

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Responsible Living Within The Church 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 Part 1

This morning/evening we are beginning the last major section of this epistle. This section goes from **1 Thess. 5:12** through **V. 22**. This section contains a series of exhortations or commands. They have to do with responsible living within the church.

Hopefully you will remember that we have been involved in a prolonged study of “The coming of Christ.” It started in **1 Thess. 4:13-18** with the return of Christ to catch up the church to Himself at the rapture. And then continued into **1 Thess. 5:1-11** where we saw a transition from the coming of Christ to catch up the church from the earth to the coming of Christ to the earth in judgment during the “Day of the Lord.”

After the discussion of the the catching up of the church or the rapture the section ended in **V. 18** with these words, **“Therefore comfort one another with these words.”** Then after the discussion of the “day of the Lord” the section ended in **V. 11** with these words, **“Therefore encourage one another; and build up one another, just as you also are doing.”** Paul is calling the Thessalonians to encourage one another and build up one another in light of the fact that the race we have entered will in fact end. History as we know it is not going in circles or moving forward without purpose. There will be a conclusion. In light of all this let us live in a responsible manner. We cannot be indifferent to the present just because we are anticipating an end to life as we now know it. So transitioning right out of a discussion of the day of the Lord and the wrath that was to come the apostle talks about how we are to live in the church today.

We have so many unhealthy churches. Churches that do not know the power of God, the peace of God, or the joy of God. It is not enough for a church to be busy or for a church to be big it must be LIVING RESPONSIBLY. Are we living responsibly? Are we carrying out the duties that have been assigned to us? Over the next several weeks we will be examining a number of very important areas that a church needs to be looking at. The first area that we will be looking at this morning/evening will be responsibilities regarding leaders.

Let us read **VV. 12,13** **“But we request of you brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, (13) and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.”**

Who are the leaders of Valley Bible Church, or in other words who “have charge over you in the Lord.” The recognized leaders of Valley Bible Church are the “elders.” I am not the leader of Valley Bible. I am only one of three elders who share leadership. The other elders are Jim Kross and Gerry Andersen. Someone might ask how did we come to this form of government within our church and we would say that we came to this form of church government because we saw this to be the biblical pattern. **In Acts 14:23** it tells us that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the churches that they established.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Responsible living in respect to the relationship that exists between the leaders of a church or the elders, and the of the of the church is a two-way street. The leaders of a church have certain responsibilities toward the people who make up the church. And the people of the church have certain responsibilities toward their leaders.

This is where the health of a church begins. If there is an unhealthy relationship between the elders and the people we cannot have a healthy church or a church that is living responsibly. If the elders are not fulfilling their proper spiritual responsibilities to the people or the people to their elders then we cannot have a healthy church. The relationship between the people and their leaders is crucial in the church and devastation of massive proportions occurs in churches where there is a breakdown in this area.

When integrity goes, when credibility goes, when confidence goes, when trust goes, when love goes, when affection goes it will have devastating consequences for the church. The church is dependent initially upon the relationship between sheep and the shepherds. I have been at this church now for 23 years and by far the most severe trauma that our fellowship has gone through has been when there has been a breakdown in this area.

I would like to share with you that the elders of Valley Bible have always been loved and highly esteemed by every person that has made up this fellowship over the years but this just is not so. There are been at least twice in my years with you that the elders as a group have come under assault by a certain segment of our fellowship. When that occurs the church is susceptible to a root of bitterness taking hold and ultimately to a division taking place. But even conversely there are times when the sheep can become a major disappointment to the shepherds. When this takes place it can lead to discouragement and ultimately to resignation on the part of the leaders which again exposes the fellowship to various kinds of attacks. **WHEN THE PEOPLE LOSE CONFIDENCE IN THEIR SHEPHERDS OR THE SHEPHERDS IN THEIR PEOPLE THEN YOU HAVE THE POTENTIAL FOR DEVASTATION WITHIN THE CHURCH.**

I believe that the passage we have before us this morning can help a great deal in preventing this kind of breakdown from taking place. Let us begin, based on **VV. 12-13**, to answer the question **WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THOSE WHO HAVE CHARGE OVER YOU IN THE LORD? WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ELDERS BASED ON THESE TWO VERSES?**

WE HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LABOR AMONG THE SHEEP

Let us read **V. 12** **“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you.”** The word translated “diligently labor” is the word (KOPIAO). The leaders of the church are to be laboring. The are to be working to the point of weariness.

Notice the sphere of labor for church leaders. These church leaders Paul is referring to in this passage are “diligently laboring among” the Thessalonian church. They are not laboring outside of the church in the community but inside the church.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

What were these leaders doing? Explaining the gospel, sharing the truth, warning them, admonishing them, counseling them. Paul expected that the spiritual leaders of a particular fellowship, to diligently labor, to work hard in ministering to the spiritual lives of the people within the church.

But did Paul expect that same standard of himself? Remember **1 Thess. 2:7-9** “**But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. (8) Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. (9) For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.**” This is not optional. If an individual assumes a position of spiritual leadership, this is the level that they need to be functioning at.

Anything less than this kind of exertion will be unable to inspire the church to make the sacrifices necessary to continue to advance the kingdom of God. Most people in this congregation this morning have jobs. And when you finish those jobs many of you have to commute home. After you have finally finished cleaning up and perhaps eating dinner how many of you want to jump up out of your chair and extend yourself in ministry to let us say a children’s group, a youth group, an adult group, to a brother in Christ who has been struggling or a neighbor that needs to understand the gospel of Christ. I know that it is not an easy thing to do. But how much more difficult would it be if the leaders of the church whether they are the elders or members of the church staff were stretched out at home asleep.

I have known people on church staff’s that have actually held the view that their ministry was a 40 hr a week job. This is an abomination. This cannot be!! Why? Because the people that they are supposedly leading when you add the hours they are spending in their secular employment with the hours they are spending in spiritual ministry, it is way over the 40 hours a week.

The leaders of a church in order to fulfill Paul’s expectation of laboring among the sheep must live a disciplined life. This is an absolute necessity for a person who is considering accepting an offer of spiritual oversight. A person who is in a position of oversight must be pressing themselves. Certainly we see this again in the life of the Apostle Paul. What does **Col. 1:28-29** say “**And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. (29) And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.**” This is the goal. We are not just trying to get people saved. We are not content with marginal spirituality. It is a consuming thing. A faithful shepherd pours his life into the sheep.

Is it possible for a leader to give themselves to the work to such an extent that it becomes a fault? I believe that this can happen.

1) When they knowingly abuse their physical bodies - We must recognize that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and it is not our own. I don’t believe that it is necessarily honorable to neglect the proper care of our body in the name of “ministry.” There is a balance we need to maintain.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Robert Murray McCheyne when he was about to die at the age of 29 turned to a friend and said, “I killed the horse and now I can’t deliver the message.” There is a point in which a person can go too far.

2) When we neglect our responsibilities to our families - In **Cor. 7** Paul makes it very clear that those who choose to marry and to have families will be distracted from ministry. He doesn’t condemn this choice but he simply acknowledges the consequences of that choice. A man who chooses to marry and have a family must out of necessity be responsive to their needs.

But even so every elder, every spiritual leader, needs to continually strive to have their ministries characterized by “diligent labor.” Not only do leaders have the responsibility to labor among the congregation but they are given responsibility to exercise authority over the congregation.

WE HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER THE CONGREGATION

Look again at **V. 12** “**But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord.**” The expression “**charge over you**” comes from the word “PROISTAMENOUS.” It literally means “to stand before.” It is used in **1 Tim. 3** three times and is translated in the NAS by the word “manage.” It is used again in **1 Tim. 5:17** and is translated in the NAS by the word “rule.” Certainly one of the ways in which elders will diligently labor is in the area of giving leadership.

Leadership does not just happen. It is something that must be worked at. It is the responsibility of the elders to take care of the general health of the church. We as elders must be continually considering all the factors that go into making this church healthy. The elders must be continually concerned about whether or not our fellowship is coming to know the Lord better and enjoying a deeper walk with Him. The elders must be continually concerned about the congregation placing a higher and higher priority on prayer and the study of His word. The elders must be continually concerned about the congregation experiencing a growing love for one another. The elders must be continually concerned about the church continuing to pursue the mission of the Church. These concerns will lead to us committing ourselves to prayer. These concerns will lead us to working at seeking new ways to stimulate and encourage. These concerns will lead us to planning, strategizing, and implementing. And all this taking place in the midst of a myriad of distractions. This is not an easy work. To stand before or to lead is not like a stroll in the park.

Notice the phrase “in the Lord.” This leadership is not to be exercised in the sphere of our flesh. Not in respect to our strength or in respect to our wishes or purposes. We are simply undershepherds of Christ. And this ministry of leadership must be carried in the same manner and with the same purposes as Christ Himself.

You will remember Christ’s words to his disciples after James and John were perceived by them to be vying for a place of honor in the kingdom in **Matt. 20:25-28** “**But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.**”

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

(26) It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, (27) And whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; (28) Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Some people might read this and mistakenly believe that Jesus is making a statement against the exercise of authority. Certainly this cannot be true because when Christ was present in this world and during his public ministry he frequently exercised authority. His point is that you don't exercise authority like the Gentiles who used it in order to serve their own purposes.

The leaders of a church should not be exercising authority in order to serve their purposes but rather to serve the needs of the church that they stand before. Or in other words they are to exercise their authority “in the Lord.”

It is not easy to lead a church in the way of the Lord. It is a very demanding responsibility. This is why prayer must be an important part of the elders work.

WE HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TEACH

Look again at **V. 12** “**But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.**” The word translated “give instruction” is from the word “NOUTHETEO.” It literally means “to admonish.” This is instruction with a view to correction. In other words it is saying, “If you go this way it will cause you problems rather than doing this, we need to go this way.”

The only skill that is mentioned as being necessary for a leadership position in the church is listed for us in **1 Tim. 3:2**. Church leaders must be apt to teach or able to teach. Why is this so important for those in leadership? Consider **Tit. 1:9** when it is giving a list of qualifications for the office of elder. It says , “**Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.**” If elders are going to be able to lead a congregation effectively they need to know where that congregation needs to be headed according to the Word of God and be exhorting them to go in that direction. And If perchance that congregation is being challenged by certain individuals in going a different direction those elders need to be able to refute them.

When I get up in front of you on Sat/Sun it is my responsibility. Where does this fellowship need to go? We need to have leaders are committing to diligently laboring We need leaders who are not leaders by title only but who are in fact willing to step into the arena of taking charge in the Lord..... And we need leaders who are not only willing but able to open up the Scriptures and show us the way.