

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Dealing with Problem People 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

The church is not a place for perfect people, but a hospital for those who know they are ill. We do not claim for a moment that the church is perfect. We do not claim that Valley Bible is perfect. In fact we would eagerly claim that we are not. The church is full of problems because it is full of problem people. Yes the vast majority of us here today though we may have have been saved by grace through faith are still sinners with unredeemed flesh.

Let me ask you a question. If we are in fact a spiritual hospital how would you measure our success? Would it be by the size of our budget? Certainly that is one way of measuring the success of a particular medical hospital but I am not sure this is what we should be looking at. Would we measure the success of a spiritual hospital by the size of its staff? Certainly that is another way of measuring the success of a particular medical hospital but I am not sure this is what we should be looking at either. Would we measure the success of a spiritual hospital by the number of patients it has. Certainly that is another way of measuring the success of a particular medical hospital, but again I am not sure that this is what we should be looking at. I believe that the best measure of the success of a hospital should be the quality of the health care that is brought to bear on the patients that are being served in that hospital. I believe that the best measure of success of a church is the quality of care that is being brought to bear on the patients that are being served in that church.

We at Valley Bible Church need to focus our energies on bringing about the very best care that we possibly can to all those who make up this fellowship. I am not speaking about medical care I am speaking about spiritual care. If hopefully we can see the level of spiritual care that is being extended in this fellowship increasing both in terms of quality and quantity then we have much to rejoice in.

In order to do this we need, based on the Word of God, to see more and more of you involved in caring one for another. We cannot be an effective care facility if the only spiritual care that is being extended to you from this fellowship is when you come here on Saturday nights or Sunday mornings and listen to me share with you a Bible lesson, even if you are here every weekend. This would be like every patient at Antelope Valley Hospital being wheeled into the lobby of that hospital and being lectured by one of the physicians on the staff on some aspect of general health care each week and then wheeled back into their rooms to wait without any more additional care until they are wheeled back into the lobby the next weekend for part two in a three part series. There must be more than this.

Don't get me wrong, I am not saying that the preaching of the Word to a church fellowship is without value. How could any of us say this. Certainly the preaching of the word to church fellowship was at the heart of the apostolic ministry in the earthly church. What we do here on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings is essential. But there must be more!! And what exactly would that more be? It is getting each of you involved in the spiritual care of people.

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Let us read **1 Thess. 5:14-15**, “**And we urge you brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak**” I believe the most important word to notice in this verse is the word “brethren.” Paul is addressing not the spiritual shepherds of a church but rather the congregation of the church as a whole. He is addressing “**the brethren.**” The spiritual care of this flock is not simply the responsibility of church leaders but the responsibility of all who name the name of Christ.

Eph. 4:11-12, it says “**And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, (12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.**” In many churches the members pay the leaders to do the work of the ministry; and the leaders cannot do it all. Consequently, the work begins to weaken and die, and everybody blames the leaders. And in a sense that may very well be true. It may be true if the leaders failed to alert their congregations to their responsibilities and make it possible for them to effectively carry out this wonderful work within the context of the church. But hopefully this will not be true of us here. Let us look at the very first group of people that we, together, as the “brethren” are to care for.

The unruly

Let us read **V. 14** “**And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly**” Who are these particular people? The word “unruly” (ATAKTOS) means “careless, out of line.” It was applied to a soldier who would not keep rank but insisted on marching his own way. It was applied to a person who would not follow through on their duty either out of apathy or rebellion.

Each of us in this fellowship, as the professed followers of Christ, need according to **2 Thess. 2:12** to be walking worthy of our calling. When people depart from that worthy walk either through apathy or rebellion then they become “unruly” or in other words “out of line.”

Paul uses this word in **2 Thess. 3:11** to refer to a group of Christians who had chosen to stop working and had become a burden to the church. These individuals had stepped out of line. The Scriptures are clear we are, if possible, to work in order to supply for our needs. Certainly this was the example of the Apostle Paul and his companions while at Thessalonica but still there were those who chose to quit their jobs and become dependent on others. These individuals had become unruly.

Any time we choose to not walk in a manner worthy of our calling and step out of line we are unruly. If you know that the Scriptures have called you to fellowship with the saints, but you choose not to because of the cares of the world, you have stepped out of line. If you know that the Scriptures have called you to minister with your talents, abilities, and resources for the building up of the church and you have chosen not to because it is not convenient for you in light of your own personal goals, you have stepped out of line. If you are no longer seeking to serve your wife and live with her in an understanding way just because it is too much trouble you have stepped out of line. If you as a father are not seeking to know the truth and to communicate that truth to your children you have stepped out of line.

At one time or another we have all stepped out of line. In fact this morning I would say that within this congregation this morning that there are people that either through apathy or indifference have stepped out of line. In fact you might know that this person is you.

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What needs to be done for you?

The passage goes on to say. “**And we urge you brethren, that you admonish the unruly**” the word (NOUTHETEO) admonish means “to correct.” A.T. Robertson said it means “to put some sense in them.” When we come alongside someone to correct them it is not from a standpoint of superiority but rather from a standpoint of concern.

It might go something like this, “John, I know that you have stopped attending church regularly because you have been going out in the desert to ride your dirt bike, you no longer are involved in ministry, you have begun to talk negatively about things. I am concerned for you. I believe changes need to be made.” It is that gentle kind of warning that comes alongside and says that the direction that you are going will be a major disappointment. As a friend I am urging you to change your direction. This is not something that can be taken lightly. In **Acts 20:31** Paul talking with the Ephesian elders said, “**Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.**”

When we truly love somebody we will warn them. I want you to know the fullness of God’s blessing, the fullness of God’s provision, and I want to see the church become all that it can become. I am not under any silly illusion that it is what I or others do on the platform each week no matter how clever it may be that will in and of itself make this a powerful spirit filled church. We might become a large church if I am and the music group were outstandingly entertaining but we will not become a strong church.

Rather it is more of a question of how willing we are to come alongside believers who are wayward and lovingly bring them into line. then the power of God begins to flow and then the church begins to cut a swath through the world. But we cannot do this if we have large numbers of people in our fellowship that remain unruly and are not being effectively ministered to through the personal admonishment of their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. **BUT WE ARE NOT DONE YET, THERE IS ANOTHER GROUP.**

The fainthearted

Let us read **V. 14** again “**And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted**” Who are the fainthearted? The word (OLIGOPSUCHOUS) literally. means “little souled.” These individuals in contrast to the “unruly” truly have an appetite to walk with the Lord but they are being systematically beat down. Perhaps because of adverse circumstances or because of their deep consciousness of their own sinfulness, causing them to despair in being able to live the Christian life. They are trying to hold on, but they are holding on, with the slimmest of threads.

The incident that comes to my mind when I think of “fainthearted” or “little souled” is when Peter and the disciples were on the Sea of Galilee fighting a terrific storm and they saw Jesus walking on the water. They at first thought it was a ghost but then Jesus identified himself and invited to Peter to join Him. But you remember what happened? He stepped out of the boat and began to walk to Jesus but then he looked at the wind and the waves and he became frightened and he began to sink and he cried out Lord save me.

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We at times are very much like Peter. We want to come to Jesus and respond to His bidding and our attempts to do this are obvious to ourselves and others but sometimes it becomes so difficult that we feel that we will slip beneath of the waves of persecution, adversity or despair. These timid, discouraged individuals need to be **“encouraged.”** The word **“encouraged”** (PARAMUTHEOMAI) means “to come along with counsel or advice.” We need to be available to come alongside people and encourage them to keep on keeping on. BUT THERE IS STILL ANOTHER GROUP.

The weak

Let us look at **V. 14** again, **“And we urge you brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak.”** We are called to help the weak. The word for “help” means “hold fast.” But who are these individuals? Certainly Paul did not mean people who were weak physically, since he was dealing with the spiritual ministry in the church. No, he was referring to those who were “weak in the faith” and had not grown strong in the Lord. This was a common theme of Paul’s and a persisting need in the church. Paul addressed, this to them at length both in **II Cor. 8-10** and again in **Rom. 14-15**. It would therefore seem reasonable that certainly this would likely be at the heart of Paul’s thinking.

Usually, the weak Christians were afraid of their liberty in Christ. They lived by rules and regulations. In the Roman assemblies, the weak Christians would not eat meat, and they held to the Jewish system of holy days. They were severe in their judgment of mature saints who enjoyed all foods and all days.

It continues to be a problem even in the church to this day. There still are many Christians who still do not understand their liberty in Christ and place upon themselves certain unnecessary rules and regulations. And will not only place a false standard of judgment upon themselves but will seek to apply their false standard of judgment upon other believers. It would be a very tempting thing for those who are more mature in their understanding to want to get away from such weak Christians. Perhaps wishing that they would go away so that they might enjoy their personal freedoms without the constant pressure to conform to someone’s else’s faulty conscience, but what does the passage tell us to do? It tells us to **“help”** the weak or in other words to “hold fast” to them.

This kind of personal ministry is not easy and so Paul added some wise counsel at the end of **V. 14** and into **V. 15**.

Be Patient - Look at **V. 14** **“And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.”** It takes patience to grow up. The weaker member may one day be a choice leader, so we are never to give up. Just because individuals in this fellowship may be struggling today doesn’t mean that they will be struggling tomorrow. There was a Christian teacher that once would pass out buttons with the letters “pbpwmginfwmy.” This seeming hodge podge of letters was a listing of the first letter of every word of the phrase “Please be patient with me God is not finished with me yet.” If we are going to extend care to the spiritually needy in this fellowship or even outside of this fellowship, patience is an absolute necessity. BUT PAUL IS NOT DONE YET HE GIVES US MORE COUNSEL IN V. 15.

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Watch your motives - Look at **V. 15** “**See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men.**” Often as we minister to others whether inside the church or out they reject us and even oppose us. Often they show no appreciation. But we should always serve in love, and be ready to forgive.

Rom. 12:17-21 says “**Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. (18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. (19) Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. (20) But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” (21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**” If your motive in ministry is to receive appreciation and praise, you may be disappointed. What should our motive be? Paul in **2 Cor. 4:5** helps us with this question “**For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus sake.**” If our motive is “**ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake.**” We will never be disappointed by what we don’t receive in terms of appreciation or praise.”

CONCLUSION

We as a church will only be as healthy as the people that make up this fellowship. And this fellowship will never be healthy unless each of us are willing to patiently reach out in love to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. We will never be healthy unless each of us are willing to admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, and hold fast to the weak.

If this is your desire then I would encourage you to get better acquainted with the people that make up this fellowship. We would strongly encourage you if you are presently able to get involved in a growth group.