**Faith in Uncertain Times – Part 8**

**Congregational Life - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15**

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – March 14th, 2021

**Intro:**

* The congregation in Thessalonica had been established, and they were growing stronger in their faith and deeper in their love. Paul encouraged them on the last page of his letter to continue to move forward as a congregation.
* To continue to move forward as a church, we must get on board the three ships that will move us forward as a church: leadership, fellowship, and worship. You have to get on board, and then we need to raise our sails so that we can catch the wind of the Spirit and move to where He is taking us.
* We must be careful not to sink our own ships by our dissing (disrespect, disorder, and disconnection) or we lower the anchors of pride, laziness, or fear. This is the nature of our fallen condition. But God gives us a new nature by His grace that we can keep the faith and keep loving each other forward. This is a future in the love of the Lord.
* By God's hand and grace, Paul addresses these things by instructing us how to set sail and move forward in love, in faith and in hope.
* Let first look at the responsibilities of those called to lead and the responsibilities of those called to follow within the Christian community: the church.

**Christian Leadership**

**1 Thess 5:12-13a NIV**

**Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.**

* *Acknowledge those who*
  + *Work hard among you* – this is what leaders do; they work hard among you. These people are signing up to work hard. In Christianity, the leaders serve the people; the people do not serve the leaders. The leaders hold everything up; the leaders support everything. They are the ones who are underground working, as a foundation of a house . . . they will work hard, and they should work hard.
  + *Care for you in the Lord* – these are the people who care for you in the Lord. They care, so they pay the bills and do the budgets; they care, so they study hard to preach and teach; they care, so they organize; they care, so they agonize in decisions; they care, so they keep the building up; they care, so they pray, and counsel and laugh and weep . . . This is not a natural care but a supernatural care. They are caring for your eternal souls.
  + *Admonish you* – They have the responsibility to call you out on things that are not okay or not Christlike. They are to do this out of love for you. They have to set some boundaries for your protection and the protection of others. They have a responsibility to tell you what you need to hear, and not just what you want to hear. This must be done because of love.
* *Highly regard those in love - because of their work*. Those who do these things desire our regard, and we should acknowledge them in our prayers, in our support, in our love, and in our respect. Love your leaders – they have agreed to step into this. They are doing this because they love this church, so love them back.
* This is how leadership stays afloat, and this is how we can move forward being blown along by the wind of the Spirit. The second ship we need to look at is fellowship.

**Christian Fellowship**

**1 Thess 5:13b-15 NIV**

**Live in peace with each other. 14 And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.**

* Now, this is true for all of us, and it is doubly true for leaders. For this ship to sail and not to sink, this is what we need to do:
* *Live in peace with each other* – you can live in peace or live in pieces, your choice. A house divided will not stand (Matt. 12:25). The enemy knows he is a defeated foe. His strategy is to have us, not to fight him, but to fight each other. This is how he survives against God's army. For us to be at peace, this means you must lay down your weapons that you are using against each other, stop grinding your ax, stop waring over old wounds, don't hold grudges, pray, forgive, choose humility, don't through stones but use them to build bridges.
* *Warn those who are idle and disruptive* – This is a word in Greek that means both of these things. This being said, the sense is that we are to warn those who, by their idleness (lack of doing what needs to be done) they are causing disruption. For example, around the house: not paying the bills, or fixing what is broken, or at work: not answering emails or doing your work well, or in the church: not following up, or taking care of business. Because we are choosing not to do our job or responsibility, it causes problems for others and disruptions in what can be done. We see this all the time, and it causes problems. So, get on the stuff that needs to be done.
* *Encourage the disheartened* – We are to encourage those who are timid, worried, discouraged, fearful, inadequate, lacking in confidence, despondent, or sad, etc. A word of encouragement can go a long way. Do look to be an encourager and cheer each other on. There is no spiritual gift of discouragement.
* *Help the weak –* The weak can be weak physically, spiritually, emotionally, relationally, or mentally. Instead of ignoring them, or we are called to help them. Christians are to walk toward the weak, not away from them. And each of us is weak in our own way; we are called to help each other; this keeps us in fellowship.
* *Be patient with everyone* – Fellowship and relationship require patience. People take time. Don't give up on them. Don't treat them harshly if they cannot move as fast as you can on an issue or in an area. Remember how much patience the Lord has shown you and do the same to other people. Everyone is learning, and everyone is in development.
* *Make sure no one pays back wrong for wrong* – This will sink the fellowship in a hurry. If we live by the rule: "a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye," we would all be sitting in darkness, gumming our food. If we are returning "evil for evil," the end result is more evil. The only way to overcome evil is with good (see Rom. 12:17-21). Not only are we not to commit evil against each other, we are to make sure others do not do so as well. This is all of our responsibility – never encourage each other in doing evil back to people. When you see it, warn them not to do it and what the end result will be if they continue down that path. Remember, all these things are being said to church people, and these are the things that sink churches and damage the reputation of Christ in the community.
* *Do good* – Strive to do what is good, first for each other and then for everyone else. We have a responsibility to do good to each other. We are to "spur one another one to love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24). Get creative with this . . .

**Conclusion and Communion**

* These things hold us all together and keep us moving forward with the wind of the Spirit. When we are all "on board" with each other in our leading and in our fellowship, we can really go places, but we will sink ourselves if we live according to our fallen nature. Let us grow in grace for and with one another, let us grow in love for one another, and let us see where the Spirit of the Lord will take us.
* Next week we will examine the next ship of worship, where we see the importance of what we do spiritually together.
* Communion – one of the greatest ways of connecting with each other is through focusing on what we have in common. We share the same spiritual DNA because we all have the blood of Jesus flowing through our spiritual veins. We are true "brothers and sisters" to each other. We are the family of God, and we are united by the Spirit of God because of the Love of God and the grace we have in the Son of God.