

## **2 Thess. 3:6-13 (WCF 26:3) “Partial Sharing”**

**For the Children:** Some parents ask their children to give them a “birthday list.” The child writes down all the things he would like to receive for his birthday. Do you think it would be good for him if his parents always gave him everything he asked for? More likely he’d become a “spoiled brat”! The Lord does not give us all we ask for either. He does not want us to be “spoiled brats.” Nor does He want His people to give money to everyone who asks. We must try to help – especially other Christians – if we can, but not if they are too lazy to work. **Questions:** Give some other reasons why the Lord does not give us all we want. What problems are caused by refusing to work? How does the Lord want us to treat our work, studies, chores at home etc?

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### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: The Importance of Limiting Sharing**

- The Lord’s Limited Sharing: Our sharing with our brethren derives from the fact that the Lord shares with each one of us. But His sharing with us has certain restrictions. For example, we *cannot* share in the Lord’s divine essence (WCF 26:3). Moreover, it is not good for sinners living in a fallen world to get everything they want. The Lord withholds some things in this life, so we learn to rely more upon Him etc.
- Our Limited Sharing: Therefore we also sometimes have to limit our sharing to our brethren. Sometimes we have conflicting responsibilities, and cannot give all to one party. Sometimes we may conclude that giving what is asked for might be harmful to the one asking. Such was the case in Thessalonica with those who were not working, but making themselves busy-bodies, and a burden on the church
- The Right of Private Ownership: Some say the Christian should share *all* his money and property – often based on Acts 2 and 4. But the command to “work in quiet fashion and eat your own bread” (v. 12) indicates otherwise. So does the prohibition against stealing. Believers are “stewards” of the things God gives them. They have a “right” of private ownership and cannot be forced to share it all

#### **Second Point: The Importance of Disciplined Sharing**

- The Apostolic Example: The apostles gave a good example of living a disciplined life – working hard, paying for their own bread – even though they could have demanded support from the church. Nor did they encourage believers to give to those who were undisciplined. They showed that Christ’s work affects us by making us hard-working and peaceful as we go about our vocation
- Helping with Real Needs: When we follow this approach, it puts us in the best position to help others. We have the means to do so, because of our own earnings. We do not put an unnecessary burden on the church either, so the church is then able to help those with true needs – rather than spending all the resources on the undisciplined
- From Self-Discipline to Church-Discipline: The matter of self-discipline in working is so important it is also a matter of church discipline. Those who ignored Paul’s teaching (the apostolic “traditions”) in this or other areas were instructed, exhorted and commanded to act rightly. If they did not listen, they were admonished. If they still did not listen, the brethren were to “keep away” from them (v. 6)

#### **Third Point: The Importance of Tireless Sharing**

- Weariness in Sharing: Helping the needy – like any aspect of ministry to others – can be wearying or disillusioning. We feel taken advantage of, taken for granted, ignored; other priorities distract us; or we feel burnt out by the difficulty of the work. Then we may be tempted to give up. But the apostle commands that we should not give up on doing good, even if some should not be helped. See also Gal. 6:9-10
- The Cure for Weariness: It should help us to remember that the Lord Jesus did not grow weary of helping us – though we are often ungrateful and certainly undeserving. We also have the example of the apostles, who endured labour and hardship, so as to avoid being a burden and able to help the needy. The 8<sup>th</sup> commandment also implies that we should strive to help others with their material welfare

### **Conclusion:**