

Love Until the Cows Come Home

1 Thessalonians 5:14; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 2-3-19

Introduction

Big Rock Sunday: 1st Sunday of each month:

- Love Your God
- Love Your Church
- Love Your Family
- Love Your Workplace
- Love Your World

God wants us to rest in Jesus, hope in God and pursue love.

This text helps us see what love looks like.

¹² But we request of you, brethren, 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. 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. ²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. – 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

I want to focus on three simple things from verse 14:

- We need to love *differently*.
- We need to love *the same*.
- We need to love *painfully long*.

1. We need to love people differently.

We urge you, brethren, admonish **the unruly**, encourage **the fainthearted**, help **the weak**, be patient with everyone. (14)

We need to love people differently, in the sense that we need to love them according to their need, as best as we can perceive it.

- According to their need
- Perceptively

- Unruly: Disorderly (scarecrow needs a brain) – needs to will differently (needs submission to God)
- Fainthearted: Disheartened (lion needs courage) – needs to feel differently (needs hope)
- Weak: Disabled (tin man needs a heart) – needs to think differently (needs the strength of full conviction of truth)

‘As the dispositions of men are various, it is not without good reason that the Apostle commands that believers accommodate themselves to this variety. - Calvin

‘The unruly ... those who live dissolutely [overindulging in sensual pleasures; lacking restraint especially : marked by indulgence in things (such as drink or promiscuous sex) deemed vices]. - Calvin

‘Admonish is employed to mean sharp reproof, such as may bring them back into the right way, for they are deserving of greater severity and they cannot be brought to repentance by any other remedy. - Calvin

‘By fainthearted he means those that are of a broken and afflicted spirit. – Calvin

‘Disorderly = without order (like soldiers who are out of step; the fanatics, the meddlers, the loafers [4:11, 12; 5:12, 13, 2 Thess 3:10]) - Hendriksen

‘Fainthearted = literally, little souls (those worried about their departed friends and relatives and/or about their own spiritual condition [4:13-18; 5:4, 5, 9]) - Hendriksen

‘Weak = without strength (those characterized by a tendency toward immorality, spiritually immature [4:1-8]) - Hendriksen

‘These three groups are addressed in the epistle and may overlap. - Hendriksen

‘The ‘unruly’ are those out of line who must be warned and taught to get back in line. Group number one, we’ll call the wayward, the wayward. They’re never in step. They’re always out of synch. They’re always out of line. They’re never with the program. When everybody else is moving ahead, they’re going backwards. When everybody else is filling up the ranks in proper order, they’re outside that somewhere failing to do their duty, not particularly interesting in serving, sometimes not at all interested in giving, idle, perhaps even loafing. They’re in the way of the progress. Disorderly, they might be. Even AWOL, they might be. Apathetic, they might be, sometimes contentious, sometimes rebellious, and I suppose they fill up the spectrum all the way from apathy to rebellion. They’re the wayward. They’re just never going the way everybody’s going in the proper line. They’re at odds with everything. - MacArthur

‘The ‘fainthearted’ are those in fear and doubt who must be encouraged and made bold. A second group we might identify that hinder the growth and the life and the power of the church, we’ll call the worried. The worried. This group is basically motivated by fear. These are the people in the church who have no courage, who will articulate the famous words “We’ve never done it that way before,” who can give you ten reasons why you can’t do anything you propose

to do. They have no sense of adventure. They hate change. They love tradition. They fear the unknown. They want no risk. They worry about everything. All the issues of life are far more than they can bear. They're usually sad, always worried, sometimes in despair, often depressed, discouraged and defeated. They carry none of the zeal, the joy, the thrill, the exuberance that adventure brings. - MacArthur

'The 'weak' are those without spiritual and moral strength who must be held up firmly. We could probably identify a third group. We could call them the weak. The weak. They're just spiritually and morally weak. Christians who, because of their weak faith, because of the weak disciplines of their life, are susceptible to sin, and they fall into the same sins over and over, and you barely get them up and dust them off and they're back in the same hole again. They find it very hard to do God's Will consistently. They embarrass themselves. They embarrass the church. They embarrass the Lord. They take an awful lot of attention. They test how good a church is at church discipline and usually run you all the way to at least step two. – MacArthur

'When it comes to troubled people, there are — very broadly speaking — three kinds in every community. The unruly or disorderly, the fainthearted (small-souled), the weak (those who are not well). The dysfunction of these three are on a continuum from strong to weak.

- There are the unruly who are dysfunctional in their strength;
- there are the fainthearted or small-souled who are dysfunctional because of being disheartened by some circumstance or experience;
- and the weak are dysfunctional because they are physically or mentally broken. – John Piper

All three groups are:

- (1) sinners
- (2) sinning (not obeying, failing to trust and love)
- (3) need repentance
- (4) unruly (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 15)
- (5) fainthearted (John 14:1; Isaiah 61:3; Psalm 42:5)
- (6) weak (Matthew 26:41; Romans 14:1; 1 Corinthians 8:9; 2 Tim 3:6)

2. We need to love people the same.

We urge you, brethren, **admonish** the unruly, **encourage** the fainthearted, **help** the weak, be patient with everyone. (14)

We need to love people the same, in the sense that we are to love them according to what God tells us to do in His Word.

- According to the Word
- Not in the same way
- But in the same spirit
- Personally
- Correct: Admonish (urge) them to obey God's commands.
- Motivate: Encourage them to trust God's promises.

- Enlighten: Help them to see God's truth.

'Admonish is employed to mean sharp reproof, such as may bring them back into the right way, for they are deserving of greater severity and they cannot be brought to repentance by any other remedy. - Calvin

'The unruly are to be admonished sharply but the fainthearted are to receive consolation. - Calvin

'Remedies must be adapted to diseases. – Calvin

Admonish means to 'put in mind' to obey God's ordinances. - Hendriksen

Helped means to not abandon but rather to 'cling to' them (be close to them both in heart and practically), rendering all the necessary spiritual and moral assistance. - Hendriksen

'For these three groups of needy people, Paul prescribes different approaches: "*Admonish* the unruly, *encourage* the fainthearted, *help* the weak, *be patient* with them all."

- Admonition (*noutheteo*) — direct and forthright exhortation to change!
- Encouragement (*paramutheo*) — an emotionally empathetic alignment that strengthens
- Help (*antecheo*) — a closer attachment and coming under to lift up

'But all of them with patience, even the unruly. Picture your arm pointing to the unruly saying, "No more." Picture it touching the shoulder of the fainthearted to let them know you care and are beside them for encouragement. And picture your arm actually holding and lifting the weak since they need extraordinary help. This is the ministry of counseling in any local church. – John Piper

'There will be in all societies some who walk disorderly. Such should be reprov'd and told plainly of the injury they do their own souls and the hurt they may do to others. The feeble-minded are the timorous and faint-hearted or such as are dejected and of a sorrowful spirit. Such should be encouraged; we should not despise them but comfort them; and who knows what good a kind and comfortable word may do them? Some are not well able to perform their work, nor bear up under their burdens; we should therefore help their infirmities and lift at one end of the burden and so help to bear it. – Matthew Henry

Wisdom doesn't speak in boilerplate. It's never a one-size-fits-all formula. Or, contrary to the Christianese equivalent, it's never 3-steps-to-Victory. So every psalm, every letter, every gospel, every prophet is different. The same redeemer God speaks and engages diverse people. And because the people face different problems and are prone to different struggles, his words and actions always come hand-crafted. ... Wisdom from God is an appropriate, flexible, and timely wisdom. See 1 Thessalonians 5:14 and Ephesians 4:29 for starters. (David Powlison, *ibid.*)

3. We need to love people painfully long.

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, **be patient with everyone.** (14)

We need to love people in these ways for the ‘long haul’ even though it means suffering over a long period of time, just as God loves us.

- According to the love of God for sinners
- Patiently = long suffering
- Patiently = painfully long
- Suffering long with people who aren’t where they need to be
- Persistently
- Patiently with the unruly; patiently with the fainthearted; patiently with the weak; patiently with the believer; patiently with the unbeliever; patiently with all people

‘He recommends patience because severity must be tempered with some degree of lenity [The quality of being kind or gentle.; the quality or state of being lenient; of mild and tolerant disposition or effect : not harsh, severe, or strict], even in dealing with the unruly. This patience, however, is properly speaking contrasted with a feeling of irksomeness, for nothing are we more prone to than to feel wearied out when we set ourselves to cure the diseases of our brethren. The man who has once and again comforted a person who is fainthearted, if he is called to do the same thing a third time, will feel I know not what vexation, nay, even indignation, that will not permit him to persevere in discharging his duty. Thus, if by admonishing or reproving, we do not immediately do the good that is to be desired, we lose all hope of future success. Paul had in view to bridle impatience of this nature, by recommending to us moderation towards all. – John Calvin

‘Patience is long suffering in respect to persons. – Hendriksen

‘All our counseling is to be joyful, prayerful, and thankful. ... Look at all these needy people draining you: the "unruly" are challenging you; the "fainthearted" are leaning on you; the "weak" are depleting you. But you are called to encourage and help and be patient and not return evil for evil. In other words, you are called to have spiritual resources that can be durable and fruitful and nourishing when others are unruly and fainthearted and weak and mean-spirited. – John Piper

‘A company of travellers fall into a pit: one of them gets a passenger to draw him out. Now he should not be angry with the rest for falling in; nor because they are not yet out, as he is. He did not pull himself out: instead, therefore, of reproaching them, he should shew them pity. . . . A man, truly illuminated, will no more despise others, then Bartimeus, after his own eyes were opened, would take a stick, and beat every blind man he met. – John Newton

‘I have been thirty years forming my own views; and, in the course of this time, some of my hills have sunk, and some of my valleys have risen: but, how unreasonable within me to expect all this should take place in another person; and that, in the course of a year or two. - John Newton

The day is now breaking: how beautiful its appearance! how welcome the expectation of the approaching sun! It is this thought makes the dawn agreeable, that it is the presage of a brighter light; otherwise, if we expect no more day than it is this minute, we should rather complain of darkness, than rejoice in the early beauties of the morning. Thus the Life of grace is the dawn of immortality: beautiful beyond expression, if compared with the night and thick darkness which

formerly covered us; yet faint, indistinct, and unsatisfying, in comparison of the glory which shall be revealed." - John Newton

Conclusion

1. Know that we are in a 'variety' of places in our hearts and lives.
2. Embrace your duty/ministry.
3. Ask: What do they need in light of where they are?
4. Pray for wisdom and grace to do what is required at church, at home, at the workplace and in the world.
5. Don't give up when you don't see progress and you are tired.
6. Wait on God to work and keep His promises.
7. Love until the cows come home (a long, indefinite, time!).