

Topic	The Gospel Community
Reference	1-Thessalonians 5:12-15
Date	29 October 2017
Speaker	Ps Mark Tan

Today is a joint application for us. This is now something that involves the dynamics and relationship of this new family in Jesus Christ. We may look like that we belong to this world, but we are certainly not of it. The difference is one is in the Lord and one is not. We need to see that subtle but vital difference, so that we may be able to go forward to see ourselves as gospel community together.

### **Respect Our Leaders:**

A gospel community respects their leaders. Now when we say respect, we mean respect in the greatest and truest form. It is not the idea of give face. It is not the idea of tolerate. It is not the idea of let him be, but rather it is given that respect that is due to him; one to acknowledge of the work that he is doing but at the same time to be able to walk alongside him and to be able to edify him, to be able to motivate and to add on to may be what our leaders couldn't see, what our leaders couldn't think of, what our leaders couldn't comprehend, our job is to take it from there and build it upon it.

**12** 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. Live in peace with each other.

So the first thing we see is that this is a direct application for a church, so it is not talking about deacons or leaders. It is now a general call of what a gospel community is like. We need to learn how to acknowledge and respect those leaders in our lives. We are asked to call and respect to the people who has these two traits.

- Those who care for you in the Lord. In a church setting these people are the leaders of the church.
- Those who admonish you. A lot of us we take correction from our leaders like a form of losing face, but these are the guys if they have any reason to admonish you or to correct you, it will be only for your benefit, they earn no profit while doing this. The reason why we respect them is because we respect the gospel work in them.

We are not a salvation by works faith, so we don't promote our leaders because they work very hard, we promote and we respect and we acknowledge and we encourage our leaders because the work that they are doing is in reflection of the gospel work that is happening in their lives, as the old saying goes, *we don't work to be saved, we work because we are saved*. That's the

difference in the gospel. The gospel actually springboards us to be able to do his will and we know through Jesus Christ by faith we are able. The key thing to do this is to live peacefully with one another.

The peace that Paul is talking about being Hebrew in culture, actually knows of this true peace and that is shalom. The gospel community is a community of reconciliation; it is harder than peace. It is not peace by tolerance, it is peace by reconciliation.

Are we ready to start that with our leaders, because we submit to their rebuke, we submit to their admonishment, we submit to their teaching? It is actually hard, because while the gospel is telling us that we are to submit by the gospel work that is happening in their hearts. Secularly speaking, we respect our leaders so that we one day can take that position. We respect our leaders, so that we can also be at peace in our little office. We see nowadays a growing arise in what we call a monarchical pastoral leadership, where the father gives the leadership to the son and then the chain continues.

If we are not careful we allow this culture to come into our church and the outcome is catastrophic. We can acknowledge, we can respect, we can encourage the leaders are doing the right things. We need to be able to identify the leaders among us, who work hard among us, who cares for us in the Lord, again it is not a reflection of their works, it is rather the fact that the Lord is working in them. Now before we do an internal audit about the leaders, we need to ask ourselves, what does a person in the Lord looks like.

There are plenty of us in the church today who wears the coat of Jesus Christ but we end up doing unsavory things, claiming to be the works of Jesus. Will we be willing to reflect the coat that we are claiming to wear as followers of Jesus Christ.

How would you feel if someone actually come up to you, thank you my dear friend, you bear Jesus's image well. The gospel community respects our leaders because our leaders are respecting the gospel of Jesus Christ in which they have committed to bear, wear and display.

### **Rebukes our Brothers and Sisters:**

**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.**

It is another call to the church, and now we have threefold ministry and that is this, we need to correct the backsliders, we need to encourage those demotivated and we need to help those who are suffering. The harder one amongst this is encouraging others. The church in Thessalonica is first and foremost a house church, so they were really close to one another and so when you see

someone outwardly being idle, it is contagious to a lot of people. The church in Thessalonica were having this issue and because they think that the world is going to end, so they want to sit quietly and let the world today. So they no longer bear accountability to the fact that one day we will go before God and we had to be accountable.

So Paul hears this and reminds us that the gospel actually gives us the courage to actually continue to work our very best, not because we are doing it for our bosses in this world, but we are doing this for the great boss as up there and we are also doing this to encourage the brothers and sisters on our left and right. That holiness does matter, that being accountable before God that counts, but now the question is how do we rebuke one another or encourage one another.

The gospel of Luke shares a very interesting story. There were two people who doubted that a miracle will happen in their lives. They responded very differently and therefore the teacher rebuked them differently. The first one is Zechariah, who was a long time faithful man of God but he is old and his wife is barren. So he has been praying, Oh God, give me a son just like you gave Hannah. But it never came. People started gossiping because they don't respect their leaders. The people thought that God is not blessing you, how he can be our priest. One day when Zechariah was in the temple, an angel appeared and says good news you will have a son. Zechariah who was swimming in doubt for so long that he ended becoming very bitter about it and so his reply sounds something like this, how can this be, I am already too old and my wife is barren. He was questioning the message of God, now Gabriel rebuked him with being silent till the birth of John.

Parallel to that if we end up asking questions for the sake of trying to way to God, saying God you are unfair, you will not like the answer from God if we follow the precedence of Gabriel, because Gabriel basically told Zechariah to shut up and pray. So for us who have this bitterness in our hearts, I ask us, take a moment, rest, step back, observe then pray and know that you are not going to God demanding justice, you are going to God demanding help. Then the reply may be similar to this next person. Mary was 14 to 16 years old, just recently betroved to Joseph but haven't gone for registration. So not legal yet, so they were staying in their own individual homes. Angel comes before her and says, do not fear marry for you have found favor in God and behoove you shall conceive a son. Now Mary is young and confused, not sure what happening, sees a great vision before her and was given an audacious miracle. She doubted but when she asked, she asked for clarity and inquiry and so her reply sounds like this, how can this be since my husband and I are not together yet. I have never known a man. Very simple. Then Gabriel handled Mary very differently, he gave an explanation.

Friends, when we rebuke one another, the first thing we do before rebuking one another is that we must first check our receivable end, how are we receiving the rebuke. Are we receiving the rebuke like a person who never ever want to taste justice and just wants vengeance or we be

willing to change our hearts, ask God to humble our hearts so that we may actually come to the honest question like O God I need help in this matter. If we can get ourselves to the latter that makes a gospel community flourish because the Holy Spirit should come upon us and it will change us, it will revive the congregation, but only if we are willing to leave our hearts open and say, O God have mercy on me, a sinner, O God speak to me I am listening, I am not complaining any more.

### **Revives Our Community:**

There are two communities here, one is God's community and the other one is the one that we involve ourselves in, that world that we relate to as managers of those who are below us, as colleagues of those who are with us and as those who have bosses above us. That's the community that we need to work with and we are called to not rebuke it, we are called not just to tell boss, you suck, we are actually called to revive the community.

**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.**

Paul has been talking about eschatology in a whole new setting, Jesus Christ will come and become enthroned as king of kings and Lord of Lords, the wrongs will be made right, the right will be upheld, but what should we do in order to see this come to provision, is actually the same thing they have been saying from the very get go. This is a very common theme in Paul's teaching and Jesus's teaching and therefore it convicts me to say this, that this therefore needs to be the Christian trademark to both fellow believers and nonbelievers, friends and enemies alike. Paul says this in many other ways and my favorite one is the one in Romans 12:19-21

**19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "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." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

We as a gospel community are not to seek out vengeance, so when we stand for what is wrong in our political agenda, when we stand for what is wrong in the legal system in this country, when we stand for what's wrong, we are not standing for wrong so that we can have our vengeance, we are standing on behalf of God and God himself will say vengeance is mine, I will repay. So we stand for what is right.

This poetry sounds very eventual, as if I do good I am putting coals on my enemies head. In the Jewish community there is a burnt offering, the whole cattle is given to a mighty God, no one takes a hair from that offering. So what they do is they will take coal that is hot from the side

and start pouring on top of the burnt offering, so that way it is wholly consumed. So the poetic imagery is that, when you do good to your enemies, you are pouring coal onto their head, so that one day they may be the living sacrifice. That means when you are doing good to your enemies, you are calling him to the gospel of Christ and hopefully more likely if you do it by faith he will turn.

What are we doing to our community, are we just condemning them or we doing what God has called us to do.

Jesus himself also says this and this is the source of it all. Matthew 5:43-47

**43** “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ **44** But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45** that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. **46** If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? **47** And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

In Application of asking for forgiveness and for change in the community, there are two things that Jesus told us, one is

**23** “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, **24** leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Friends that very symbol tells us very clearly that Jesus would rather have reconciliation between us as brothers and sisters than offerings of money and kind on the altar. Our Lord, our God has no need and therefore demands for nothing except for one thing that we reflect his love by reconciling with one another. The question is are we, so something we can think about in our church service.

The second thing is part of the whole church or the anglican lethargy, there is this beautiful peace which even we Baptist are very jealous, we like to recite the Lord’s prayer once in a while,

**12** And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Jesus is revealing that true gospel communities are able to forgive one another because we were first forgiven and that’s why Jesus even puts a clause there in verse 14

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Again this is not salvation by works friends, rather this is actually a reflection of how much do we understand and comprehend the gospel that has changed our lives. By fact, we are forgiven we can therefore forgive and we are called to forgive, therefore, otherwise we don't know what the gospel of forgiveness is like. We need to do that and we therefore need to first ask forgiveness of ourselves. C.S. Lewis puts it very nicely,

*To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.*

Question is can or not?

If we do not how to forgive, we therefore don't know how we are forgiven. If you truly say we know we are forgiven, then it is easy for us to forgive.