

# “Comfort One Another With These Words”

By Chris Ulrich

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Thank you; you may be seated. It's good to see everybody out this morning, and, glad to see it's not raining. I don't know how many's been affected. I know, Kirk, you had quite an experience about a week and a half ago. Has anybody else really—Todd—anybody else have any damage or house damage or vehicles or anything? That's good, that's good. I know it's been pretty severe, and I know we had another round the other night.

I want to welcome back Donna Ferguson; she was up—they call it up in the U.P., they call it, the upper peninsula. Was Justin there, too? No. Just you and your dad. So, welcome back. Anybody else traveling this past week?

Okay, so, Scott, I just want to say congratulations, but I also want to say, Robin, good job on the color coordination. Very good summer color choice; it reminds me of lime sherbet ice cream.

So, this month, we've been looking at the Book of First Thessalonians. It's been a really enjoyable month; I would say that we've had some of these in years past where we looked at the Book of Galatians, we've looked at the Book of Ephesians, and this is the first time we're looking at First Thessalonians. But our theme verse for the month is from First Thessalonians 2:12, which I'm going to read; it says:

**1 Thessalonians 2:12** *That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.*

And it's something that we have to look at from the standpoint that we take it seriously.

## Part 1 – Sanctification and Honor

And I'm going to jump right in here, because, there are certain biblical topics that, I think we all would agree that kind of fall under the category of no-fun, but we wouldn't be doing ourselves justice or anyone else for that matter if we failed to give them the attention they deserve. I get that this kind of preaching is not just not popular, it's extremely unpopular. Who wants to have extremely unpopular preaching, teaching, or even public speaking, for that matter? So, how many remembers about ten years ago, General Motors, a very large corporation here in the United States, they filed for bankruptcy. Anybody remember that? Okay. So, I remember, as I was preparing the message, and I was thinking back about, the CEO at the time was a guy by the name of Rick Wagoner, and there were a lot of articles, and there was a lot of publicity about all the things that that corporation, which, at one point in history was an incredibly thriving, very prolific, very profitable corporation, and they've recovered. They did, again, like I said, they did go through bankruptcy. But, I remember looking at some of the executives in General Motors that were traveling to Washington, when they understood that their model was not sustainable. That's what they call it in the business world. This is not about business; this is more about the discomfort, the grief, and, even, I would go so far as to say, the sadness that everybody that was employed—and they are an incredibly large employer of people here in the country. So this affected a lot of people, it wasn't just him—he was the face of the company. And I'm getting to what I'm going to be talking about, because, when he went, along with some other people, and they asked for thirty billion dollars, which, obviously, is an incredibly large sum of money. And, there was, it was okayed, then they still had trouble; they eventually filed for bankruptcy, they restructured their

organization, and they eventually came out of it, and they're back in business. That's good to see. I myself drive a General Motors car. But, it was something that, I look at it—when we present something that isn't popular, or maybe something that, it seems like we're trying to put a damper on it. That's not the case. Do I really want to talk about these things? When we look at what we're going to look at, and we're going to read from the Book of First Thessalonians here in a little bit, and we're going to go through quite a bit. But, do I really want to talk about these things? Not really. But, again, I can't in good conscience skip over these things that God teaches us and God shows us in His Word, about, like you shared, Scott, in the Book of Revelations. Those aren't pleasant things to hear. That's not a fun topic, or a fun subject matter, but they're also salvation of the soul subjects, they're salvation of the soul topics. And part one of the sermon today is on Sanctification and Honor. And I'm going to ask if you would turn with me to the Book of First Thessalonians, four, verses one through seven.

**1 Thessalonians 4:1-7** *Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, [Keep that part in mind, because that's something we're going to talk about a little more.] even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*

Mike Alford, I'd like to ask if you could come up and lead us in a word of prayer for the sermon today.

**Mike:** Lord Jesus, we just praise Your holy Name, Lord, God. Thank You for all Your blessings, Lord Jesus, and, Lord, You have a message from our messenger, Lord God. We just pray that You bless Chris and anoint him, and open up our hearts so that we can receive that message that You have for us, and all the things that have been shared already today, Lord God, that we can go forth and be pleasing in Your sight, Lord, God, and we can help be a light to those around us that they can have what we have, that hope, the glory, the hope of salvation that we have. I just pray that You continue to bless this service, and bless and anoint Brother Chris. Amen.

Amen. Thanks, Mike.

I would say that a lot of people here, today, that, and even a lot of people on the outside who aren't religious at all, have heard talk about the will of God. Sometimes the expression is thrown around a little bit too loosely, or it can be twisted around to justify ourselves, but, either way, it's the will of God; it's not our own will. We can make it harder than it really is or we can think that there's nothing to it at all, but, if we examine ourselves, and we look at this passage there is something to be said for the last verse, which, it said that God has called us to be holy. 1 Peter 1:16, it says, "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." And because it says, "Because it is written," it's also in the Old Testament, in the Book of Leviticus chapter twenty, verse seven (Leviticus 20:7).

And this is the will of God that we live our lives in sanctification and in honor. Not an easy order in this world but I would venture to say that you could go back a hundred years, a thousand years, or as far back as history takes us, and there's always been temptation. There's always been violence. You look in the Book of Genesis, chapter six, where it talks about, "Violence filled the whole Earth." (Genesis 6:11) And that was the reason for the flood. It wasn't anything else. It was because violence filled the whole Earth, and God saw—but Noah found grace in the eyes of God (Genesis 6:8). Of courses, we look

at temptation; it's been around since the beginning, it's going to be around until the end of time. It seems like violence has escalated; it seems like, as we look around—and it might have something to do with the fact that we have media twenty-four-seven, and internet, and television, and radio, and just on and on and on and word of mouth, and we hear these different things, we see these different things on the news, or whatever source of information we use, and it is depressing, it is discouraging. But, there's hope in God. Abstain from fornication, which is sex outside of marriage, plain and simple. Not in the lust of concupiscence, which is evil, lustful desire. Defrauding one another, which is illegally obtaining money by deception. Again, I want to add that it's not an easy life and never will be and these temptations are real, but we can be victorious.

I'm going to ask Jesse Rairdon if he can come up; he's going to read from First Thessalonians Four, verses eight through twelve, but, before he starts, I'm going to ask a question that pertains to the last few points that I made: What happens when we do fall into sin? Repent, get right. Brother Rob Severance, gave a study the other night, and he showed several verses—and I appreciate the study—where God just said, “Only acknowledge thy sin, and repent, and do right, and that's pleasing in the eyes of God.” All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God (Romans 3:23). If anybody says that they haven't sinned, they're a liar (1 John 1:8-10).

Go ahead, Jesse, please.

**1 Thessalonians 4:8-12** *He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit. But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*

Thanks, Jesse. So, how are we doing in “brotherly love”? And I ask that knowing that we all have room for improvement. This isn't about trying to do a shakedown, or trying to get somebody to confess something that's not real. But do we like to make people around us uncomfortable? Do we like to see them squirm, and get on the edge of their seat? Is that the testimony that we really want to have? We shouldn't. And, I'm not talking about—I get that people, especially those on the outside of the faith, that we want to have a godly influence, and, if they shape up, and act right, and act civilized, good enough; give credit to God. Thank God for that. Thank God for that godly influence. But we shouldn't try to brush off our godly conviction on them of our own selves. It should be a matter of them sensing the presence of God, because that's the difference-maker. But are we mustering every bit of strength within us, and every bit of godliness within us to try to draw people closer to God? Christ Himself said, “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me.” (John 12:32) It's times like that where we should. Again, I understand that sinfulness, and sanctification, and brotherly kindness, they're not super popular subjects. I don't go to other churches, so I don't know to what extent these are addressed—I've been to other churches, as far as visiting, whether it's family members, or there's times that we've gone as a church to sing, or whatever the case might be. So, one of the best ways I've found, though, of understanding what people are about is just talking to them. I had a brief encounter, about a week and a half ago, with some people that approached me. I was out, actually grilling, and these guys came along, they were just walking the streets, and they were Jehovah's Witnesses, but, what I'm going to share is this: It wasn't a matter of trying to get into some confrontation, but they were asking me a little bit about what I believe, and, so, I told them. I mean, I'm not going to hold back. It's not a matter of pounding somebody over the head with it. It's just a matter of expressing, “Well, this is what it takes. Being born-again. Being baptized, enduring to the end, having holiness,” and there's plenty of verses that God will bring to our remembrance, and, at the end, we agreed to disagree. Did I kind of think that

was going to happen? Yeah, I kind of thought that was going to happen. But that's the case a lot of times. It's not a popular message, and it's never going to be a popular message. But, it's a matter of being able to stand on that, and understand that we know in whom we believe. We have to be able to back up what we believe with what the Bible teaches, but, again, Scott, one thing that you mentioned was that the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life (2 Corinthians 3:6). Did I care about those people as I was talking to them? Sure! I mean, as much as you can somebody you just met that's walking off the street. And they were respectful. I mean, it was a civil conversation. But, it's a matter of looking at it, there is a disagreement in the beliefs that we have. There's no doubt about it. And it's more than just a good idea to address these issues; it's a mandate from God.

## Part 2 – The Power of the Tongue

**Proverbs 18:21** *Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.*

I would say, maybe, about five or six years ago, reading through, I came across this verse, and it hit me quite hard, but in a positive way. It wasn't a matter of—yeah, it was convicting, but it was a blessing, it was peace, all at the same time. I mean, you're going to have a lot of emotions that we experience whenever we read the Bible, whenever we pray to God, whenever we have fellowship, and it's not always a matter of going to one extreme, it's a matter of having that balance in God. But, how much damage can we inflict, or how much encouragement can we express in just the words we that we say? Think about: We hear music that has words; we hear the radio, it's got words; we watch television, and there's words that the people are talking about; we read books, and it's more of that, it's just words. Some of the greatest and some of the most moving speeches are just that; they can move people to change behaviors, and sway audiences, and that's not really the point, the point is that, ultimately, to convey the Word of God. How many's given speeches where you talked about something other than something Biblical? Okay. How many's given a speech, or a share time where it's been something where it is related to something that's Biblical? A lot more hands went up. How many feels a lot more comfortable delivering a speech or sharing or something whee it is related to the Bible? I believe that, I believe that. Because that's our bread and butter. That's in our wheelhouse, as the expression goes. There's other things that we might have passion about. It could be—I'll just share a topic that's something that I think about quite often because it's shaped America, and it's shaped the world, which is the industrial revolution. Probably started around the 1850's, and it had to do with the invention of the combustion engine, it had to do with the invention of air travel, the automobile, the light bulb, the telegraph, and just on and on and on, and there's so many of those that were done here in America, but there were other ones that were done throughout the rest of the world, but, ultimately, getting back to that wheelhouse, which is in Christ. That's more important to me than the Industrial Revolution. And there could be other things that we have interest in or passion about, or a desire to learn about. There's nothing wrong with that. But it comes back to, well, what are our words saying? And I get that we're not supposed to be just hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word, (James 1:22) and not just talkers, or making empty promises. And that's why, I think, that so many are just so distrustful of, probably politicians, mostly, but I would say this: This isn't about trying to bash anybody, because then it's a matter of, well, what am I exposing myself to? What am I really trying to listen to, or believe, or put my faith and hope and trust in, without backing up and saying, "God said, 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.'" (Proverbs 3:5) That's in Proverbs chapter three. God's never going to fail us. There's plenty of other people, and, we, ourselves, at times, are going to fail people or fall short on whatever it is that we tell people. But, it's not a matter of getting

people to try to trust in us. Even Christ, Himself, He said in Matthew, chapter fifteen, verse eight, He talked about the scribes and the Pharisees, that, "These people draw nigh to Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Matthew 15:8) So we could have that, where we're guilty of that, where we're saying, "Oh, yes, God," and putting on a good show, but, ultimately, what's that really going to do for us, or for anybody else, for that matter? Another good example where words do make a difference, positively: Christ said, in John 6:63, He said, "**It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.**" That's the power of the tongue.

I'm going to ask everybody if you could turn with me to First Thessalonians Four, thirteen to eighteen. And this is going to be our main text for the message today.

*1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. [I appreciate what you mentioned, Malcolm, about Mike Hooks. That was a recent passing. And it's something that we keep him in remembrance. It's something that, we reflect on that, and I'm going to get into that little bit more. Verse fifteen:] For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

Again with the words: comfort one another with these words. And that's our sermon title for today: "Comfort One Another with these Words". And if Part 1 of the message today seemed to be a little more on the no-fun side for you—I say that a little bit tongue in cheek, I hope that in part 2 is not only a great encouragement, but it's a hope to keep going. It's something where we can go into our tool box and we can use what God's given us. We can remember some of those great blessings, we can remember some of those great victories, we can remember some of the things that God's done for us, warts and all. The good, the bad and the ugly, and whatever the case might be. But, I know this much: In Psalms, it talks about, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever." (Psalms 23:6) So there's a lot more good than bad, I'll tell you that much. And I believe that we all believe that, and it's a matter of looking back, it's a matter of thinking back to what God's given us. Do you believe Heaven is real today? Will you still believe tomorrow and the day after that and the day after that? Do you believe that those who've gone before us and were born-again and followed the Lord are in paradise? Comfort one another with these words.

I like that song that we did, in the one verse, it says, "Oh, how happy I will be when life's journey here is run, and I look upon His face, and I hear Him say, 'Well done.'" So, what other group of people in the world would actually sing that and believe that? I mean, you're saying, "I'm going to be happy at the end"—and I'm not saying don't be happy along life's journey, I'm not saying don't enjoy what God's given us along the way, but there's something more to look forward to at the end than even while we're in the midst of it.

I want to do something a little different this morning, and I really don't know how I'm going to do it quite yet, but, I've brought along some bulletins of some people that we've known over the years, some of us that have been around, maybe, for a long time. I just want to—it might be a little difficult... Parrish, if you could—I'm going to read some of these, and if you could—I'm going to hold the microphone; if you want to—I'm going to ask you to go ahead and read off some of these names from these bulletins, here:

**Parrish:** Owen Tony Mattia, Martha E. Allsopp, Julia Bell Hardy, Robert Joseph Bournonville, Robert Granberg, Pastor Roland Saniatan, Pastor L. R. Davis.

Thank you. I wanted to bring those in, and I don't know why I've kept those over the years. I just have. I think some of them probably have a little more sentimental value, but I knew all these people, and many of us here did, as well. And I know this isn't everybody. I'm going to share just a few names of people: Brother Mike Hooks, Louise Smith, Bill and Alice Mathiesen, Christine Schultz, Jay Owens, Jim Allsopp, - others you might remember that I don't and vice-versa. And there are others we know from our other congregations too. From Norfolk: Aaron Schemp, Travis Swinton, I remember a lady: Mrs. Cherry. This is kind of going a ways back. Tom Hanson had a brother by the name of Billy that was baptized many years ago, and he was living in up in Minnesota at the time of his passing, but I want to just share something quickly, but I want to elaborate a little bit more on some of the people and reflect, because it's a memorial. We keep it as a memorial, but I remember, about two years ago, when Tom's brother passed away, and, it was kind of unexpected, although his brother had lived kind of a rough life, I mean, he'd gotten baptized, maybe 1990, and then went astray, but Tom shared with me that, when he went to meet up with the people, the caretakers, that, they shared that, in his last couple of months, he really made a turn back to God., He started sharing from the Bible and he started witnessing to people. And all Tom could say was, "You know, that's all I can hope for. That's all I can really hope for. That's the best I can hope for." Did he really know, okay, where does he stand? This isn't about that. This isn't about jumping on the judgment bandwagon, or maybe even putting people into Heaven or into Hell, for that matter. The judgment is in God's hands, and it's in His hands only. But every one of these obituaries, and celebrations, and the people that I just mentioned, were all people who were baptized in Jesus' name in this ministry; people that were born again. And it's about sharing some of the memories and thinking back and reflecting on their lives and comforting one another with these words.

I'm closing in a moment, here, but, how hard are we really trying to make this plan of salvation and this life in God? Oh, I get there are strict standards, I mean, we covered some of that earlier this morning, but we're not going to be very comforting if we try to convince people that this Christian life is harder than it really is. And that's the balance that we need to have. I'm going to read one last verse; it's in Matthew eleven, verses twenty-eight to thirty. Interestingly enough, when we had prayer prior to service—Jesse, myself, and Parrish prayed—that was the last thing you mentioned, was this verse. And I didn't show you my notes. I mean, is that coincidence? Do I think that's the incredible thing from God? I think it's more than coincidence; I'll say that much. I don't try to read too much into something, but I do believe that there's such a thing as being in tune with the Spirit. But Christ Himself said:

**Matthew 11:28-30** *Come unto me, all ye that lab our and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

So, I just have to ask the question: What if Christ said, "My yoke is somewhat hard, and my burden is kind of heavy," would we still want to carry it? Would we still want to live this life? I would hope so, but maybe not. It might be something where it kind of discourages somebody, and they say, "I don't want to do that." Because there are enough verses that go along with that, that say, "Endure hardness as a good soldier." (2 Timothy 2:3) But, that verse right there, I appreciate that, and I believe we all do, because we're talking about a spiritual matter. Yes, the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life (2 Corinthians 3:6). And Christ's words, in Him, they are Spirit and they are life (John 6:63).

Thank you for your time. God bless you.