

February 07, 2022 - I Thessalonians 5:11-18 - “The State of the Church”

Introduction:

The 2022 State of the Union Address is scheduled to be given by our 46th President. This will take place on March 1, approximately one month later than usual. This is always an important message to the country and our hopes and prayers are for a better nation. All State of the Union addresses since 1934 have occurred in either January or early February. The cause of the delay has been attributed to the spread of the Omicron variant during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This has taken its toll on both country and on the church.

Today I want to talk with you for a few minutes on an even more important subject and that is the state of the church. In a little while we will have our congregational meeting and we will take some time to look together at the fiscal state of our church. But what is even more important is the spiritual state of our church and we would all do well to look to it and respond accordingly. First, let me make some general observations about the state of the church at “large” as compiled by Barna.

For many years the Barna Research Group has been studying cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors within the church. They suggested that the church seems mired in spiritual complacency. It has been now for years and the pandemic has only added to this complacency and drop outs. Barna did a survey based on national random samples of 1000+ Christian defined as born again adults. These are just a few of their findings. Out of 1000+ surveyed only 42 % attended a church services. Only 20% volunteered at their church; 19% attended a Sunday school class; only 16% participated in prayed meeting that met for religious purposes or Bible study. Only 4% had a private time to pray and read the Bible. 43% of the Christians polled have an average church attendance of once a month. That is the state of the Church in America; sad to say that these figures pretty much match our own and again they have become much worse since the start of the pandemic.

Folks the church is the most blessed institution on the earth, the only one built by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church is the only institution Christ promised to build and bless. Christ is only doing one thing in the world; I know that might be shocking to say, maybe sounds a little oversimplified but it's actually the truth. Christ is only doing one thing in the world and that is He is building His church. I commend our church on giving and missions.

I like us to look at the church in Thessalonica because it was a good church. They were a wonderful church. They were in the process of maturing. They were moving in the right direction. They were moving toward the direction of holiness. Yet, there was room for growth. So it is with our church and this passage will help us to identified areas we can grow.

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, [and] look well to thy herds. --Pr.27:23

I Encourage Fellowship vv.11

1. In verse 11 we see the word wherefore, let see first what it is there for... Christians live in the reality that Jesus Christ is coming to Rapture His bride, the church, to deliver her from the

day of the Lord and His wrath. It is an exciting thing and encouraging fact that is to be share with one another. Paul is being very pastoral, "encourage one another." The word "encourage" is exactly the same word as the word "comfort" in chapter 4 verse 18. It is the Greek word "parakaleo" - to call to one's side, to come to one's aid. Comfort those that are anxious and worried and fearful, and those that are weak and anxious. There' are reason to be discouraged in our society... So, Encourage each other. I see much encouragement being demonstrated and exercised by the members of at DFBC.

2. It is conducive to come along side and help others and better if you are here. The key word is "together". We need to come together. We need to see better attendance at Church if we are to grow together. Edify one another means to promote growth in Christian virtue, wisdom, affection, grace, holiness and knowledge. You can't learn together if you are not here! You encourage fellowship by participation. This goes a long way in uplifting those who attend church regularly. It is rather difficult to do that if you are not here. In verse 11 he told the sheep how to treat each other & in verses 12 and 13 he tells the sheep how ---

II. Encourage the Shepherds vv12-13

1. The responsibility of the shepherds is to instruct the sheep; labor among and oversee the sheep. He said to the sheep, "Appreciate the shepherds, esteem the shepherds and submit to the shepherds. He is asking that the members assist the church leaders.

2. There needs to be respect to those that labor in the Word. Preaching is the chief means God uses to dispense His grace. It is the proclamation of the Word that people are edified, built up, strengthened, motivated, confronted, convicted, rebuked, reprovved and restored.

3. Note verse 20 it says, "Despise not prophesying. The Greek word is *prop-fā-ti'-ä*. It is a broad term that refers to public proclamation of the message from God. Literally it means a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted or revealing things hidden; esp. by foretelling future events. It can be a new message directly through the mouth of a prophet, or it could be reiteration, that is simply communicating publicly what God had already said and already revealed. That is what preaching is today

4. I don't think some people realize they disrespect the shepherd because they don't appreciate preaching. The Apostle Paul stated to the church at Corinth, "**For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.** - I Corinthians 1:18

Application: When you are looking at your watch, texting, gaming or just day dreaming that implies little regards for what is being preached. It displays a lack of respect to the Word of God and God's servant. Paul is saying in this passage to show respect and wholehearted love because of their work. Note what John 1:1 states. It is disrespectful to the Lord Jesus. When the word is being taught we should listen and not be absorb in anything else.

5. This is what it says in verse 13. The work is important. People, come to church and they want to see Jesus. The preacher is here to show them Jesus, the Logos. Remember in John

12:21-22- And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

There are people here that want to see Jesus and I want them to see him and you can help me guide them to see Jesus. Listen, I think the fundamental problem in our church is the lack of respect for the preaching and what is necessary to produce the kind of preaching where people see Jesus. People desperately need to see Jesus and some need to be saved.

6. There has to come a fundamental understanding what the purpose of your pastor shepherding the flock is. It is for others to see Jesus in him and in the word and come to a saving knowledge of Christ. The pastor will never be able to do this when the church has the faulty concept that we pay him to be the janitor, the stock boy, the buyer, a taxi cab driver and coordinator of church programs. In these days it seems I must do all the deacons jobs as well and the church clerk. I have never worked harder since this pandemic with fewer people to help. I am grateful for those that do. Some think it is beneath them to assist the pastor...they don't have the time. For the perfecting (is the word equipping) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: --- Ephesians 4:12

7. The congregation must see the pastor in the role that God set for him not with preconceive ideas that do not have any validity in the Word of God. A recent Barna Group study showed that 38 percent of U.S. pastors have thought about quitting full-time ministry in the last year. Of pastors above 45 years old, 34 percent said they seriously considered leaving ministry compared to 46 percent of pastors who are younger than 45. The top six reasons given by CLA, Church Answers and Lifeway Research are as follows:

1. Pastors are very weary from the pandemic, just like everyone else... Matt Bloom is Associate Professor at the University of Notre Dame. He describes the toll that the switching from role to role and task to task does, "it is costly in terms of cognitive effort, behavioral control, and emotion regulation." This list of tasks for a pastor never ends. There is always another complex task to switch to and to pour your all into. 2. Pastors are greatly discouraged about the fighting taking place among church members about the post-quarantine church.

3. Pastors are discouraged about losing members some who died others who left. 4. Pastors don't know if their churches will be able to support ministries financially in the future. 5. Criticisms against pastors have increased significantly. Why don't we have this or that, when there are less people serving; eg. "Live- Stream". 6. The workload for pastors has increased greatly. Almost every pastor with whom CLA communicate expresses surprise at their level of work since the pandemic began. Pastors are burned out, beaten up, and downtrodden so, stay plugged in and serves!