

1Thessalonians 12-06-15b

1 Thessalonians 5 verse 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, or better, underemployed, coach, encourage, draw into activity those who are idle, who aren't engaged, comfort the faint-hearted, or the small-souled, uphold the weak. Uphold is the verb ant-echo. Ant-echo.

This is ante plus echo. Echo means to have or to hold, or to have and to hold. And ante means against.

And to hold against means to hold against yourself, to embrace, to grab hold of. It doesn't mean so much to uphold as to hold fast or to hold to yourself. It's related to kata-echo.

Kata-echo, which is what we're going to see down in verse 21. Test all things, hold fast what is good. That's kata.

Kata means according to or with reference to a thing. But this is ante-echo. And there's a perfectly good word for up in Greek, and ante isn't it.

Ante-echo means to hold close. And what this means is don't disabuse yourself from the weak. And this is the standard word for weakness.

It can be weakness due to illness. It can be weakness due to lack of spiritual resources or any one of a number of things, just depending on the context of the weakness. But ante-echo means to have a strong attachment to something or to be devoted to something.

In the ancient world, it was a commonplace that the weak were considered useless, and they would just put them on the rubbish heap. Like in China, you know, girl, baby, well, just expose it, put it out there to die. And the idea that, well, we want the strong, this is the Roman Empire, we're Greeks, we've got the heritage of the Athenians and the Spartans, and it's manly and it's virile, and it's all useful and strong, and the weak is... Well, in Christianity, it was an entirely different attitude.

Devote yourself to the weak. Pay attention to the despised. Look after those who can't look after themselves.

Care for those who need care. And this is an expression of love. This is self-sacrifice.

You give of your strength to those who lack it at the moment. We share strength. We share resources.

We share in the cause of Christ. And this was a foreign concept to your pantheon, worshipping, materialistic, secularized Greeks and Romans. But you can see uses of this word in the New Testament.

Jesus, for example, when he was talking about no man can serve two masters, remember that back in Matthew chapter 6? Either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. Well, being loyal is antecho, to hold to, to be attached to. You have this same idea a little bit later in Titus chapter 1 verse 9, where Paul says, holding fast the faithful word, as he has been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convict those who contradict.

Holding fast the faithful word, having an attachment, being dedicated, being devoted to it. And that's what this word is. Have an attachment, be devoted to the weak.

Then it says, be patient with all. This is another present active imperative. All of these are present imperatives.

Keep on doing this. An aorist imperative would be start doing it. So, keep on coaching those who aren't a part of the action.

Keep on comforting those whose soul is not adequate to the challenge. Keep on being attached to and being devoted to the weak. And be patient.

This is macro fumeo. And thumos is a type of passion and macro means have a lot of it. Be patient with all.

Now, this is interesting. I thought I only had to be patient with the ones that really make me impatient. You know, the good and the fine.

Aren't there just a few little troublemakers that I need to be patient with? It says be patient with all. And there's a clue in here that those of us who struggle with impatience can really benefit from. You know why it says be patient with all? Because in situations where impatience is a problem, there's one common denominator.

And it's me. When there's a problem with impatience, the problem is not really with what I am impatient with. The problem is me.

I'm the common denominator. You know, I'm impatient with this political situation. I'm impatient with this economy.

I'm impatient with this person. I'm impatient with this situation. I'm impatient with this condition.

I'm impatient with this prospect. I'm impatient with whatever it may be. Well, it's always me doing the impatientness.

Right? And that's why when it says be patient with all, there's one solution. If I fix the impatient here, now I can be patient with all. It doesn't say, well, you can pick and choose who to be patient and impatient with.

Impatience is a problem with the impatienter. And the way you fix it is fixing watashi wa. Fixing, you know, me, myself, and I. Ego.

That's one G, by the way. Ego. I, myself.

Not E-G-G-O. I, the waffle. Be patient with all.

When it says be patient with all, what this really means is work on your impatience problem, young man or young woman or old man or old woman. If impatience is an issue, the source of the problem is with the person being impatient. There are other ways to deal with things that need rectification, that need correction.

Is impatience the solution to this difficulty, this idleness, or this doing it wrong over here? What does Paul say in those situations? What are we to do? If they're doing it wrong, nutheteo. Coach them. If they're insufficient, comfort them.

Come alongside and encourage them. It doesn't say if you find somebody slacking off or doing it wrong, be impatient with them. Is there any command in scripture that says be impatient with the following? No.

Impatience is never the answer. Impatience is a problem we have to solve in ourselves. And this is a powerfully convicting truth for those of us who struggle with impatience.

Because it's not helpful. Impatience doesn't do anybody any good. Least of all, the person expressing and exhibiting it.

So he says, have patience. Macro thumeo. With everything.

With everybody. Fix that problem at the source. Now, verse 15.

See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone. You can see the transition here, can't you? Be patient with all. Impatience is not going to be the answer.

And returning evil for evil isn't going to be the answer either. Well, you dented my car, I'm going to dent yours. You ran over my dog, I'm going to run over yours.

You broke my window, I'm going to break yours. You did me wrong, I'm going to do you wrong. You spoke badly about me, I'm going to speak badly about you.

You falsely accused me, I'm going to falsely accuse you. You ran me down, I'm going to run you down. Do not render evil for evil.

Now, this directly confronts our fallen nature. Because we are built to return evil. We're built to invent evil where there hasn't even been any on the other side.

And when somebody else evilizes, well, we feel like we've got a 007 license to shoot right back. And it goes against the grain. We think, well, they fired first, they shot at me, I have the right to return fire.

Isn't that the rules of engagement? They shoot, I can shoot back. Not if you're shooting evil. Do not render.

See that no one renders. Notice it doesn't say, you personally don't render evil for evil. This is to the group.

See that no one renders evil for evil. So what if somebody else starts rendering evil? How does this usually happen in a fellowship? Somebody fouls up. Somebody messes up.

And commits an evil against somebody else, usually. Well, this somebody else now feels like a victim. And maybe their alibi can't really take that victimhood.

And they want to talk about it. They want to badmouth this person. They want to tear him down.

They want to retaliate. They want vindication. They want things set right.

And if we sit and listen. If we sympathize. If we engage in gossip.

If we join in the maligning. Shake our head and tsk tsk. And oh yes, isn't that terrible.

We are not following this injunction. See that no one renders evil for evil. If someone starts rendering evil in our fellowship, it is our responsibility to throw water on that little spark.

To turn this into a flame. Let's look at this another way. Maybe there has been a misunderstanding.

In any case, shouldn't this be our attitude? Look at the Lord Jesus. Talk about somebody that got evil for no good reason. And yet he opened not his mouth.

Good example for us. This would be a good place for coaching. A good place for comfort.

A good place for encouragement, wouldn't it? And it says, see that no one. This is something where we can help each other. Spouse to spouse.

Get upset. Hey, let's work on this together. Let's try to look at this in a different light.

Let's not join the party of evil. There is enough evil in the world without us contributing. Let's find a way to reflect the glory of God in this situation.

It's difficult. It's hard. And many times we can't do it alone.

That's why it says, see that no one. We've got to cooperate in this. It's hard enough to stand

against evil alone.

It's much better when we do it together. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone. Notice, this is interpersonal stuff.

This is not the abstract, let's march on the abortion clinic or picket against this bad politician or this terrible policy or what about immigration this and economic that. What is it? Anyone, somebody is doing evil. We need to resist the urge to retaliate, to be vindictive, to engage in attitude sins and sins of the tongue.

And we've got to help each other with this because it's very difficult to sustain a sin of the tongue unless there's a sin of the ear along with it. You know what I mean? How can somebody perpetrate a sin of the tongue if there's no sin of the ear to be its partner? It's kind of like when Paul said, if anybody is speaking in tongues, there's got to be somebody to interpret. Well, if somebody is going to malign and gossip and judge and backbite verbally, there has to be somebody sitting there listening to it.

Let it not be us. We want to see that no one renders evil for evil to anyone. This is interpersonal contention.

But always pursue what is good. And notice, the good is not always just sitting there. Sometimes you have to chase it.

Pursue what is good. Many times it's in the process of getting away from us. But this is dioko, D-I-O-K-O, and it has the idea of active effort involved.

This is not, oh, well, the good is falling from the sky. All I have to do is stand under it. You have to go get this.

You have to go grab it. It takes some effort. It may take some thought.

Dioko is an active word. It means, the lexical definition, number one in the lexicon, says to move rapidly and decisively toward an objective. That's Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich.

To move rapidly and decisively toward an objective. Why do you have to move rapidly and decisively? Because if you don't get there and grab it, it can elude you. This takes effort.

It takes decision. It takes dedication. It takes commitment.

It takes motivation. Let's get out there and get this. Do not let anyone render evil for evil to anyone, but always, pantote, all the time, be moving rapidly and decisively toward what is good, both for yourselves and for all.

This pretty well covers it, doesn't it? Verse 16. We've got these little short exhortations. These present active imperatives, all of these are keep on.

Make this a pattern, a policy, a way of life, a lifestyle, part of your walk. If you want to examine yourself and see if you're in the faith, this is a great passage to come to. Are these the things I am doing? Is this an ongoing part of my pattern? Rejoice always.

And this is Cairo. This is the word for being happy. This is looking on the bright side.

This is finding the full half of the glass. And you've got another pantote. These are policies.

These are universalities here. We've got pantote. We have pantos, when he says, pursue what is good for yourselves and for everyone.

Notice the alls that you start seeing in verse 14. Be patient with all. Pursue what is good for all.

Rejoice always. Pray, our next phrase, all the time. This is ubiquitous.

This should be the condition, the prevailing climate in our life. This is not sporadic. It's not once in a while.

It's not intermittent. It's not hit and miss. Always, all, all the time.

This is policy. This is procedure. This is the way we do it.

Joyful all the time. It doesn't mean slap happy and giddy. It means that at the foundation and at the core and at the root, we are happy to be alive.

We're happy that Jesus is our savior. We're happy that we are in the church age with all of these wonderful resources. We have the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We have the power of God in our midst. We've got fellow believers to whom we can turn and both bless and be blessed. We have the word of God that lives and abides forever.

That's living and powerful, sharper than a sword. Shows us what's wrong. Guides us when we need guidance.

Illuminates our path. Keeps us from stumbling. What's not to like about this life? Yes, there are difficulties.

Yes, we will be sad. Yes, sometimes our soul will be overwhelmed and we will be oligarchs. But that's why we've got each other.

That's why there's a fellowship. That's why we've got the Lord Jesus, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit dwelling with those who love Him, who value His word, who have it and keep it. It's a great life.

These things work together for our good. We're being trained and prepared. These difficulties are

just like quizzes and tests in school so that we'll be ready when the great true life of the eternal future unfolds and we can be a part of it.

We can serve. We can walk with Christ. We can rule and reign with Him.

We can be an active part of the creation that we can only guess at now because we're just puny. We're ants in New York City. We have no concept of what's going to be going on later.

But we are going to be promoted. We are going to be elevated. God in His grace through Jesus Christ is going to elevate us above the angels.

Think about it. How much do the angels know? How much can they do? We are now, for a while, lower than the angels. Did you hear me? You, beyond the angels in capabilities, in opportunities, in functions, in engagement with the plan and purpose of God and the eternal future.

These things that we go through that seem so big and so difficult, this is our training. This is like falling off your bike when you're learning to ride it. It's like skinning your knee and bumping your head and burning yourself and learning all the things that we learn these things and we know them and then we are prepared and ready.

That's what these are and we've got to look at it in that light. And when we do, we are able to rejoice always. It's not always laughing, smiling, tears of happiness rejoicing.

But we go back to these fundamentals. We remind ourselves of who we are and why we're here. And there is joy in being a Christian.

There is joy in belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody can pluck you out of his hand. No one can remove us from the promises.

No one can take away our eternal future. It is certain. It is founded and sure.

It rests on the rock of the Lord Jesus Christ. What other thing do you have that you can guarantee like that? Savings, job, education, presence of family, everybody's going to die, jobs change, possessions come and go, health comes and goes. This life is almost entirely uncertainty.

There are things we can be certain of and this ought to give us on the low end of the spectrum quiet peace and on the high end of the spectrum enthusiasm and excitement about who we are and what God has done for us in Christ. What's not to like about this life? It's great and getting greater. And when the Lord Jesus comes back and takes us to himself, you can't believe how great it's going to be.

So rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Why is it important to pray? Does God need to hear from us? Is he up there saying, boy, I sure wish somebody down there would send up a request

or give me an idea of what they'd like me to do.

I'm kind of sitting here. I'm the genie with the three wishes and nobody's expressed a wish. Just kind of tapping my fingers on the table here wondering when I can... Does God need us to pray? We need to pray.

Prayer is for our benefit. How do we benefit from prayer? Because prayers prayed properly prepare us. That's a lot of Ps, isn't it? Prayers prayed properly prepare us.

We think about, we digest, we metabolize, we process, we employ, we apply truth when we pray. Any parent of a teenager, probably any parent of any child that can talk, knows what it's like. When the child wants something, the child will come up and find reasons why you should do what they want you to do.

Oh, dad, can I please do this? Because here's all these following great reasons why you should let me do this. Everybody else is doing it. I'll be back in such and such a time.

I've already done this. There are arguments. There are rationales to try to get the parent on board with this desired outcome, right? Well, this is how we pray to God.

And what is an effective prayer? When it lines up with and moves forward the plan and purpose of God Himself. When it is in line. Wouldn't you like your teenager to come up and say, you know what I'd really like to do is clean the house because if I clean it now, then I'll be done and I can go do these other things later.

Would it be okay with you if, I know maybe you want it to be quiet, but can I run the sweeper now so I can get the house done? And I say, sure, you can run the sweeper now. Run the sweeper to your heart's content. Run it upstairs, downstairs, inside, outside.

Do whatever you want. Yeah, you know, we never get those requests. But we want to pray in line with God's own will.

And in order to do that, we have to think about what we know about Him. If you want to know those that are over you in the Lord, how about knowing the Lord Himself who is over all, head of all things to the church, right? If we know what He's up to, know what He wants accomplished, then we can pray intelligently. So pray without ceasing.

And in everything, be thankful. In everything, give thanks. In everything, give thanks.

I'm sick with the stomach flu. That's part of everything. Why would I give thanks for being sick with the stomach flu? Thank you that this is something I can get over.

Thank you that this is not permanent. That I'm not going to be retching my toenails up for the rest of my life. Thank you that it's not any worse than it is.

Thank you that some of the rest of my family has not caught it. Thank you that you have provided people who can care for me when I can't care for myself. Thank you that there's modern medicine.

Thank you that you have given me a reminder of the temporal nature of this flesh. That it is going to be so much better when I have a resurrection body that never gets sick, that never ails, that never hurts. And this is an experience that I can look back on when I am raised with Christ.

And I will appreciate my deliverance into glory so much more because I know what it's like to be in fallen human flesh. In everything, give thanks. This is a great challenge.

Find a way to be thankful. Lost your job? Flunked your course? Got robbed? Got sick? What an interesting exercise to be thankful in that. To look for God's hand.

To think outside the human box of myopic subjectivity. To think, you know, you meant it for evil, brothers, when you threw me in the pit and sold me into slavery. But God meant it for good.

Look at the outcome that God has wrought, which could have been accomplished in no other way. Joseph couldn't have gone down there and given Potiphar or Pharaoh his resume and gotten hired on to be second in the land. God worked it together for good.

And God gave Joseph the privilege of foreshadowing the life and the career of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Who wouldn't be happy with that? In everything, give thanks. For this, this everything, is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

The question is, what does this refer to? Is giving thanks the will of God in Christ Jesus for you? Or is everything that's happening to you the will of God in Christ Jesus for you? What do you think? It's the everything. You could rearrange this and say, in the will of God in Christ Jesus for you, give thanks. That's everything.

Everything that happens to us is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. So be thankful that God has a plan and a purpose. We're not outside the fold.

We are the sheep of His pasture. We are His people. We are the body and bride of Christ.

And He has a specific will for us. And whatever it entails, whatever it involves, we should be thankful. He loves us.

He is doing what is best for us. And it's a measure of our faith that we recognize that. This brings us to verse 19.

Do not quench the Spirit. And I want to save this for next time, which next Friday night is going to be our final set of classes in 1 Thessalonians. But there is a lot of misunderstanding of grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean? How do you do it? How do you avoid it? And this is a subject that will take some discussion. So we're going to close here at the end of verse 18 and pick up our study next week. But think about this.

These are present, active imperatives. Sometimes we say, well, I'm not sure what God wants me to do. I'm facing some issues.

I've got some decisions to make. I've got some challenges. There's some uncertainty.

Things are up in the air. The way seems dark. I'm not sure.

When we face uncertainties, when we face challenges, go with what you know. I may not know what God wants me to pick. I may not know which option He wants me to select.

But these are things I know for certain. I know without any question, without any doubt, I should be doing these things. And many times when we go back and concentrate and analyze ourselves and say, am I doing what I should be doing in these known areas of command? Suddenly we find that other situations that seemed uncertain are suddenly quite clear.

Well, if I'm going to observe these priorities and follow these commands, I find that this has suddenly disqualified some of these options. I can't really follow this option and be obedient to these commands. That's not the right environment.

I'm never going to be able to rejoice. I'm never going to be able to be patient. I'm never going to be able to be a comfort and an encouragement to other believers if I'm over here.

I'm never going to be able to fulfill these things. I'm not going to have the opportunities. I'm going to remove myself from fellowship.

And I won't be able to do these things if I isolate myself, if I exclude myself, if I go into this situation or make myself a part of this group at the expense of fellow believers who understand and pursue these goals and these exhortations. And we often find that by focusing on the things that we know, clarifies. So this is a great passage to come to when it says examine yourself and see if you're in the faith.

Here's the ruler. Here's the yardstick. You use the ruler if you're aligosome.

You use the yardstick when you're doing better. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for how