LSB 1 Thess. 5:12 - 15

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.

We're continuing this morning in our study of Paul's first letter to the christians at Thessalonica. And Paul is very predictable. In one way or another, depending on the need of the folks he's writing to, he always follows a pattern. Every letter will contain first, doctrine, and second, duty.

Position, practice. Doctrine, duty. This is who you are. Therefore, this is how you live. The duty or practice or admonishment to live differently from how the world around us lives, is based in the doctrine of who we are in Christ.

You have been purchased out of the blanket condemnation of this lost and fallen world by the blood of your purchaser, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has quickened you from the dead and called you out of this world to belong to Him. He has chosen you before the foundation of the world to be His own possession. His delight. His bride. You are betrothed to Jesus.

You, if you are truly a christian, have been given the downpayment, the good faith promise of your riches you will inherit in another world, and that promise and down payment is the Holy Spirit of God who dwells inside your heart. This is who you are. Therefore, this is how you live. Always from Paul.

In this letter, we have been in the duty section since Paul said Therefore, in Chapter 4 vs. 1. A little recap for you. In chapter 4 vss 1 - 8 we are called to walk in moral purity. In 4 vss 9 - 12 we are called to walk in love,

working quietly with dignity. In 4 vss 13 - 18 we are called to walk in hope of our seeing Jesus when He comes to receive His bride to Himself, the living and those who have fallen asleep. Hope of the rapture and resurrection orders our walk. We long to be walking in purity when He arrives to receive us.

Then in chapter 5 vss 1 - 11 we are admonished to walk in spiritual sobriety, awake to the call to ***Come Up Here***, always with a posture of readiness to see our Lord, whenever He should call us home. Don't become weary and fall asleep while we wait for our rescuer from heaven.

Then finally, as he closes, Paul gets specific in defining duties of shepherds and duties of sheep, and this morning we will see Paul asks us to corporately watch over one another. All of us are to be engaged in coming along side all of the rest of us. In a parallel passage to the Galations Paul simply says, *Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ*. Gal. 6:2

We introduced the "one anothers" last week in vs. 13b. Let's recap these verses quickly and we'll outline 5 different possible scenarios where we all are responsible to come along side one another and help each other as we walk in Christ.

13b 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.

5 categories of believers who need our help or indeed who might be us needing your help. Unruly christians, fainthearted christians, weak christians, exasperating christians, and even occasionally perhaps evil christians.

Last week we began with the unruly christians. And we discovered that this is a military term. A word often used in extrabiblical greek writing that

describes a soldier who won't march in step with the other soldiers. A soldier who is often awol. A soldier no one can count on. Unruly. Out of step. Off on other agendas. MIA (missing in action). A soldier who won't live within the prescribed rules for soldiers.

Paul says the help we are to render those folks is admonishment. Admonish the unruly. We all have that responsibility. Calling wandering folks gently back to safety and usefulness. Taking these folks gently perhaps to the word and teaching why what they're doing isn't allowed by Christ for those who belong to Him.

The next category of christians who may need our help are the fainthearted. We are to *encourage the fainthearted*. *oligopsuchos*. Literally the small souled.

These are the folks who huddle in the center, fearful to push back against the world. We just lived through a stress test. The state told the churches to cease and desist, and the strong hearted ultimately pushed back against the state and stood on the grounds that the church obey's Christ, not Ceasar.

We all sort of watched from the sidelines out here where no one was paying much attention to what we were doing. But it was interesting, or perhaps alarming to some of us, that christians were pointing fingers at christians saying we must bow down to Ceasar. Some real schisms developed that have remained to this day.

There's always going to be some fainthearted folks among us. Fearful folks. *Please don't rock the boat* folks. Worst case is the fainthearted christians call the bolder stronger christians unruly. We saw that happen. Some long associations at my shepherds conference were severed. Still are.

Paul says we are to ***encourage*** the more fearful among us. Remember we are enemy combatants in Satan's turf. When the world starts shaking it's sabers at us, it's normal to be frightened. The strong among us are to come along side the less strong and be encouragers.

Beloved, I'm not very bold. I talk real tough inside my four walls up here where it's safe, but when the day comes where we have to boldly stand for the authority of the truths of this book against an angry mob, I'm going to need your help. You'll find out that I'm kind of timid. I'll need you and you'll need me.

Challenges will come. We need to join together and meet opposition boldly when the challenge comes to reject the authority of this book and bow to some other worldly authority.

After all, we've read the end of the book, we win. We win. All they can do is cut off your head. Ultimately, we win no matter what they do. Be an encourager. Come along side those who are fearful. The opposition at Thessalonica was fierce. Paul had to get out of town for his own survival. With that kind of threat level, of course the timid will need the encouragement of the stronger brothers.

The next category in the help one another's are the weak among us. Encourage the fainthearted, *help the weak, asthenes*. It can certainly mean physical weakness, but in our context it is mostly speaking of those christians who are weak in their various battles with sin. Strugglers. The spiritually sickly.

Have you ever been hiking with a group of children and there's always one little guy who just can't keep up. You look back 500 feet and there he is, sitting on a log. Gave up.

We've all seen the picture of Jesus with one of the sheep straddling His shoulders getting carried along. That's all of our jobs. We are to help the weak folks who are forever getting beset in their faith by something.

It's the word in James 5:14. Is any among you sick? Call for the elders. Same word is translated sick in James and weak in Thessalonians. Help your neighbors who are struggling. Chances are you'll do it far more kindly

than I will. The next category is for me.

be patient with everyone This is my downfall. We are all admonished to be patient with each other. Strong christians, be patient with weak christians. Bold christians be patient with timid christians. Circumspect christians be patient with unruly christians. To a point.

Jesus and Peter were walking along one day and Jesus was trying to make this point to Peter. Peter was a fast mover. Jesus says you have to wait for the slow movers. And Peter in order to prove that he's getting it, he's willing to be magnanimous for the Lord's sake.

How many times should I forgive these exasperating slow movers? Seven times? Wow! Normal for the jews was three times, then you lower the boom. Peter doubles it plus one. Pretty magnanimous. Jesus says; No, seventy times seven.

Those of us who are strong and bold and couragious are to be patient with the slow movers who keep tripping over twigs and falling down. They're exhausted and can't keep up. They're sickly in their faith. They're sitting on a log in the shade taking yet another rest and the leaders know we won't get back to camp in daylight if we can't keep these folks moving.

Patiently, we have to come along side and help the folks who need help. Impatience is my worst flaw. But then I stop and think about the ceaseless patience Jesus has for me. Honestly, I must be the most exasperating sheep He's got. He has patiently and graciously forgiven me almost daily for 52 years. Don't add that up. I passed up 70 X 7 long long ago.

Jesus is patient with me and He demands that I be patient with folks just like me who are almost as exasperating as I must be to the Lord. His patience is infinite. He commands us to be patient as HE is patient. Forgiveness is often involved. Sometimes it's reciprocal as we'll see in the final one another.

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.

Here's something you don't know about me. Maybe you suspected it all along. When I'm driving into town and some guy with California plates bumps up to my back bumper and rides my tail and then zooms around me when it becomes two lanes, I utterly fail to live this verse.

My mind will be saying "where's a cop when you need one!" I wish that guy a $350 ticket and a $4800 transmission failure. Shameful lack of grace. Sometimes its just the $350 ticket. Depends. If I'm slugging it out on a hill pulling a trailer trying to keep my speed and you carelessly pull out in front of me and make me brake, then it's definitely the transmission job.

Revenge. Vengeance. Vengefulness. This is a multi-trillion dollar industry built into our culture. Lawyers and courts and judges out the kazoo so that people can get vengeance. We like to call it justice, and sometimes there's actually justice involved, but mostly what we're doing is seeking vengeance.

Vengeance pre-supposes something that is owned, something that is due to someone else that is not given. Let's consider my silly example. You come up bumping against my bumper and zoom around me impatiently sometimes right over the double yellow lines, and I'm wishing for at least a Cop or better yet a $4000 transmission failure. Why?

You've invaded my space. You've made it perfectly clear that your right to that space far exceeds any right that I might have because I was there first. Of course, because it should be obvious to anyone that you're a thousand times more important than I am.

And so it goes and we know there's really no justice due, so we wish a cop would see that incident and pull that guy over. Serve him right. But let's think about this.

One person owns everything. The real estate that I was inhabiting that got crowded by another who wanted the space I considered mine, really belongs to the Creator of all things.

What has happened in a microcosm is that I've become an idolator, a little god who owns some space and wants revenge on someone who would dare invade my space. Vengeance is only possible for one person. The real owner.

That's why our book makes it clear to fallen idolatrous little gods all over the place that think they need revenge for some wrong inflicted upon them, you aren't God, you don't really own anything, and any vengeance that actually is due, is due to God.

We have a direct parallel passage in Romans 12 that speaks clearly to this idea of vengeance due to us because we deserve something.

16 *Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 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*.

Revenge, if in fact any is actually due, belongs to God. To repay evil with evil is to intervene in an area where you become god and deal out judgement as you see it fit for some justice you've devised. You've told God, step aside, I'll take care of this. That's a frightening place to have stepped into.

Paul is very careful in his letters to tell christians, never repay evil for evil. Never seek revenge. God is the judge. God is the one who owns everything. God is the one who meets out justice. We do not.

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.

Do christians render evil onto other christians. Sad that we have to say yes. We are fallen creatures who retain our sin nature even after we are regenerated and have the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit living in us to give us victory over our old self.

We sin just the same. I wish, oh how I wish the Spirit was stronger and the flesh was weaker. Christians are very capable of sinning against other christians.

Jealousy comes to mind. That might be a cause of sin. Lust certainly is possible among believers and sin against a brother or sister might happen. Sometimes dis-agreements can bring anger and sin between brothers. All kinds of possibilities for formerly fallen people to sin egregiously against each other.

Add to that the fact that Jesus taught us in the parables that not everyone growing together in the field is wheat. Some that look identical to us, are in fact tare's. A wheat like plant that looked like wheat but was useless. Fake wheat.

Lots of sources for sin against you to be possible from within the church. What do you do? Paul tells us the answer. First, you don't get even. You don't seek revenge. You don't seek justice for yourself.

If there's dirty laundry in the church we don't sue our brothers in the world's courts. Paul addresses this to the Corinthians.

1 Cor. 6:1 *Does any one of you, when he has a case against another, dare to be tried before the unrighteous and not before the saints? 2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not worthy to constitute the smallest law courts? 3 Do you not*

know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? 4 So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint those who are of no account in the church as judges? 5 I say this to your shame. Is it really this way: there is not one wise man among you who will be able to pass judgment between his brothers? 6 On the contrary, brother is tried with brother, and that before unbelievers! 7 Actually, then, it is already a failure for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?

Did you get all of that. Some brother sins against you, Paul says it's better to be defrauded than to take the matter, brother against brother before the worlds courts.

Paul is astonished. Don't you have some elders with enough wisdom to adjudicate matters within the church? First of all there should never be this level of trouble between christians. Second of all, if you do manage to get this messed up, you don't take all the dirty laundry before unbelievers. What kind of witness is that.

The one area where we will immediately seek help from the world though is if someone is harming women and children who are weaker than the perpetrator. Then the world gets involved because safety of weaker folks trumps even our witness for Christ in the world. That's a great sadness to admit but we know that it is happening in corrupt churches and there's zero tolerance for that kind of a scenario.

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 verse covers a LOT of ground, doesn't it. Someone does evil to me, I am to return good to them. That's what God has done for me, and that's what God expects me to repay others who may have done evil to me. You're never more like God than when you're seeking the best good for someone who inflicted evil upon you.

Finally, this verse goes beyond the community of believers. Paul commands us to seek good for one another, but he doesn't stop there. He says, not only for the one anothers, those who ultimately have been purchased by Christ and who in common with us belong to Him, but seek good for all people.

This has a funny twist in our culture. To actually seek good for those outside the church really only has limited possibilities. To seek good for all peoples requires you to tell them the truth. Truth they do not want to hear.

There's only one possibility of good for the lost. Truth, repentence and redemption. It's actually pretty narrow. That should be our first priority. But of course beyond that we are to just be sweet friends to all who we meet. Be winsome and helpful and have their best interest ahead of yourself, and God will open the doors for witnessing.

Earlier this week I listened to a youtube that caught my attention. It was a question / answer session at Grace Church where I grew up and still cast my lot, John MacArthur has been so helpful to me over 52 years.

In any case the fellow posed the question which he claimed had the agreement of the Southern Baptist Convention and Al Mohler, in particular who I also love to hear. And within his statement, he had a hard time asking a question, he was really trying to use that platform to usurp a platform to state his beliefs, in any case he said that those baptists believe that it is the church's job to make the world a better place. make the world a better place.

And it became obvious that his belief in how we are to accomplish that is to join with marxism in dismantling all society which is a game of oppressors and oppressed, and marxism says have a revolution, tear that stuff down, and rebuild a more just society. Social justice.

Those are interesting questions, and definitely a conversation the church is to be engaged in. The church is in the business of relief from sin and guilt

purchased for us by Jesus blood. Spiritual relief from the debt of sin against God.

But relief in this world from the oppressors of this world, whatever the method, for the oppressed is not our main thing in the church of Jesus the Christ.

In fact relief for the oppressed as defined by our culture is all about relieving oppressed women of unborn babies in their wombs. Relief for the oppressed defined by our culture means reversing the shame of sodomy so that the one who is shamed is the one who holds the biblical view of sodomy.

Relief for the oppressed includes freedom from gender identities assigned biologically by the Creator, not at birth, but at initial inception of a fertilized human embryo. Social justice defines relief for racial inequalities by creating new inequalities that are more egregious than the original problem that we all recognize.

So be careful if you sign on with the culture in their methods of making the world a better place. I watched a little documentary about the demise of Sears and Roebuck that had played on Sunday Morning TV show. Sears at one time was the largest book publisher in the United States. Just by their catalog production. They surpassed all other book printing in the world.

And the moderator of the discussion said the biggest blow against communism would have been to take 10,000 of those millions of catalogs and distribute them in Russia. 1500 pages of mind boggling choices to people who had to stand in line to get a loaf of bread, or a pound of bacon if you were a lucky communist.

Is it the job of the church to make the world a better place? We're working on vs. 15 in case you just woke up and said to yourself, how in the world did we get here.

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.

How do we seek after good, not only for the household of faith which is our first priority in Galations 6:10. Our parallel passage. 10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to the family of faith*.

First priority, good for our brethren. Second priority, good for all men, all peoples. That's a big order. How do we accomplish those ideals. Good for our brothers in Christ, and good for all men.

The answer is; Good for all men is not our business in a fallen world, but it is a by-product of christians being christians. I looked repeatedly for where Al Mohler or the SBC said it's the church's work to make Satan's world a better place. I found neither. The fellow was twisting words to accomplish his own agenda.

Never the less, real christianity in practice cannot help but spill over into the outside world that surrounds us. Making the world better is simply a by-product of righteous living.

Real christians who live within the moral rules of God's commandments simply can't help but thrive. It's just built into the universe, even though Satan has done his best to undo those God ordained truths that will bring thriving.

I've often said, even people who aren't redeemed, people who aren't going to heaven, who keep some form of God's moral laws, can't help but thrive. Exhibit A. Utah. The Mormons don't believe Jesus is equal in Deity with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, and thus are precluded from salvation, but they fully endorse the moral portion of God's 10 commandments.

Work ethic. Marriage. Families. Property ownership. Truthfulness. All of the moral commands, and they are like one of the BLM's fenced

enclosures. The have thrived wonderfully, only because they adopted God's moral laws. Silo's after silo's filled with grain. I have mormon bread in my freezer that we get from Linda Peterson. Superb.

Thriving is a by-product of christianity. And you can study so-called Western Civilization and it was born after the dark ages and thrived within the reformation time period from the mid 1500's to the mid 1900's. The greatest thriving and wealth and relief from poverty the world has ever known and enjoyed came as a by product of biblical christianity.

It isn't perfect. How could it be. The Bible is clear about who temporally rules this world. *We know that we are of God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*. 1 Jn. 5:19

Of course there are problems and inequalities. We live in a world of sinners ruled by Satan. Did people with more melanin and darker skin suffer at the hands of white europeans. Absolutely. Did the indians get brutalized by white europeans. Absolutely. Will unraveling our civilization and ebracing anarchy fix it? Of course not. Ask the oligarch's in Russia. Communism came, a few got wildly rich and the poor are more poor than ever.

Even with all of the problems that are very real, Western civilization born in reformation christianity brought the greatest thriving the world has ever enjoyed. Ever. It was the christians who have given dignity and protection to women. It was the christians who modeled what a family should look like with safety and security for women and children. It was christians who began the hospitals and ultimately the advances in health care we enjoy.

Doing good to all men is the by product of christian influence in any society where the thriving God brings to even marginally obedient peoples just spills over for all to have better lives.

We are salt. An ***influence*** of both flavor and preservation to the rest of the condemned world. It isn't our job now to make Satan's world a better

world. But some day, we look forward to the day when Jesus will return to depose Satan and reclaim this world that is rightfully His.

The world will never ever see the justice it craves until that day. There will be no justice and there will be no peace until the day that Jesus returns and deposes Satan and takes back the authority to reign in this world on David's throne in Jerusalem for a thousand years. Listen as I close with Isaiah 42;

1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations.

2 "He will not cry out or raise His voice,
Nor make His voice heard in the street.

3 "A bruised reed He will not break,
And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;
He will faithfully bring forth justice.

4 "He will not be disheartened or crushed,
Until He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law."

5 Thus says God the LORD,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread out the earth and its offspring,
Who gives breath to the people on it,
And spirit to those who walk in it,

6 "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness,
I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you,
And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the nations,

7 To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the dungeon,
And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

8 "I am the LORD, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images.

9 "Behold, the former things have come to pass,
Now I declare new things;
Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you."

10 Sing to the LORD a new song,
Sing His praise from the end of the earth!
You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it.
You islands and those who dwell on them.

11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices,
The settlements where Kedar inhabits.
Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud,
Let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains.

12 Let them give glory to the LORD,
And declare His praise in the coastlands.

13 The LORD will go forth like a warrior,
He will arouse His zeal like a man of war.
He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry.
He will prevail against His enemies.