

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

by Paul Washer

The gospel is necessary because of the nature of God, specifically His holiness and justice, and the responsibility of the congregation to the elders is to appreciate and esteem them highly in love because of their work.

Duration: 1:09:58

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 4:32, 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:14

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker urges the congregation to take certain actions towards one another. These actions include admonishing the unruly, encouraging the faint-hearted, helping the weak, and being patient with everyone. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and appreciating the hard work and sacrifices made by others. Additionally, the speaker highlights the need for holding onto both people and the word of God in order to be compassionate and truly help others. The sermon references Ephesians 4 and emphasizes the role of equipping the saints for the work of service in building up the body of Christ.

Transcript

Also, we're going to be in First Thessalonians again. We should finish up in a week or two. And we're going to be in First Thessalonians 5, beginning in verse 12.

Before I go to the text, though, I would like to say our pastor read about the resurrection. And this is so extremely important. And though we preach the gospel here with great frequency, I do see new faces.

And so let me just lay a few things out for you with regard to the gospel that possibly you've never heard. Whenever we're contemplating the gospel itself, the good news of God and Jesus Christ, you have to ask yourself, what is the reason for the gospel? What is the reason for the death of Christ? And here's what I want you to see. The gospel does have to do with the sin of man.

But that's not the primary reason why the gospel is necessary. The primary reason why the gospel is necessary is because of the nature of God. You see, if man was a sinner and he is, but if God was not holy, then there wouldn't be a problem.

There would be no problem, there would be no need for reconciliation. The need for reconciliation comes from the fact that God is holy and God is just. And that presents the greatest problem in all the scriptures.

And let me set it before you in sort of a philosophical formula. It would be this. Paul says it in Romans 3. How can God be truly just and righteous and yet pardon wicked men? That's the greatest problem in the Bible.

If you haven't known that, well, know tonight that that's the heart of the gospel. And usually when I'm witnessing to somebody, that's where I start off. The greatest problem is how can God be just and pardon wicked men while maintaining his justice? Because even in our own world, isn't it true that if a judge lets criminals go, what do we say about him? He's corrupt.

You see, God can't demonstrate his love at the expense of his other attributes. You may have heard some preachers say at one time, well, instead of being just with you, God was loving. Well, if you study classical logic, you know that.

Well, that preacher is saying that God's love is unjust. God's love must be just. And so how can God pardon wicked men and still be just? There's only one way in the person of Jesus Christ, who is God in the flesh.

What happened there on that tree? Well, let's look at the whole thing. God in his justice condemns man. And man is separated from God and without hope, and there is nothing man can do to save himself.

But then in God's mercy, in God's love, God becomes a man. He walks upon this earth and lives a perfect life. In complete submission to the law and perfect obedience to the will of God, and then he goes to a tree and on that tree, he takes the sin of his people upon himself.

Of. Not only does he take our sin upon himself, but the Bible says he becomes the curse, a curse of God. And then all the wrath of a righteous God, all the divine punishment that should fall upon wicked men on that cross, it fell upon the sun.

You see, a lot of times, many of you, especially now during what's called Easter season, you'll hear preachers talk about the cross of Christ. And they'll talk about the crown of thorns on his head. They'll talk about the nails in his hands and his feet and the spear in his side.

And then they'll just end their sermon. But what you have to understand is that's that's not the pain of the cross. Your sins are not forgiven just because some Romans beat up Jesus and nailed him to a tree.

What saves us is that when he was nailed to the tree. In that horrible physical suffering, he bore the filth of our sin. He bore our sin and God turned away from him as he should turn away from us.

And then all the wrath of God that should fall upon us throughout an eternity in hell fell upon the sun and the sun in himself. He extinguished, we can say, the wrath of God. He swallowed it up.

And that's why when the very last drop do you was suffered by him, he cried out, it is finished. That means what? He extinguished the wrath of God because he satisfied all the demands of God's justice by suffering in your place and it's finished. He died.

He rose again on the third day, send it up into heaven. He sits at the right hand of God. And who shall ever whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, whoever puts their faith in him and the one who puts their faith in him.

Here's the marvelous thing. There is therefore now no more condemnation for the believer. Never.

None. Why? It was swallowed up on Calvary by the son of God. And that's the gospel.

But in order for you to be saved, you must repent of your sins and you must believe the gospel. And the evidence that you have believed in a saving manner is that you go on repenting. You go on believing that he who began a good work in you, he finishes it until the day you stand before him blameless and with great joy and glory.

And that's the gospel of Jesus Christ. And if you have any questions about that tonight, will you come see me or pastor or someone else, another member like myself? And we'd be glad to talk to you about the gospel. Now, let's look at First Thessalonians, chapter five, verse 12.

And we're going to do a lot of different word studies, because when you read a passage like this, there's all sorts of words that you just kind of read and don't really get a hold of. But we need to get a hold of them now. Five, 12.

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you and the Lord and give you instruction and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

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. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word.

Thank you for your great mercies that you have revealed in your son. Thank you for your kindness and your patience. Father, I pray that tonight for the glory of your son, for the good of your people.

That you would help me to communicate the things that are here. And that you would help your people to hear and understand. And Lord, we acknowledge that nothing is possible apart from your spirit.

We have no wisdom, we have no strength, we have no eloquence. You alone, Lord, you alone deserve the glory and you alone. Are our help.

So help us, Lord, in Jesus name. Amen. Now, in this section, which, as many of you know, we've been preaching through First Thessalonians.

In this section, we have the responsibility of the elders to the congregation. We also have the congregation's responsibility to the elders. Then we have the responsibility, mutual responsibility between the elders and the congregation.

And then finally, we have the responsibility of the congregation to the congregation. And we're going to work through that. And I'm glad that I'm not an elder.

I'll tell you why. It makes elders very uncomfortable to have to teach on these kind of things. About not only what they're supposed to do, that doesn't make them uncomfortable.

But when they try to tell you the way you're supposed to treat an elder. And since I'm not an elder, I can stand up here and preach as a member. And tell you that you and I need to do certain things with regard to the elders are at this time elder that is here.

All right. And this is very, very serious. Why? Because we live in a day where we've always.

Well, most of you weren't didn't grow up in the hippie era like I did. But in the hippie era, it all started that we always got these T-shirts that said question authority. And after a while, if you keep hearing something over and over, it becomes a truth to you, even though it's a lie.

And so you get to the point where you have an entire generation of people who are constantly questioning authority and not trusting authorities. When I was in political science my first year at the university, a professor went down a list of all the things you needed to do in order to destroy a country. And the first one was to eliminate all confidence in the established institutions.

Of government, of religion. Of education, and that's basically what's happened in our country, and sometimes it bleeds into the church, doesn't it? Especially when you see these TV evangelists getting wealthy and all sorts of things like that. And so we almost develop an attitude where we're afraid to trust and we're afraid or at least hesitant to honor an authority.

And yet that's exactly what the scriptures are going to tell us to do. So let's let's look at the text. We're going to look at three responsibilities of the elder.

And the first one is he must diligently labor among the congregation. Look what it says in verse 12. But we request you, brethren, that you appreciate those who now he's going to describe an elder who diligently labor among you.

So the first thing that an elder is required to do is to diligently labor. Now, I want you to look down here and it says appreciate those. That's plural.

Why? Because in a perfect case scenario, there's more than one elder. In a perfect case scenario, you have various elders with various gifts, all taking care of the church. But sometimes in a church plant or a new church like this, it'll often begin with one elder or maybe as our church began with a few.

But then others went some of the elders went to preach in another place and another elder went to study at the university. And so we're left with Brother Anthony. So we have a singular elder.

And that ought to tell us something. The work of being an elder is very, very difficult when you have several elders. But when you have one, it makes it even more difficult.

And therefore, we probably should appreciate in a greater way the elder that we have. Now, another thing, it says diligently labor. It comes from a Greek word, kopio.

And we've we've gone through this word before in First Thessalonians. Paul uses it at different times. And it means literally to grow weary with toil.

To grow weary with toil, what is the work of an elder, a true elder will grow weary, most of them die young and those who don't look a lot older than they actually are. And so you need to realize that the work of being an elder is quite difficult. When I was in seminary about 150 years ago, I remember in systematic class, one of my professors said, if you want to know what it means to be the pastor of a church, then read Isaiah 53.

I think many of you probably know what that text says. It talks about the suffering servant of Yahweh, talks about the Messiah who is going to suffer and die for the sake of his people. And in one way, the minister takes on something of that mantle.

He diligently labors. Now, when Paul tells the elders to diligently labor, what he's actually doing is telling them to imitate him. And I want you to look over with me to chapter two.

At verse nine, look what he says about his own ministry, he says, for you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, the word labor there again is kopos, which is the noun form of kopio. He says our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you. We proclaim to you the gospel of God.

Now, this is part of what a minister's life has to be diligent, toil, labor. But church, I want you to realize something. We need to be careful.

Should the ministers of this church be be ready to help? Yes, yes. But should we also our own selves seek to grow to maturity so that we're not constantly in need that we ourselves study the scriptures, that we ourselves encourage one another? You know, when my little when my little girl Rowan needs to go across the parking lot at Walmart, she's seven years old. I'm going to hold her hand.

Hopefully I don't have to do that when she's twenty seven. I want her to grow to maturity and all of us must grow to maturity, and as we do, the burden becomes less and less on the elders so that they can dedicate more and more of their time to studying and praying in order to be prepared to be in the pulpit and teach us. Remember, Romans 12, too, says that the will of God is perfect.

Now, what's that have to do with this? Well, there's been down through the ages this idea that the minister ought to sacrifice his family for the benefit of benefit of the ministry. We've all heard that. That's a lie.

Not only is it a lie, it actually speaks against God. In what way? God says that his will is perfect, which means you don't have to violate one aspect of God's will in order to fulfill another aspect of God's will. God has commands for the minister and all of us, if we're men with regard to our wives and our children.

And in order to do what God says in the ministry, we should never have to neglect them over here. We want to have a life of whole obedience unto the Lord and we as members, when we have needs, yes, we can contact an elder, but we also ought to be sensitive. Man has a wife, man has a family.

It's very, very important to understand now, I also want us to look at something that's very important. Let's go to chapter one, verse three, and we're going to see this word again in its noun form. And look what it says.

He's talking about the members of the church and he said, constantly bearing in mind your work of faith, your labor, Corpus, your diligent labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and father. Now, we've seen that the minister in one sense makes himself weary taking care of the congregation. But here, what do we see? The congregation doing the same thing for one another.

Do you see that? He says that the congregation is involved in a labor, a corpus, a diligent labor of love towards one another. And we're going to talk about this later, we're going to look at Ephesians four just a little bit. The purpose of the minister is to minister to you, to teach you to minister to each other and all of us should diligently labor.

Now, I want to say this. Every Christian in here will pass through times of need when they cannot give, they need they need help. But here's something that I always I always check my own life with this.

So it's all right if I tell you to do the same. You be very careful that you don't become a sponge to everybody. Now, please understand me, there are times when all of us have great needs and when we do, that's that's that's what we're here for, is to meet your need at the same time.

Beware that you you'd not become a person who is constantly asking for more help, but rarely able to give any. Maybe that's reflecting something in your life, your personal life that that ought to get right. You see that because there's a sense in which all of us need to be diligently involved.

In helping one another grow in Christ now also look here in chapter five. It says, but we request verse 12, we request you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you. Now.

Here's what he's saying, the minister, the elder is not a person who stands aloof, stands far off and yells directions at everybody. He's not someone who stands in a pulpit and speaks down to the congregation. He is part of the congregation and he is there among them.

Loving them, caring for them, there is one sense in which, yes, he's an elder, he's an authority. There's another sense in which he's a member. And he's with the people, I have known so many pastors in my lifetime that thought it was their responsibility to go from their study to the pulpit and back and no one talked to them.

But that's not what pastoring, that's not what pastoring is. Now, again, when Paul tells a minister to be among the people, he's telling the minister to mimic him. Look for just a minute at chapter two again, where Paul is describing his own ministry.

Verse seven. Paul just wasn't an apostle, he just wasn't a type of prophet and teacher and theologian. But he says this, but we prove to be gentle among you.

Same phrase in the Greek. As a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children, having so fond an affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives because you had become very dear to us. The minister is not just imparting information.

He's imparting his life. He's imparting his life. And I want you to know of all the things that I have done in my life, I think counseling and pastoring have taken the greatest toll when I have done it, taken the greatest toll.

I mean, it seems like you could preach for four hours, but an hour in a counseling chamber or in the office with someone, it just literally, it's not just the impartation of knowledge, it's the impartation of life and it will wear you out. And that's what the elder must do. That's the price of being an elder.

Yet at the same time, all of us should be sensitive to that, should be sensitive to that. OK, all right, well, let's go on. Also, it says in verse 12, it says that, but we appreciate, but we request of you, brother, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you and the Lord have charge over you and the Lord.

So the elder is not just diligently laboring. Among the people, but he has charge over them in the Lord. Now, the phrase have charge over comes from the Greek word pro is the man pro means before and is the man means to stand.

And I think you can figure it out. It means to stand before. To stand before the people as one who leads.

As one who instructs in some context, it can be used as one who rules another context, the one who gives an example, an elder does have authority. And so when an elder speaks, we ought to listen. Now, there's an important phrase here in the Lord that we need to look at.

And what does it mean? First of all, the elder has charge of the congregation in the Lord, which means his authority is divinely appointed. He is God's man. He's God's elder.

He's the one that God has appointed or they are the ones that God has appointed to care for the congregation. You see that now, let me give you the attitude I have about that in anything in which I'm leading. Whether it's being a husband or a father or, you know, directing heart cry or whatever it is, I always say this, this is my attitude.

I go, look, God could have given my wife a better husband than me. But the fact is, he gave her me. God could have given my children a better father than me, but he gave them me.

God could have put a better leader over heart cry, but the fact is, I'm the founder and leader of heart cry. God put me there and therefore I'm not going to act falsely humble. I'm going to do what I have to do.

I'm going to lead. I'm not going to whine about the fact that there are better men. I'm not going to look for anyone to replace me.

And that's the same way with an elder. An elder has to take this authority upon himself in the fear of the Lord and lead. So the authority is divinely appointed, but also the authority is divinely limited.

And this is extremely important. I hear these preachers today, these TV preachers and stuff, they talk about their anointing and their authority and their God's man. And let me share with you something.

First, John says that all believers have been anointed by the Holy Spirit. Secondly, our authority does not come from some special calling. As men of God, as elders.

A person has authority, an elder has authority only to the degree that he teaches and conducts himself and makes decisions in accordance with the word of God. Do you see that? This is so very important. If you ever see a man who gets up in front of the church in his own authority demanding that he be followed, you get out of there really quick.

You're in a cult. Just get out of there. You don't need to be there.

Authority comes from scripture and the scripture also limits authority. And protects us all. Now, here's something, though, that I want to lay on all of you.

Let's go for a moment, just for a moment, to Acts 17. Look at verse 11. We'll start in 10.

The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now, these are apostles. OK, these these guys have authority a lot more than any elder you'll ever meet.

Paul, the apostle, had some serious authority. Now, verse 11. Now, these were more noble minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

They were not taking the apostles word at it. Do you see that? When they were hearing the word, they were going, wow, this seems wonderful. This man really seems to know what he's talking about.

This is indeed good news, but we cannot affirm it and we cannot follow it until we see it in the scriptures. Do you know why most people are deceived by leaders? Because they don't study the word of God. It is the church's responsibility to study the word of God.

Please understand that. It doesn't function if you just have the elder studying the word and everyone following. But each one of us must study the word of God.

Now, there's a third requirement for the elder. It's found in verse 12 also. He says, but we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you and the Lord and give you instruction.

Instruction. Now, the word instruction here, some of you will be familiar with this word, it's new fatale, you've probably heard of new fetic counseling, new fatale noose, meaning mind and tithami, meaning place or put to place or put to put something in the mind. Do you see that? So when we are instructing or when an elder is instructing, he is putting something in your mind.

And that right there ought to tell you that's a good reason to study the scriptures yourself, to be able to judge what's putting in what's being put in to your mind. But now this word new fatale is means much more than instruction. It carries with it all also the idea of exhortation, admonishment and warning, and it can even be rather aggressive, such as telling you, look, you're dead wrong.

And you need to stop right now. And if you don't stop right now, you're going to do yourself and your family some great damage. Do you see that? So when it talks about the elder giving instruction, you need to realize that's what he has to do, that's his job.

Now, I've heard a lot of people like a lot of parents, they'll say we don't we don't discipline our children because we just love them too much. The Bible says it's just the opposite. You don't discipline your children because you love you and you want your children to love you.

You want them to like you. And if you discipline them, they won't like you. Well, I hear a lot of preachers say, why don't I just don't preach those hard things because I just preach the love of God.

No, sir, you're a coward. And you desire for people just to like you or maybe you're protecting your job. But I want to tell you something, if a man truly loves you.

Well, the man who loves you most is the man who's going to tell you the most truth. Even if it makes you angry. You see, I am constantly in need of the word of God correcting me.

Admonishing me, exhorting me, warning me, I'm also in need of that for my brothers and sisters in Christ who are around me, I'm in need of that from my wife. You see, we need each other doing these kinds of things. Now, let me say something just for a minute about preaching that's so important.

If preaching is dangerous, teaching is dangerous. Did you know that it's dangerous for everybody? If if the elder preaches something that's not true, it's dangerous for him, isn't it? Because one day you'll stand before God and be judged. But it's also dangerous for you if you follow it, because you're following something that's not true, you're basing your life on something that is sand and not a rock.

But also, you need to realize this, if the elder preaches what is true, it's dangerous. It's very dangerous, it's dangerous for you, why? Because you'll be held accountable for what you hear and not just what you hear, but how you responded to what you hear. Bad preaching is dangerous, good preaching is dangerous, but good preaching, according to the scriptures, obeyed leads to life.

Leads to life now. Now we're going to look for a minute at the responsibility of the church as the responsibility of all of us to our elder and in the future elders. Let's look in verse 12 again.

But we request you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you. Now, the word appreciate here is really not what I was expecting in the Greek text. I was expecting some really flamboyant word.

But the fact is, it's just the word Oida and the simple. Translation of Oida is know them literally that, you know, those who diligently labor among you, but in the original languages, context always influences the meaning. And so the idea here is not just that you know who they are, but you recognize them.

That's the idea being taught. You recognize who they are. You recognize the caliber of man that they are, you recognize the hard work that they're doing on behalf of you and your family, you recognize the sacrifices that are being made and you respond accordingly.

With appreciation. With respect. With honor.

Now, I want to. Say something that's very important here, and that is this not so much in this culture, because in our culture, we've almost learned not to honor anybody. But in many cultures around the world, especially, for example, when I'm I'm with the Chinese or when I'm over in India, there's something that that remains in those cultures that I think is good, and that is this a sense of respect for someone who's older.

And oftentimes the elders are older, but that's not always the case. Many times the elder may be younger than you. Anthony's a lot younger than I am.

All right, but now I want us to go for just really quickly go to First Timothy, Chapter four, verse 12. It says to Timothy, Paul is writing to Timothy and he says, let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe now. Why should we respect someone? Well, we should respect someone just because they're older, even if they're a fool.

Really, we should rise up in the presence of the gray headed man. See that in the law, there is a sense in which we should respect those who are older than us. But when it comes to elders, we respect them.

Not because they're older, they might they may be younger, but we respect them for the character that they've manifested. And Paul says that here, he says, speech, conduct, love, faith, purity. Are they showing themselves as an example in those things? And if they are, then respect.

Now. I was out in I've been out to California several times at Grace Community and and out there at the Shepherds Conference and things like that, and it would really bother me. I mean, if I talked to Dr. MacArthur, I would say, Dr. MacArthur.

But I'd hear the students walking around, go, Pastor John. And one day I said, why do you call him Pastor John? I mean, I'm 53 years old, I call him Dr. MacArthur. And he said, well, because Dr. MacArthur told us

we could call him Pastor John.

And well, that's all right then. So, you know, if the elder says, just call me Joe. Well, that's fine.

You don't have to give him some special title at the same time. Realize this. He's different.

And I want you to acknowledge that and I want you to know that. All believers should be treated with dignity, we see that in the scriptures, but when it comes to an elder, he's different. Because of not because of his position as much as the character that made him qualified to be an elder and the service that he's given.

OK, this is very, very important. So young guys, especially those of us who may be around the elders more, we need to be very careful. Yeah, but he's different.

And show, show respect, and I love the way all of you are nodding your head, so praise the Lord, because we should now. So we are to appreciate, but then he goes on and I want us to look in verse 13 also and that you esteem them very highly in love. You esteem them very highly.

Now, the word esteem is not really a special word. It kind of means to. Well, let's put it in kind of Virginia country slang.

It means to reckon. I reckon that's a good fella. It means to count, it means to think, it means to regard, and in all that it means to esteem.

What you do is you're looking at that person and you're calculating and saying, yes, they're worth they have worth. They are worthy of being esteemed. Now, it's not only says esteem.

Look here in our text, it says very highly. Now, this is a word in Greek that just kind of it's very unusual. Why? You know what a compound word is, right? Usually it's two words kind of put together.

Well, this one is three words put together and it really comes out to a strange word. Let me see if I can give you the correct pronunciation. Uper ex perissos.

Now, uper means over or beyond and ex means out of and perissos means abundantly. And when you put it all together, this is what it's saying. Esteem him above abundantly, esteem him very high, esteem him most highly, esteem him beyond measure, esteem him exceedingly.

That's that's what it means. Now, we all know men are men. We all know even the man that's worthy of most esteem is capable of failure.

We're not talking about following men. Because as the elders hold us accountable through preaching and teaching, we also hold the elders accountable by reading our own Bibles and speaking with them also. But know this, the scriptures do command us to esteem them very highly.

Now, look at the phrase. It says esteem them very highly in love. Why is that important? Esteem them according to the love.

That you have for them. And not because you've held them up to an almost unattainable standard and they've met that standard, don't do that. I've heard people say, I don't esteem that person because they failed me.

And whom have you not failed? For someone to be esteemed, it doesn't mean that they're perfect, it doesn't mean that they will never drop the ball. The only one who never drops the ball is Jesus Christ, our Lord. The rest of us, we got butter on our hands.

But you look at the whole trend of a man's life, you look at what he's trying to do, you look at the integrity that's there, you look at the achievements made in character and you esteem them again, not because you've held them up to some unattainable standard, but because you've watched them give their life away for the sake of the congregation. So we do it in love because we love them. OK, all right.

Let's look at another text, First Timothy 5:17, just turn there for a second. And it says the elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. Worthy of double honor.

Now, we're not going to get into all the things that that does mean or could mean, but just know this. And really, I want you to take this as something that it doesn't scare you the next time you talk to one of the elders, but it is in the back of your head. Hold it.

I'm from a culture that really doesn't esteem, really doesn't honor. And really doesn't appreciate. And I'm going to break out of that mold and I'm going to show appreciation.

I'm going to give honor. I'm going to show preference, OK, as I said, it's always good that a man like me can preach this because it's really uncomfortable for an elder to get up to do something like this. But it's true.

I'm saying it because it's in the Bible. You can see it. There it is.

There it is. OK, now let's look at the motivation for doing this in verse 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. That's one of the reasons you esteem them because of their work.

You know, it's like the elder gets up in the morning and is going out the door and is, you know. You know, most guys say, hey, honey, I'm off to the factory or hey, honey, I'm off to the office. The elder basically says, hey, honey, I'm off to fight the ruler of the prince of the power of the air.

I'm off to fight hell. I'm going to take the whole world on today. Do you see? It is a difficult task.

It's a very difficult task, and the man is in the crosshairs. And he's always got to fight battles, and the more responsibility a man is given, the more battles there will be. And so you ought to esteem the elder for the sake of the work that he's doing.

It is a difficult work. Difficult. It's.

Now, let's look at another reason, because it's the will of God. Look at the first phrase in in verse 12. But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you.

Request. You think that Paul is just kind of maybe saying, well, I requested. No, it's also carries with it the idea of I beseech you.

I urge you because this is right. This is what you should do. OK.

He's urging you to come on now, pick this up. This is a part of what you need to be doing as a congregation. Now, let's go on and look at verse 13.

It says the last phrase, it says, live in peace with one another. Now, since we've just got through talking about the relationship between elders and the congregation, most commentary writers believe this is kind of talking about the same thing, that there should be peace between the leadership and the congregation. And the more that the leadership understands the frightful, terrible responsibility that it has and how it will be held accountable on the day of judgment, and the more the congregation appreciates the sacrifice of the leadership, the more peace there's going to be among them.

And I want to just give two things here. First of all, leaders are to guard against abusing their authority and exasperating the congregation. I have seen this in my 30 years of ministry quite often.

Elders abusing their authority and it's wrong and it's dangerous. And on the day of judgment, well, let me put it this way. You go back into the prophets of the Old Testament, especially look at Ezekiel, where the leaders were abusing God's sheep and God says some terrible things about what he's going to do to those people.

If you're a young man and one day you end up being an elder or positioned in the church, you need to realize you do it with fear and trembling because you're going to be held accountable on the day of judgment if you've abused your authority. But also know this, you're going to be held accountable on the day of judgment if you were fearful and did not exercise your authority. And that's the same way in the household for men.

If you've been abusive to your wife and not an exercise, too much authority and in a wrong manner, you will be held accountable. But also, if you have not led your home. You will be held accountable.

For simply hiding your head in the sand, and so there's great responsibility, I just want to read a text to you, it's in first Peter five, two and three, it's a shepherd, the flock of God among you exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily according to the will of God and not for sword gain, but with eagerness, nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples of the flock. And there's several sermons right there. But at least you get the idea that the elder is to lead.

He really is. And he really has authority, but he does it cautiously. He does it biblically.

And first of all, he does it as an example. Now, let's go on, the congregation should not disdain or disregard those who are over them in the Lord. Now, honestly.

You know, people have said that in America, the theology of the American evangelical is something like this, that Jesus Christ is the only all sovereign Lord who can't tell anybody what to do. And that filters down, doesn't it? No one's going to tell me what to do. Well, you know, as Paul used himself as an example, I can use myself as an example.

I've gone to our elders many times and said, is there anything you want me to do? What do you want me to do? How do you want me to do it? OK, I want to know why, because they're the ones that have to care for this church above me. Do you understand? So I want to know, what do you want from me? How can I help you? What do you think I should do here? Even in the mission? I've been running the mission for 20 some years. I go to the elder.

What do you think we ought to do here? Why? Because I appreciate God's put this person here and it's for my care. Do you see that? And all of us should have that attitude, should have that attitude. Such great counsel can be gleaned because no one's going to Lord anything over you, but hopefully tell you the scriptures.

I want you to listen to Hebrews 13, 17. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Let me just say this on way of passing. You know what? Almost every minister knows when someone calls them up, they want counseling. When someone wants counseling, basically what they want is this.

They want to come in and tell the leader what they've already decided to do and they want the leader to affirm it. That's not counseling. Hopefully that will be the case, but that's not why you go.

You should want to hear not what this leader has in all his tremendous wisdom. No. But what does the word of God say with regard to this particular situation? And also, let me say again, I have known people who have abused their authority.

And I pray for them because it will be terrifying on the day of judgment to stand before the Lord, knowing that you used God's sheep for some vision or some purpose of your own. Now, let's go on looking 14 and 15, we'll try to hurry through this. He says, we urge you, brethren.

Now, look, he's urging us, all of us, the congregation to do certain things. Admonish the unruly, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 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.

Now here we're seeing Ephesians four all over again. We've seen it a couple of times. I've addressed it where Paul would teach the congregation something and then he would say, now go comfort one another with these words.

Now, just back up for just a second. Maybe you don't understand what I say by this is Ephesians four. But look at Ephesians four for a moment.

And look what it says, Ephesians 4, 11, and he gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping. Why did he give them for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ? Paul has just told us what the elders are to do, what the congregation is to do with regard to the elder. And then he's going to turn around and say, now, listen, the purpose of leadership is so that you will learn how to minister so that you, each individual member of the body of Christ in the local church, that you will do certain things.

And now what are those certain things that we ought to be doing now? I'm going to give you these, but with a great deal of care and concern, why? This is not he is not giving you the right with this passage to be a little Nazi spy who runs around trying to pick faults out in everybody else's eye. You understand me? He's not asking you to go around judging the rest of the congregation. He's not asking you to be the Gestapo.

And if you're going to participate in these things, you need some wisdom. And not only do you need wisdom, you need mercy. You need love, and maybe most of all, you need a really big mirror and you

need to look in it a lot.

Because the more you look in that mirror and the more you see your own faults, the more gently, tenderly and carefully you're going to deal with the fault of others. And sometimes you're just not going to do anything because the wisest thing you can do is keep your big mouth shut. Also, let me give you just another idea, don't talk to anybody unless you've talked to God about them first.

I always tell young prophets this, guys coming in, you know, God, I have guys walk up to me all the time, Brother Paul, you know, God, yeah, I'm like you. God's called me to be a prophet. God's I say, really? They go, yeah, I go roll up your pant legs.

What? Roll up your pant legs. I want to see if your knees are bleeding, because if they're not bleeding, you have no right to stand before God's people. As someone who is going to admonish them.

Say hard words to them, break them, cut them and hopefully hopefully turn them back to God, you say, so be very careful. This is not giving everybody a license to just go out there and correct the world. All right.

So but let's look. First of all, he says admonish the unruly new detail. It's the same word used with regard to the elder, to the congregation that we are to be able to instruct each other.

Now, if someone asks you a question, hopefully you won't tell them something your grandmother told you. Hopefully you will open up your Bible and here's a good rule. Never new detail, never counsel anybody unless you can do it by pointing them to the text.

Isn't that a good idea? That sure keep us silent, wouldn't it? It also keep us out of danger because even you will stand before God one day with regard to how you taught other believers. Now, now he says to admonish the unruly. Attacos is the word.

And what does it mean? It means the people who are out of order, out of place, undisciplined and slothful. OK, this was always a problem in the New Testament. They're they're out of order, they're not in their right place.

They're doing things they shouldn't be doing or they're not doing things they should be doing, they're undisciplined, they can't discipline their life. They're slothful. Now, Thayer, who's a really great lexicologist, he says this, he uses it in three ways.

First of all, it was used of soldiers marching out of order or quitting the ranks. You know, everybody's marching this way and there's one soldier just kind of going this way. Or someone who just quits all the time.

He said admonish people like that need admonishment and there are believers and all of us sometimes get out of order. I've had people say, Paul Washer, you're out of order. And they were right.

I've also at times wanted to just flat out quit the ranks. And someone comes along, says, you can't do that. You can't do that.

I remember one time my wife was counseling someone and a lot of ladies had gone and visited this lady and her husband had left her and she was there with just these children and she was depressed and she was in bed and everybody would go to her and fix meals for her and try to care for her and watch over her and soothe her. And one day my wife looked at me and she just said, I've had enough of this. And she

went over to that lady's bedroom and she said, sister, get up.

Get up, you got three children, they're hungry, they're dirty and they need a mother to take care of them. You don't have the luxury of being depressed. Get up.

See, sometimes people need that. We all need it sometimes. We truly, truly do.

So it says admonish the unruly, it can mean a soldier marching out of order, quitting the ranks, those who are neglectful in their duties and those who are just lawless. They live as though God had never given them a command or a law to obey. They need to be admonished, which means instruction with exhortation.

All right, and with warning. Warning, the New Testament is full of warning signs and they need to be pointed out to us now. Also, it says, encourage the faint hearted.

God is so wise because every person needs to be treated differently. Some people, I don't want to say it, but I have to say it this way. Some people just need a kick in the pants, don't they? But other people don't need a kick in the pants.

They're so fragile. They're so broken. And so Paul deals with that now.

He says, encourage the faint hearted, verse 14. The word encourages part of my and it means this part means beside and mythos means to speak or speech or story. It's someone who comes alongside and speaks to a person, speaks to them.

Now, mounts defines it this way to exercise a gentle influence by words to soothe, comfort and console. Sometimes that's what people need. And that's why we need a great deal of wisdom, don't we? And then Thayer defines it this way, to calm and console and to also give incentive.

Sometimes people say, I can't go on. And you need to just grab him up by the collar and say, you got to go on. But sometimes people say, I can't go on.

And you need to be very careful. Very cautious. Give them incentive, help them.

This was the word used when the Jews came to Mary and Martha and consoled them over the death of their brother. You see now who should be receiving this kind of encouragement, he says, the faint hearted. Now, this is a really neat word in Greek.

It is Oligos Soutos. And what does it mean? Oligos. Now, this is very good.

Listen, this Oligos means few, little or small. And souke is soul. They're like a little small soul, they've become withered.

Withdrawn, it's the difference, I guess the other side of that would be like Greatheart, the evangelist in Pilgrim's Progress, you know, someone who's just mighty and bold at heart, ready to take on anything. But this person, either because of their own timidity or because of things that have happened to them, their soul has become small, their strength has become weak, their breath is limited. They can barely breathe and they need encouragement.

Now, then he says in verse 14, help the weak, help the weak. OK, this is not just with words, not just soothing, but actually helping them through their problem. Well, let's look at this.

The word help comes from the Greek word antecho, and it means to hold firmly to something, to grasp something tightly like you would maybe the pulpit of a ship if it was about to go down or or maybe in a great storm you would hold tightly to a tree. Or if someone was falling off of a building and you grabbed their arm and you held tightly, knowing that if you let go, they're going to die. That's the idea.

Mount says to hold firmly, to cling or adhere to to be devoted to anyone. So it's an idea that you're devoted to other believers to the point where you're going to hold on to them. You're not going to let them go.

You're just not it's not an option, you say. This word is used in Luke 16, 13 in a different way, but it gives us kind of an understanding of what it means. It says no servant can conserve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other or else he will be devoted.

Grabbing a hold of the word is antecho, grabbing a hold of the one and despising the other. So it's this devotion to a thing that causes you to hold on to it like a miserly greedy man holds on to money. But this is you're holding on to a person because you're so devoted to them that though they are weak, you're not going to let them go.

You see, you're not going to let them go now, I think it's interesting, this word is also used in Titus one nine in this way. Holding fast, that's the word holding fast, the faithful word, which is in accordance with the teaching so that he will be able to both exhort and sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. Sorry about those who qualify as an elder.

And it says that they must hold fast to the faithful word in order to teach it. So in one way, I want you to look at this in our devotion to a person. We hold fast to them and we don't let them go, we hold fast to the word of God like this, because really, you and I have no strength to help them.

Our wisdoms help them, but we hold fast to the word of God so that we can communicate God's truth to them. That's one of the greatest ways that we can help the weak brother and sister, listen to me. Sympathy.

Compassion, feelings, they're all wonderful, but they only go so far. What do people need? They need the word, don't they? They need God's promises, don't they? So if you want to be a compassionate person, you not only need to hold on to people, you need to hold on to the word so that you can actually help them. Now, the word weak.

As thin as our meaning, no, it's thinness, meaning strength, no strength. And here's what I want you to say. All of us should be able to identify with this person.

All of us, all of us have passed through times when we simply had no strength. I can't tell you how many times I've told my own wife, I just have no strength to go on. And she always tells me, you don't have an option, get up.

No strength, all of us have been there, so when someone comes to us and says, I just don't have any strength to go on, listen before you criticize, listen before you judge and listen before you give them a kick in the pants, because then maybe that's not what they need. You remember what the Bible says about us? Let me read something to you. For while we were still helpless, as thinness, at the right time, Christ died

for the ungodly.

We were helpless, all of us. So when we meet unbelievers who are helpless, we just need to look at them and say, man, when I look at you, I see myself in the mirror, but I know someone who can help you. Or when we see believers who are helpless.

Yes, we need to listen really carefully because they may be having a pity party and they may need to be admonished, but before you make that judgment, you better listen very carefully because they may just need to be helped. You see now it says, and be patient with everyone. Verse 14, patience.

Macro, female, it means to persevere, to be patient, to be long suffering. One Greek scholar defines it this way, to demonstrate patience despite difficulties. Thayer, the lexicologist, says this, to be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of another, to be mild and slow and avenging, to be long suffering, slow to anger, slow to punishment.

Now, I've heard people say, man, it's so difficult to be patient with that person. I mean, they just I've got one last nerve and they get on it every time. Well, it's not patience if everybody's nice to you.

It's not patience if everybody gets it right the first time, you don't need patience. Patience only comes into play when you're dealing with people who are not only weak, but they're just like you. Isn't it amazing how patient we'll be with ourselves and how much we lack patience with others? You see, anybody can do it for a while.

It's doing it for the long haul, it's just like marriage, it's like romance, just anything, whether it's discipline for a sport or wanting to seek to be, you know, a doctor or lawyer or something at school, anyone can start off out of the blocks. But man, to keep going, that's the difference. And in this case, it's keep going with someone else.

Chato and I, when we were in Peru years ago, working and planting a church, there was this young man who came. He was probably in his 30s. He acted like a child.

His mother had spoiled him his entire life because he did have certain limitations mentally. And literally, I almost prayed at times, Lord, don't let him show up for the Bible study because he just ruins everything. And it really he made it hard.

But gradually, gradually, Chato and I began to see that God was doing something. And then one day this guy gets miraculously saved and became one of the greatest blessings in that Bible study and in the church. Patience, patience.

You say, what's so long? Yes, what patience is about, if it's not long, you can't call it patience. It's being patient with other people like the Lord who is slow. Not wanting for anyone to be lost, patient now.

Now, it says in verse 15, see to it that no one repays evil for evil. And in order to deal with this just quickly, I want you to go, I'm going to pass over some things, but just run over to Matthew five for a second and look at 43. It says, do not repay anyone evil for evil.

And he says in 43 chapter five, you have heard that it was said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven. And for he causes his son to rise on the evil and the good and sends

rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same. Therefore, you are to be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. Heard someone give this counsel one time.

This man said to this counselor, very wise man said, I just can't love my wife. And he said, well, sir, are you a Christian? Yes, I'm a Christian, but I just can't love my wife. Are you telling me you can't love your wife? Is she a believer? Well, she's a believer, but I just can't love her anymore.

OK, can you love her as a wife? He said, no, that's what I've been telling you. OK. Can you love her as.

A believer. In Christ. Well, I have to, don't I? This will let me ask you this question, can you love her as an enemy? Because even as an enemy, you're required to love her, do you see that? You're required to love, period, you're required not to repay evil for evil.

Period. It's not like one of my cousins one time we were little boys and we were in this youth camp and someone asked him, you know, can anyone quote a verse? And he stood up and said, yeah, Jesus said, do unto others before they do it unto you. I never forget that we're all like eight years old, I never forget that.

No, that's not it. That's Wall Street. That's not Christianity.

You don't have that option now. Finally, he says, see to it that everyone seeks after that which is good for one another and for all people, for one another. That's believers.

And then for everyone else, those who are not believers, that just includes everybody, doesn't it? Now, the word seek here, Dioco, is very interesting word because it means to pursue something. But you also know that it has the idea of almost a violence in it. The idea of pressing on and even the idea of persecuting.

It's the word used when Paul says he's persecuted. So it means to go after something or go after someone. One Greek scholar defines it this way, to move quickly and energetically towards some objective, to hasten, to run, to press forward, to press on.

Now, remember, Paul, what he said in Philippians, that he had not attained what he needed to attain. But what did he do? He pressed on. He pressed on to conformity to Christ.

He pressed on violently, vicious. I mean, like Jacob wrestling with the angel in Peniel. I will not let you go.

I must have conformity to Christ. I must be everything that I should be in Christ. I want to honor Christ.

I'm going to give all my energy, every fiber of my body to that. Well, that's the same word. And so the idea here is that we should press on.

We should use our energy, our resources, our talents, every fiber of our being to do what? To seek the good of one another as a congregation and then anyone else outside of this congregation, which includes other congregations. We should be praying for them, blessing them. And includes even those in this community who may hate Christianity, we should seek out their good and we should be full of zeal.

Now, what is the good that we should seek for them? Well, what is the greatest good? According to Romans eight, the greatest good is conformity to the image of Christ. That's what our great desire should be, that our wives, our husbands, our children, our brothers and sisters in Christ, our friends, our enemies, everyone become reconciled with God and conform to the image of Christ. But it doesn't stop there.

It can also mean other things, and I'm going to finish by just reading this text. First, John 3, 17 and 18. But whoever has the world's good and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but indeed in truth.

I remember years ago I was up in a village in Peru called Pacaipampa and I was sitting on a dirt road there in the village. And there were a couple of pastors right in front of me. We're just sitting in the road.

It was a dirt road. There weren't any cars get run over by a mule, maybe. And this little girl comes limping by and her leg, right leg, I think it was stopped at the knee and her foot came out of her knee and she had nothing else.

And she had a tree limb that was divided like this. It had a Y in it and a piece of rubber here. And she'd put her leg right in that rubber thing and she would walk.

And and I said, what's going on there? And they said, well, she was born this way. She really suffers and everything. And I thought, well, brothers, let's pray.

And soon as I said, brothers, let's pray. It was like. I mean, I didn't hear a voice, I couldn't pray, I don't want you praying.

We prayed about there's nothing to pray about. Go back to Lima, find a doctor, fix her leg. You don't need to pray.

You need to talk to me, you just need to get up, go back to Lima, find a doctor and fix her leg. So what do we do? Went back to Lima, found a doctor and fixed her leg. So, you know, be careful, it's not just the spiritual, it is primarily the spiritual.

But it's other things also. All right, let's pray.

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