



1 Thessalonians 5:12-18
Shepherds & Sheep—Part 1
From Sermon 4.3.22

Read *1 Thessalonians 5:12-18*

Review from Sunday's sermon: As far as Paul would have known, this would be both his first and last letter to the Thessalonians. The Holy Spirit has him start to conclude the letter by equipping them for the inevitable issues that arise in even the healthiest of churches. Even if their doctrine is sound and their leadership biblical, they will still have the subject of relationships to deal with: the members toward their pastors, the pastors toward the members, and the member's relationships with each other.

1. What do we know about perfect churches? They do not exist. There are better churches and worse churches. But, no perfect ones...not even Thessalonica. Why? Because the church on earth is run by and populated by sinners. Even though most are redeemed sinners, everyone is still battling the old nature and bring with them sins, hurts, issues, and dysfunctions. See also *1 Corinthians 3:3*

2. Name and define the four attitudes and practices a healthy church should have regarding their leaders/pastors/elders:

Recognize: conscious effort to see the work they do, what's involved, and the challenges they face.

Esteem: regard them highly and submit to biblical authority. The church is not a democracy.

Love: View them as spiritual parents. Care for them and compensate them, especially the preachers.

Peace: Do all things to be at peace with them and with the other members. Cooperate

3. What would be the unproductive opposite of those instructions? Instead of peace with their leaders, many churches have members, groups, and ministries that are argumentative, judgmental, ungracious, and suspicious of the elders. Discuss. Share any experiences you may have from your church life.

3a. Again, using the parenting analogy, discuss how peace with the other sheep (members) frees up the pastor's calendar, mind, & focus for the ministry of the Word. See also *Acts 6:3-4*. Why is this so vitally important? If they are too focused on people issues and "putting out fires", they will be forced to neglect prayer and the preparation of the sermon. In that case, everyone (even those not involved in the dramas) will be starving for the Word and ill equipped to face the darkening world.

4. What were the four kinds of wayward sheep: unruly, fainthearted, weak, needy. Discuss each.

5. Address the deeper issue here: by identifying those in my church who fit each category or wishing more were like me, I become a bigger problem than them/their issue. See also *Luke 18:9-14*. [The Church is a hospital for sinners, not a country club for saints]

5a. The healthy practice = asking: "Do I see me? What am I going to do about it?" Grow up. Stop my worldly life. Learn to feed myself & mature. Deal with my issues/sins. See also *2 Corinthians 13:5*