

Impacting our Culture

1 Thessalonians 5: 14-15

I don't think anyone would disagree that our culture is rapidly changing. The America we knew growing up has ceased to exist. We no longer live in a nation with a majority of people holding a Christian world-view. It has been determined that America is now in a post-Christian era. Values and principles that once guided our nation, those once embraced by the majority, have shifted significantly, and fundamentally changed. In a generation of time, we have shifted from a Christian culture to a humanistic culture. The social, political, and spiritual landscape of America has radically changed, and I have no confidence it will ever return to what we once enjoyed.

So, this begs the question – what are we to do in the current age? How is the church to respond to the changes we have experienced? Is there any hope for spiritual awakening in our generation, and a return unto the Lord? Well, I suppose time will reveal the answer to these questions, but we cannot allow the current difficulties of modern culture to dictate our response. The church has not been called to serve only when it is easy or convenient. We are called to be salt and light, regardless of the culture. In fact, the need is greater today for the church to be an effective witness than it has ever been in the history of our nation. If we choose to do nothing, merely accepting defeat, we can expect deterioration of our culture at a more rapid pace than before. The only hope for America is for the church to realize the great needs of our day, and faithfully serve the Lord in an effort to positively impact our culture.

The text before us today is certainly not an exhaustive list, but it offers several [imperatives](#) if we are to be effective in seeing real, needed change. I want us to consider: [Impacting our Culture](#).

I. The Obligation of the Church (14) – [Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly,](#)

[comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.](#) Paul reminded the Thessalonians of their obligation to encourage those around them, being willing to proclaim truth to all they met especially within the church. In this one statement, Paul reveals four specific groups the church was obligated to impact. He declared the church was obligated to:

A. Warn the Defiant (14a) – [Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly.](#) Paul reveals a biblical principle that is often overlooked and neglected in our day. The church is obligated to warn the unruly. We are obligated to sound the alarm and seek to lovingly correct those who have strayed. The word [unruly](#) is actually a military term and it speaks of “*one who is disorderly; out of ranks, or subordinate.*” It presents the idea of an officer correcting a soldier who has disobeyed orders or is not marching in line with his company.

- This is little done in our modern society, but it is needful and beneficial. We have a biblical obligation to warn those who are walking out of line. We are to admonish those who are living purposely outside the will of God. We ought to encourage fellow believers to submit their lives to the Word and will of God. We must also have the courage to engage the defiant within our culture. Love for others is not shown through silence, but from a willingness to share truth! [Col.1:28](#) – [Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.](#) Ezekiel 33:6-7 – [But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.](#) ^[7] [So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.](#)

B. Comfort the Discouraged (14b) – [comfort the feebleminded](#). This speaks of those who are *“fainthearted, weary in their faith, almost ready to give up and abandon the work.”* These are to be [comforted, calmed and consoled](#).

- Oh, how we need to be mindful of that need in our day. We all know those who were once committed to the Lord and active in church, but for some reason they grew discouraged. They became fainthearted and faded away. We are obligated to reach out to those who are weak and comfort them. We need to encourage and support them in their time of weakness.
- We have all had times when we needed a little encouragement. Had it not been for a concerned saint of God we too would likely be out of church, no longer being used of the Lord.

C. Support the Dependent (14c) – [support the weak](#). We know that we are to support and encourage those who are weak, but this actually reveals much more than is commonly perceived in this passage. Those who are [weak](#) speaks of *“those who yield easily to temptation; easily led astray; those who are burdened, discouraged, or defeated.”* Clearly this is more of a spiritual application than that of a physical nature.

- Paul ministered in a day of gross sin and immorality. The early believers were faced with all manner of temptation and opposition. It was not uncommon for some to yield to the temptations that were so prevalent. Many were led astray by the teaching of false doctrine. Due to the intense opposition they faced, many were discouraged and defeated spiritually.
- We too find ourselves in a society that closely resembles that of Paul's day. Temptation abounds on every hand. There is an abundance of false doctrine and apostasy being spread and encouraged today. Many believers find themselves exhausted and often discouraged by the

constant bombardment of the world. Those who are strong in the Lord need to support those who are weak.

- We need to understand that this goes much farther than just an encouraging word. The idea of [support](#) literally means “*to cling and hold to; to hold up and support.*” A simple, “Brother I know you are struggling and I will pray about it,” isn’t enough. We must be there for them, standing alongside them, supporting and holding them up. [Gal.6:1 – Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.](#) [Rom.15:1 – We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.](#)

D. Engage the Different (14d) – [be patient toward all men](#). The church had likely handled Paul’s instruction pretty well up to this point, but now he adds a final obligation that is much harder to embrace. Not only were they to care for and support those of like faith, they were to show patience toward all men. That includes those who had never been saved, those who had no desire for the Lord or His church, and those who were difficult and different. In essence the church is obligated to the world.

- We are instructed to [be patient toward all men](#). That has the idea of “*longsuffering, steadfastness, persevering with patience.*” Sometimes we have difficulty with patience toward those of like faith, and especially toward those who offend us or speak harshly toward our faith and Lord, but we must express godly patience toward them as well. We need to understand that they have not received what we possess. They don’t know the Lord. We can’t expect them to embrace and support things they know nothing of. We cannot abandon them or refuse to share our faith. We must be willing to go again and again if that is what it takes.
- [Eph.4:32 – And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.](#) Consider where we would be had it not been for the patience of a loving and compassionate saint of God. I pray that we will learn to see others as God sees them rather than what is revealed on the surface.

II. Our Submission in Character (15) – [See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.](#) Paul concludes this thought with an exhortation regarding our attitude and behavior among men, basic principles of the faith. Notice:

A. The Admonition (15a) – [See that none render evil for evil unto any man.](#) It is within human nature to return that which has been given. When we are shown love and appreciation, we feel

compelled to return that same love and appreciation. However, we are often tempted to return evil or anger for the same. Most deal with the urge to “get even” or “return the favor.”

- This is not what God desires or expects. The Christian is expected to rise above the temptations of the flesh and render loving-kindness for evil. Even when we are mistreated or wronged, we are to show love and godliness. This applies to every situation and every circumstance. There is never a time when it is acceptable for a Christian to lash out or seek revenge. We need to express the love of God rather than the hatred and anger of men. [Rom.12:19](#) – [Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.](#)

B. The Expectation (15b) – [but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.](#) We are to always seek and follow that which is good and godly. Notice this isn't reserved for those of like faith, although it is expected there as well, but it is to be embraced and shown to all men. A church that is filled with love will be a prosperous church, while a church that is filled with wrath and strife will struggle and fail. May we be known for love and compassion rather than anger, vengeance, and ill will. [Rom.12:18](#) – [If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.](#) [Gal.6:10](#) – [As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.](#)

Conclusion: The church in Thessalonica faced many challenges, but those challenges did not absolve them of their responsibility. There were varied needs within the church and the local culture that they were expected to meet. The same is true for us. We live in a difficult time, but we must be willing to engage the needs of our day, seeking to make a difference spiritually.

Are we willing to engage the culture around us? Are we willing to disciple one another, holding each other accountable in this difficult day? I pray that we will sense the needs and embrace our obligations. If there are needs, especially regarding salvation, come as the Spirit is leading.