peri** = about, around + **pateo** = walk, tread) means literally to walk around, to go here and there in walking, to tread all around.

Peripateo - 95x in 88v - NAS = behave(2), conduct ourselves(1), conduct yourselves(1), leading... life(1), leads... life(1), prowls around(1), so occupied(1), walk(50), walk about(1), walk around(2), walked(7), walking(21), walking around(1), walks(5). Matt 4:18; 9:5; 11:5; 14:25f, 29; 15:31; Mark 2:9; 5:42; 6:48f; 7:5; 8:24; 11:27; 12:38; 16:12; Luke 5:23; 7:22; 11:44; 20:46; 24:17; John 1:36; 5:8f, 11f; 6:19, 66; 7:1; 8:12; 10:23; 11:9f, 54; 12:35; 21:18; Acts 3:6, 8f, 12; 14:8, 10; 21:21; Rom 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 14:15; 1 Cor 3:3; 7:17; 2 Cor 4:2; 5:7; 10:2f; 12:18; Gal 5:16; Eph 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; Phil 3:17f; Col 1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1, 12; 2 Thess 3:6, 11; Heb 13:9; 1 Pet 5:8; 1 John 1:6f; 2:6, 11; 2 John 1:4, 6; 3 John 1:3f; Rev 2:1; 3:4; 9:20; 16:15; 21:24.

The 39 uses in the Gospels always refer to literal, physical walking. Seven of the 8 uses in Acts are also in the literal sense (except Acts 21:21). (See Spurgeon's comments on what it means **to walk**). Here and in most of his epistles Paul uses **peripateo** in the metaphorical sense (32 times) meaning to conduct one's life, to order one's behavior, to behave, to make one's way, to make due use of opportunities, to live or pass one's life (with a connotation of spending some time in a place). The present tense indicates this is to be their lifestyle.

You may behave properly - They are to conduct themselves with decorum, decently and in a fitting manner toward non-believers (literally **outsiders** is "those without" or "those that are without" and so not in the sphere of Christian faith and fellowship). Christians not only have the obligation to love one another but also to be good testimonies to the people of the world. In the present context, they do this by leading a quiet life and working hard which serves an evangelistic function. When Christians work and live with integrity, their lives are like written epistles that sound forth the gospel. Writing to the Corinthians Paul alluded to their witness to the pagans declaring...

You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on

tablets of human hearts. (2 Cor 3:2-3)

John MacArthur echoes this thought writing that...

When believers display diligent work attitudes and habits and live in a loving and tranquil manner that respects others' privacy and does not intrude or gossip, it constitutes a powerful testimony to unbelievers and makes the gospel credible... Believers who sacrificially love other people, exhibit tranquil lives, conscientiously focus on keeping their own lives in order, and faithfully carry out their daily responsibilities in the workplace (thus avoiding any welfare dependence)—all the while proclaiming the gospel in light of the return of Christ—are the most effective witnesses to their unsaved neighbors and loved ones. ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

Other ways believers can **behave properly toward outsiders** and thereby give a proper opinion of Christianity (Mt 5:16-note) to those who do not yet know Christ are suggested by the following passages...

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. (Ro 12:17-note)

Let us behave **properly** (euschemonos) as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. (Ro 13:13- note)

But let all things be done **properly** and in an orderly manner. (1 Corinthians 14:40)

Conduct (peripateo; present imperative = command to continually walk in this way) yourselves with wisdom (sophia - knowledge of God and of His will applied to life's situations = not just head knowledge but that which affects and transforms our "walk") toward outsiders, making the most (exagorazo = literally to buy out of the market place = to completely redeem) of the opportunity (kairos = speaks of a limited period with notion of suitability = "the suitable time", "the right moment", "the convenient time"). (Col 4:5-note)

(Paul to Titus but applicable to all believers who should be) sound (hugies [English = hygiene, hygienic] = "healthy") in speech (see note Ephesians 4:29) which is beyond reproach (unblamable - cannot be condemned), in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. (Titus 2:8-note)

Keep (present tense = continually keeping) your behavior excellent (kalos = "intrinsically good, beautiful, fair" describing that which is the ideal, the model that others should imitate) among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe (implying both continuity and intent) them, glorify God in the day of visitation. (see **note** 1 Peter 2:12)

Keep (present tense = continually keeping) a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. (see note 1 Peter 3:16; 17)

Properly (2156)(**euschemonos** from **eu** = good, well + **schema** = appearance, figure, fashion. Contrast morphe = the distinctive nature and character of the object versus schema which is the unchangeable, outward fashion - in a man for example, in his gestures, clothes, words, etc) is an adverb which means seemly, becomingly, appropriately, suitably, in a seemly way. It describes that which is noble or has an attractive form.

Euschemonos therefore pertains particularly to one's outward, visible life, as in Ro 13:13-note, where it explains the believers walk which is to be is a fitting or becoming manner of behavior. A fitting or becoming manner of behavior was highly valued in the ancient world. Paul speaking of elder qualifications but still applicable to all believers living in a pagan society wrote that...

he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1Ti 3:7) (See also the cross references listed above explaining proper behavior)

Euschemonos was "a word that is also used to describe those in the community who acted nobly and worthily and who would even receive public recognition for their conduct. ([Green, G. L. The letters to the Thessalonians. The Pillar New Testament commentary. Page 212. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W. B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos](#))

The literal sense of **euschemonos** is suggested by the familiar phrase in good form and the contrast is disorderly (which Paul uses in, 2Thes 3:6) In the present context Paul is interested in the impression made by the saints to non-believers who are outside of the church.

Romans 13:13+ (see above)

1 Corinthians 14:40+ (see above)

1 Thessalonians 4:12 (note) so that you may behave **properly** toward outsiders and not be in any need.

J Vernon McGee says that **behave properly** or "'Walk honestly" is also something that the saints of God need to do today. It will gain the respect and the confidence of mankind. Our walk should be honest before God and man. I have letters from several organizations which use methods to raise money that seem very questionable to me. Certain organizations have men out contacting people who have become senile, attempting to get them to make their wills over to their organizations. That is one reason you ought to make your will before you become senile. There are unscrupulous people who are out to get your money—there is no question about that. A child of God cannot do such questionable things because we are to "walk honestly toward them that are without." That means that all dealings with unbelievers are to be scrupulously honest. God will judge us if we do not walk honestly. ([1 Thessalonians 4:10-12](#))

Outsiders ([3588](#))(**exo**) means out, without, as opposed to within. Metaphorically, exo refers to those not belonging to one's society or church (i.e., non-Christians)

Frame writes that Paul's point is...

that the idleness of some of the Christians tended to bring Christianity into discredit with the unbelievers (Frame, J. E.. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. 1912)

As **Matthew Henry** says "It is a great ornament to religion when the professors (Ed note: I would add specifically the "possessors" of Christ, which is what I think he means by the term "professors" in this context) of it are of meek and quiet spirits, diligent to do their own business, and not busy-bodies in other men's matters.

Martin makes the point that it was never "

Paul's intent that the church disrupt society or overthrow governments. Rather, he encouraged Christians to be good citizens and exemplary members of their families and of their society but to do so in a manner consistent with the teachings of Christ. Only in this sense was the Pauline gospel intended to change society. It set out to change the individuals who made up society while awaiting that climactic event when the power of God would truly change the world forever. ([Martin, D. Michael. 1, 2 Thessalonians. The New American Commentary Series: Broadman & Holman Publishers. 1995](#))

Ray Stedman feels like several other commentators have surmised that...

These Christians in Thessalonica were making fools of themselves by stressing the immediacy of the coming of the Lord to such a degree that they had stopped working. That is why the apostle bids them to keep busy. Here in the United States, in 1846, a group of followers of William Miller abandoned their work, sold their possessions, and went out on a hilltop to wait for the Lord to appear because this prophet had told them that Jesus was coming at a certain day and hour. There was tremendous expectancy on their part, but, of course, Jesus did not come. They became fools in the eyes of people because of their extreme action and turned many against biblical prophecy by what they had done. The apostle corrects that kind of thinking in these words. "Keep busy" is his advice. "Keep from meddling in other people's affairs. Do not try to get them to follow some foolish idea that you may have about prophetic things. Keep busy, providing your own needs (that is a wonderful word) so you do not become a burden to others and you will win the respect of the outside world." These are very important words. ([1 Thessalonians 4:9-18: Comfort at the Grave](#))

And not be in any need - The NIV renders it "so that you will not be dependent on anybody".

Not (literally "of nothing")(3367)(**medeis** from **medé** = and not, also not + **heís** = one) means not even one, no one.

Vincent comments that **not** is "Either neuter, of nothing, or masculine, of no man. In the latter case it would refer to depending upon others for their support, which some, in view of the immediately expected parousia, were disposed to do, neglecting their own business.

Need ([5543](#))(**chreia** from **chraomai** = to use, make use of or **chreos** = a debt) means a necessity, what is needed or the occasion of need. In NT metonymically it refers to that in which one is employed (an employment, affair, business).

Chreia - 49x in 47v - Matt 3:14; 6:8; 9:12; 14:16; 21:3; 26:65; Mark 2:17, 25; 11:3; 14:63; Luke 5:31; 9:11; 10:42; 15:7; 19:31, 34; 22:71; John 2:25; 13:10, 29; 16:30; Acts 2:45; 4:35; 6:3; 20:34; 28:10; Rom 12:13; 1 Cor 12:21, 24; Eph 4:28f; Phil 2:25; 4:16, 19; 1 Thess 1:8; 4:9, 12; 5:1; Titus 3:14; Heb 5:12; 7:11; 10:36; 1 John 2:27; 3:17; Rev 3:17; 21:23; 22:5 **NAS** = necessary(1), need(40), needed(1), needs(6), task(1).

Self sufficiency was a Greek ideal, which of course was one of the basic tenets of the Stoic philosophers. For Christians to be

gainfully employed was to manifest conduct that would be attractive to unbelievers, even as it is today. Christians more than anyone should aspire continually to excellence in their behavior in the workplace so as to give a fragrant aroma of Christ to the lost world.

Richison makes the following application "Credible Christians pay attention to the way they live on a day-to-day basis. A godless world looks upon those who leech off others with askance. Non-Christians can judge us only by appearances, so our walk should fit the fashion of Christ. What kind of testimony would we have to non-Christians if they viewed us as wranglers, gossips, critics, busybodies and lazy? ([1 Thessalonians 4:11](#); [4:11b](#); [11c](#); [4:12](#))