
The Thessalonian Epistles 14

Peace and Progress in Church

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

The story is told about a small, country church where the pastor called a special meeting of the congregation about the purchase of a new chandelier. After some discussion pro and con, an old farmer stood up and said, "Buying a new chandelier may seem like a good idea to you, but I'm against it for three reasons. First of all, it's too expensive and we can't afford one. Second, there isn't anybody around here who knows how to play one. And third, what we really need in this church is a new light fixture." Sometimes, peace and progress is merely a matter of misunderstanding the whole purpose and process.

In this passage we see as we observe the practical exhortations that relate to the coming of Christ we are to be in harmony with our belief in the God of Peace and our vocation as peacemakers. This does not require a looking away from the sin we see in ourselves or others, for sin is the cause of all conflict; rather, it is a pursuit of peace that promotes peace in all of its processes. True peace with God and with others cannot exist when we violate our own consciences of what is right in light of the Holy Scriptures and a sanctified common sense.

In order for a church to progress and to prosper there must be peace and harmony centered upon the Prince of Peace, the Living Word. Peace has its soldiers of valor, its casualties, its wounded and weary who have and continue to battle against the contentious, the warmongers and against those who oppose themselves to their own demise. It is a worthy and a noble vocation that is placed within every citizen of God's Kingdom, ***blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God—Matthew 5:9.***

It is much more difficult to be a full-time perfect peacemaker as the Holy Scriptures define it, than even a

part-time imperfect troublemaker, for our sinful nature is such that we rebel against God and His commandments, if not outwardly, then most definitely inwardly.

As we consider the subject of *Peace and Progress in Church*, there are two proponents of peace and progress. The first proponent we will deal with is *Peace with the Shepherd*. Secondly, we shall examine the proponent of *Peace among the Sheep*.

I. (vs.12-13) Peace with the Shepherd

1. **12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;** under this heading we must first recognize that we must have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd of the sheep of God. Only then can we be in the position to be at peace with the undershepherd or pastor of each flock or church of the Lord Jesus. We find here three qualifications of those who would be pastors to promote and maintain peace enunciated in the words, **labour, are over,** and **admonish**.

1. **And we beseech you, brethren,** here the Apostle Paul and his fellowlaborers in the truth, urge them as brethren, as opposed, in Paul's case, with a voice of apostolic authority.

a) There is a warmth here that can only be effectual by those who have worked for and earned such in a relationship.

b) Paul didn't throw his apostolic weight around unless it was necessary as with the church at Corinth.

2. **to know them which labour among you,** this *knowing* is present tense, that

is, continual, and as the case in the Scriptures, it is an intimate knowledge that involves an affectionate relationship.

a) The plural **them**, is indicative of a plurality of elders, not pastors, or pastors in the church at Thessalonica.

b) The first mark of a pastor in this text is **them which labour**. In this case, because of those who care for their souls, and are engaged in that **labour**.

c) The word carries with it the idea of laboring until completely exhausted, as the Apostle Paul in **2Co 12:15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.**

d) This work is that which exhausts the person both physically and mentally.

3 **and are over you in the Lord**, secondly, a pastor is the overseer of the church, as an undershepherd, and thus, **in the Lord** is included here.

a) This overseeing is not in vainglory, or in the pursuit of power, fame or fortune, etc...but it is **in the Lord**.

b) Hebrews tells us to obey them that have the rule over us as they that watch over our souls, and those who rule are not to be lords over God's heritage.

e) At the same time there is no testing of political winds, stroking the rich or famous, but taking the oversight.

4 **and admonish you;** the third element of pastoral labors carries with it the idea of blame and/or warning supporting the concept of reproving the ones guilty of sin, and instructing those who are not to beware of sin.

a) We must follow them as they follow Christ searching the Scriptures to see if those things be so (**1Corinthinas 11:1; Acts 17:11**).

b) Again, those who **know** their pastor and understand that he must be obedient to his Lord in this, and who realize it is done out of a loving concern for their souls, will more likely receive these admonitions more favorably.

B **13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.** Here we have a continued response required of the membership to their pastor. The first was to **know them**, now, we move on to two others expressed in the verbs **esteem** and **be at peace**, for a total of three. So, we have three things pastors should do and three things the church should do.

1 **And to esteem them very highly in love**, this goes beyond **to know**, but involves the exercise of honoring and respecting a person in super abundance

and out of love to God and for the person who watches over your soul.

2

for their work's sake, again, the labor involved is included here, therefore, there must be this labor for the esteem to be justifiable. Those who enter the ministry for ease and comfort, are not called by God, but are merely self-proclaimed pastors, and do much damage to the reputation of the ministry. So, too, those who are called of God, can grow weary and lethargic in well doing and fall into the snare of the Devil in this.

a) This is a great work that is greater than the building of the wall of Jerusalem that Nehemiah was engaged in.

b) The pastor is not only involved in protecting the flock, but also equipping the flock to watch and work with sword and trowel, to fight and destroy what is evil and to build up, edify and strengthen what is good.

3

And be at peace among yourselves, this is all said as a preventative measure, for there was no alarming issue here, but the components were there for the enemy to manipulate and use to their demise.

a) The element of inexperience was a potential issue, and most all of them were new converts, so what makes so-and-so think he is the boss over me?

b) I've been saved as long or longer than him. With this kind of pride

comes contention and every evil work.

e) The fact that another brother was appointed with more maturity from another place is unlikely because no one is named.

d) To have peace between the pastor and the flock is an absolute ingredient of necessity for a church to progress and prosper.

e) Know the pastor who labors among you, esteem him very highly in love for the work's sake, and be at peace with him.

d) The pastor who so labors and works in the skill especially given to him to admonish and so forth will give reason for one to have esteem and a peaceful and loving disposition towards them.

e) ***Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.***

h) The pastor of the church we will be praying for tonight is sadly going somewhat in that direction. You only make a pastor to give account of his flock with grief and not joy and that is unprofitable to you.

i) To have joy taken away will weaken not strengthen a pastor,

and that flock is only hurting themselves and bringing dishonor to God in the process, for the joy of the Lord is our strength.

II. (vs.14-15) Peace Among the Sheep



14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. Even though tending to the flock is a primary role of a pastor, it is not a solitary role of a pastor. We all are, in a very real sense, called to be our brother's keeper, to watch out for them in love for their souls. We have three categories of sheep that under consideration here and general instructions toward all of them and others.

1. Now we exhort, you brethren, once again, note the warmth of this encouragement for the brethren to take heed to these words.

2. warn them that are unruly, pastor and the members are responsible to warn those who are out of step, out of ranks as the word implies with the rest of the platoon or company.

a) These either are silently rebellious and don't engage in the work, nor support it, or secretly or semi-secretly rebellious and sow seeds of discord among the brethren, or openly rebellious and disorderly and insubordinate.

b) We should warn such though it may be uncomfortable to do so.

3. comfort the feebleminded, as members of the body of Christ we

should bring consolation and encouragement to those who are “small-souled”, who are discouraged, and disheartened, who are less likely to be bold, but rather encourage them, not rebuke them, for they already are over scrupulous of their faults.

4 **support the weak**, we are to hold up those who are weak spiritually, who are led away easily by false teachings, the appeals to the flesh, and are not established in the faith.

5 **be patient toward all men**, in all of these endeavors we must exhibit patience towards every one of these three classes of believers who need help.

a) Prayerful and loving patience, longsuffering, understanding, are in order.

b) Exasperation, walking away in disgust, make for disharmony.

c) The implication here is that such people will tend to try our patience, especially when we see little or no progress being made over a given amount of time.

d) This also, implies that such is likely present in most every church. Once again, as we often hear, there is no perfect church here on earth in this present dispensation.

e) To be impatient and simply accusatory will not promote biblical peace, but only tear down the church and dismember the body.

Those who leave a church during the space of repentance before exclusion which is a liberty and a command given by each church under God's leadership in each particular unique situation, or even afterwards of exclusion, we should be seeking to win them back, at the very least, by praying for them.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. We had a positive of patience, now we have a negative and another positive. This appears to relate to the Thessalonian church and their relationship to the lost world. Retaliation and revenge is so bound up in the natural man seeking to be God and usurping His authority, for vengeance belongs to Him alone, many do not see that there is anything sinful in it.

1. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; this is God's work, not ours. This would be especially tempting to engage in against those who may be persecuting you.

a) But, the Christian virtue is to turn the other cheek, and go the extra mile.

b) Sometimes people do so in more subtle ways in the spirit of rebellion, pride, discontent, and these are most often unhappy.

2. but ever follow that which is good, instead of just avoiding doing evil and passively doing nothing, we are to

actively and always be in pursuit as a hunter after its prey to do good.



both among yourselves, this injunction is an obvious application within a church, the context of a local church of the Lord Jesus Christ.



and toward all men, yet, this command of abstaining from revenge and following after what is good is to be pursued towards everyone, saved and lost, good and evil, friends and enemies, church members and ungodly persecutors.

Do we want to see positive progress and prosperity in the Lord's churches, then we must be proactive, not passive when it comes to promoting the proponents of peace between the shepherd and the sheep, and peace among the sheep.

Consider **1 Peter 3:7** *Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.* God hinders the prayers of a husband and wife if they are not properly performing their roles in love, peace and harmony.

A parallel can be drawn as well in the churches relationship between the Lord and His churches. A church's prayers for progress and prosperity in the work may be hindered because the principles outlined in these verses are not being carried out in love, peace and unity.

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus.

"These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold."

"Which channel do you want?" asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

Sometimes the enemy is more organized and unified than God's churches, and that should not be.

If we must fight, and I thank God that we have had a blessed unity in our fellowship in this church, but if we must fight, let us fight the good fight of faith with a united front against the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Praying one for another, knowing what to pray for, and praying together as a body is a biblical means to ensure peace and progress in the Lord's church.
