

Four Classes of Church Persons

August 30, 2017

1Th 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren ... support the weak, be patient toward all men.

This is category group number three, the weak. When we discuss what is meant by weak; one element of our definition is weak in faith. A weak faith means that the person is very susceptible to temptation and sin. Old desires and allurements can be aroused easily. The garbage and trash that is a part of the sin system can be regurgitated. This person has not embraced strongly enough the transformation of his life. A person can sin in their mind and relive all of their former lusts.

The weak people are persons that you barely pick them up out of the hole of sin and get them dusted off, and they're back in it again. These are the people that find it so extremely difficult to do God's will. These are the people who keep falling into the same sins over and over, and you work so very hard and there they go again.

James 5:14 "Is any," and the translation sick is usually given, but the word is the same as the word weak here. "Is there any weak among you? Go to the elders." Why? Because they're strong, and they'll hold you, and they'll pray for you, and if you've committed sins, they'll be forgiven you. You need to be with the spiritual strong when you're spiritually and morally weak.

Support means help. The Greek word means to hold firmly to, to hold tightly to, to cling to, to support, and to hold them up. Galatians 6:1 says, if a brother's overtaken in a fall, you that are spiritual; Pick him up. Then it says bear one another's burden. That's the second step. Hold him up. Support.

Third step, create accountability. The church grows when the sheep begin to take care of the sheep, when they start to care enough to go to the wayward and admonish them, when they care enough to go to the worried and encourage them, when they care enough to go to the weak and hold them up. That means involvement.

1Th 5:15 "See that no one repays another with evil for evil."

God is forbidding vengeance and retaliation, the assumption is somebody did something to you. Rendered you evil, *kakos*, baseness, meanness, wickedness. The most difficult circumstance or the most severe abuse a Christian will face. The most painful treatment is wickedness not from the world but from our brothers and sisters. This is the deepest pain.

So Paul is saying, "There are people in church going to hurt you. They're going to do evil to you." They'll harm you directly with wicked words that attack you face-to-face. They'll harm you indirectly by gossip and slander and evil speaking to others about you. They sometimes will harm you directly by closing you out of their fellowship, by

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eliminating you from their social circle, by keeping you out of their ministry because of jealousy, envy, hate, bitterness or anger.

They may harm you directly by stealing your virtue in sexual sin, breaking up your marriage, taking something precious, influencing one of your children toward wickedness. They will harm you indirectly by leading you into sin. There are people in the church, believe me, who will do wickedness against other people. Malicious harm happens in the church, gossip, slander, sexual sin.

Matthew 18:6-9 ;Deuteronomy 32:32-43; Romans 12:19

There's no place for retaliation anywhere in the church. There's no place anywhere for personal vengeance. The only one who has a right to retaliate is God. Don't you step into the wrath and take your own revenge. You leave room for the wrath of God. I'll take care of that not you. On the other hand, if your enemy is hungry, you feed him, and if he is thirsty, you give him drink, and in so doing, you will heap burning coals of guilt upon his head. Don't be overcome by the evil he does to you but overcome that evil with the good you do to him."

The only one who has a right to retaliate is God. You say, "What about an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and a life for a life?" That was a governmental mandate that the government had the right to punish equally the criminal. The government had the right to exact a life for a life, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. That was never instruction for personal vengeance. That's what Jesus intended the disciples to understand and the Jews to hear in the Sermon on the Mount when he said, "Yeah, you think you're supposed to hate your enemy. You've perverted the Law of God to that degree. I'm here to tell you, love your enemy, and you are to do good to those that do evil to you.

Jeremiah 4:18; Acts 8:14-23; Hebrews 12:14-17; James 3:14

So how do we treat those who do evil to us? We always, seek after, pursue eagerly and pursue zealously that which is good, beautiful, noble, and excellent. In other words, we say, "Well, in spite of what they've done to me, I'm going to do everything I can to do what is good to them, to do what is noble and excellent to them. In an act of love, I am going to return their hostility with goodness and not just for them but for everybody, for everybody, for all men especially the household of faith,"