First Thessalonians 5:12-14

5:12 <u>Paul defended and supported the ministry by charging them to the care of their pastors</u>.

1. It is at this point Paul enters into his summary of various exhortations before closing.
2. Rather than appealing to bare authority, Paul gently beseeches them and calls them brethren, though not necessary (I Corinthians 4:4; II Cor 10:8; 13:10; Titus 2:15).
3. Ministers are introduced by three different aspects of their vocation, calling, or office.
   a. They labor among members by being one also and serving them personally, which rejects the monastic and hierarchical practices of Rome and daughters.
   b. They are over the members by their God-given rule in spiritual matters, which power is neither theirs by choice nor by application (I Peter 5:2-3). Their rule is in spiritual matters only and subordinate to the authority of their Captain.
   c. The work is admonition – correction, warning, and exhortation to right conduct.
      (1) It is amazing how little patients resist doctors, but how much members do pastors, when the pastor has the Spirit and Scripture over the doctor.
      (2) Wise men will thank God they have a man to admonish them (Pr 9:7-9).
4. Of course members know their pastors, but do they truly know their labors and trials?
   a. It is one thing to casually know, and another to know with conscious affection, attentive regard, loyal respect, caring concern, eager hearing, and adequate help.
   b. It is easy to forget them and their work, so Paul exhorts to remember (Heb 13:7).
5. Ministerial labour is defined to Timothy, labour in the word and doctrine (I Tim 5:17).
   a. Rightly dividing the Scripture is an enormous responsibility, but little known.
   b. Confrontation, correction, warning, and exhortation to all ages and sexes is hard.
   c. Ministers should work harder than others, for the calling and effects are greater; and they usually do, for the qualifications wisely used identify exceptional men.
   d. Even in the midst of leisure, which is due, ministers bear great soul burdens.
6. Admonition is such a worthy service, as progress, let alone perfection, is impossible without it. For correction and exhortation are necessary to perfect the saints.

5:13 <u>He further exhorts them to ministerial affection and to peace and unity within the church</u>.

1. Due to a minister's work, church members should esteem them very highly in love.
   a. Faithful ministers can cringe promoting their office, but every word of God is pure, and the God-given office is the focus rather than the person in the office.
   b. They are ambassadors of the Most High God and servants of the King of kings.
   c. A true minister rarely expresses personal opinion officially, for he has a royal commission with a published decree that he must faithfully represent to all.
   d. Doctors are given great respect, but they only treat the body, not the eternal soul.
   e. Teachers are given great respect, but they are only guessing at carnal matters.
   f. Politicians are given great respect, but they are only pawns in earthly kingdoms.
   g. Ministers deserve such esteem due to the objective of their lives (Hebrews 13:7).
   h. Paul taught Timothy to promote "double honour" in the churches (I Tim 5:17).
   i. Ministers give their lives to serve the saints in the most important part of life.
   j. To master the Word of God and apply it fairly at all times is a sober obligation.
   k. Though the knowledge and affectionate esteem are personal, it is for their work.
   l. Ministers find their greatest frustration and trouble in bearing with the saints.
   m. Ministers must give an account, and how will they account for you (Heb 13:17)?

2. Not directly connected, but certainly helpful, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to peace.
   a. Church peace and unity greatly aid ministers by reducing stress and distraction, for personal conflict and division destroy the work of God's Spirit and steal much time from ministers that could be spent in positive and profitable ways.
   b. Corinth was full of deadly carnal strife, stressing Paul (I Cor 1:10-13; 3:1-4), as we find that much of his second epistle was spent defending and rebuking.
   c. How many times did Paul plead for peace and unity (Phil 2:1-4,14; Eph 4:1-3)?
   d. Every father should know the blessing and value of a family at peace with itself.
   e. No wonder the psalmist told of great blessedness in brotherly unity (Ps 133:1).

5:14 <u>Paul exhorts them to mutual duties of warning, comforting, supporting, and patience</u>.

1. Leaving his gentle beseeching in the previous two verses, he exhorts to their duties here.
2. Though these are ministerial responsibilities, they are not exclusively so by this verse.
   a. This epistle to Thessalonica is a general epistle, rather than a pastoral epistle.
   b. Church members are bound to show this level and kind of care for one another.
   c. It is so easy to identify carnal Christians or false professors by these duties.
3. Warning the unruly is that corrective action that will keep a church holy and growing.
   a. If the offense is personal, our Lord gave the remedy (Mat 18:15-17; Lu 17:1-5).
   b. If the offense is sin, Paul and James gave the remedy (Gal 6:1-5; Jas 5:19-20).
   c. This is true brotherly love of the difficult kind (Leviticus 19:17; Prov 27:5-6).
   d. True love rejoices in seeing its object in the truth, not iniquity (I Cor 13:6).
   e. Just imagine the growth in purity and character, if every member did this duty!
4. Comforting the feebleminded is to strengthen and encourage those with weak minds.
   a. What a contrast! But how true of every church! In a flock there are rams needing strong correction and old and sick ewes needing gentle assistance.
   b. We come into this world with a feeble mind, and we leave the very same way.
   c. If the Lord tarries, we will have occasion to comfort some with declining minds.
   d. **Comfort**. To strengthen (morally or spiritually); to encourage, hearten, inspirit.
   e. Rather than trying to force meat into a toothless mouth, we sweeten the milk.
   f. The feebleminded can also be the fearful, oppressed, and discouraged (Ps 38:8).
5. Supporting the weak is to help those with weak faith, particularly in matters of liberty.
   a. We receive converts weak in the faith, but reject their disputations (Rom 14:1).
      (1) Weakness in faith gives up the right to doubtful and foolish questions.
      (2) Strength in faith gives up the right to act for yourself without due regard.
   b. And the limitation of their weakness to matters of liberty is plain (Rom 14:2-23).
   c. And this is also how the strong bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom 15:1-2).
   d. Consider how thoroughly Paul explained this matter to Corinth (I Cor 8:1-13).
   e. And he practiced this kindness greatly, to give a holy example (I Cor 9:19-23).
   f. We don't comfort or support those in sin at all, which this duty does not address at all, but we rather warn, correct, and convert such (James 5:19-20).
   g. There is no room in this text whatsoever for compromise with sin against God.
6. Patience – longsuffering under affliction – is that godly virtue due to saints and others.
   a. Glorious saints knowing the grace of God overlook personal offences (Pr 19:11).
   b. The purest measure of sanctification is charity (Col 3:12-14; Eph 4:2-3,31-32).
   c. Grudge holding, bitterness, repeating past personal offences, and being implacable in personal dealings is the spirit of hell (James 3:14-16; 5:9; Pr 17:9).
   d. As the natural man much loves hatred and war, this is a great testimony of grace.