

SUNDRY EXHORTATIONS

John Edwards

The Bible is filled with inspired exhortations. An exhortation is “an utterance, or address conveying urgent advice or recommendations” (The Random House College Dictionary). Let’s consider the exhortations which Paul, Silas, and Timothy delivered to the brethren at Thessalonica. “*Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men*” (1 Th. 5:14).

WARN THEM THAT ARE UNRULY. The duties that Paul addresses here are such as appertain to all Christians, and should not be left to be performed by preachers only. As children of God, it is our obligation to warn, or admonish, those whom we know to be living contrary to the requirements of the gospel of Christ. Notice the warning that God gave Ezekiel long ago, if he failed to warn the unruly: “*Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his*

wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul” (Ezek. 3:17-19). A failure to warn the unruly meant “*that the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.*” Thus, Paul announced to the elders of the church at Ephesus, “*Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:26-27). Can you say that you are “*pure from the blood of all men*” or have you been neglecting your duty to “*warn the unruly*”?

COMFORT THE FEEBLEMINDED. In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul exhorts Christians to encourage the fainthearted. The feebleminded, or fainthearted, are those who require constraint as the others need restraint. Perhaps, an individual was at one time energetic in doing the work of the Lord, but when persecution and opposition came, this person grew discouraged and disheartened. It is then our responsibility to revive these individuals, to encourage them to continue laboring in the

vineyard of the Lord. Paul, after assuring the Thessalonians that those who die in Christ have hope, said, “*Wherefore comfort one another with these words*” (1 Th. 4:18).

SUPPORT THE WEAK. Paul does not have reference to those who are physically weak and sick, but those who are spiritually weak, whose faith is insecure. It is then up to those who are “*rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith*” (Col. 2:7) to “*bear the infirmities of the weak*” (Rom. 15:1). If the weak are not supported by the stronger, then they will most likely be “*tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men*” (Eph. 4:14). May gospel preachers, elders, and teachers never shun to proclaim the “*first principles of the oracles of God*” (Heb. 5:12) so that “*babes*” may have the milk that is needed to grow and develop into strong, mature Christians (1 Pet. 2:2).

BE PATIENT TOWARD ALL MEN. As God is longsuffering and merciful to all (2 Pet. 3:9), so ought we to be toward all men. Longsuffering is that of restraining oneself in midst of harassment and vexation. Instead of growing angry and retaliating, one is to persevere and have mercy. Notice what Paul said about charity, or love: “*charity suffereth long, and is*

kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up” (1 Cor. 13:4). This is the type of love that we need to cultivate for both our fellow laborers in Christ and those outside the body of Christ.

May we all give attention to these exhortations, incorporate them into our lives, and then teach them to others.

STATES OF THE MIND

Johnie Edwards

The state of one’s mind is important. Solomon said, *“For as he thinketh in his heart so is he...”* (Prov. 23:7). It is important that we keep our mind in a good state, for God *“searcheth the hearts and knoweth what is the mind of the spirit...”* (Rom. 8:27). Let’s take a look at some good states of the mind:

A SOUND MIND. The word *“sound”* as used in this lesson means *“to be healthy, sound in health or wholesome”* (Vine). Paul said, *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a*

sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7). Young men are exhorted *“to be sober minded”* (Titus 2:6). Do you have a sound mind?

A GOD-GLORIFYING MIND. One purpose of our minds is to glorify God. Paul told the Romans, *“That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Rom. 15:6). We glorify God in being a Christian (1 Pet. 4:16), in speaking as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11); and the purpose is, *“that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.”*

A PURE MIND. Christians are admonished to keep pure (1 Tim. 5:22). Peter said, *“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance”* (2 Pet. 3:1). One way to keep a pure mind is to *“think on pure things”* as Paul admonished the Philippians (Phil. 4:8).

A BRETHREN-CARING MIND. In our society, just too many do not care! Paul wrote the Corinthians, *“That there should be no schism in the*

body; but that the members should have the same care one for another” (1 Cor. 12:25). Paul said of Timothy, as he wrote the brethren at Philippi, *“For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state”* (Phil. 2:20). How much do you care?

A HUMBLE MIND. “The word humble primarily signifies low-lying. It is used in a good sense in the New Testament, metaphorically, to denote of low degree, brought low” (Vine). God’s people must be humble-minded. Paul said he served the Lord with *“all humility of mind...”* (Acts 20:19). Again Paul said, *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”* (Phil. 2:3). Peter said, *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time”* (1 Pet. 5:6). Christians are told to put on a number of things. One of these is humility. *“Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind...”* (Col. 3:12). There is no place in the Lord’s church for haughty minds.

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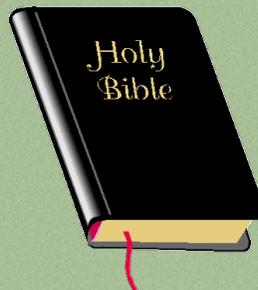
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