

LSB 1 Thess. 5:12 - 15 Part 1

12 But we ask of you, brothers, that you know those who labor among you, and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. 14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 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 people.

This morning, after 8 years of biblical verse by verse exposition as we've worked our way through several books, we come to the defining passage about how a congregation of sheep are to treat their shepherd and how the shepherd is to care for the sheep.

Let me begin by saying my shortfall is more severe than any you folks might have. This is more about me coming up short than you.

Last weekend you folks allowed Pam and I to go enjoy a weekend camping at Benton Hot Springs, a place we've really taken a serious shine to. We thank you for your graciousness in allowing us some times off.

We attended a fund raising dinner put on by the Historic Benton Hot Springs Non-Profit group. It's the only way to get access to the inside of the historic trading post building there, and I wanted to see what was inside that time warp building.

It was great fun and the dinner was mostly inedible for me and nearly killed Pam with indigestion but this is what we do to be included in a group of like minded preservationists of a fabulous collection of 150 years of ephemera in a place that's like a unique little paradise oasis.

None of that is important to our study this morning, except perhaps, kudo's to you all for allowing us the time to enjoy. But something else at Benton is important to our passage.

At the sit down dinner and historic presentation, I recognized Jim Copeland who pastored the White Mountain Chapel at Benton for over 15 years. Timing wasn't great but I did get to sit for a couple of minutes with him as he told me of the heartbreak of being forced out by people in his own congregation. A hostile takeover by the tares.

Tragic occurrence but probably much more common than we even know. Paul gives us the elements necessary for effectual relationships that guarantee a healthy, happy, productive church that brings glory to the chief shepherd, right here in these verses. What could be more important than that?

A healthy, happy, productive church requires participation from both the sheep and the shepherd. It's a symbiotic relationship between sheep and shepherds and Lord Jesus.

Symbiotic is a word we borrow from organisms where a combination of organisms thrive and become more than the total of the individual parts. They thrive on each other and languish alone.

It's the perfect descriptive word for what Paul defines for the church so simply and elegantly in just a few words. We'll take some time to look at the words so we can understand fully what Paul asks of the Thessalonians here, both the shepherds and leaders at Thessalonica, and the sheep.

The pastor has some duties, and the congregation likewise has some duties, and the result, with the life giving blessing of the Holy Spirit of God, becomes far more than the individual parts.

We'll look at the words that define the pastoral roles first, then we'll come back to the response from the sheep.

*12 But we ask of you, brothers, that you know those who **labor** among you, and **lead** you in the Lord and **admonish** you,*

There are three potent key words in that first verse that define the pastor's role. Labor. Lead. Admonish. We'll spend some moments understanding all of those words. This will be a report card on me.

*we ask of you, brothers, that you know those who **labor** among you*

labor The word is kopiōntas from the root word kopos which is simply the word for toil. Work. Physical work. Effort. But the version of the word in our verse is only used one other time by Paul, and it's the word that combines the idea of not just work, but working yourself to exhaustion.

In Acts 20:35 Paul tells the elders at Ephesus; *“In everything I showed you that by **working hard** in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

Paul lived this word, living every moment to exhaust himself for the purposes of the advancement of the kingdom of Jesus. Hard work that literally uses up your physical and emotional strength.

In the Septuagint, the greek translation of the hebrew old testament the translators used this word in a very familiar verse. In Isaiah 40:35 we have; *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and **not be weary**; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

Running to exhaustion is the word weary in that verse. Same idea. Physical exhaustion from effort. But the promise is that the Lord will renew your strength if you wait for Him.

Shepherds are to physically and emotionally work to the point of exhaustion caring for God's sheep. Paul spent every waking moment working towards a single goal. Glorify Jesus by expanding His kingdom.

My hero's, the guys I listen to on YouTube who I believe are positively impacting the expansion of the Kingdom of God within Satan's realms are guys who wake up every day and work single mindedly towards that goal.

If you do that and the Lord is part of it, causing the increase, like minded christians might know your name. Nobody know's mine. I'll let you do the math. We had 24 visitors at our web pages this week.

Second word for shepherds; *But we ask of you, brothers, that you know those who **labor** among you, and lead you in the Lord*

Leadership. Like it or not, and evidence leans towards people not liking it, there has been a change in this church's direction in the past 8 years since you asked me to be your teaching pastor.

This church generally followed a model, an idea; of feel good. The original creators of this new fellowship had as their ideal, a church that was sort of old fashioned country church where you feel good.

Hey! Don't get me wrong. I love to feel good. I want the feel goods as much or more than anyone here. I want the warmth and the fellowship and the family atmosphere just like we all do.

But, I've been in and out of so many churches in my lifetime as a christian, where feeling good is **not more** than psychological manipulation. That's what the world does.

You flip on the TV and the folks who have to sell soap and deodorant to stay in business are experts at emotional manipulation to make you feel good. The world knows exactly what to do and what to not do in order to manipulate emotions.

In fact we click on the guide button and we actually control the level and type of feel good we're in the mood for. We have choices. Everything from Disney and Hallmark to cop shows to horror shows. Whatever you're

looking for in order to feel good, Hollywood has got something in the can.

Well, Hollywood Pollyanna Whittier feel good has crept into the church. We want the music that makes us feel good. We want the fluffy 20 minute sermons that are designed to make us feel like winners. We want to have a good time and the world has showed us how to get guaranteed results, **no Holy Spirit necessary.**

In large suburban Los Angeles wealthy areas and equally true in all large population centers, there have been market analysts taking door to door surveys of what style and type of mega church the population wants. Then a church that meets the market criteria is built and the clientele and the cash surges in and they get what they asked for.

I won't apologize for the fact that from day one, my rule is, if we're going to feel blessing, it isn't going to be a human manipulation. Either God comes and blesses us through the Spirit of His Son, or He doesn't. No manipulation. No Hollywood. No forced manipulated feel good.

Look around you. People have voted with their feet. Fair enough, like the little signs on the gas pump that say "I did that", I'll take ownership of steering us to either blessing if God so desires, or no blessing, if God so desires, but whatever we end up with, it's not going to be psycho manipulation.

I'm holding out for miracles. The feel good I'm insisting on will be when God does miracles in people's lives via faith in His written word. Sorry, but I won't settle for less. For better or worse, that is in fact, leadership. All or nothing. Blessing poured out miraculously from heaven, . . . or not. But whatever we experience, it isn't going to be man made. God or nothing. Period.

Let's look at the word. **and lead you in the Lord**

proistamenous. Someone who rules over. Someone who leads by example.

The word is used 8 times. Several times in Timothy and Titus of one who rules his household well. This is leadership that people *want* to be under.

To rule a household well the one who leads has to combine love and a bit of fun and a helping of wellness and of course some discipline so that those who are under his rule actually wouldn't want to be anywhere else. This kind of leadership brings wellness and thriving.

Out at work we had 2 bosses. And I used to laugh at my own reaction to both of them and try to evaluate what it was that caused my reaction to their leadership.

The one guy would ask me to accomplish something for him and I would literally knock myself out trying to give him much more than he asked for. The other guy would ask me to do something and it would make me mad. My automatic reaction to that guy was to get mad that he even asked. It was silly enough that I had to try to evaluate my odd reaction.

The bottom line was one guy was a natural born leader. The kind of person you would charge into battle with and enjoy the battle under his leadership. And the other guy was just the opposite. We had no esteem for the person and we cringed under his leadership. The ultimate motivator was respect I think. I wanted to work for the guy I respected and didn't want to work for the guy that I really had no respect for.

God made us that way. That's why when Paul set down standards for elders, who would be leaders over God's people, the requirements are stiff. If a man can't rule his own home effectively, how can he rule the church. It's pretty common sense. The word rule in those verses is the same word as translated lead in our text.

This word is someone who leads by example. Someone that the people want to follow because they respect his proven track record. Someone whose wife and children thrive under his leadership in his household. Someone who it's fun to serve with. Someone you'll work for because of

respect. Someone who you want to work hard to please because you love him, and he loves you. Love is actually the motivator.

James isn't pulling any punches when he writes, be not many teachers;
James 3:1 *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

And the writer of Hebrews says the same thing even clearer regarding the liability of being a leader;

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them—for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account—so that they will do this with joy and not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17

Not only must the leader be all of the things I just described, but he also bears the weight of having to give an account of what he did. Leaders are stewards of the Master's most valuable possession. So besides the exhausting effort, the strenuous work, we get to give an account to the owner of how we managed His most valued property. His sheep.

Did the sheep thrive? Or did they starve for lack of food and perish for lack of water. Or was the shepherd off doing who knows what while wolves came in and slaughtered the flock one by one. Shepherds will give an accounting as stewards, to the Master who owns the sheep.

I'm not stupid. I never sought to be your shepherd. I know of the pitfalls. I knew long before I ever entered this pulpit. My mistake was telling the Chief Shepherd that if the door opened, I would go through.

And it was only months after that when Dennis and Maxine retired to Alabama and Jeff asked me, could you just do what you do on Sunday evenings except do it on Sunday mornings, in the pulpit. Done deal. So now if you folks fail to thrive, I get to answer to the Master.

But it won't be for lack of feeding and watering or because of wolves. I can

be rather fierce if the sheep are threatened. I insisted on the web pages as a record of witness of everything I've ever said in this pulpit. After 8 years I can say with Paul, I did not fail to declare unto you the full council of God. It's all there. We've covered almost everything. Ultimately though, we'll never ever get to the bottom of the gold in this mine.

Leadership is simple. Love, feeding and watering, care and protection for the sheep. Give them what they need to thrive. Everything you need is available in this book. We don't need to go anywhere else. The words of this book and the blessings of the Holy Spirit are sufficient.

OK, our final word about shepherds;

*we ask of you, brothers, that you know those who labor among you, and lead you in the Lord and **admonish** you*

Raise your hand if you like to be admonished. Anyone? Like I said, people vote with their feet. You have options. But the truth is, anyone who is faithful to teach this book, verse by verse, cannot help but admonish.

Most of what this book relates is admonishment. Warning. From Genesis 3 to Revelation 22 this book warns. Rather sternly I might add. If I'm faithful to the book, you folks are going to be admonished. Period. You have options. You can go where the book is mostly ignored. Most people do.

Pollyanna Whittier asks the preacher; *Did you know there are 800 glad texts? You know, the happy texts.*

I'm getting there. I'm getting there. My problem is I'm doing this one verse at a time. Most of the book is a stern warning. MOST of scripture is corrective. Remember, our natural fallen default is sin. This whole book is a corrective against our natural fallen natures, our inborn bent towards sin.

Paul tells his elders who he will never see their faces again in this life;

*Therefore be alert and remember that for three years I never stopped **warning** each of you night and day with tears.* Acts 20:31 Same word. Admonish and warning are the same greek word.

The preacher in Pollyanna abandoned the book. Most of it. He found 801 glad texts and from that day forward he only preached on the happy texts. No more admonishment. That's a glad idea but it isn't what Paul tells the Thessalonians to expect from their leaders. I'm going to have to stick with Paul on this. Don't worry, we'll get to Philippians 4:4 some day. Look it up.

Meanwhile the only source of real gladness in this life is to know that your sins have been forgiven and you are citizens of another world. This book will in fact make you glad. When the weight of your sins is forever removed and the Spirit of the Lord Jesus takes up residence in your heart. That's the gladness we're working towards. Inner peace in a troubled world. Real gladness waits for us in another world.

But in the nasty now and now, anyone who faithfully teaches this book will be known more for corrective admonishment than glad feely good. The ultimate end game is feel good. But feel good isn't achieved by the world's shortcuts. Feel good results from peace with God and a real joy and peace in His Holy Spirit. Usually and often, admonishment is a necessary step in that process.

In 2 Corinthians Paul speaks at great length about sorrow. The necessity of sorrow to facilitate ultimate joy. Admonishment ultimately brings joy. Real joy worth having. God's joy.

Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 responds to something that was first undertaken in 1 Corinthians 5. Some guy is sleeping with his father's wife! And the church is proud about it! Sound familiar? And Paul says, if that guy won't repent, throw him out. Excommunicate him. Follow the Lord's discipline guidelines given in Matthew 18. They did! That's the background for 2 Corinthians 2. Paul says;

1 But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you again in sorrow. 2 For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful? 3 And this is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all.

Paul writes to them and says, the purpose for my admonishment that caused sorrow was the end game, which is joy. Paul says I wanted to get the admonishment, the necessary punishment out of the way so that when I get there, we can enjoy the fruits, which are joy.

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have abundantly for you. 5 But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree—in order not to say too much—to all of you. 6 Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, 7 so that on the contrary you should rather graciously forgive and comfort him, lest such a one be swallowed up by excessive sorrow. 8 Therefore I encourage you to reaffirm your love for him.

Gladness and rejoicing are directly related to admonishment and repentance. The Corinthians obeyed Paul and the process restored joy and fellowship.

Beloved, most of this book, written to captives in Satan's world is necessarily admonishment. A faithful leader admonishes the flock for the single reason of ultimately achieving peace with God and gladness and rejoicing of hearts at peace. We admonish because we love. To fail here is to NOT love. We're going for the joy and the thriving at the end of the process.

Paul tells Timothy; *5 The goal of our instruction is the love that comes*

from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith. 6 Some have strayed from these ways and turned aside to empty talk.... 1 Tim. 1:5,6a

admonish. The word is; nouthetountas verb: present participle active. Sorry folks, that means it's continuous. No end in sight of admonishment.

nouthetéō (from /noús, "mind" and /títhēmi, "to place") – properly, to place the mind, to set the mind, to fix the mind; i.e. reasoning with someone by warning (admonishing) them.

The word explains itself. Admonishment is simply reasoning at the mental level. The book places your mind in the right place. Teaching the book does that. Knowledge of God's words does that. We talk about a christian world view. That term is OK. I'd prefer to rather have as a goal, a biblical world view. Minds that instantly go to what the Word of God says about whatever the situation at hand might be.

Fallen men are not capable of living in a way that pleases God. Our default is sin. This book is God's revelation of how we must live, different from our fallen defaults, in order to please God and thrive. That begins at the level of the mind. Information. Revealed truths from God given to us in this book. *For lack of knowledge, my people are destroyed.* Hos. 6:4
Information from God to our fallen minds.

My job is to explain what the book says. What it means. God's job is to take the words of the book and convict or cause rejoicing, whatever the need of the moment may be. I'm not the Holy Spirit. I "make the sense" from the book. Then God causes repentance, obedience, faith, peace, joy; whatever He pleases to do in your life.

Once I've effectively explained the text, the rest, the results, are caused by Him. He gets all of the glory. I get spanked if I don't give you the words and the meaning. But I also get to rejoice if the book causes you to thrive, and it will. It does.

Paul tells the Corinthians in chapter 4 of his first letter; *I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.* 1 Cor. 4:14

Pam used to be a pre-school teacher. She never let them vote. Do you want to learn your ABC's or go outside and play? Do you want veggies or candy.

Paul says, you're my children. I love you. Therefore I admonish you. Teaching God's word is what a loving leader brings to his children. Why? Because he loves them and knowing God's words brings thriving. Simple.

In Colossians 3:16 Paul says we are all to admonish one another. Doesn't have to just be me up here hammering away. We are told to admonish, to teach, one another.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Col. 3:16

A perfect example of the word *nouthetountas*, to admonish or warn is given to us in Paul's instructions to Titus; ch.3

*9 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and conflicts about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 Reject a factious man after a first and second **warning**,* Titus 3:9,10

The word for admonish is translated warning here. A man who is insisting on spreading heretical words gets taken aside and admonished. We go to the word to judge if something is truth or false. If correction by admonition, warning, isn't possible, the problem persists, the person is rejected.

Admonition is corrective teaching in this process. Someone comes teaching the rapture is going to be in July of 1988, and people are getting upset, it's time for some corrective teaching from the Word of God.

Admonition. Go to the word and study to get your mind corrected. That's a shepherd's work.

*12 But we ask of you, brothers, that you know those who **labor** among you, and **lead** you in the Lord and **admonish** you,*

We're going to flip this over and consider the words that describe the responses of the sheep towards their shepherds next week. But before I close our thoughts and teaching on the shepherd's responsibilities and charges here, let me spend a few moments talking about what's NOT in this verse.

There's no pragmatism in this verse. We are so wired for pragmatism these days. What is pragmatism?

From the good old reliable interwebs, a definition; *an approach that assesses the truth of meaning of theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.*

Success is the measure of the effort born of ideas. Lack of success is the proof of false ideas or philosophies. Pragmatism 101

What're you going to do with a guy who won't modify his methods in the face of what pragmatism would define as a failure?

When I walked in here, there were roughly between 30 - 35 regular attenders. We're down to perhaps between 12 and 15? According to pragmatism, you folks should lose me like a bad habit.

But I don't see pragmatic success anywhere in Paul's formula for leaders. *we ask of you, brothers, that you know those who **labor** among you, and **lead** you in the Lord and **admonish** you*

labor, lead, admonish. We expect success when we faithfully trust and obey God's design, given to us via the Thessalonians by Paul. But we find

in Acts 2:47b these words; *And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

We could paint our hair rainbow colors and get an electric guitar and some skinny jeans and strut around up here like a rock star and you know what, people might come. Our numbers might go up. But notice in that verse in Acts, It's the Lord who adds, and the Lord who saves. *And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.* Acts 2:47b

Those guys on You Tube are busy building the First Church of the Tares. The market analysts go house to house and do surveys of what the tares would like to enjoy in a mega church. Coffee bar. check. hair on fire. check. skinny jeans and a loud hawaiian shirt. check. strut around and make sure your sermon is both short and glib. check. Loud music with cool lighting and smoke generators. check.

The tares will come. But it was the tares who forced out a godly pastor who we loved to fellowship with at conferences in a town close by.

My plan is to labor, to lead, and to admonish verse by verse through this book, and if God desires to empty this church and board up the windows, that's His prerogative. Mine is to be obedient and faithful to the words we taught this morning. And wait.

Beloved, our nation is under the judgement of God. It isn't going to get better or easier as far as the world we find ourselves in. Trust, Obey, Wait.

5 The goal of our instruction is the love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith. 6 Some have strayed from these ways and turned aside to empty talk.... 1 Tim. 1:5,6a