

ENCOURAGE THE FAINTHEARTED

1 Thess.5:13-15 contains a list of 7 characteristics of a healthy church. They are listed by 7 Greek present imperatives (commands).

We will study each of the following 7 characteristics of a healthy church.

- Live in Peace (5:13)
- Admonish the Unruly (5:14a)
- **Encourage the Fainthearted** (5:14b)
- Help the Weak (5:14c)
- Be Patient with all men (5:14d)
- See that no one Retaliates (5:15a)
- Seek after Good for all men (5:15b)

**Today we will study EIGHT aspects of the third characteristics of a healthy church
“Encourage the Fainthearted.”**

1. The third command deals with the second of four problems disrupting the spiritual health of the Thesalonians church.

The four problems with solutions that Paul addressed were *unruliness, faintheartedness, weakness, and retaliation*.

Last week we studied – “Admonish (noutheteo/ to put correction in the mind by instruction) the Unruly (ataktos/ to be insubordinate towards positions or policies of divinely delegated authority).”

This week we will study – “Encourage the Fainthearted.” Notice that once again Paul addressed the problem by offering the spiritual solution. This is a sign of wise leadership.

So often we are content to focus all our energy and time on the problem rather than on the spiritual solution (spinning our wheels). Paul didn’t just focus on the problem of faintheartedness but he also focused on the spiritual solution of encouragement.

2. The Greek word for fainthearted is (*oligopsuchos*). It is a compound Greek word (*oligos/ small*) and (*psuche/ soul*).

“The word must be relatively old, for the secondary (*oligopsucho*) ‘to be cowardly,’ ‘to lose heart.’” (TD of NT, pg.666)

“This rare word is found in the *koine* in the sense ‘fainthearted.’” (TD of NT, 665)

“Thus oligopsuchia means ‘despondency,’ ‘crossness,’ and ‘impatience’ in Ex.6:9.” (TD of NT, pg.666)

The Greek idea of oligopsuchos is that something in life whether real or imagined is causing the soul to contract or shrink. The cause could be external and physical or internal and mental (Jonah 4:8; Ex.6:9).

3. The Greek word for encouragement is (paramutheomai). It is also a Greek compound word (para/ beside, with, near) and (muthos/ advice, counsel).

“*Encourage* – as the sense there is that of stimulating to the earnest discharge of duties.” (Vines, pg.111/ paramutheomai)

It refers to coming along side of someone in order to give wise counsel to think and to do the right things regarding whatever was the stimulating the faintheartedness.

Elijah’s ministry to the widow of Zarephath is one example of “encouraging the fainthearted.” (1 Kings 17:7-16; 1 Cor.14:3)

4. Faintheartedness can result from despondency over a pattern of abuse.

Abuse is an attempt to control the spirit of another person (POW complex) (Prov.18:14; Isa.57:15).

One example of this is recorded in Ex.6:5-8 with the Israelites in bondage to Egypt (Ex.2:23-25). Another example of this is recorded in Judges 16:13-16 with Samson and Delilah.

5. Fainthearted is also be the results of failure of the faith cycle.

Any of the three categories of sin can cause the faith cycle to fail (mental attitude, sin of tongue, overt sin).

For example, the Israelites faith cycle failed because of fear of Goliath but David’s succeeded (1 Sam.17:23-24, 32-37).

Another example, the Israelite spies’ faith cycle failing but Caleb’s succeeding (Num.13:26-33/ to lose heart).

6. A wife could become fainthearted and despondent from being overwhelmed by a sense of desertion of her husband (divorce, death,etc) (Isa.54:5-6).

PROBLEM (fainthearted): “Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one’s youth when rejected.” (54:6)

SOLUTION (encouragement): “For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the Lord of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth.” (54:5)

7. Encouraging is an important part of parenting to prevent faintheartedness in children.

“Just as you know how we were exhorting and *encouraging* and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His kingdom and glory.” (1 Thess.2:11-12)

8. Encouraging the fainthearted is an important part of ministering to the bereaved (John 11:18,31; Rom.12:15).

“And many of the *Jews* had come to Martha and Mary *to console* them concerning their brother.” (John 11:19)

How did Jesus encourage the sisters? (11:21-27, 39-46/ read)