

1 Thessalonians

I. Introduction

- A. **1 Thessalonians 5:12-22** . . . But we request of you, brethren, that you [know] (*appreciate*) those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, [13] and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. [14] We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. [15] See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. [16] Rejoice always; [17] pray without ceasing; [18] in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. [19] Do not quench the Spirit; [20] do not despise prophetic utterances. [21] But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; [22] abstain from every form of evil.
- B. My intention last Sunday was to complete **vs 12-13** because they form a complete thought. However, due to time we only looked at **vs 12** and the first half of **vs 13**. And so today we are going to pick up our study with the words “Live in peace with one another.”
- C. Pray

II. Practical Christian living for everyday life and the return of Christ.

- A. **[13b]** Live in peace with one another.
1. The exhortation to live in peace with one another directly follows the exhortation to know your church leaders and esteem them highly through the various ways you show love to them. Therefore, we are going to apply this “live in peace” exhortation in two specific ways. But before doing this, I want to acknowledge that you are already living in peace with one another. And so I am not trying to get you to start doing this, but to remind you of why we ought to do it and, where possible, to excel still more.
 2. **The first** way we can apply this exhortation is to apply it to every Christian regardless of position, gender, age, maturity, or ethnicity. Why? Because it is God’s way for Christians to live in peace with one another – whether they are part of a particular church, or Christians who live in the same city but attend different churches, or Christians around the world.

- a. As the scripture says in **Ephesians 4:1-3**, “[We are to] walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which [we] have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, [3] being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
- b. In contrast to God’s way, disunity and division within the Body of Christ is the devil’s way, and he has had his way for centuries within individual churches and the church universal.
- c. And how do we know disunity and division are the devil’s way? Because it is disunity and division among believers that makes God look bad and gives unbelievers a reason to disregard Christians and their message.
- d. In contrast to the devil’s way, it is peaceful, loving unity that clearly states to the world that we are born again, that we have become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and that we are members of the Body of Christ – with one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all (**Ephesians 4:5-6**).
- e. As Jesus said in **John 13:35**, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- f. Therefore, as Christians, we are to live in peace – in so far as it depends on us – with every believer who attends our church and with every member of the universal Body of Christ.
 - (1) Realistically, peace may not be possible in every setting or situation, but it ought never be because we refuse to find a way to live in peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - (2) And this does not mean we cannot speak the truth to one another, for peace without truth is most often built on one-sided power or appeasement or ungodly tolerance – and though these forms of peace may result in the absence of open conflict, they cannot unify people in love and heartfelt cooperation, which means they are not true peace.
 - (3) Therefore, **Ephesians 4:15-16** says, “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

3. The **second** way we can apply this exhortation is to apply it to relationships within a particular church, and specifically to the relationships between leaders, and between the leaders and those under their leadership in a church.
 - a. In other words, leaders are to live in peace with the other leaders in the church. And leaders are to live in peace with those they lead. And those who are not in leadership are to live in peace with the leaders of the church.
 - b. This does not mean there won't be any differences or conflict. But it does mean that those involved in any differences or conflict – regardless of their position – will do their part to find a path to peace. And if those involved cannot come to true peace and unity, then they ought to seek a third godly person to help them find a way to peace.
 4. We may have grown to a level of spiritual maturity whereby we are committed to living in peace with one another. But that is not the case in all churches.
 - a. The truth is, leaders sometimes give way to pride and think they should be the leader of the leaders, or they think that their plans and ideas are the best ones, or that their position grants them special privileges. Such thoughts and actions on the part of leaders often leads to conflict and power struggles and a disunity that too often results in division and separation. Sadly, unresolved conflict among the church's leaders has divided congregations and resulted in some leaders leaving or churches splitting.
 - b. It is just as easy for those being led to think they could do a better job of leading than the leaders, or to harbor ill-will toward a leader over a decision he made. And of course, it is all too common for leaders to become defensive or authoritarian in the face of resistance or disapproval.
 5. Therefore, we need to seriously and intentionally work at living in peace with one another. And if each of us does our part, as difficult as it can be sometimes, we will be able to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of genuine peace.
- B. [14] We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.
1. Though these four tasks are a part of the work every church leader ought to be doing, they are also part of the tasks every believer in the church ought to be doing – in whatever ways they can.

2. Obviously, the more spiritually mature the Christian, the better he or she can do these tasks. Yet even a newer, younger, or less mature believer can contribute to the spiritual, mental, and emotional well-being of the church by doing what they are able based on their own spiritual growth and maturity.
 - a. Of course, admonishing the unruly, encouraging the faint-hearted, and helping the weak requires being humble, compassionate, and gentle as well as honest, clear, and direct.
 - (1) And it requires taking the time to understand the person well enough to be able to do for them what is truly needed.
 - (2) We can gain insight into how to do these first three tasks from **Proverbs 25:11-15**, “Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in **right circumstances**. [12] Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a **wise reprover** to a listening ear. [13] Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him (*God, the spiritual health of the church, love for your fellow believers*), for he refreshes the soul of his masters. [14] Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely (*who claims he is the best person to admonish, encourage, and help – when he isn’t*). [15] By forbearance (*not giving up after a first or second effort*) a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue (*rather than a hammering or caustic tongue*) breaks the bone (*accomplishes the goal*).”
 - (3) Our goal in admonishing, encouraging, and helping is to promote godly behavior and spiritual growth in everyone and in every area of life, while preserving our unity.
 - b. However, those who are being admonished, encouraged, and helped must be willing to receive it in a way that enables them to do their part in protecting the peace and unity of the church. In other words, the right attitude on both sides is important.
 - c. Therefore, it is when the church, as individuals and as a group take responsibility for and work together (1) to grow in spiritual understanding and godly living, and (2) to remain faithful in the face of trials, suffering, and persecution that we are able – as a church – to attain to the unity of the faith, and to a spiritually healthy knowledge of the Son of God, and to a Christian maturity that is like the maturity of Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 4:13**).

3. **Admonish the unruly**

- a. To admonish is to seriously yet gently warn those who are doing something wrong or unloving or self-destructive **that** the outcome will be far more harmful – to them and others – than whatever good they are hoping to achieve.
- b. The unruly are those who know what is right or what is required of them, yet repeatedly do something else – either out of selfishness and pride or out of rebellion and willful disobedience or out of carelessness and a lack of self-discipline.
- c. In the context of Christianity, the unruly would be those who know that what they are doing is wrong yet either fail to put forth a reasonable effort to change their ways, or who justify their wrong on the basis of other people’s bad behavior, or who are so caught up with self-interest that they are willing to break whatever rules necessary to please themselves.
- d. What they are ignoring is (1) the damage they are doing to their character, (2) the added troubles their wrongdoing brings into their lives and the lives of those affected by their sinful choices and behavior, (3) the harm they are doing to their reputation, (4) the damage they are doing to relationships, (5) and how bad they are making God and Christianity look.
- e. It is for reasons like these that we, individually and as a group, are to admonish the unruly among us. Failure to do so opens the door to ongoing and even growing ungodliness in the unruly themselves and any others who might follow their example.

4. **Encourage the fainthearted**

- a. To encourage someone (1) is to inspire them, (2) or give them hope, (3) or build up their confidence so that they make a commendable effort to accomplish the task before them or to remain faithful to what they believe even if their fears are shouting “don’t do it!”
- b. In this context, the fainthearted are Christians who lack the courage needed to face whatever challenge or overcome whatever fears stand in the way of doing what God’s word teaches them is right.
- c. At this point I want to remind you that the Thessalonian believers were being persecuted, which would explain some of them being fainthearted and needing encouragement to continue trusting God with their lives, the well-being of their families, and having their basic needs met.

- d. However, though we are not being persecuted for our faith in God, some of us may be fainthearted when it comes to giving up certain sinful pleasures, or selfishly sinful methods of self-protection, or power over others, or the economic security that the world provides, or the sense of well-being gained from a broad base of approval and acceptance.
- e. My point is that some of us may need encouragement to live a godly life when it seems the cost of godliness is greater than the cost of continuing down the path of selfishness and sin.
- f. And there is one more thing that I believe is important in relation to encouraging the fainthearted. Though Bible based reasoning and personal stories about trusting God are great tools for encouragement, standing with or going with someone who is fainthearted so they are not facing their fear alone is equally good. And here again, this is a task for all of us.

5. **Help the weak**

- a. To help is to strengthen or assist or provide the means needed to accomplish a difficult task.
- b. In relation to Christianity, the weak are those who are not yet strong enough – emotionally, mentally, and spiritually – to live a godly life without regular help and support.
- c. It is best for all of us to be sensitive to any believer in any situation who is exhibiting some form of weakness so that we can come along side them and give them the help needed to continue down the narrow path of righteousness.
- d. And we should be especially sensitive to new believers, believers facing marital problems, believers in a difficult job or work environment, and believers prone to addiction.
- e. **Galatians 6:2** affirms this truth: “Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ (*i.e., love one another as Christ has loved us*).”

6. **Be patient with everyone**

- a. The first thing to notice in this statement is who we are to be patient with – and the “who” is everyone. In other words, **every** Christian is to be patient with **everyone**. No Christian is excluded from the exhortation to be patient, and no one is excluded from the list of those with whom we are to be patient.
- b. The second thing to notice is that at one time or another every one of us needs those around us to be patient with us. None of us gets through life lacking a need for patience from others.

- (1) Now it is true, some of us are in need of patience more than others, yet even the mature believer can have a moment or a day when they need the rest of us to be patient with them.
 - (2) And because we all need God and those around us to be patient with us from time to time, we can use that reality, along with the qualities of humility and love, to motivate us to endure the effects of other's bad behavior – and to do so without anger, murmuring, resentment, or bitterness.
- c. Sadly, we often find it easier to be patient with other people's children than with our own, and with the adults outside our home than those we live with. However, impatience is unloving, and the way we often express our impatience is ungodly – which makes us wrong on two counts when dealing with someone who may only be wrong on one count.
 - d. Finally, there is an end to patience. But that end ought to be determined by love and what is in the best interests of the individual and the community, not our frustration or pain or weariness with the offender's behavior.
 - e. Therefore, God says in **1 Corinthians 13:4**, "Love is patient, love is kind." And in **James 1:2-4**, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, [3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. [4] And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

III. Conclusion

- A. Though we are already living in peace with one another, let us make it our aim to excel still more. And as for admonishing the unruly, encouraging the fainthearted, helping the weak, and being patient with everyone – this is the work all of us are to do. Therefore, may we all value God, and the spiritual well-being of each other, and the spiritual health of the church as a whole, and our testimony in the world enough to do this kind of work – intentionally, seriously and with love.