

Warning Against Idleness

Key Verse: “*I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*”
—Acts 20:35

**Selected
Scriptures:** Acts
20:33-35;
II Thessalonians
3:6-12

20:18-21, *Weymouth New Testament*

Paul urged the elders, “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock” and “act as shepherds to the Church of God.” (vs. 28, *Weymouth*) Here Paul points out how elders had a double responsibility, for both themselves and for the brethren, over whom the Lord had made them under-shepherds. “Take heed,” that is, beware and examine

The Apostle Paul had arrived at Miletus, a seaport, near the end of his third missionary trip. While waiting for the ship to depart, he sent word to the elders in the nearby city of Ephesus, inquiring if they could come and meet with him. It would be the last time Paul saw them.

After the elders arrived, Paul recounted “the kind of life I lived among you the whole time, serving the Lord in all humility, and with tears, and amid trials.” He stated, “I never shrank ... from teaching you in public and in your homes, and urging upon both Jews and Greeks the necessity of turning to God and believing in Jesus our Lord.”—Acts

not only what you do, but also examine your motives.

Then Paul reminded them, “No one’s silver or gold or clothing have I coveted. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have provided for my own necessities and for the people with me.” (vss. 33,34, *Weymouth*) Paul was a “tentmaker” by trade and testified that he worked “night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you,” in order to supply himself the necessities of life, while preaching and teaching the Gospel to others. —Acts 18:3, I Thess. 2:9; II Thess 3:8; I Cor. 4:12

Quoting our Key Verse from the *Weymouth* translation, Paul concluded, “In all things I have set you an example, showing you that, by working as I do, you ought to help the weak, and to bear in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” There are abundant opportunities for each of us to be generous towards others, even if we have no money to give. Expressions of sympathy, encouragement, or simply a kind look, have sometimes been worth more to someone who is discouraged than a handful of gold.

Being a “giver” means thinking more about others and their needs, and less upon self. Being “idle” is the opposite of being a giver, and is a form of selfishness, which can lead to spiritual weakness. (I Tim. 5:13) Paul spoke boldly against brethren who practice idleness, stating, “if any would not work, neither should he eat,” and admonishing “that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”—II Thess. 3:7-12

An important element of a happy Christian life is to develop the art of giving, “with his heart,” to others. “For God loveth a cheerful giver.” (Exod. 25:2; II Cor. 9:7) In so doing, we become more like God, because God is the greatest giver. “He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life ... that the world through him might be saved.”—James 1:17; John 3:16,17 ■