

"The Ministry of Restoration—part 7" 1 Thessalonians 5:14—continued

People are different. People in the church are different. Needy people in the church are different. The way we minister to needy people in the church needs to be different. We can't help everybody the same way. People in need surely need our help but the demonstration of help will vary.

That's what we began to learn last week as we investigated Paul's teaching in 1 Thessalonians 5:14. "And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

Review... Let's review some initial observations made last time based on this verse.

1. There were at least four different kinds of people in the church at Thessalonica. One could safely assume these four kinds of people are present in most if not all churches. Here are the categories Paul used:

The idle

The timid

The weak

Everyone else

2. In this verse Paul gives an exhortation to the "brothers" who received this letter. He said that the "brothers" were to identify the above four groups of people in the church and then treat them accordingly.

This would imply that you do not handle an *idle* person the same way you would the *timid* person, nor the *timid* the same as the *weak* person, and so on.

3. We are not to treat everyone in the church the same way. The *idle* need to be "warned." The *timid* need to be "encouraged." The *weak* need "help." *Everyone* needs "patient" treatment.

Review first category...

Last week we investigated the first category, both who the people are and how we are to help them.

Category #1: The Idle

The idle: Greek *ataktos* = out of order, out of place, not in proper order

--hence, disorderly, insubordinate, even undisciplined; deviating from the prescribed order or rule

--hence, lazy, idle. The KJV uses the term 'unruly.'

--The related verb *ataktéo* means "to set oneself outside the order," "to evade obligations," "to act without discipline, or irresponsibly."^[1]

Examples of word usage:

--used of soldiers when they were out of rank

--used in Greek society of those who did not show up for work

Warn the idle: The Greek verb is *noutheteo* which is comprised of the noun *nous* (for mind) and the verb *tithemai* (to put into).

--it's a command meaning to admonish, to exhort, to instruct, to warn

--it appears in Acts 20:31 and Col . 1:28

--it means "to provide instruction so as to correct behavior and belief"^[2]

--it appears in 5:12 where Paul says concerning pastors, "who are over you in the Lord and who *admonish* you."

Are there any indications in the letter what kind of people Paul had in mind when he referred to the "out of order" ones? Yes. We looked at the following references...

--4:3 "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality..."

The fact that Paul gave this instruction indicates the fact that some in Thessalonica struggled with moral purity. If a person engages in immoral activity, how should the church treat them? Do they need *encouragement*? No. They need to be *warned*.

--4:11 "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you."

What does that instruction indicate about what was happening in Thessalonica? Some were NOT leading quiet lives and working with their own hands. Apparently, some were sponging off the rest of the church. And based on what Paul said in his second letter (which was written about six months after the first letter), some folks didn't take to heart this instruction in the first letter. Note the same word *idle* in the following...

--2 Thes 3:6-8 "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is **idle** and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.^{?7?} For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not **idle** when we were with you,^{?8?} nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you."

--2 Thes 3:11-12 “We hear that some among you are **idle**. They are not busy; they are busy-bodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.”

Paul did here what he told the church to do in 1 Thes 5:14. He “warned the idle.” What was to happen if the idle didn’t respond to the verbal warning? Note...

--2 Thes 3:14-15 “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but **warn** him as a brother.”

Observation: When a person is knowingly disobeying God’s Word, he doesn’t need our “support” or “encouragement.” Paul says he needs our *warning*. And if he refuses to heed our warning he needs even stronger warning in the form of action that is intended to help him come to grips with the seriousness of his condition so he will change.

Application Questions:

1. According to 5:14, whose responsibility is to to “warn the idle?” The “brothers,” that is, everyone who is a part of the church at Thessalonica.
2. What is involved in *warning* someone? What must you do in practical terms if you are going to engage in the ministry of *warning* an idle person?

That’s where we left off last time. Let’s go a step further this week...

New Material...

3. How do you reconcile this responsibility with Jesus’ command in Matthew 7:1, “Do not judge or you too will be judged.”?
4. How should we determine if someone is “idle” and therefore needing our warning?

Category #2: The Timid

The timid: the Greek is *oligopsychos*, a rare word

--literally “small -souled” or “short breath”; those who are losing heart, perhaps on the basis of physical weakness

--we could translate 5:14, “Encourage those who are losing heart.”

--feeble-minded (KJV); faint-hearted (NKJV)

-- pertaining to having limited or diminished motivation for the attainment of some goal^[3]

--refers to those who do not have courage, those whose hearts are not strong

--carries the idea of being despondent, exhausted, and at times anxious

--in 5:14 it seems to have the idea of ‘weakness of faith’

--Kittle observes, “The reference is to inner spiritual vigor (or the lack of it) in relation to the task that God has set.”^[4]

Examples of a small-souled person:

Describe someone that fits this description. I think of a person in a rest home or care facility whose health is failing and whose perspective is likewise failing. I also think of a person who has been hit by a series of losses (like Naomi in Ruth 1).

What does this kind of person need from us? They don’t need what the *idle* person needs, to be challenged to change (i.e. to “buck up!”). Rather, as Paul tells us...

Encourage the timid: The Greek is *paramutheomai* and appears 4 times in NT

--translated ‘comfort’ all four times in the AV

--to encourage, cheer up someone

--to console someone, especially in connection with death or other tragic events

--can mean to speak to someone in a friendly way

--can carry the idea of admonish (according to Kittle), to urge, to win over, to spur on, to persuade, to convince; other nuances include, to refresh, to cheer, to tend (as with plants)

--the main sense of the related noun is comfort, but can also refer to the means of comfort, in the financial world referring to compensation or a tip

Examples of usage:

John 11:19 “And many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to *comfort* them in the loss of their brother.”

1 Thes. 2:11-12 “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ^{12?} encouraging [*parakalountes*], comforting [*paramutheomai*] and urging [*marturomai*] you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”

Application Questions:

1. What is involved in *encouraging* someone? What must you do in practical terms if you are going to engage in the ministry of *encouraging* a small-souled person?
2. How can we determine if someone is struggling because they are “timid” rather than because they are “idle” and therefore need our encouragement rather than our warning?
3. What is the goal of encouraging a timid person? What outcome are we seeking to accomplish? It’s not necessary a change in the person’s circumstances (the person may never leave the rest home). It is to fill them with hope and courage in the midst of their trial (to encourage means to *put courage in* another person).
4. Why is it important to have the proper goal in mind as we seek to encourage the timid person?

Next Week: We’ll explore the final two categories...

Category #3: The Weak

The weak:

Help the weak:

Category #4: Everyone else

Everyone else:

Be patient with everyone:

[1] Kittle, *TDNT*

[2] Greek-English Lexicon

[3] Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, c1989). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (LN 25.290). New York : United Bible societies.

[4] Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1995, c1985). *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. Translation of: Theologisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament. (Page 1353). Grand Rapids , Mich. : W.B.

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