

Theme: Holy ambition is not the pursuit of fame, platform, or recognition — it is the God-given aspiration to live quietly, work hard, and love others through faithful service in the callings God has given us.

I. Intro - Ambition to Be Famous

- A. Photos of Paris Hilton; Kato Kaelin (forgotten!)
- B. We have people who are famous for being famous
- C. Middle school girls would rather be Britney Spears assistant than a US Senator!
- D. Algorithms now reward outrageous behavior rather than actual contribution.
- E. How should Christian's live in such a culture?

II. Love, Holiness, Waiting

- A. Paul returns to the subject of love
Now concerning **brotherly love** you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to **love one another**, ¹⁰ for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to **do this more and more**, 1 Thessalonians 4:9–10
 - 1. Paul is returning to the subject of ever growing love
 - 2. This is picking up same call from 1 Thess 3:12-13
May the Lord make you **increase and abound in love for one another** and for all, as we do for you, ¹³so that he may establish your hearts blameless in **holiness** before our God and Father, **at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints**. 1 Th 3:12–13
 - a. Prayer for them to love one another - more & more
 - b. The three key themes in Paul's prayer and this section of the letter – love, holiness, return of Christ

- 1) Love (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13; 4:9-10)
- 2) Holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8)
- 3) The return of Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-11)
- c. All three are in each section – love leads to holy conduct, and the motivation is the return of Christ.
- d. He will now be addressing holy love in a new area

B. A call for practical love for fellow Christians

Now concerning **brotherly love** you have no need for anyone to write to you, for **you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another**, ¹⁰ for that indeed is **what you are doing** to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. **But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more**, 1 Thessalonians 4:9–10

- 1. Brotherly love (philadelphias) referred to love for siblings - now applied to fellow believers
- 2. We know this - by Scripture and by Spirit - we should love fellow believers, for they are family
- 3. The love is 'doing' here - the actions of love for brothers and sisters in Christ
- 4. They have been doing this, but there is always room for growth – love must keep abounding and growing

C. The Christian life is not about fame and flash, but rather practical deeds that express love to others

III. A Holy Ambition

- A. Paul gives them a holy ambition
and to **aspire** to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 1 Thessalonians 4:11 ESV

Make it your **ambition** to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 1 Thessalonians 4:11 NIV

1. Aspire – φιλοτιμέομαι – ambition; aspire; aim

I make it my **ambition** to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation Romans 15:20 ESV

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our **aim** to please him. 2 Corinthians 5:9 ESV

2. Colorful phrase/oxymoron - to arrest our attention

Make it your **ambition to lead a quiet life**, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 1 Thessalonians 4:11 NIV

a. Ambition for quiet life; strive for restful, quiet life

b. How different this is from worldly ambition!

1. Lead a quiet life rather than seeking to garner fame

2. Strive for restful life, rather than ceaselessly striving for our place and to be noticed

B. Holy ambition in practice

and to aspire to live quietly, and **to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands**, as we instructed you, 1 Thessalonians 4:11

1. Mind your own affairs - do not be a busybody

a. True love and holiness do not desire to be a busybody, engaging in gossip or trying to run other's affairs

b. True love and holiness strive to lead a quiet, productive life that is an example and blessing to others

c. Such a life will not be rewarded by internet algorithms, but it is pleasing to God and of actual benefit to our neighbors!

2. Work with your own hands - the value of work

a. Greek philosophers and aristocrats despised manual labor - but Scripture values it highly

b. The Greek ideal was a life of idle contemplation, while others (slaves) labored to provide your needs

c. Scripture teaches that we are made in God's image to work, and that work is a blessing, not a curse

d. This includes manual labor - long before Mike Rowe and Dirty Jobs!

e. Never doubt that God values your labor as service to Him as you serve others via your calling.

f. Calling refers to the specific tasks and responsibilities given to us by God, through which God works to serve our neighbors and promote the common good, restraining the effects of the curse and bringing blessing to every realm of life and every corner of creation.

g. Our callings are a primary way where we who have been blessed by God are a channel of blessing!

h. Each of us has received many callings - areas of responsibility where God works through us to serve others in every realm of life and every corner of creation.

i. Working hard at your various callings - including your job - is an essential part of holy waiting

j. You can learn more about this in our series "Called"

k. I will talk about this more in AfterHours

3. The apostolic teaching and example
and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own
affairs, and to work with your hands, **as we
instructed you**, 1 Thessalonians 4:11

- a. Not a new message - basic Christian instruction
- b. The apostles had also taught this by example

For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we
worked night and day, that we might not be a
burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you
the gospel of God. 1 Thessalonians 2:9

C. This holy ambition is an important NT teaching

For even when we were with you, we would give you
this command: **If anyone is not willing to work, let him
not eat.** ¹¹ For we hear that **some among you walk in
idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.** ¹² Now
such persons we command and encourage in the Lord
Jesus Christ to **do their work quietly and to earn their
own living.** ¹³ As for you, brothers, **do not grow weary in
doing good.** 2 Thessalonians 3:10–13

- 1. Vv11-13 - holy ambition - hard work, not busybody,
quiet life, earn your way, do good (help others)
- 2. The exact same concerns as in our passage
- 3. The example of Jamestown Colony!

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers,
intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all
people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions,
**that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and
dignified in every way.** 1 Timothy 2:1–2

- 1. One of Paul's last writings - same concern
- 2. We are to pray to be able to lead a quiet life - one
devoted to working hard and serving others

3. We are to pray to be able to live this holy ambition

IV. A Holy Motive

A. A motive related to unbelievers

so that **you may walk properly before outsiders** and be
dependent on no one. 1 Thessalonians 4:12

- 1. So that - the purpose/result of love, holy ambition
- 2. Walk properly before outsiders - unbelievers
- 3. Especially important since sexual holiness and love
will bring derision (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8)
- 4. We must always be concerned that our lives adorn
the Gospel with love and good works

B. A motive related to believers

so that you may walk properly before outsiders **and be
dependent on no one.** 1 Thessalonians 4:12

- 1. It appears that some thought that since Jesus was
coming, they should just wait and not work - this is
not holy waiting! (note the next topic in 1 Thess.
4:13-18; 5:1-11).
- 2. For some, eschatology/return of Christ leads to idle
speculation, conspiracy theories, controversies, and
irresponsible behavior, but in the NT it is a motive
for holiness and hard work!
- 3. It also appears that some had taken advantage of
the love of others and had become idle busybodies
- this is not love or holiness!
- 4. Love and holy ambition make us work hard to not
be a burden on others
- 5. The NT goal – giving not taking

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.
Ephesians 4:28

- a. Stop stealing, work hard, take care of your own needs, and have enough to share!
 - b. This is what holy love in action looks like!
6. True love and holiness produce a desire to work hard so that we can meet our own needs and then have some to help others as we look forward to Christ's return!
 7. This is pleasing to God, and it is used by Him to make the faith attractive to a watching world.

V. Applying the Word

A. Do I have holy ambition - or worldly ambition?

1. Our culture prizes and pushes empty fame, riches, and "looking out for number 1"
2. We are encouraged to desire the lifestyles of the rich and famous
3. It encourages us to be voyeuristic busybodies
4. It encourages us to a loud life of controversy and conflict, full of arguing and rancor.
5. Scripture gives a far different ambition for us!
6. Do I find my significance in public recognition, or in quietly fulfilling my callings?
7. Do I find my significance in success or faithfulness?

8. Am I content and at rest in fulfilling my callings - or am I always restless, yearning for something more?
9. Do I find joy in a job well done that helps others?
10. Do I believe it is more blessed to give than receive?
11. "I Did Not Save the World Today" by Allen Levi

B. The Table of the Lord

1. Jesus was not about flash, but substance!
2. This Table reminds us of His humble incarnation and obedience!
3. Isaiah 53 - He would not have been on the cover of a magazine!
4. He was out of step with the unholy ambition of His age - in fact, the unholy ambition of the leaders put Him to death!
5. But His life of quiet, constant obedience won us salvation!
6. So, we come here, giving thanks for His obedience to His calling, and the salvation it brought us!
7. The Apostles Creed

A Holy Ambition

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

July 26, 2026

Communion

Psalms 90:16-17

Teaching keywords: love; calling and work; holiness

May God's deeds be shown to us, His splendor to our children.

¹⁷ May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us to establish the work of our hands for us. Psalms 90:16-17

I did not save the world today,
Or change the course of history,
I walked the small and quiet way,
The life that God has given me.

I woke up with the morning sun,
I sat awhile to think and pray,
I did my work till the day was done,
But I did not save the world today.

I tried to live with gratitude,
To do the good that I could do,
To love the people close to me,
My neighbors and my family,
To share the kindness I've been shown,
To trust the Love that is my home,
To celebrate the tiny part I play,
But I did not save the world today.

I hear the politicians speak,
Such big ideas and lofty claims,
My life, to theirs, seems small and weak,
But in God's big hand we weigh the same.

The saints and poets seem to know,
The law behind the ocean tide,
The world gets changed and moved along,
By little gestures multiplied.

So I try to live with gratitude,
To do the good that I can do,
To love the people close to me,
My neighbors and my family,
To share the kindness I've been shown,
To trust the Love that is my home,
To celebrate the tiny part I play,
But I did not save the world today."

— **Allen Levi, "I Did Not Save the World Today"**