

February 09, 2020 - I Thessalonians 5:11-18 - "The State of the Church"

Introduction:

This past Tuesday night over 37 million people saw the President give his annual State of the Union address to a joint session of the 116th Congress. This speech was important because it outlined the President's priorities for the fiscal year. It also previewed the 2020 Federal budget and reflected on proposals to improve our nation. This message is our hopes and prayers for a better and less divisive nation. We as the church have a Biblical obligation to pray for our governing administration, leadership and the state of the Union.

Today I want to talk with you for a few minutes on an even more important subject the State of the Church... In a little while we will have our annual congregational meeting and we will take some time to look together at the fiscal state of our church. I praise God that the fiscal state of our church is very good. 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. Having written my report for 2019 I am proud and blessed to report that when compared to the church at large Dover First Baptist is doing well.

I do praise God for the 263 years being a light house in this Community. I am happy that we have the people, the tools and are applying the principles that encompass a N.T. Church. Yes, we do have areas for improvement and I will expound on them a bit in this message. I do so to safeguard the commission given our church. Yet, I have much to commend our church for as well.

First, let me make some general observations about the state of the church as compiled by Barna Research Group. These facts include the church at large and not representative solely of DFBC. Barna is an independent marketing research company and since 1984 it has been studying cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors within the church. Barna suggested that the church seems mired in spiritual complacency. Americans seem to have become almost inoculated to spiritual events, outreach efforts and the quest for personal spiritual development. There are exceptions, but overall, Christian ministry is stuck in a rut.

They 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 church services... Only 20% volunteered at their church; 19% attended a Sunday school class; only 16% participated in prayer 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.

The percentage of born again adults who gave money to churches dropped to its lowest level this decade (76%). That is the state of the Church in USA.

I commend our church on giving and it's giving to missions. This church has a heart in giving second to none... Mike Clark, Mike Patterson, Kurt La'Cappuccia, myself and many more...

The church in Thessalonica was a good church. They were moving toward the spiritual direction of Philippi. They were the best example of a missionary supporting church in the New Testament. Within Paul's letter to the Philippians, there are clear indications of how this church uniquely partnered with the Apostle Paul. So it is with our church and this passage will help us to identified areas we can grow. --- **Proverbs: 27:23**

I Encourage Fellowship vv.11

1. In verse 11 we see the word *wherefore* we must see what it is there for... Paul is being very pastoral, "encourage one another." The word "encourage" is exactly the same word as "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's no reason to be discouraged we are here to encourage each other. God has assembled a wonderful group of people here who attend in prayer and deeds for each other and for this church... We are very privilege in this respect and we praise God.

2. Now, it is not possible to come along side and help if you are not active. The second key word here is "together". We need to come together for fellowship, worship and service. **43% of the Christians polled have an average church attendance of once a month.** We need to see better attendance at our 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. You can't 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 to...

II. Encourage the Shepherds vv12-13

1. The responsibility of the shepherds is to instruct the sheep; labor among and oversee the sheep. He is saying to the sheep, "Appreciate the shepherds, esteem the shepherds and submit to the shepherds. Verse 13 said to esteem them in love. My wife and I appreciate your love and support and we can say that our church is second to none is caring for its pastor needs.

2. Preaching is the chief means God uses to dispense His grace. It is by the proclamation of the Word that people are edified, built up, strengthened, motivated, confronted, convicted, rebuked, reprovved and restored. That is a great part of the labor that a pastor must do. Paul exhorts to give respect to those that labor in the Word but more importantly to the word.

3. In light of this for a moment move down to verse 20 it says, "Despise not *prophecyings*. The Greek word is *prof ā-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 reprovving and admonishing 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 and many avoid it leaving the church during the preaching etc.

Application: When you are texting, gaming, searching or maybe even shopping on your cell phone that implies little regards for what is being preached. It displays a lack of respect to the Word of God. Paul is saying in this passage to show respect love for God's Word.

4. Look at John 1:1 and look at Luke 5:1. It is disrespectful to the Lord Jesus He is the Logo. When the word is being taught we should listen and not be absorb in anything else. 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.

5. The shepherd and the sheep must appreciate and love one another if we are to grow the church. The congregation must see the pastor in the role God set for him not with preconceive ideas that do not have any validity in the Word of God.

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**

III. Encourage Unity vv14-15

1. Note the key word in verse 14 is the word "brethren." While certainly there is a responsibility on the part of the shepherds to exercise unique authority in confronting troublesome Christians, the lines between the shepherd and the sheep in this regard are very fluent. It is not just the Pastor's job in fact if the brethren would do this when needed the pastor would not look like the bad guy...**Galatians 6:1**. The word '**warn**' is the Greek verb "noutheteo"(newt's a tay o) means to put sense into, to come alongside and put some sense into their heads. And basically it is instruction but instruction with a view toward correction.

2. He tells the brethren "to admonish the unruly". This Greek word "ataktos" (at a toss) often was used in a military sense. When used in a military sense it had the idea of a soldier who was out of line, a soldier who was out of rank, a soldier who was guilty of disorderly conduct, who was insubordinate, not following through on his duty.

3. You see, what its saying is we've got to deal with each other in compassion, personal love, and personal care. That's how the church grows. Verse 15, Paul is saying, "Returning evil for evil will never grow the church. You only overcome evil with good. Beware of becoming competitive in ministry... beware of shunning others because you heard this or that basically gossip. Beware of allowing a disagreement to fester where you don't even speak and avoid another. There is no room for that in God's house. Satan likes it but not the LORD.

Conclusion: Encourage Praise, Prayer and Thanksgiving vv16-18

1. Praise is rejoicing and it comes from joy. Joy is not a result of feelings. It's a result of the knowledge of the truth. Growing in patience and kindness seems pretty difficult sometimes. Prayer and thankfulness must go hand and hand. Let us work together to encourage fellowship; encourage leadership, unity in our church by exercising loving support and admonishment. Keep your eyes on Jesus, not man.