

Comfort of the Church

1 Thessalonians 5:11-14 “Wherefore **comfort** yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*.”

The church, for God's people, should be a place/people of great spiritual comfort. Paul, writing to the church at Thessalonica, gives great exhortation in these last days, specifically to the church! The “Wherefore” in verse 11 above points back to verses in 1 Thess. 5:8-10 which have proclaimed that the people of God are “appointed” to a **Position** of certain eternal communion in Christ. Knowledge of where we all are positionally (in Christ) continually points us to Christ and His finished work. Our Position, however, automatically assumes and commands **Practice**. He sums up our practical spiritual living as actions which are “together”, “among” and with “one another”. Paul makes the case here that the people of God can not safely detach from the local church.

In 1 Kings 19:14 Elijah repeats a concern that he first voices in verse 10 of the same chapter when he says, “...I, even I only, am left...”. In this passage, Elijah thinks himself to be the only individual still walking faithful to God. It is a dangerous and prideful place for him to be. Our Lord answers him in verse 18 by proclaiming, “Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.”

Henry Blackaby in his book *Experiencing God* (P. 147-148) tells a story to highlight the rationale that plagued Elijah and can sometime befall you and I. He simply titled it, “I'm Tired”. He says,

“The population of this country is 200 million. 84 million are retired. That leaves 116 million to do the work. There are 75 million in school, which leaves 41 million to do the work. Of this total, there are 22 million employed by the government. That leaves 19 million to do the work. 4 million are in the armed forces, which leaves 15 million to do the work. Take from that total the 14,800,000 people who work for the state and city governments and that leaves 200,000 to do the work. There are 188,000 in hospitals, so that leaves 12,000 to do the work. Now, there are 11,998 people in prisons. That leaves just 2 people to do the work. You and me. And you're standing there reading this. No wonder I'm tired.”

Henry Blackaby uses humor to outline what can be a very real spiritual battle. I pray that our Lord will continue to remind us of our **Position** (In Christ). With that foundation may we **Practice** those things exhorted by the apostle Paul: “comfort yourselves together”, “edify one another”, “warn”, “esteem”, “support”, and “be patient toward”, one another.

Thank God for the Church!!! As Preacher Joe Parsons stated so well, “It is the BIGGEST, little thing in all of the world!”

~ Pastor Tim Hodge