

A Critique of *Paul and Money* by Verbrugge and Krell

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It is a pleasure to respond to Verbrugge and Krell's fine book on the Apostle Paul's concepts about money. The book is a clearly written and well informed analysis of a vast subject that was often in Paul's mind as he performed his ministry.

My biggest challenge with responding to this book is that there is so much that I agree with. Hence my response will simply pull at a few small loose threads. I hope my comments will help reinforce and advance the authors' claims.

I will limit my comments to three areas: (1) Paul's policy of self-support on his missionary journeys; (2) a few observations about Paul's collection for the poor Jewish Christians in Jerusalem; and (3) the nature of the church discipline of the Thessalonian freeloaders.

1. Paul's Policy of Self-support on his Missionary Journeys

Paul acknowledged that people who preach the gospel and minister in churches have the right to expect some sort of financial support for their work (1 Cor. 9:6-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18). Yet Paul's general practice was not to accept financial support from people in the community where he was planting a church. Instead, he would try to support himself through work as a tentmaker, or perhaps a leatherworker, as Verbrugge and Krell claim (pp. 52-54).

It is important to distinguish Paul's response to potential support from three classes of people: (1) Non-Christians in the community where he was planting a church (through admission

fees, donations or hospitality); (2) Christians in the community where he was planting or building up the church (again through fees, donations or hospitality); and (3) Christians in communities other than where he was currently planting a church (through donations).

(1) Paul normally refused donations from people in a community where he was planting a church (1 Cor. 9:12, 15; 1 Thess. 2:9).¹ He did not charge people for his teaching, in order to not discredit the gospel by appearing like one of the itinerant religious teachers and philosophers that were common in the Graeco-Roman world (2 Cor. 2:17; 1 Cor. 9:18). In contrast to Paul, some false teachers associated with the early Church sought to become rich through their ministry (1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Cor. 11:13-15 contrasted with Paul's practice in vv. 7-9). Paul also did not want to be a financial burden to the fledgling churches (2 Cor. 11:9; 12:13-16; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). Yet there was at least one time that Paul accepted hospitality from non-yet-Christians. When Paul first arrived in Corinth, he "stayed with" a Jewish couple named Aquila and Priscilla "because he was of the same trade" (Acts 18:2-3). This is not actually a deviation from Paul's policy, since they were involved in a joint business venture and thus would naturally share a shop and perhaps even lodging.² Sometime after working alongside the apostle at their craft, they became believers (Acts 18:18, 26) and valuable coworkers in Christ (Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19).

(2) Paul sometimes accepted support or hospitality (i.e. lodging and food) from an church or individual Christian while he was in their community, provided they would not be financially

¹ Paul "would not ask for support from strangers when he entered a town for the first time as an evangelist, but as soon as there was a community of believers, Paul was willing to accept their support." (Verbrugge-Krell, 97-98)

² It is likely that Paul paid for his share of lodging as a business expense. They were likely renting their shop and quarters, since they were natives of Pontus in Asia Minor, not Corinth, and had recently fled from Rome, when emperor Claudius expelled all of the Jews from there. So, as a business partner, Paul would have paid his fair share.

burdened.³ (e.g. Acts 16:15: Lydia in Philippi; Rom. 16:23: Gaius in Corinth; Rom. 16:1-2: Phoebe in Cenchrea; Phile. 22: Philemon). At the end of 1 Corinthians, Paul says “perhaps, I will stay with you, or even spend the winter” (1 Cor. 16:6) and on at least one occasion, he stayed with Gaius, the host to a house church in Corinth (Rom. 16:23). Yet in 2 Corinthians, he says he does “not want to become a burden” to them during his third visit (2 Cor. 12:14). When the legitimacy of his apostleship was questioned by his opponents, Paul took the financial issue off the table, by reverting to his practice of self-support. This would allow him to correct the problems in Corinth without incurring any obligations or restrictions on his teachings that could come if they thought of themselves as his patron. In fact, he says “children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children” (2 Cor. 12:14), which asserts his authority over them and implies that their behavior is immature.

(3) Paul accepted support from churches in communities other than the one in which he was currently ministering. The church in Philippi sent Paul financial assistance more than once (Phil. 4:10, 14-16; cf. 2 Cor. 11:8-9, “Macedonia” apparently refers to the Philippians). Paul encouraged churches to provide money or provisions for his journey before he left town (Rom. 15:24; 1 Cor. 16:6; 2 Cor. 1:16; cf. 3 John 6), although many did not help him (Phil. 4:15). For example, in his letter to the Romans, Paul asked “to be helped on my way” when he came through the city on his planned mission to Spain (Rom. 15:24). The verb translated “helped on my way” (προπέμπω) refers to providing money or supplies for a journey (Verbrugge-Krell, 81-

³ Paul’s concern not to burden (2 Cor. 11:9; 12:13-14, 16; 1 Thess. 2:9; 3:8; cf. 1 Tim. 5:16) the young churches may reflect their level of poverty. 2 Cor. 8:2 specifically refers to the “deep poverty” of the Macedonian churches,

82, 93; BDAG). Sometimes individual Christians helped Paul, even if the church did not officially support him (e.g. 1 Cor. 16:17: Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus helped Paul while he was in Ephesus and “supplied what was lacking on your part,” which may involve both financial aid as well as encouragement). Since support from churches was not a frequent or reliable source of income (cf. Phil. 4:15),⁴ Paul was often forced to rely on his leatherworking skills to support himself.

Although Paul often supported himself through his business, he argues that Christian workers have a right to receive support for their work, as was a common practice for other apostles. He defends this from precedent in the Old Testament Law, including the support of the Levitical priesthood (1 Cor. 9:9, 13), logical analogy from the income of soldiers and farmers (1 Cor. 9:13), as well as Jesus’ teachings (1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:18).

Paul’s most interesting justification comes from Jesus’ teaching. 1 Cor. 9:14 says “the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.” This alludes to Jesus’ instructions to his disciples when he sent them to proclaim the news about Him on various mission trips (the twelve apostles: Matt. 10:5-15; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6; the seventy: Luke 10:1-12). Paul is clearly aware of these stories since he quotes from the account of Jesus sending out the seventy disciples in 1 Tim. 5:18. He quotes Jesus’ proverb, “the laborer is worthy of his wages,” to show that churches ought to offer some type of financial assistance to local church

which nevertheless gave generously (2 Cor. 8:3-4). Bruce Longenecker argues that the majority of early Christians came from the lower classes (*Remember the Poor*, 279-280; cf. Verbrugge-Krell, 107-110).

⁴ Philippians 4:15-16 says that no churches, other than the one in Philippi, assisted Paul financially during his time of planting churches in Achaia, where Corinth was located. It is also possible that no church was supporting

elders. He introduces this quotation as “Scripture” (γραφῆ), which shows he has in mind a written form of Jesus’ teaching, not an oral saying (BDAG). He is likely quoting Luke 10:7, which would have been familiar to him, since Luke was his traveling companion beginning with his second missionary journey.⁵

This proverb teaches that people proclaiming the message about Jesus ought to be able to have their basic material needs met in relationship with this work. But Paul applies this proverb differently than Jesus. When Jesus sent out the disciples, this proverb applied to receiving room and board from unbelievers in the towns where they were proclaiming the message about Jesus. Paul applies this to church overseers and urges the church to give them a financial honorarium. The money comes from believers, not from unbelievers. Ironically, the very thing Paul refused to do in his mission trips – i.e., accept aid from those he was evangelizing – is what Jesus told his first disciples to do! It is important to recognize that *Jesus’ instructions to the twelve and the seventy were never intended to be timeless practices*. These mission trips were training exercises, designed to build the disciples’ faith. In Luke 22:35, just prior to his arrest at Gethsemane, Jesus reminds them that they had all they needed when he sent them out without money. “But now” (ἀλλὰ νῦν), going forward after the cross, they should take along the money they need rather than depending on those whom they tell about Christ. Hence, Paul’s practice of not depending on unbelievers for hospitality does not violate Jesus’ teaching in light of the post-cross situation.

Paul while he was in Macedonia, except for the Philippians, who assisted him as he planted a church in Thessalonica, which was not far down the road.

⁵ Verbrugge-Krell, 46, argue that “Scripture” only applies to the first quotation, which comes from Deut. 25:4. They also do not believe the Gospel of Luke had been written at this point.

Paul understood the principle of Jesus' teaching about the legitimacy of receiving support for Christian service, but his personal practice is more in line with this teaching of Jesus from near the end of his earthly ministry.

Paul's practice of self-support is different primarily because his social context is different than that of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' mission trip instructions depended on the normal cultural expectation of hospitality in Jewish society.⁶ Hospitality was evidently more readily to be expected in the small Jewish communities where Jesus sent his disciples than in the large Gentile cities where Paul was planting churches. This Jewish social context is spelled out in Matthew's version Jesus' instructions to the disciples on mission, where Jesus tells the disciples not to "go into the way of the Gentiles" or a "city of the Samaritans" (Matt. 10:5). This, of course, changes after the resurrection, when Jesus instructs the followers to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). Jesus sent the disciples to towns that were fairly close to the communities from which they came and thus there was a chance they would have friends or relatives or at least be known by reputation. The courteous and normal social expectation in such a situation was to offer hospitality. To not offer hospitality would be not merely a major social offense, it would also imply the rejection of their message and the Messiah. Jesus said that if they don't "receive you" (i.e. offer hospitality) they also would not "heed your words" (Matt. 10:14). "He who receives you receives Me" (Matt. 10:40). There is eternal significance in hospitality toward the messengers. One who "gives . . . even a cup of cold water to drink, . . . shall not lose his reward"

⁶ There might have been a patron-client relationship wherein those who proclaimed the gospel gave a benefit that expected reciprocity in gratitude. But the fact that the disciples looked for hospitality as soon as they arrived in town, suggests that social graces were in operation, more than reciprocity.

(Matt. 10:42). Paul’s ministry in large cities with a dominant Gentile population had a different social context. When Paul shared the gospel among Gentiles, he specifically wanted to avoid any implicit patron-client relationship that suggested that one could pay for the gospel and its benefits. He wanted to “offer the gospel without charge” (1 Cor. 9:18), so he would not seem like the many wandering Gentile religious teachers and philosophers, who charged admission to their lectures.⁷

3 John shows that other missionaries to Gentiles had similar concerns. 3 John 7 shows that the missionaries (“the brothers”, who “went out for the sake of the name”, vv. 5, 7) had a policy of “accepting nothing from the Gentiles,” much as Paul did. Therefore, the author says, “we ought to support such men” (v. 8). Whether “support” (ὑπολαμβάνω) refers to hospitality or financial giving, it would enable these workers not to depend on those they are evangelizing for their basic needs. The church “will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God” (v. 6). “Send them on their way” uses the same verb (προπέμπω) Paul used for money and supplies given for his missionary journeys. Thus Paul’s practice may not have been as unusual as often thought, particularly among those planting churches in cities with a large Gentile population.

⁷ The socially expected Jewish hospitality may also help explain why Paul felt comfortable accepting the hospitality of Aquila and Pricilla when they were not-yet-Christians (Acts 18:3) and Lydia, when she was a newly baptized believer (Acts 16:14-15). The verb μένω (“stay”) is used in the sense of “stay in one’s home and accept hospitality” when Paul accepts the hospitality of Lydia and Aquila and Pricilla (Acts 16:15; 18:3; cf. 9:43; 21:7-8). This is the same verb used when Jesus sends his disciples out on mission trips and instructs them to “stay” in the house of a worthy unbeliever (Matt. 10:11; Mark 6:10; Luke 9:4; 10:7; cf. 19:5; 24:29). This usage reflects Jewish hospitality, even toward strangers.

2. Paul's Collection for the Jerusalem Poor

One of Paul's most defining projects was his effort to collect money from the Gentile churches to send to the impoverished Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. He hoped that this collection would serve as a show of solidarity that would both demonstrate and help to increase the unity of Jews and Gentiles as the one people of God.

Paul's Eagerness to Help the Poor in Galatians 2:10

Galatians 2:10 is one of the key verses related to the inception of Paul's plan to collect money to send to the Jerusalem church. Sometime after Paul had already been involved in his mission, he met with some of the Jerusalem church "pillars" (James, Peter and John) and compared notes about the gospel message (Gal. 2:1-10). The leaders affirmed that Paul preaches the same gospel as them, but that Peter focuses on reaching Jews and Paul focuses on reaching Gentiles (Gal. 2:6-9). Paul adds one final statement about the meeting: "They only asked us to remember the poor – the very thing I also was eager to do" (Gal. 2:10 NASB).⁸ Many modern scholars believe that the apostles gave Paul a mandate to take up a collection for the poor Jerusalem Christians.⁹

One critical issue is the significance of the aorist tense verb ἐσπούδασα ("I was eager"). (1) Many interpreters see this as an *inceptive aorist*, which would mean that Paul began to be eager to collect money for the poor at this time, specifically the poor in Jerusalem. But, Verbrugge and Krell do a good job showing that this is unlikely (pp. 125-129). If Paul was

⁸ See Verbrugge-Krell, 122-129

⁹ See the list in Bruce Longenecker, *Remembering the Poor*, 158-182 and Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 33-34; cf. Verbrugge-Krell, 123-124.

“eager” or “zealous” (BDAG) to begin the Jerusalem collection at this point, it is odd that it took him several years before he began to act on this passion and to start the collection. Paul did not start the collection until the third missionary journey, which was at least three to five years after this meeting (p. 125-126).¹⁰ Verbrugge and Krell consider either of two other understandings of the aorist more likely: (2) A *gnomic aorist* would imply that Paul had an overall life pattern of concern for the poor, perhaps even starting while he was a Pharisee. (3) A *constative aorist* would mean that Paul had been eager to care for the poor *prior to* the request by the Jerusalem church leaders. This refers to the financial gift Paul brought from the Antioch church to Jerusalem as described in Acts 11:27-30. This might well have been the occasion for this visit to the Jerusalem church.

There is another slightly different way to understand the aorist as constative, particularly if the visit is the one that Luke describes in Acts 11:27-30: The aorist describes a past action *from the perspective of the Galatians letter*, not an action prior to the meeting itself. Thus the constative aorist summarizes Paul’s attitude at the time of his visit with the apostles. Paul was eager to help the poor at the time he met the apostles, which was shown by the fact that he had come to Jerusalem with money for the poor. The present subjunctive *μνημονεύωμεν* (“remember”) expresses an ongoing action that could be translated “continue to remember” the poor (NIV, cf. NLT). If the apostles were asking Paul to begin taking a collection, the aorist subjunctive would have sufficed (either constative or ingressive). The present tense means that

¹⁰ There is a large time lag before Paul acted whether the meeting of Gal. 2:1-10 was the meeting recorded in Acts 11:27-30 (after the first missionary journey, when Paul and Barnabas took money to Jerusalem to help the poor

Paul should *keep on doing* what he had already done when he brought the gift from Antioch to Jerusalem.

This understanding of Gal. 2:10 fits Paul's purpose for describing his limited connection with the Jerusalem apostles in the first two chapters of Galatians. He wants to show that he is an apostle equal to the other apostles and dependent only upon God, not men. The other apostles "contributed nothing" to Paul (Gal. 2:6), either in terms of his gospel message, which came directly by a revelation from God (Gal. 1:12), or his mission of helping the poor. Paul is not dependent on the other apostles and is fully an apostle in his own right.

Three-way Patronage in 2 Corinthians 8-9

Paul's appeal in 2 Corinthians 8-9 urging the Corinthians to give to the collection is an excellent example of a three-way type of patronage. David Briones describes this type of personal patronage as a patron-broker-client relationship.¹¹ "God is the ultimate source [patron] of every gift, and we as humans are only an intermediate supplier [broker]." (Verbrugge-Krell, 87 n 21)

This type of three-way patronage is central to the argument of 2 Cor. 9:8-15. God is the *patron*, since he is the one who "is able to make all grace abound" and provides "an abundance for every good deed" (2 Cor. 9:8). The Christian who gives financially is the *broker* who channels the provision that God gave him. God "provides seed to the sower and bread for food" (2 Cor. 9:10), which is a metaphor meaning God provides the money that a person gives to the

during the famine prophesied by Agabus) or the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 (during the second missionary journey).

¹¹ Summarized by Verbrugge-Krell, 86.

needy. This three-way patronage explains why *God* will receive thanksgiving when the Corinthians give a gift, rather than the Corinthians who are merely the broker channeling God's grace (9:11). The *clients* are the poor Christians in Jerusalem, who will receive the gift which helps meet their material needs. Verse 13 explicitly spells this out this three-way relationship: "they will glorify God for . . . the liberality of your contribution to them."¹²

This concept of God as the patron in a three-way relationship makes sense of Paul's opening statement in these two chapters: "We wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia" (2 Cor. 8:1). The generous giving by the Macedonian Christians is a demonstration of God's grace.¹³ Paul revisits the concept of God's grace shown in financial giving at the end of this long section. In 9:14, He anticipates that the Corinthian's gift will show "the surpassing grace of God in you" (more literally "upon you", ἐφ' ὑμῶν; cf. ESV). The repetition of "the grace of God" (τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ) in 8:1 and 9:14 creates a structural inclusion that shows that the Corinthians can be brokers of the grace of God to the poor, just as the Macedonians were. If the Corinthians give, it will demonstrate "the *surpassing* grace of God" (τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ, 9:14). The addition of "surpassing" to this rhetorical climax suggests that the generosity of the Corinthians would show the grace of God even more than the gift of the Macedonians, who "overflowed in the wealth of their liberality" (8:2).¹⁴

¹² Verburgge-Krell, 179, do not identify the three way patronage, although they note that God receives the thanksgiving, not the generous Christians.

¹³ This broker role is brought out more clearly in 8:1 if ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις ("in the churches") is translated instrumentally "through the churches."

¹⁴ There is nothing like adding a little competition to motivate the Corinthians!

Paul also sees himself as a broker in this complex patronage relationship. Paul refers to “this grace” (τῆ χάριτι ταύτῃ) “which is being administered by us [the broker] for the glory of the Lord Himself [the patron]” (cf. 8:20 “our administration of this generous gift”). The liberality of the Corinthians “through us [the broker] is producing thanksgiving to God [the patron]” (9:11, cf. v. 12). In the end, since God is the patron of all and the source of every gift of grace, he is the one who always should receive thanksgiving.

3. Church Discipline of the Thessalonian Freeloaders

In both letters to the Thessalonians, Paul commands able-bodied believers to work hard for a living and not to take advantage of the generosity of the church by unnecessarily drawing upon funds the church set aside to help the poor (1 Thess. 2:9; 4:11-12; 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15). They should follow his example of “labor and hardship,” while he was preaching the gospel in their community. He was “working night and day so as not to be a burden” to them (2 Thess. 3:7-10).

Verbrugge and Krell (pp. 210-211) note that in 1 Thess. 4:11-12 Paul gives several reasons why one should work hard to support himself: (1) Your behavior affects the witness of the church: “walk properly toward outsiders” (4:12a). Unfairly taking advantage of the generosity of the church discredits the gospel, since Christians could be conceived of as irresponsible and meddlesome members of society (cf. 2 Thess. 3:11, “meddlers” περιεργάζομαι). Paul is always concerned about how the moral life of Christians impacts the spread of the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). This is why overseers “must have a good reputation with those outside” (1 Tim. 3:7).

(2) You should work hard so that you will “not be in any need” (4:12b). If you work to provide for your own basic material needs, the church would not have to feed you.

(3) All Christian behavior should express love. The opening clause, “as to the love of the brethren” (v. 9), shows that this is the overriding concern in this passage. The Thessalonians understood the importance of loving one another and were exemplary in that they “practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia,” apparently including their generosity towards the needy. Yet Paul wants them to excel even more in love. To unnecessarily draw upon the financial generosity of the church is unloving, because it strains the limited financial resources of the church, resulting in less opportunity for the church to lovingly help those in genuine need. The most loving behavior of the freeloaders would be to “work with your hands” so they are “not in any need” that must be met by the church.

How should the church respond if a Christian disobeys Paul’s command to “work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread” (2 Thess. 3:12) and instead does “no work at all” and as a result takes advantage of the generosity of the church (2 Thess. 4:11)? In 2 Thessalonians 3, Paul uses a structural inclusion to stress the importance of avoiding associating with the lazy brother. At the beginning of the section on hard work, Paul exhorts the church to “keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life” (2 Thess. 3:6).¹⁵ At the end of the section, he tells the church to “take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame” (2 Thess. 3:14). It is important to note that Paul commands the church to exclude the person from the Christian community only after repeatedly appealing to the freeloaders in person and in his

¹⁵ The importance of excluding the lazy brother is shown by the command given in the full authority of “the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

first letter. Removal from the fellowship should be a last step for persistently unrepentant sinners.¹⁶

What does this avoidance of the lazy Christian involve? At the very least the person must be cut off from the financial assistance of the church for the poor. To continue supporting him would enable his irresponsible behavior. Once outside the financial safety net of the Christian community, he would feel more motivated to work, since there was little opportunity for social assistance in the wider society. Most commentators believe that Paul refers to a limited disassociation from the offender, such as exclusion from the Lord's Supper (e.g. Best, 343-344; Bruce, 211) or requiring the offender to sit alone at fellowship meals (Witherington, 255; cf. 1 Cor. 5:11). Verbrugge and Krell, on the other hand, argue that Paul orders a full exclusion from the Christian fellowship (p. 218). The only other time the Greek verb translated "associate" (συναναμίγνυμι) is used in the NT is in 1 Cor. 5:9, where Paul says not to associate with an immoral Christian.¹⁷ The immediate application is to a man who is having sexual relations with his stepmother, although Paul says that the principle applies to other kinds of serious and persistent immorality (1 Cor. 5:11: "an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler,

¹⁶ There is a progression in the severity of Paul's treatment of the freeloaders. When Paul was in Thessalonica he commanded people to work: "If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either" (2 Thess. 3:10). In the first letter, Paul gives a strong appeal for working by providing logical reasons for this responsible behavior (1 Thess. 4:9-12). Since the problem had not been resolved by time Paul wrote the second letter, he steps up the intensity of the exhortation and the severity of the consequences, eventually leading to exclusion from the community (2 Thess. 3:6, 14). The command to "take special note of that person" (2 Thess. 3:14) may refer to an early warning in which a record is made of the person's offense (the *hapax legomenon* σημειώω can mean to "note in writing", BDAG). Only when a person does not respond to repeated strong appeals should he be removed from the church. Paul is implementing progressive stages of correction of a sinning brother similar to what Jesus taught in Matt. 18:15-17. Only after continued resistance to repeated exhortation should someone be removed from the Christian community.

or a drunkard, or a swindler”). In that passage, Paul sharply concludes with the command to “remove the wicked man from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:13), a quotation of a frequent command from the OT holiness code (e.g. Deut. 13:5; 17:7, 12; 21:21; 22:21).¹⁸ The verb συναναμίγνυμι (“associate”) can be used in non-biblical Greek for mixing unlike things together. Paul does not want the church to have a mixture of righteous and unrighteous people.¹⁹

In 2 Thessalonians 3 Paul cannot be referring to completely shunning the person, in the sense of avoiding all conversation. After commanding the church not to associate with this brother, Paul clarifies the type of relationship that must be maintained if the discipline is to be effective: “Do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:15). One must never cut a person off from Christian contact to such an extent that they are beyond the discipling influence of the church. In a group-oriented society, cutting a person off from participation in all community activities would result in shame and a loss of identity. The goal of putting him to shame is to bring him to repentance, so he can be restored to full fellowship in the Christian community (2 Thess. 3:14-15). In American society in which exclusion from a church simply means a person goes to another church down the street, it is hard to appreciate the power of exclusion from Christian activities. Shame (2 Thess. 3:14) is a powerful motivator, particularly in an honor-shame culture. Exclusion from the activities in the believer’s new

¹⁷ The verb συναναμίγνυμι (“associate”) means in a physical sense “mix up together” outside the NT. This reflects the importance of not allowing wicked people to ruin the purity of the community of the people of God.

¹⁸ Paul is as concerned with the purity of the community of God’s people as the OT Law. However, does not require the execution of the offender, as the OT Law required in the contexts of this command.

¹⁹ The physical meaning of the verb is “mix up together” (BDAG). Moulton and Milligan note that the cognate adjective is used with this physical meaning in the Hellenistic papyri.

identity group in the church would mean that he would have no connection to any identity group, since he had already been cut off from the broader culture due to his lack of participation in common cultural sins, such as idolatry, sexual immorality, cheating others, etc. (Verburgge-Krell, 211).

Does Paul put laziness in the same moral category as sexual immorality, idolatry, drunkenness, swindling, and the like (1 Cor. 5:11)?²⁰ Nowhere does Paul include laziness in his list of moral vices, with the possible exception of Rom. 12:11.²¹ Paul’s language about the incestuous man in 1 Corinthians 5 is much stronger, since his immoral behavior raises the question of whether he is actually a believer. In 1 Cor. 5: 11, he is “a so-called brother” (ἀδελφὸς ὀνομαζόμενος), i.e. a brother “in name only”, because his immoral behavior is more like the people of the world. Abuse of the Lord’s Supper and making class distinctions within the body of Christ are very serious sins, because they result in divinely administered discipline leading to sickness or death. But for Paul, even though laziness is not a type of immorality that makes one look like a non-Christian, taking advantage of the church’s generosity is serious, because it is an unloving action that weakens the ability of the church to help those genuinely in need and

²⁰ Proverbs repeatedly lists laziness as a characteristic of an unwise person, but it is not quite put in the category of serious immorality.

²¹ The KJV translation of Rom. 12:11 (“not slothful in business”) is misleading to modern ears, due to the archaic usage of “business.” The verse is not an exhortation to work hard at one’s profession, but to exhibit zeal in “serving the Lord” (v. 11c) or perhaps brotherly love (v. 10; so Moo, 778). Modern translations express this idea better: “not lagging behind in diligence” (NASB); “never be lacking in zeal” (NIV). The NLT shows the connection of the clauses: “Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.” Commands to slaves to work hard as though serving God have modern application in the workplace (e.g. Col. 3:22-24; Eph. 6:5-8). Our accountability for all of our work is ultimately to the Lord.

because it discredits the gospel. Christians must cease any behavior that hinders bringing people to salvation in Christ.²²

²² This is why Paul even limited his own freedom in Christ in morally neutral areas, such as eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 10:32). There appears to be a sort of continuum in Paul's thought from neutral activities for which the Christian has freedom to activities unbecoming of a Christian to immorality that makes one look like a part of the world. The freeloading behavior appears to fall into the second category and has overtones of serious sin, because it is unloving behavior.