

To the Saints of God at Topeka, Kansas – May 5, 2019

Warn - Comfort – Support – Have Patience

1 Thes. 5 - Part 2

I am continuing my sermon from last week on 1 Thes. 5:1-18. As I talk about these matters, please know that I am not talking about anyone specifically, ever. Instead, I am talking to and about all of us and our duties to one another.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. 12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

Paul here beseeches or “begs” the Thessalonians to have a close relationship with the pastors and deacons and those that labor in the word and doctrine regarding that church. He asks them (the congregants) to give these that labor among them deference and respect, to help them whenever they could, to make their jobs easy and not bear hard on them, to willingly and voluntarily converse and have fellowship with them so they can ascertain the state of their souls. Paul wants the congregants to be thankful for the elders and see them as a blessing and willingly submit to their authority. They were to seek the friendship and counsel of the elders. This is a spiritual duty. The congregants were not to be cold, distant and treat the elders at arms-length or as strangers. Steve said a few weeks ago that it is very bad for your soul to purposefully avoid someone that is trying to give you sound counsel because you do not like it. These that have the charge of the church are stewards and the congregants are to acknowledge them as such and that they are responsible for them and to God for them. And, it goes without saying, but I will say it for clarity's sake that there is a mutual duty on these that labor and have authority (elders and deacons) to love their flock and for them to not misuse their authority or bear hard upon the congregants. 1 Pet 5:1 *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the*

oversight thereof, not by constraint (Gill: with force, in a rigorous and severe manner), but willingly; not for filthy lucre (not for the sake of gaining money), but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage (Gill: govern with tyranny, and in a haughty, imperious, and arrogant manner), but being ensamples to the flock.

And be at peace among yourselves.

Paul bids the Thessalonians to greatly love and cherish these that have the oversight of them and to go out of their way to show kindness to them and to have peace with them and with each other and to have general peace in the church. We must have peace in the church. Heb 12:14 *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. 1Cor 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.* Satan loves to create dissention in the body. When there is a root of bitterness, or a schism or a divide in the church, he has a way in and the work of the Lord is not the focus of the church any longer. It (a root of bitterness) is a distraction and a diversion to the real work of the church – to preach. We have no root of bitterness in this body that has sprung up, but we must continually look diligently for them. We must all continually stay on our guard and strive every day to have peace among ourselves. It is a priority.

We must have a culture of peace, love/charity, forgiveness and forbearing in the church. There is a lot of talk in business about culture these days. Peter Drucker (management guru) is purported to have said “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” It means you can have the greatest strategy ever, but if your culture is bad it won't matter – you will fail. If our culture is that we will bend the rules and overcome emissions standards in cars (how much pollution they put out) by developing software that shows correct readings when they are in a diagnostic mode – when the inspectors are testing them, but then the emissions standards are turned off when the car is actually operating – it doesn't matter what your business strategy is. The culture is one of deceit and greed. The culture of the U.S. military is “we don't spend money on anything, unless it kills people.” And “the only way I could please my commanding officer is to kill people.”

Culture is the operating system of an organization or group. If someone asks “how do things get done around here” whatever the answer is – that is your culture. Culture is created as soon as two people start interacting. As soon as the social contracts are formed around how we treat each other, the messages being sent and received start shaping culture. If you want a better culture, you must define a better way and then you must live a better way with every interaction. The Bible tells us in no uncertain terms what good looks like and what our culture should be.

And, it doesn't matter if it is in the church setting, or a family setting, or the law office, or a work crew, these rules about how we are to treat each other apply. Stress does not give you an excuse to mistreat people. History of conflict does not give you an excuse to mistreat people. Youth does not give you an excuse to mistreat people. The excuse that you work with family members and that it is particularly difficult, does not give you an excuse to mistreat people. There are no outs here. Period. No excuses – do the work.

We are a body. We are a team of people with a single purpose to *serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear* (Heb 12:28). We are a spiritual building. Eph. 2:19 *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* Every time we speak in wrath, anger, malice, rumormongering, gossip and meanness toward one another we take away from the building and weaken it at the foundation and weaken the fabric of what we are trying to build. All of those things destroy trust with God (God trusted Abraham to do right – Gen. 18:17-19). They also destroy trust with each other and destroy charity. We do not have any authority for anger, wrath, malice, bad, improper, unedifying, demeaning, mocking, ignoring or filthy, communication. Col. 3:6 *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.* We must look forward and not backward. Every time we look back to dredge something up by words or conduct toward one another, provoking one another – we take a giant step toward “*pay me that thou owest*” (Mat. 18:28). Phil 3:13 *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: (he had not attained Christ and he did not have perfect knowledge yet)*

but this one thing I do (this one thing I am absolutely certain of and I do), *forgetting those things which are behind* (past sins, past grievances, but also past successes in the Gospel – which might make him self-righteous) *and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Every time we have kindness toward one another, comfort one another, support the weak, speak of holiness and godliness toward each other, edify one another, comfort the feebleminded, rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing and the like, we add to the building, strengthening it and create trust with God and each other. We create this culture every time we interact with each other. Who is responsible for the culture of this church and this body? We. Are. We. Own. It. All.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

Now we exhort you, brethren,

Paul “exhorts” the church - begs them, beseeches them, and entreats them to do these things. The word “brethren” is “adelphos.” It can be very broad or very specific depending on the context. Based on the context I believe it primarily means “a fellow believer,” “united to another by the bond of affection,” “brethren in Christ” and “Christians, as those who are exalted to the same heavenly place.” I do not believe this is specifically intended to just elders, but it is directed to each of the church members at Thessalonica and by absolutely necessary implication each of us in this church. Secondarily, there may still be some application to all men, particularly since the last phrase of the verse specifically say’s “all men.”

Barnes - *This earnest entreaty is evidently addressed to the whole church, and not to the ministers of the gospel only. The duties here enjoined are such as appertain to all Christians in their appropriate spheres, and should not be left to be performed by ministers only.*

Warn them that are unruly – The word “warn” means to admonish. Admonish is to express a disapproval or to correct. 1 Thes 2:7 *But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.* This literally means as a nursing mother is gentle

to her infant. You don't get gentler in life than a nursing mother to her baby. Pr 4:3 *For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.*

"Unruly" means "out of rank." Barnes: *It is the duty of every church member, as well as of the ministers of the gospel, affectionately to admonish those whom they know to be living contrary to the requirements of the gospel. One reason why there is so little piety in the church, and why so many professors of religion go astray, is, that the great mass of church members feel no responsibility on this subject. They suppose that it is the duty only of the officers of the church to admonish an erring brother, and hence many become careless and cold and worldly, and no one utters a kind word to them to recall them to a holy walk with God.* It is all of our duty, with great kindness, prudence and affection to warn others of danger, to show them when their soul is in jeopardy and to nurture and help one another when they are in trouble. This is because all of us will be unruly at times and need a course correction. So, we must truly do unto others as we would have done to us. Mat. 7:12 *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.* There are times when we must rebuke sharply. Titus 1:10 *For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped...13 Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.* There may be times even in the church when we must rebuke sharply, but it should be as a last resort when everything else has failed. When we do warn the unruly it should be with careful scriptural words, with a kind tone and with a patient, godly and nurturing spirit.

Comfort the feeble minded – "Comfort" means to calm, console and encourage. It means to give strength and hope and to ease the grief or trouble of someone or something. "Feeble minded" means weak-minded or fainthearted (lacking courage) and has historically been used to indicate an illness or deficiency of the mind. This could also be used for any number of conditions such as those in heaviness, depressed, downcast, reduced mental capacity (disability), reduced mental ability/capacity (lack of sound mind in completing a will – or due to old age), or other illnesses, mental or otherwise.

Gill: *Feeble minded* - *Such as are not able to bear the loss of near and dear relations (grief stricken); are ready to stagger under the cross, and at the reproaches and persecutions of the world; and are almost overset with the temptations of Satan; and*

are borne down and discouraged with the corruptions of their hearts, speaking a comfortable word to them, encourage them with the doctrines of grace, and the promises of the Gospel.

Barnes: The dispirited; the disheartened; the downcast. To do this (comfort the feeble-minded) is also the duty of each church member. There are almost always those who are in this condition, and it is not easy to appreciate the value of a kind word to one in that state, Christians are assailed by temptation; in making efforts to do good they are opposed and become disheartened; in their contests with their spiritual foes they are almost overcome; they walk through shades of spiritual night, and find no comfort. In such circumstances, how consoling is the voice of a friend! How comforting is it to feel that they are not alone! How supporting to be addressed by one who has had the same conflicts and has triumphed! Every Christian — especially each one who has been long in the service of his Master — has a fund of experience which is the property of the church, and which may be of incalculable value to those who are struggling now amidst many embarrassments along the Christian way. He who has that experience should help a weak and sinking brother; he should make his own experience of the efficacy of religion in his trials and conflicts, the means of sustaining others in their struggles. There is no one who would not reach out his hand to save a child borne down a rapid stream; yet how often do experienced and strong men in the Christian faith pass by those who are struggling in the "deep waters, where the proud waves have come over their souls!"

This reminds me of William Cowper (1731 – 1800), English poet and hymn writer who wrote:

1. There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains:
2. The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in His day;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away:
3. Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its pow'r,

Till all the ransomed church of God
Are safe, to sin no more:

4. E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die:
5. When this poor, lisp'ing, stamm'ring tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy pow'r to save:

His words have been a comfort to us all along this path. He was institutionalized during his life and struggled at times with his mental capacity. This is something else William Cowper wrote:

Infinite despair is a sad prompter...Oh, lot of unexampled misery incurred in a moment! ... Most miserable at present in this, that being thus miserable I have my senses continued to me, only that I may look forward to the worst. My thoughts are like loose and dry sand, which the closer it is grasped slips the sooner away...Mr. Johnson reads to me, but I lose every other sentence through the inevitable wanderings of my mind, and experience, as I have these two years, the same shattered mode of thinking on every subject and on all occasions... Adieu – I shall not be here to receive your answer, neither shall I ever see you more. Such is the expectation of the most desperate and most miserable of all beings. W.C.

We have a charitable duty to comfort each other. This is particularly true for those that we know are struggling with some infirmity in body, heart or mind. We each have a non-delegable duty to do this. Period. Please do not provide a list of reasons why this is impossible (i.e, too busy, too important, too many children, angry at them, they didn't share their secret <insert reason here>) or why you are exempted from this duty. You are not. Mat. 7: 9 *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

As Charles said a few weeks ago, I completely agree that the person with the issue (feeble-minded or otherwise), has a responsibility and duty to control their spirit,

rejoice evermore and pray without ceasing. Pr 16:32 *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.* But that duty does not absolve the rest of us of comforting and supporting that person. And, if need be, and if the situation arises appropriately, warning that person if their spirit is unruly. And if the person's conduct is so egregious as to constitute a disorderly walk we must withdraw ourselves from that person. 2 Thes 3:6 *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you.* But first and foremost we should lead with comfort and support per each of our duty of charity. And the duty, is not just doing it, but doing it with great patience (as you will see), with a kindly spirit, with no anger and not being weary in well doing. 2 Thes. 3:13 *But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.* We must edify one another, rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing and not render evil for evil.

Support the weak – “Support” means to hold, withstand, cleave to. It means to give assistance to, enable or hold up (bear all or part of the weight). “Weak” means infirm or feeble. It means lacking physical strength and energy, not able to resist an external force or withstand attack, mentally or intellectually deficient and not able to withstand temptation. It can mean either physical or spiritual weakness or both.



Gill: *Support the Weak - Who are weak in faith and knowledge, strengthen them, hold them up; or as the Syriac version renders it, "take the burden of the weak" and carry it, bear their infirmities.*

Rom. 15:1 *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.* 2 *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.* 3 *For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

Barnes on Rom. 15:1 *The apostle ... continues the exhortation to brotherly love and mutual kindness and forbearance. By the strong here he means the strong in faith in respect to the matters under discussion; those whose minds were free from doubts and perplexities. His own mind was free from doubt, and there were many others, particularly of the Gentile converts, that had the same views. But many also,*

particularly of the Jewish converts, had many doubts and scruples. Ought to bear. This word bear properly means to lift up... But here it is used in a larger sense; to bear with, to be indulgent to, to endure patiently, not to contend with... And not to please ourselves. Not to make it our main object to gratify our own wills. We should be willing to deny ourselves, if by it we may promote the happiness of others. ... it may be applied to Christian conduct generally, as denoting that we are not to make our own happiness or gratification the standard of our conduct, but are to seek the welfare of others. ... #Php 2:4 1Co 13:5, "Love seeketh not her own"; #1Co 10:24, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth."

Matthew Henry - *Some are not well able to perform their work, nor bear up under their burdens; we should therefore support them, help their infirmities, and lift at one end of the burden, and so help to bear it. It is the grace of God, indeed, that must strengthen and support such; but we should tell them of that grace, and endeavour to minister of that grace to them.*

Beloved, we are all members of this church and as such we are all in this together. What happens to one of us happens to all of us. Rom 12:25 *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.* Beloved, we are all unruly, all feeble-minded and all weak at one time or another in our lives. Ga 6:2 *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.* The duties to warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded and support the weak are all just another aspect of our duty of charity, and brotherly kindness to fellow church members and our duty of loving our neighbor to all men.



Beloved it is each of our duty to do these things. Just like it is each of our duty to visit the sick. Mat. 25:36 *Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me.* This is another way that you support the weak and show charity. Just because someone else goes and visits the sick does not absolve you of your responsibility and duty to visit the sick. And, just because someone else lends comfort and support doesn't resolve you of your responsibility to do the same. When you have a weak bridge you have to

shore it up at the weak point. 1 Cor. 10:12 *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

1 Cor. 1:26 *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.*

2 Cor 12: 9 *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

1 Cor 4:10 *We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. 11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; 12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: 13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.*

Acts 20:35 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. It is THE work of the church to comfort and support the weak. It's not a side thing, it's a main thing.



Isaiah 35:3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.

Beloved, this is the design of the Christian church – that we talk with one another daily and that we daily help and support one another. This is what allows the church to “punch above its weight class.” Peculiar gifts were given to each of its members that shore up and strengthen the church so that the members have complimentary but different skills. 1 Cor. 12:4 *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

Be patient toward all men. We must with particularity be patient toward our brethren that are unruly, feeble-minded and weak. Calvin says this is true even when we are called on two or three times or more to do this job. It doesn't matter that you are tired of the situation. We must be patient. We cannot become weary in well-doing (as noted earlier). Rom 2:7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. Ga 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Matthew Henry – *Be patient toward all men - We must bear and forbear. We must be long-suffering, and suppress our anger, if it begin to rise upon the apprehension of affronts or injuries; at least we must not fail to moderate our anger: and this duty must be exercised towards all men, good and bad, high and low. We must not be high in our expectations and demands, nor harsh in our resentments, nor hard in our impositions, but endeavour to make the best we can of every thing, and think the best we can of every body. Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: Tit 3:3 For we ourselves also were*

sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. Ga 5:26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Be careful not to provoke your loved ones except to love and good works.

Poole - Be patient toward all men: this duty is universal; the former concerned only the saints. The word signifies longanimity, or long-suffering, and is often attributed to God. It consisteth in the deferring or moderating of anger, to wait without anger when men delay us, and to suffer without undue anger when they deal injuriously with us, whether they be good men or evil, believers or infidels, the strong or the weak, ministers or people.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

Gill - See that none render evil for evil unto any man] Not an ill word for an ill word, railing for railing, nor an ill action for an ill action; no, not to any man whatever, not to an enemy, a persecutor, a profane person, as well as not to a brother, a believer in Christ; and this the saints should not only be careful of, and guard against in themselves, but should watch over one another, and see to it, that no such practice is found in each other. But ever follow that which is good; honestly, morally, pleasantly, and profitably good; even every good work, which is according to the will of God, is done in faith, from love, and to the glory of God; and particularly acts of beneficence and liberality to the poor; and which are not to be once, or now and then done, but to be followed and pursued after, and that always; both among yourselves, and to all men; not only to the household of faith, though to them especially, and in the first place, but to all other men, as opportunity offers, even to our enemies, and them that persecute us, and despitefully use us; do good to their bodies, and to their souls, as much as in you lies, by feeding and clothing the one, and by praying for, advising, and instructing the other.

Barnes: Both among yourselves, and to all men. The phrase "to all men," seems to have been added to avoid the possibility of misconstruction. Some might possibly suppose that this was a good rule to be observed towards those of their own number, but that a greater latitude in avenging injuries might be allowable towards their enemies out of the church. The apostle, therefore, says that the rule is universal. It

relates to the heathen, to infidels, sceptics, and persecutors, as well as to the members of the church. To every man we are to do good as we are able — no matter what they do to us. This is the rule which God himself observes toward the evil and unthankful, and is one of the original and beautiful laws of our holy religion.

16 Rejoice evermore. 17 Pray without ceasing. 18 In every thing give thanks



The “river” of I Thes. 5 flows to rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing and in every thing give thanks. I love you all. Amen