

is an imposition of strain. They have the welfare of the saints on their hearts, but their concerns will often be misunderstood. How should the leader respond? There is but one response: longsuffering. This is the character of all labor that has love as its motive (1 Cor. 13:4). The leader must heed the Word in total obedience.

THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

"Exhortations to Help"

1 Thessalonians 5:14

Introduction

1. It is true that all believers are to encourage one another in the Lord (v. 11). This is the interdependence so logical in the body (1 Cor. 12).

2. But this interchange between members of the body has never displaced the leadership of a local church (vv. 12, 13). In fact, unless this leadership is acknowledged properly, there will be no peace experienced. Hence, peace is commanded and urged (v. 13).

3. When the assembly recognizes the principle of order and leadership--rather than the "everybody is equal" idea--then the burden is on the leadership to do the will of God. What is that will of God for the leadership? It is given by earnest "exhortation." This verb is the common term for "comfort" and often referred to by transliteration as a proper name for the Holy Spirit (Paraclete). Admittedly, all in the body should heed this exhortation, but in the context, it has special concerns for the leaders. Here, then, is God's will explicitly stated for leaders:

1. WARN

a. Action described

This verb is a present active imperative. It has the same force as its participle (v. 12). It includes 1) instruction and 2) warning. In these days of "positive thinking," this sort of word is a taboo. But not so with God!

b. People involved

They are noted as "unruly." This term comes from a Greek word meaning to "break rank." It is a military word. What a challenging task for a leader. The word is only used here in the New Testament, though its verb form is found in 2 Thessalonians 3:7 and the adverb in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11.

An insubordinate spirit manifests itself in several ways (2 Thess. 3:11, 12). Refusal to submit to rule is a weakness and not a strength, as is so often considered (1 Cor. 16:16). When there is order in the church, there is evidence that there is submission to the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 14:40). Without rule, no assembly can be constituted (Acts 20:17). Indeed, no church can prosper without effective fellowship and efficient service. Leaders are therefore urged to stick to their responsibility to warn lest they sacrifice godly order in the interest of false peace (peace at any price concept). It is true that self-will must be studiously avoided, but the basic presupposition in the Word is the control of the Holy Spirit so that all will be ministered to with profit.

2. COMFORT

a. Action described

The verb used is not common (cf. 2:11; John 11:31). It has the same basic meaning as the more common verb root found in the term Paraclete. It means to bring comfort and encouragement.

b. People involved

They are called "feeble-minded." Literally, this means "little souled" or "small souled." The word refers to those who are despondent. It is used in the LXX in a good sense (Isa. 57:15) and in a bad sense (Prov. 18:14). These people lack energy and boldness in which the unruly superabound. It points out that any given assembly will have various sorts of people. They can be expected whether they are desirable or not. Oh, if only those who walk in the Spirit could understand this and work with the leader (pastor) to control the situation. These small souled people need constraint where the unruly need restraint. Perhaps these tender souls need comfort in connection with sensitiveness to criticism (2:3-6), dread of persecution (3:3), or apprehensiveness concerning the second coming (4:13-5:11).

3. SUPPORT

a. Action described

Here is another present middle imperative. It means to "hold on by" or "keep close to." The strong, therefore, must not turn away from the weak. Rather, it is expected that the strong will bear with and care for the weak in the spirit of our Lord and follow His example (Mark 6:34; Rom. 15:1; Heb. 2:17, 18; Jude 22, 23).

b. People involved

The term used here is "strengthless." There are many reasons why people are this way. Included are these: 1) They lack knowledge of the will of God. 2) They lack courage to face persecution or criticism. 3) They have not submitted their bodily drives to the Holy Spirit. 4) They lack stability and are easily carried away by supposedly new ideas. These sort of folk will need more pastoral care than the rest because they are not mature as some others might be. Like the poor, these weak believers will always be around.

4. BE PATIENT

a. Action described

"Be long-tempered" is the meaning of the verb here. It is to be compared with "short-tempered." This is the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation. It does not hastily retaliate nor promptly punish. The word is opposite to anger and is broadly associated with the idea of patience (cf. Heb. 6:12, 15; James 5:7, 10). Those who do not surrender to circumstances nor succumb under trial are patient. Despondency and discouragement are its opposites. Patience and long-temperedness are linked with hope. Those who are controlled by the Spirit will bear this fruit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

b. People involved

The preposition used here means "towards." The object of that preposition is a pronoun referring to all believers, whatever their character. It is always a temptation to show less forbearance toward the weak, but the text intends the attitude to be inclusivistic.

Conclusion Leaders will find that resistance, passive or active, to their God-given responsibilities (vv. 12-14),