

“Life in the Body”
1 Thessalonians 5:14-15
(Preached at Trinity, December 8, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I pointed out last time, **Verse 12** begins the final section of Paul's letter which will bring it to a close. These verses are very practical in nature. They consist of several points of admonition that we might consider universal Christian conduct. They describe elements of the sanctification Paul has been describing since we began **Chapter 4**
2. **Verses 12-13** describe Christian conduct with respect to the elders of the church
Verse 14 describes Christian conduct with respect to the disorderly, fainthearted and weak.
Verse 15 describes Christian conduct with respect to those who have injured you
Verses 16-18 describe Christian conduct with respect to God
Verses 19-22 describe Christian conduct with respect to the Holy Spirit and prophetic utterance or preaching.
3. Finally, in **Verses 23-28** Paul will give statements describing sanctification, intercessory prayer, and then some final greetings.
4. Last week our focus was upon the pastoral leadership of the church, but we should never presume that the pastors alone bear responsibility for the care of the church. There is a duty for every church member to give himself to the care and edification of the church.
 - A. We saw this in **Verse 11**
1 Thessalonians 5:11 NAU - "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing."
 - B. In fact, one of the duties of pastors is to equip the church to build up one another. Christ had given some to be pastors and teachers . . .
Ephesians 4:12 NAU - "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ"
Ephesians 4:15-16 NAU - "but 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."
 - C. The KJV brings confusion by adding a comma and giving the idea that the work of building up the body of Christ rests only with those called to public ministry.
Ephesians 4:12 KJV - "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"
5. As we come to **Verse 14** Paul's direction is upon the entire church to care for the body. It opens, "We urge you brethren" – by "brethren" Paul is referring to the entire church, just as Paul uses the word in **Verse 12**.

6. The word for “admonish” is *νουθετέω*. It is the same word translated “instruction” in **Verse 12**. Pastors admonish by way of office, but every member has the duty to admonish one another. This morning I want us to examine Paul’s charge in **Verse 14**. I title the sermon, “Life in the Body” because it encapsulates the care of the church for itself. Paul is addressing three groups within the Church of Thessalonica that needed special attention: The unruly, the fainthearted, and the weak. And then he adds the duty of the church to exercise patience towards all.
7. Paul doesn’t give us any detail regarding the exact identity of these three groups so we need to be careful not to overstep Biblical propriety. But there are some general applications that are beneficial for every generation. Paul is addressing the entire congregation – “We urge you brethren . . .”

I. “Admonish the Unruly”

- A. The word translated “unruly” is *ἄτακτος*. It is a hapax legomena. (used only here)
1. This is true of all three words used – “unruly, fainthearted, and weak.”
 2. In the Lidell & Scott Lexicon we find this word translated “unruly” used primarily as a military term meaning, “*out of order, not at ones post, disorderly, lawless*”
 3. It is further defined:
 - To be undisciplined
 - Disorderly or disruptive
 - One who raises a riot or rebellion
 4. William Hendriksen refers to the unruly in his commentary as, “fanatics, meddlers, and loafers.”¹
- B. In the context there are two types of unruly members
1. The first are those who consistently resist the teaching of the elders. Paul had taught them and their current leadership was teaching them. The word for “instruction” in **Verse 12** carries the idea of admonishment. But some were stubbornly refusing to receive their instruction.
1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 NAU - "that you 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. "
 2. The second type are those who persist in living undisciplined lives
1 Thessalonians 4:11 NAU - "make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you,"
2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 NAU - "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. ¹¹ For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread."

¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of I-II Thessalonians*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 3:136.

3. Neglect of duty should always be corrected. A dad that would rather give himself to pleasure than care for his family should be admonished. A mother who gives too much attention to her social life should be corrected.
- C. Notice the context: peace in the church demands admonishing those who disturb the peace. Admonishing is by both word and action
1. They must be warned. The tool of admonishment is always the Word of God.
Titus 3:10 NAU - "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,"
 2. If they persist, they must be removed
2 Thessalonians 3:6 NAU - "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us."

II. "Encourage the Fainthearted"

- A. The fainthearted are those lacking in confidence. They are losing heart.
1. Perhaps it is fear of being engaged in the work of the kingdom. Gospel work demands courage as well as a bold confidence in the presence of Christ who has promised,
"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 2. Perhaps it is a general lack of assurance. Some Christians are hyper-introspective and condemn themselves at every flaw and imperfection. God knows the difference between weakness and willful rebellion.
 3. Some just become discouraged. It describes the laborers during Nehemiah's day as their enemies continued to rail against their work.
Nehemiah 6:9 NAU - "For all of them were *trying* to frighten us, thinking, "They will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done." But now, *O God*, strengthen my hands."
 4. We need to remember the context of this letter. These Christians were suffering persecution because of their faith.
1 Thessalonians 1:6-7 NAU - "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia."
1 Thessalonians 2:14 NAU - "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews,"
- B. The word for "encourage" carries the idea of consoling
1. It's the word used to describe the Jews who had come to comfort Mary and Martha after Lazarus died.
John 11:19 NAU - "and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning *their* brother."
 2. The fainthearted should be encouraged so that they might become stout-hearted.
 3. We should always be prepared to give a faithful word of encouragement.

4. We saw this in the faithful friendship of Jonathan to David
1 Samuel 23:15-17 NAU - "Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. ¹⁶ And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God. ¹⁷ Thus he said to him, "Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also."
5. This shines forth the nature of God's people. While we are courageous to admonish the unruly, we are tender to care for the fainthearted. Love should permeate all that we do. We should seek to imitate Christ. He would admonish the Pharisees while speaking words of comfort to the fainthearted.

III. "Help the Weak"

- A. Weakness can come in many forms
 1. It can be physical weakness – Jesus cared for the sick, lame, and blind. It could include those economically destitute.
 2. It can be spiritual weakness – to be glued to this earth. Where Christ has little significance.
 3. It would also include moral weakness
 - a. This must have been true for some in this church.
1 Thessalonians 4:3 NAU - "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;"
1 Thessalonians 4:7 NAU - "For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification."
 - b. This is the heart of Galatians 6
Galatians 6:1-2 NAU - "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ."
 4. While we should care for all, we should give particular attention to the spiritually weak. While those with physical infirmities are usually keenly aware of their weakness, those who are spiritually weak are often dull to their weakness.
- B. We must help one another
 1. The word here means to hold close, to be devoted to. The weak need special care. We need to hold tightly to them.
 2. This is the nature of the care we have for one another within the body of Christ.
1 Corinthians 12:25-26 NAU - "so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."

IV. "Be Patient with Everyone"

- A. Paul uses this word as he describes the fruit of love in **1 Corinthians 13**
1 Corinthians 13:4 NAU - "Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant,"
1. The word literally means "to suffer long."
 2. Patience enables us to remain calm, even in the face of disturbing situations.
- B. Patience creates forbearance
1. It leads us to endure offenses without retaliation
1 Thessalonians 5:15 NAU - "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."
 2. Christian longsuffering flowing from love enables us to bear the injuries inflicted by others without retaliation or resentment. Revenge is strictly prohibited in the Word of God.
Romans 12:18-21 NAS - "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹ Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
 3. Not only should we not seek revenge, we should seek to do good.
Matthew 5:43-45 NAU - "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you ⁴⁵ in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous."

Conclusion:

1. Pastors have the duty to teach and admonish.
 Paul's point here is admonishment is not the duty of pastors alone. Paul is speaking to the entire congregation. All of us have a duty to maintain the wellbeing of our church.
2. You need to recognize your duty. You have promised to do it. You have entered into a covenant.
"I further promise, therefore, to watch over my brothers and sisters in Christ in brotherly love, and faithfully warn, exhort, and admonish them as occasion may require"
3. May God grant us to watch over one another in love.
1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 NAU - "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰ for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,"