

1Thessalonians 12-06-15a

This is Friday, the 15th of June, 2012. We continue our study in the book of 1 Thessalonians. We're in chapter five, and we pick up tonight in verse 14.

We'll take a moment at the beginning to go to the Lord in prayer and dive straight into our passage. Shall we pray? Father, what a blessing it is to see as we look back over this preceding week, the many ways you have expressed your grace and your faithfulness to us, hearing and answering our prayers, watching over us, giving us opportunities to apply and to meditate on the things that we have learned from your word. We thank you for the passage that is before us this evening.

We ask your blessing on it as we study it together. May each of us be edified and encouraged and be equipped and enabled to be a blessing to each other and to our community and the world in which we live, that we can shine as lights. Although our generation is perverse, we are here as representatives of the Lord Jesus, and we thank you for that privilege.

We pray that your Holy Spirit will shine light on these truths so that we can understand them and incorporate them into our thinking and into our faith. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. 1 Thessalonians chapter five, beginning at verse 12.

We urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. This is the section we covered last time.

I'll just point out in quick review that there are two infinitives there that are urged. Urged, he exhorts at the beginning to two things, and this is the parakaleo. This is the, it's a combination of comfort and encouragement.

We encourage you, brethren, to do two things, to recognize and to esteem. You see those two infinitives? You remember the first one, to recognize, is from oida, and it means to know, to know them, to be aware of them, to be able to identify them, to distinguish them in the group. There are some people that God has gifted with that ability, that function, that enablement, and we should know who they are.

It becomes evident over time when there is someone who is laboring and is over you in the Lord in the sense of being able to provide guidance. Many times, these are the older members of a congregation. They've been through more.

They've got life experience. They hopefully have spiritual life experience, and they provide stability, counsel, example, leadership, direction when it comes time to make decisions that affect the group. We ought to know who these people are, and this is largely a function of the evidence of our eyes.

We know people, and it is a reminder that personally, and this is just me, and I've been through the pastor candidating process and so on, but ideally, I think a group, when it looks for a pastor, would look among people they know. I think it's kind of a strange thing to candidate total strangers. Well, this guy's a seminary graduate.

We like the seminary, so we'll see if we like him. He comes and does a couple of guest shots, but the average tenure of pastors in churches has become very short. I think it's between two and three years.

That's the average, which means that probably half of them are not staying that long, and I am one of those guys. I spent less than two years at a church where I went as a stranger and candidated and pastored, and it was a great experience, but I think one of the things that the modern church has lost is knowing those in your midst and trusting God, looking to God to provide the gifts in the group to meet its needs, and to sort of date strangers, and on the basis of two or three contacts, to say, okay, move here with your family and be our pastor. It's done and done successfully, but it's a dicey thing.

This passage suggests that there are those that we can recognize in our midst, and ideally, things are seldom ideal, but ideally, your next generation of teachers and elders will grow within the group, and so long as there is a collection of believers who are of like mind and are co-located and are pursuing the common goal of living a life that pleases God and understanding His truth and fulfilling the one another commands in faith and in hope, we would trust God to provide us leadership, to provide us teaching, to provide us all of the other helpful and necessary gifts, encouragement, music, helps, the training up of little ones, caring for one another, washing the feet of the saints, many different things that have names and don't have names that benefit and bless a group. So this is no small thing. We are encouraged, we are exhorted to know those in our circle of believers, and to recognize particularly those who are laboring, and this isn't necessarily the leadership.

It says, know those who labor in your midst. There are people who are, in many cases, just quietly doing laborious things that are a blessing to everyone in the group. Sometimes it's laboring in prayer.

Sometimes it's laboring in intercession. Sometimes it's laboring in maintenance or preparation or cleanup or aiding in the delivery of materials, whatever it might be. So we should know and we should appreciate.

We should pray for one another. We should thank God for one another because there are those who labor on our behalf in many, many different ways, not just the teaching, not just the leadership, but many ways, and we should be aware. This is part of sensitivity, part of objectivity, looking outside ourselves and saying, who is it that's got a shoulder under this load that I can know and appreciate? And there are some who occupy leadership.

They're over in the sense that they're going to be making decisions and setting priorities and trying to ensure that the goals and things are met over you in the Lord and who admonish you. And we saw this word admonish, which really means to coach, to correct in the sense of positive encouragement to do better. This is *nutheteo*, and we're gonna see that verb again in our next verse.

And it says to esteem them very highly. I didn't really go over the word esteem last time, but this esteem word is the second infinitive, infinitive, to know and to esteem. Well, this is a middle or passive infinitive from *hegeomai*.

We have the English word hegemony, and what does that mean? It means rulership, right? But this is a middle or passive infinitive. So it wouldn't mean to rule, that would be active. It would mean to be ruled if it was passive, right? To be ruled, but it doesn't make sense to be ruled very highly in love or to be ruled greatly in love.

It doesn't quite catch it. And we know from other passages that *hegeomai*, when it gets into the middle voice, means to create a rule for yourself. It comes to mean to regard a thing or to decide a thing.

Paul and Peter both will, you remember when Peter was saying, I thought it would be a good idea to write you about these things again. I thought it good to review it. Well, when he says, I thought it good, it's *hegeomai*.

I regard it as good. I have decided that it is good. I rule for myself.

I've made a ruling in my own mind about this is what it comes to mean. It's a not so much rulership as a ruling. I've made a ruling in my mind.

And so this is the idea. You decide on an attitude toward these people. It's not so much esteem in the sense of, well, I've got to praise, laud and honor this person.

It means when I know that there's someone in the group that God has entrusted with oversight, with responsibility or accountability for things, I am going to make a ruling in my mind that they should be respected. That should be kept in mind. Very much so.

The next word doesn't so much mean very highly as it just emphasizes whatever the verb is, greatly. Regard them greatly in love for their work sake. And what this means is when you recognize that there are whatever you want to call them, key players, people upon whom things depend in the group, in the circle of believers, you regard them in love.

If you regard someone in love, what do you do? Well, you try not to undermine them. You try not to belittle them or backbite them or nip at their ankles. You want to pray for them.

You want to try to support them. You'll try to be a positive and not a negative, recognizing that

their work is something God wants done. And so we might set aside minor quibbles.

We might, in other circumstances, we might make some bones. We might pick knits. We might have a little issue here or there, but we say, you know, it's not worth it here.

The welfare of our group of believers is more important. And this is someone that God is obviously using for these important functions of work and leadership. And so I'm going to regard them for the work sake.

I'm going to be quiet. I'm going to support them. I'm going to suppress these little tendentious, possibly divisive ideas and thoughts and words for the work's sake.

There's something bigger going on than dotting every I and crossing every T or this personality issue or this minor oversight or slide or whatever it might be. The work is the important thing. So it's a great salve.

It is a great healing presence to reduce friction and to ease the movement of the important working parts that God has put into a group. It's just lubrication. It eases the stickiness and the potential for jerky movement and so on.

It's just like a well-oiled clock. Some of the gears that are closest to the main spring have got a lot of pressure. You want to be sure that they're lubricated.

You don't want to be somebody that's sucking all the oil out of it and making it overheat and get sticky and cause problems. That's the idea of this verse. And it's important because, look at what we get into tonight in the next verse.

Verse 14, now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. This is classic Apostle Paul, where he'll give a series that's got a verb and an object. And so, it says, now we exhort you.

And the word that we had had up above, when he said, we urge you, brethren, remember that up in verse 12? We urge you to know those who labor among you. This was *erotao*. Remember, it was like the hortatory idea, the encouragement, the let's all get on board idea.

There's the exhortation, the co-hortative, let's do this together. The hortatory idea is to try to motivate people in a certain direction. This now, in verse 14, is *parakaleo*, the very word that's used for the Holy Spirit.

We encourage you, brethren. Then it says, warn those who are unruly. Warn is a really interesting word because it is the same word we had in the preceding verse, *nuthateo*.

Remember when it said, those who are over you in the Lord and admonish you? But we saw that it's really, they're coaching you. They're pointing out where your technique is off, your form is off,

where it's not as smooth and as effective as it could be, and they're coaching. Nuthateo is a, you can sort of see the idea of noose in there.

You're thinking about it, you're analyzing it, you're finding ways to make it better, improving, those who are trying to improve what's going on. It's an improvement. And so now you've got, he said, regard the ones who are doing this for you, and now you can do this for others.

You can look around and coach, help to improve those who are unruly. You say, ah, these unruly rascals, I'm gonna improve them. I'm gonna coach them back into ruliness instead of unruliness.

But there's kind of a misunderstanding about the word in Greek behind unruly. This is a-tactus. It's got an alpha privative, and then you've got this, and there's a verb that goes along with it, a-tacteo.

And you think about tactics, and you think about things that are lined up. And so they think, well, the tacto idea is orderly, and a-tacto, a-tacteo, a-tactus, this would be out of order, out of line, literally, those who are out of line. Well, it can have that meaning, but the way Paul uses it both here, and we'll see it again in 2 Thessalonians, it means out of order or out of line in a particular area, not just any old, not out of line, well, your manners are bad, or out of line, you dressed the wrong way, or out of line, you said or did the wrong thing.

There's a specific area where this word is typically applied and it is the lining up with expectations of work. It, a-tactus means idle, means not pitching in, not helping, not being a part of the effort. It isn't just soldiers marching that you're out of line with, it is soldiers accomplishing a mission that you are not a part of.

Lieutenant says, okay, men take the hill, and you're kind of sitting there picking a piece of grass out of the bolt of your rifle that you just dropped because you're not really with it, you're not playing the game, you're not a part of the effort, you're disconnected, you're disaffected, you're not, you haven't caught the spirit of the thing, you're not motivated in the direction of the goal, you're a-tactus, and so what Paul says here is, we encourage you, we parakaleo you, and notice once again, it's brethren, this is all within the household of faith, just like it was in verse 12. We neuthateo you, Adelphoi. We hortatory you, we cohort you, we urge you, we want to motivate you, brethren.

And then here, we encourage you, brethren. It's all in the household of faith, that we try this out, we learn how to do this amongst ourselves first. So, we encourage you, brethren, to coach, to help those who aren't doing it right in a positive way.

This isn't the correct rebuke, chastise, reprimand, climb all over and tear shingles off. This is someone who is showing you a better way. Sometimes this is by example, sometimes it is by a careful, humble presentation of an opportunity, an invitation.

I'm about to do this, would you like to come help me? And in the help, they learn how to do it a better way or the right way. You find positive ways to, coach is really a good translation for neuthateo. It is a, this is your personal trainer, this is your guide, this is your, I wouldn't want to say mentor, but someone who is really going to help you.

If you enter a new kind of a hobby or a club or something, a lot of times you get a sponsor, somebody who's already in, already knows how to do it. They kind of show you the ropes, they can, you know, you kind of shadow them and watch how they do it. And you get initiated into the mysteries of this particular area of expertise.

That's what neuthateo is. It has a positive connotation. So he said, Warren is kind of like, well, I'm going to go around and put a thing under your windshield wiper.

Hey, you know, don't park here. What's the matter with you? And it's really got a much more positive idea. So coach or assist with helpful suggestion or advice, those who are idle, those who are unemployed or underemployed.

And we're talking about the opportunities that are a part of being in the brethren. We're making a bunch of food for somebody that's unable to do for themselves. Would you like to make a salad? Would you like to contribute a jello? Or, you know, can you bring a jug of water? You know, something that's within their capability, but you find ways to engage people and bring them along.

Encourage them not to be an inactive. And by the way, this is an interesting insight into the way church is supposed to work. The fellowship and body of believers is supposed to work.

Everyone is engaged. Everyone has a part. Everyone, we don't have people that are just riding along, freeloading in the spiritual sense.

If you're a healthy part of a fellowship, you find a way to contribute. It's, there's always something. And that's the beauty, by the way, of a small group is that you don't wind up in little eddies and backwaters where, well, it's such a big building and we've got so many hundreds of people coming that it's easy to just show up, sit, soak, sour, salivate, surrender, and, you know, send yourself away.

You just, there's, you find a way to contribute. But what it says is the believers who are busy and who are engaged should find ways to encourage those who are not to join in. Find a way to be a help.

Find something you can do. Do not be an inactive part of a Christian fellowship. Everybody can do something.

If you, you can always pray, you can intercede, you can lift up holy hands in prayer, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. You can look around. There are always

opportunities.

And we have this encouragement to not only look for these things ourselves, but to be a positive influence on each other. You know, it says, when you get together, let each one have a psalm, a hymn, or a spiritual song. Well, when Brother Matt stands up and says, anybody got a hymn? You can do that.

Think ahead, grab the hymnal, get online, go to, you know, hymnals.com or whatever it is. Find a good hymn. Hopefully one that we've got a familiarity with the tune so that we can heist the thing properly.

But think about where we are in the passage. This is what Dan does every week. He not only prepares music, but he knows where we are in our studies.

He finds, he and his family, I think, together. And it's an enjoyable thing. But if you ever notice how harmonious and how supplementary and complementary the music is to our studies, there's thought that goes into that.

And it's sort of an unheralded, unrecognized, wonderful contribution to our fellowship. Everybody can do that. The Bible says, let each one have.

So if you're motivated, if you'd like to contribute, that's a thing you can do. Think up a good hymn. Have something you can put your hand up over on Sunday.

It's an easy thing. It's a matter of looking. And I just use that as an example.

But there are many, many things. Look around. Everybody has their ups and downs.

We can mutually support one another. Who better than your brothers and sisters in Christ to entrust with these things where we can all be a blessing? So that's in here. When it says, coach those who aren't currently engaged, who are idle, who are underemployed, who are unemployed, who maybe they just really haven't figured out what they can do.

Well, if they're sitting next to you, say, hey, would you mind helping me with this? Bring them in, bring them along. The next imperative here, and these are imperatives, by the way, is comfort the faint-hearted. Comfort is *paramutheomai*.

Paramutheomai, and you love these O-M-A-I words, the O-M-A-I endings on verbs, because this is sort of a middle-in-form, active-in-meaning idea, but it means that you are involved in this. This is not just I hit the ball with your direct object and hit is the verb. These middle-in-form verbs emphasize that the subject is engaged in this.

There's a part of the subject that is actively involved and may even get benefit from it. I do this and I benefit. In whatever I'm doing.

And paramutheomai has, notice para, that's alongside, right, like parallel. And the idea here is of consoling or cheering up someone. When Lazarus died in John chapter 11, two or three times in John 11, it says that there was a crowd of people who were there to paramutheomai the sisters, Mary and Martha.

And it says they were mourning, they were comforting, but they're just there for support. Normally, Martha's in the kitchen, Mary's at the feet of Jesus. Well, their brother has died, and so there's probably someone else in the kitchen.

There's someone else making sure there are groceries, that they're just a shoulder to cry on, and someone to reminisce about Lazarus in his younger days and some of his funny quirks or whatever it might be. Something to take their mind off their bereavement a bit, or to console, just to be there as a presence. Sometimes you can do more comforting without saying anything.

But not leave people for their mind to run down a bad road, like, oh, the man is gone, how are we gonna provide? Where's the money gonna come from? And this sort of thing. Whatever it may be. But that's the, just when you think paramutheomai, think about all of those people in the community who gathered around these ladies when their brother passed away.

Fainthearted is a really interesting word, and this is the last word we'll be able to cover before the break. See if you can figure out the meaning of this word from its construction. Oligo-psyche.

Oligo-psyche. Oligo-psuche. Oligo-psuchos.

You ever heard of an oligarchy? You know what a monarchy is, right? Mono is one and archy is ruling. One guy ruling, monarch, right? He's the mon-arch, the one king. What's an oligarchy? It's the rule of the little people.

Oligos means little. Oligos means small, few, not much. Just a pinch, just a dash.

Just a little bit. So what would oligosuche be? My soul has shriveled. My soul is little.

My soul is small. I'm small-souled. Doesn't mean little feet.

Means my soul is shrunk. My soul doesn't have much. It's deflated.

It's down. And soul in the sense of application and expression, when people are bereaved, when they are overwhelmed, it's like your soul isn't big enough for the challenge, for the test. You know, it says another place, who is sufficient for these things? Many times and in many different ways, we can come up to a situation or a circumstance and just feel insufficient.

I'm too small for this. My soul doesn't have what it takes to deal with this. Small soul is literally what faint-hearted, and faint-hearted is not bad, but I don't know.

Maybe it's being a Marine or something. I don't like the word faint. I don't like anything about faint.

I don't, you know, faint heart never won fair maiden. Faint, I just don't like fainting in general. You know, it's F-E-I-N-T is good if you're gonna fake somebody out and, you know, you faint when you're sword fighting or something, that's good.

But F-A-I-N-T, faint, you don't want faint colors. You don't want faint music. You don't want faint anything.

If you're gonna do something, do it with gusto. And you don't wanna be faint-hearted. You don't wanna be small-souled.

Well, this is something we can help one another with. Notice, it's a one another type command. When you get tossed for a loop, there's an unexpected challenge, bereavement, overwhelming circumstance.

There's two parts to this. It says you can comfort the small-souled, but notice that person that is currently being challenged and is feeling insufficient and overwhelmed has to let people comfort. There is some humility here.

We say, oh, you know, people are gonna think badly of me if I'm overwhelmed. I don't wanna seem like I'm a weak believer. I've got to stand on my feet and, you know, stride manfully onward, dark passions subdued, you know, march into the valley of death and so on.

It's okay to be overwhelmed. It is okay to be thrown for a loop. It does not say tell the faint-hearted to get out their notes, does it? It doesn't say deride the faint-hearted for not being strong enough to meet their crisis, does it? It doesn't say warn the faint-hearted not to be so faint-hearted and to get the lead out and quit being such panty wastes, does it? It says comfort.

It is okay to comfort and it is okay to be comforted. It's okay to be aligo suque from time to time. This shouldn't be our permanent condition.

It shouldn't be a way of life, but there are times when we get smacked. We get smacked hard. And it is a blessing and it is a benefit and it is built in to the church that when we get hit hard like this, we are in line for comfort.

We can comfort one another. It's proper, it's right, no embarrassment, there's no shame, there's no problem. From time to time, your soul just is too small for what's going on.

Well, other souls come in and buoy you up. If one pontoon won't float your boat, get more pontoons. One floaty won't hold you up, get more.

And make sure they hold air. But there are times when we are all going to be aligo suque and comfort is a function, it's an opportunity. Let people have the blessing of helping you.

Let people have the, you know, Jesus said, if you give a cup of water to a little one in my name, it's as though you've done it unto me. What if everybody walked around and said, I'm not thirsty, take that away. What do you think I am, needy, think I'm weak, think I can't get water for myself? How dare you, what's the matter? You think there's something wrong with me? Why are you handing me this glass of water? Let people have the blessing that God is going to give them for handing you the cup of water.

Sometimes you're the child. Sometimes you're the person with the glass. There's blessing either way.

Don't deny people the blessing of handing you the water. If everybody has got all the water they need, whether they actually do or not, who's going to hand a glass of water out? All of us can both comfort and be comforted. That's why it's a one another idea.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see what it means to uphold the weak. And it doesn't mean uphold the weak.

So we'll see that when we come back.