

Responsibility as a Member of the Church

I Thessalonians 5:12-22

1 Pearl Harbor, Hawaii! The morning of December 7th, 1941, found 353 Japanese airplanes swarming all around the harbor site. Within a couple of hours America lost eight big battleships, six major airfields, almost all of her planes and 2400 personnel. That happened at 7:50 a.m. in what was, supposedly, a surprise attack.

But these are the startling facts. That morning at 7:00 a.m., while the Japanese warplanes were 137 miles away (50 minutes), two U.S. soldiers on a small radar station in the Pacific scanned the screen many dots appearing until the whole screen was filled.

These soldiers notified their supervisor. No other officer was around since it was a Sunday. The lieutenant thought these planes must be the ones coming from California, and without another thought, said these crucial words, “Don’t worry about it”.

There would have been time to scramble planes from Pearl Harbor, prepare the battleships and shelter the

personnel. But this lieutenant, at the most responsible moment of his career, failed the nation.

As a member of your church you need to be responsible for your calling.

There are three responsibilities a member of a church needs to get serious about. You can find these responsibilities in our scripture today, from First Thessalonians, chapter 5, verses 12 through 22. ²

The first thing to get serious about is . . .

I. Your Responsibility Toward Your Church Leadership - 12-13

Your responsibility toward your church leadership.

Verses 12 through 14, **Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.** ³

Verse 12 says to **respect your elders.** ⁴

Respect ¹ means to know through observation. ⁵

In the New Testament there are two words used to signify to know. The other word ² means to know by personal experience. ⁶ So, you grow respect for them as you see their godly conduct.

The word in our scripture today implies honor. The King James Version translates it “recognize; the New Century Version “appreciate and the Living Bible “honor”. ⁷

Elders in the church are people who have been selected from among you who have met certain biblical qualifications. ³ ⁸

Why respect them? ⁹

They **work hard. ¹⁰**

They are **over you; ⁴ they “stand before” or are “put before you”. So, they lead or rule you. ¹¹**

¹ οἶδα.

² γινώσκω.

³ Titus 1:6-9 and I Timothy 3:1-7.

They admonish you. ¹²

So, verse 13 tells us to **hold them in the highest regard**. ¹³ In fact First Timothy, chapter 5, verse 17 says, **The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching**. ¹⁴

Again, in Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 7, **Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith**. This needs to be done in love because of their awesome responsibilities. ¹⁵

The second thing to get serious about is . . .

⁴ προϊστημι.

II. Your Responsibility Towards

One Another - v14-15

Your responsibility toward one another. Verses 14 and 15, **And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.**

This passage brings out five ways to do that. ¹⁶

Verse 14 says to **warn the idle**. ¹⁷ The word idle ⁵ means to be out of order or out of place; it doesn't belong. The King James Version translates this word "unruly". In ancient days it was a military term that meant to be insubordinate, disobeying commands, going AWOL ⁶, etc. ¹⁸ You are to warn these people. ¹⁹

⁵ ἄτακτος.

⁶ "Absent Without Leave".

Next, verse 14 tells us that we are to **encourage the timid**.²⁰ The timid⁷ are, literally, “weak souls”. They are those whose faith has never developed.²¹

Notice what Lord Jesus taught us in the Parable of the Sower.

What happened? **Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.**^{8 22}

What do we learn? **The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life & the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.**^{9 23}

You can be a believing, baptized, church attending person whose spiritual life hasn't grown much in twenty years! You are to encourage these people to grow up in their faith by teaching them and showing a godly example before them!²⁴

⁷ ὀλιγόψυχος.

⁸ Matthew 13:7.

⁹ Matthew 13:22.

Verse 14 continues encouraging you to **help the weak.**

²⁵ The weak in faith, here, are the brand-new Christians. ²⁶

The Lord continues in the Parable of the Sower.

What happened? **Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.** ¹⁰ ²⁷

What do we learn? **The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.** ¹¹ ²⁸

Worldly cares choke a faith before it can grow. The devil can take away faith before it gets a start. You can help, or support, new Christians by calling them on

¹⁰ Matthew 13:5-6.

¹¹ Matthew 13:20-21.

the phone, inviting them to church events or to your home. Let them know you care about them! ²⁹

Again, in verse 14, **be patient**. ³⁰ Biblical patience ¹² means to be long or slow to display anger. Be slow to come to conclusions. Richard C Trench defines it as “a long holding out of the mind before it gives room to action or passion . . .” ¹³ ³¹

It's one of the fruit of the Spirit. ¹⁴

The story is told that for forty-two years years, every week, David Thomas slipped a love letter under the door of his neighbor, Rachel Jones. Each letter tried to mend a quarrel that separated them when they were both 32 years old. Rachel burned each letter and refused even to speak to her neighbor. David finally got enough courage to knock on her door and proposed. She accepted. When the wedding finally came, they were both 74! Patience has its rewards! ³²

¹² μακροθυμέω.

¹³ Trench, Richard Chenevix, Synonyms of the New Testament, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1880, P. 196.

¹⁴ Galatians 5:22 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness . . .

In verse 15 presents another responsibility as an example to your fellow church member, **be kind even when you are wronged**. This Christian virtue may be the hardest to master! ³³ Lord Jesus said, **But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.** ¹⁵ ³⁴

Romans, chapter 12, verses 20 and 21 quotes Proverbs 25 when it says this response will heap burning coals upon your offender's head! ¹⁶ ³⁵

The third thing to get serious about is . . .

¹⁵ Matthew 5:39-41.

¹⁶ Romans 12:20-21 - If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

III. Your Responsibility Towards

God - v16-22

Your responsibility towards God. Verses 16 through 22, Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. ³⁶

Verse 16 says God wants you to **be joyful always**. ³⁷

Lord Jesus wants you to rejoice even when you are persecuted because your reward would be great in heaven. ¹⁷ ³⁸

Second Corinthians, chapter 10, tells us persecution produces strength. ¹⁸ ³⁹

¹⁷ Matthew 5:11-12 - Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

¹⁸ II Corinthians 12:10 - That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The promise in Romans, chapter 8, verse 28, makes this joy possible, **And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.** You honor God by trusting Him when things are not going right! ⁴⁰

Verse 17 tells us to **pray continually**. ⁴¹

This isn't praying all the time and not doing anything else. That's often-what Monastic orders did in ancient times. ⁴² But the Lord does want you to talk to Him about every aspect and decision in your life! He wants you to focus on Him continually!

Prayer is like using a hand pump. If you use it often you only have to pump it once to get the refreshing water to pour out. If you let the pump sit for several days you may have to pump it several times, or even prime it, to get it to work. ¹⁹ The same is true of prayer. The more often you do it, the easier it is to do!

¹⁹ "Use the Pump Often", Our Daily Bread.

Early converts to the Lord in Africa would find a private place to pray. They prayed so often a path would often be made through the grass to their spot. If one of them began to get careless in their prayer life grass would start growing over their path. Others might encourage their prayer life by saying, “Grass is growing over your path”! ²⁰ Don’t let anyone say that about you! ⁴³

Verse 18 encourages us to **give thanks in all circumstances**. How often do you thank God for common things or, even, when things go wrong? ⁴⁴

In Acts, chapter 5, the apostles gave thanks for their suffering because they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the Lord! ²¹ ⁴⁵

Finally, in verses 19 and 20, we are encouraged **not to put out the Spirit’s fire!**

²⁰ “Pray Without Ceasing”, Our Daily Bread.

²¹ Acts 5:40-41 - His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Most fires are extinguished by flooding them with water. The Spirit of God can be quenched by flooding your lives with worldly concerns! ⁴⁶

This can be done by ignoring the preaching and teaching you have heard. ²² ⁴⁷

This can be done by grieving the Holy Spirit. ²³ ⁴⁸

This can be done by not walking in the Spirit; not living a Spirit conscious life! ²⁴ ⁴⁹

The Lord is telling us here to take Him and His ministry seriously!

You will never really be fulfilled until you do!

<http://biblelifemessages.org/>

²² I Thessalonians 5:20 - Do not treat prophecies with contempt.

²³ Ephesians 4:30 - And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

²⁴ Galatians 5:16 - So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.