

Be Ambitious to Be Quiet

A Concordant Keyword Study



Frank Neil Pohorlak (1907-1988)

That you study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you (I Thessalonians 4:11)

In the midst of such a great spiritual awakening as occurred at Thessalonica there is a temptation to neglect the necessary duties of life, and mistake enthusiasm and noise for the quiet yet powerful operations of the spirit. The apostle urges them to attend to their own affairs and provide for their needs, so that their enemies will not find occasion to reproach them. – A.E. Knoch, *Concordant Commentary*

The study of *Concordant* key words will often show different results with different students. Where one will see a Bible reading, another may see a devotional; where one will see only statistics another may see a sermon; where one will see a key word study another may see nothing to challenge the mind.

Let us each prayerfully look to the Lord for what we are to receive from this study of words in God's divine vocabulary, while we are learning how to use the *Keyword Concordance*.

“WORD” STUDY OF THE WORD “STUDY”

Suppose, as a student of the Scriptures, you saw the word “*study*” in “*study to be quiet*” (I Thessalonians 4:11, AV), and in “*study to shew thyself approved unto God*” (II Timothy 2:15, AV). How would you go about finding out if they were the same word or different words?

Let us see what our tools can tell us that will reveal truth in which we can revel. First let us look at the last reference, since it will lead us to the other verse. We turn up “*study*” in alphabetical order and find it on page 291 of our *Keyword Concordance*. Since one entry is in lightface type we know this one represents the rendering found in the *Authorized Version*.

Above this entry on page 291, we find “**study**” in boldface and only one reference, Matthew 6:28, where the CV¹ “study” stands for the AV² “consider.” Just below this entry we find our lightface “study” and with it in boldface type (representing the CV) two words listed: “**ambitious** (be)” once, and “**endeavor**” once.

When we look up “endeavor” in alphabetical order we find it on page 89 and see that our standard for the Greek term is be-DILIGENT. In this cluster of references we find that Timothy is to present himself to God (II Timothy 2:15). In this way we have learned that here the AV “study” is “endeavor” in the CV and reads, “*Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth.*”

Now let us look up “ambitious (be)” in alphabetical order (page 13). Here we find our Thessalonian verse to be one of three places where “be ambitious” is to be found and is represented by our standard FOND-VALUE.³ At the end of this listing on page 13, we also find that the CV has “be ambitious” in all three places (Romans, II Corinthians, I Thessalonians) uniformly, while the AV has three different renderings: “labor” once, “strive” once, and “study” once.

While the New Testament writings cannot be dated with certainty in every case, the consensus seems to be that the order of these three letters is I Thessalonians, II Corinthians, and Romans. Let us look up in this order these three occurrences of “be ambitious” in the Concordant Literal New Testament and see what we can learn.

I THESSALONIANS

*Now, concerning brotherly fondness, we have no need to be writing to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to be loving one another, for you are doing it also to all the brethren who are in the whole of Macedonia. Now we are entreating you, brethren, to be superabounding yet more, and that you be **ambitious** to be quiet, and to be engaged in your own affairs, and to be working with your hands, according as we charge you, that you may be walking respectably toward those outside and you may have need of no one* (I Thessalonians 4:9-12).

Though these believers had been taught by God to be loving one another (and this they were doing), yet love is an obligation we never fully discharge (c.f. Romans 13:8), hence Paul entreats them to be “superabounding yet more” in loving one another (c.f. Philippians 1:9).

Next, and here we find our word, “be ambitious to be quiet.” Why was this word of entreaty necessary? It seems that some of the saints misunderstood their expectation. Since His presence for them was imminent, they were becoming disorderly, eating freely the bread earned by the sweat of another’s face, working at nothing, but meddling (II Thessalonians 3:6-15). This time Paul’s additional charge is a stern statement, that “*If anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat*” (3:10). Instead of being busy so that no matter when He came He would be pleased with them, they were disorderly, meddlers, parasites sponging off of other working believers who also were expecting His summons to meet Him in the air.

1. CV stands for *Concordant Literal New Testament*.

2. AV stands for *Authorized Version* (also known as the *Kings James Version*, since he is the one who authorized it.)

3. In this manner we have learned that the one word “study” in the *Authorized Version* was made to represent two different Greek words. They are *spoudazō* (be diligent) and *philotimeomai* (FOND-VALUE).

IS THIS OUR AMBITION?

Is this also our ambition – “*to be quiet*”? To be engaged in our own affairs? To be working with our own hands? To be walking respectfully toward those on the outside? To be like those who do not need any support from others?

This entreaty to be ambitious was followed by the removal of the ignorance concerning those asleep and what would take place in His presence and our assembling to Him (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; II Thessalonians 2:1).

II CORINTHIANS

The next occurrence of “*be ambitious*” is also found in a context that speaks of His return for us, and the “*judgment seat*” (AV) or “*dais*” (CV) before which believers will be manifested.

*We are not wanting to be stripped, but to be dressed, that the mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now He Who produces us for the same longing is God, Who is also giving us the earnest of the spirit. Being, then, courageous always, and aware that, being at home in the body, we are away from home from the Lord (for by faith are we walking, not by perception), yet we are encouraged, and are delighting rather to be away from home out of the body and to be at home with the Lord. Wherefore we are **ambitious** also, whether at home or away from home, to be well pleasing to Him (II Corinthians 5:4-9).*

Even when we are at home with Him and clothed in our new bodies, we shall still strive while there to be “*well pleasing to Him.*” Even so, while we are away from home in our bodies of humiliation (*c.f.* Philippians 3:20-21), we should seek to be well-pleasing to Him in every way – in word, will, walk, work, wisdom, waiting, witnessing, in worship – since all of us must be manifested in front of the “*judgment seat*” (AV) or “*dais*” (CV) of Christ (II Corinthians 5:10). For what reason? That we should be requited for our acts in “the” body, that is, our present soulish bodies, whether our acts are good or bad.

“*The desires of the flesh*” we are not able to vanquish, but these desires cannot be carried into effect without the use of the members of our bodies. Yet our members are not to be the implements of injustice to sin, but rather the implements of righteousness to God (Romans 6:13). In Romans 8:12-14 we are reminded that we are not debtors to the flesh, to be living in accord with flesh, but in spirit we are to be “*putting to death the practices of the body.*”

Flesh and *spirit*, not flesh and *body*, are antagonistic to each other (Galatians 5:17). If we are putting to death the practices of the body we shall be living really (*c.f.* I Timothy 6:19), since we are not sowing for the flesh, of which we reap corruption, but sowing for the spirit, from which we reap life *eonian* (*c.f.* Galatians 6:8). Let none of us be deceived by others or deceive himself in this matter.

God is not to be sneered at,⁴ for whatsoever a man may be sowing, this [and not something else] shall he be reaping also. Therefore we should not be despondent in ideal doing (which is well pleasing to Him), for in due season we shall be reaping, if we do not faint (Galatians 6:7-9).

4. The Greek for “*sneered at*” is *muktērizō* and means: “toss up the nose in contempt;” (*mukter* is nose or irony). *C.f.* Keyword Concordance, page 275, NOSEize.

It is so easy to become “*despondent*” (Keyword Concordance, p. 74, IN-EVIL). Paul, knowing we would be prone to such a defeatist disposition, wrote a whole chapter (I Corinthians 15) in order to strengthen us for the admonition which we find in its last verse.

Paul knew that it takes great truths to keep us faithful to small duties. In verse 58 he clasps his readers close to him with the words,

So that, my beloved brethren, become settled, unmovable, superabounding in the work of the Lord, always being aware that your toil is not for naught in the Lord.

ROMANS 15:20

The third and last occurrence of the “*ambitious*” is found in a section dealing with Paul’s *previous ministry* as a *priest* (15:8-21) and as an “*evangelist*” (1:14-17). Where do we find this? In Appendix C, “*Skeleton Index of Subjects*” (p. 409), which is an invaluable aid in seeing a verse or a subject in its immediate and remote context, since in it each New Testament book is outlined in a unique way.

Paul was not only much “*hindered*” in coming to them (15:22), but he also had been “*prevented*” hitherto (1:13). Yet Paul was fired by an ambition that could not be hindered or prevented from being carried out.

*Yet thus I am **ambitious** to be bringing the evangel where Christ is not named lest I may be building on another’s foundation, but, according as it is written, “They who were not informed concerning Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand.”*

Not all of us may have an opportunity to herald Christ among people who have never heard of Him. There will, however, be many occasions where we can emulate Paul and proclaim all the aspects of truth which he was taught by the risen Christ (*c.f.* Acts 26:16). Even among believers, our Lord is not known as He ought to be. We all cherish, and rightly so, hearing or reading “*concerning all which Jesus begins both to do and to teach, until the day on which He was taken up*” (Acts 1:1); but the words of the risen Christ (which Paul put down in writing) are no less important than the precious words of Jesus during His earthly career. Did He not intimate to His disciples that He had much more to tell them, but that they were not able to bear it at present (*c.f.* John 16:12)? At that time He did not disclose to them what John was to write at Patmos, nor what Paul was to write in his epistles to us.

Not all of us may have an opportunity to bring the evangel [gospel] of the “*unsearchable riches*” of Christ to the nations, and to enlighten all as to what is the secret administration of the grace of God (*c.f.* Ephesians 3:2, 8-9). Even if we feel that we are not able to proclaim these truths ourselves by word of mouth, we can distribute tracts and pamphlets which bring them out. We may even offer copies of this magazine [*Unsearchable Riches*] when we think that the recipient might enjoy some of its contents.

Are we ambitious, like Paul, to spread the evangel of the risen Christ? Let us do it in a quiet way; let us not “mistake enthusiasm and noise for the quiet yet powerful operations of the spirit,” as A.E. Knoch urged in his commentary.

THESE THINGS CHARGE AND TEACH

Are you “ambitious” to be quiet (I Thessalonians 4:11)? Are you “ambitious” to be well-pleasing to Him (II Corinthians 5:9)? Are you “ambitious” to bring the evangel where Christ is not named as He ought to be (Romans 15:20)?

Have we been quiet when we wanted to protest against those who persecuted us or disparaged Pauline teaching? Have we gone on seeking to be well-pleasing to Him when it would have been easier to please those who criticized and chided us for relying on “*the living God, Who is the Savior of all mankind, especially of believers*” (c.f. I Timothy 4:10)? Have we gone on seeking to announce Him where He is not made known as He ought to be? Have we stressed His grand and glorious goal, His ultimate victory over all opposition?

Have we been charging and teaching those truths (c.f. I Timothy 4:11) which glorify God and exalt His Son – the repudiation of sin at the conclusion of the eons (Hebrews 9:26), the abolition of death as the last enemy (I Corinthians 15:26), race-wide salvation (I Timothy 2:3-6; 4:9-10), race-wide justification (Romans 5:18-19), race-wide vivification (I Corinthians 15:22), creation-wide reconciliation (Colossians 1:20), with God “*All in all*” (I Corinthians 15:28)?

Let us use our three tools to check these facts in order to make these truths known “*by every method*” (Philippians 1:18). Let us live these truths where He has been pleased to place us for and support service to others, and let us pray for and support those who have made it their ambition to “*spend and be bankrupted*” (II Corinthians 12:15) that all may know our great God in all of His glories.

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