

Scripture: I Thessalonians 5:1-11.

Topic: Building Up Each Other.

Text: I Thess. 5:11--"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up,..."

Proposition: Building each other up is important and necessary, both to the solution of world problems and to the preparation of eternity.

Dates written: Nov ~~9-11~~ 8-10, 1962.

Dates and places used:

Nov. 11, 1962 - Montrose, Colo.

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Dates written: Nov 1952 - 8-10, 1952

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Introduction:

1. November 11 is the date which in this country has been called Armistice Day. It recognized the end of World War I, and man's hope that no more ~~wars~~ wars would be fought. Other wars were fought, with World War II and the Korean conflict being the two largest. It seemed, ~~as~~ if a holiday were to be observed each year to remember the end of ~~war~~ each war, the calendar would become mostly holidays. Veteran's organizations brought influence to bear, so that today November 11 is designated as Veteran's Day. Certainly this is appropriate, for if ~~we~~ we cannot celebrate a day which marks the end of ~~a~~ war as a method, we can honor those who risked their lives that wars might be won by the democracies.

2. Most people recognize that war is a foolish method which should be abolished. None recognize its horror ~~for~~ more than the veterans who survived terrible battle experiences. Yet most people recognize that there are some things for which non-resistance, or peace, is too high a price to

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2. Last people recognize that war is a foolish method which should be abolished. None recognize its horrors more than the veterans who survived terrible battle experiences. Yet most people recognize that there are some things for which non-resistance, or peace, is too high a price to

pay. It is better to be dead than red. It is better to risk even the terrific destruction of nuclear warfare than for atheistic forces, with no respect and value for the individual, to rule the earth. As christians, we should never give in to the "either-or" position, however. It is not "either give in to communism or suffer nuclear war." We believe that there are other ways than just these two, by which the world problems can be solved. We see in the Scriptures many suggestions of attitudes and methods by which peace can be attained, both in person-to-person relationships and in nation-to-nation encounters. Some such suggestion is ~~in~~ in the Scripture that we read today, I Thessalonians 5:1-11.

I. The Scripture, like the world situation about which we hear everyday, points to grim and terrible possibilities for mankind.

1. Paul, like most of the early christians, expected Christ to return to earth very soon. He accepted the common notion that when this happened it would be accompanied by tremen-

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dous and terrible things. People who feel secure, who think the world is at peace, are being fooled, he says. "When people say 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape," he writes.

2. Let us note that a woman with child is often termed "an expectant mother." Though she does not know just when the event will take place, she does know that it is coming, and she can prepare accordingly for the time of labor and pain. This is sort of the psychology which is advocated and practiced by many people and powers of our modern world. They think that world conflict, including the massive destructiveness of nuclear weapons, is bound to come. It's just a matter of time, they argue.

3. Therefore, the ~~next~~ thing to do is to prepare for such an eventuality. One way to prepare is for the democracies to be so powerful that the conflict will be delayed for as long as possible. When it does come

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however, then many lives should be saved through the use of shelters, food storage spots, and first aid supplies, and other facilities, which were ready for the crisis long before it happened.

4. All this sounds sensible, to some degree. It would be much more sensible it would seem, if the calamity could be avoided entirely. Perhaps it can. The Scripture points to a way out of the catastrophe which Paul foresaw.

II. The Scripture points to a "way out" for christians, a way which is not easy, but which demands vigilance, faith and action.

1. Vigilance is suggested in our Scripture in these words: "So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober." (v. 6, RSV). These words suggest faith: "...since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." (v.8-RSV). Action is pointed to in the words of our text, verse 11: "x

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"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up..." Paul predicts that such vigilance, faith and action on the part of the christian will find him prepared to meet whatever calamity may accompany Christ's coming again. The christian has nothing to fear.

2. In the matters of great concern among current events Paul's suggestions of vigilance, faith and action are pretty good ones too. Not only should we be vigilant to counter any aggressive acts by an enemy, but we should be vigilant ~~to~~ seeking the initiative for peace. Our United States president in an address to the 16th General Assembly of the United Nations presented several thoughts of which we as christians should be aware, ideas dealing with the present-day problems of peace and war. Some of these ideas are expressed in "A Petition to the President," which was printed in our church newspaper mailed to many of you at the beginning of this month. Members of our church's commission on christian social concerns will have copies of this petition in their hands at the doors today, for you

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up..." I will pre- dict that such vigilance, faith and action on the part of the Chris- tian will find him prepared to meet whatever calamity may accompany Christ's coming again. The Christian has nothing to fear.

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to sign, if you wish to do so.

Certainly it is vigilant to ~~recognize~~^{use} ~~in~~ this petition a chance to give moral support to the president in ~~his~~ efforts to seek ways of peace.

Among the statements of this petition are these:

We agree that "mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to ~~mak~~kind," and that "every man, woman and child lives under the nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest thread."

We know "The risks inherent in disarmament pale in comparison to the risks inherent in an unlimited arms race," and that "in a spiralling arms race a nations security may well be shrinking even as its arms increase."

We support your statement: "it is...our intention to challenge the Soviet Union, not to an arms race, but ~~to~~ a peace race...until general and complete disarmament has been achieved."

Therefore, Mr. President, we whose signatures appear below register our support for efforts of the United States government directed to: (1) Persistent negotia-

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tions in all areas of East-West tensions; (2) a nuclear test ban treaty including inspection and embracing all major powers; (3) an international agreement for worldwide total, safeguarded disarmament under the United Nations, along with the development of a UN Peace Force."

3. This petition, the ^{most} important parts of which I have read here, takes into account the need for vigilance, yet proposes vigorous action. It seems to me that such a statement is one that any christian would want to sigh. In keeping with this Veteran's Day emphasis on a "Race for Peace," we have also distributed in our church bulletins today some cards. One side of these has this statement:

"The critical international situation has led many Methodists to ask for an opportunity to share in a broad movement of prayer, study and action for peace. The Division of Peace and World Order of the General Board of Christian Social Concerns has proposed a Race for Peace. It has been endorsed by the Council of Bishops. In a state-

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ment to the church the bishops proclaimed:

"The birth of Jesus was announced in a message of peace on earth, good will among men. He has earned the right to be known as the Prince of Peace. The promise of sonship is to peacemakers. The making of peace is our business, our sacred trust. In this heritage of remembrance, commitment and redemption, we call The Methodist Church, indeed, all christians, to join in a crusade for peace, to move resolutely against the drift toward war."

4. The president calls the world and the nation to vigilant ways of seeking peace. The bishops of our church call christians to action in creating peace. The other side of the card in our bulletins today provides an opportunity for some action. This side is entitled "Covenant for Peace." It has several blanks in which a check mark by a statement indicates your decision to act in a christian manner for peace. Among the things that you can indicate that you will do are to pray daily for peace; to join with others in small groups to meet regularly

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for prayer, study and action for peace; to give for peace and peace projects; to study international problems in order to be a better informed and more responsible christian citizen; and to share your desire for peace with your family, friends and government officials. If you feel that you can make such a covenant for peace use this card. Your national Methodist agency for peace would like to know of your decision. Members of our local Commission of Christian Social Concerns, or the minister, will be glad to receive your signed card as you leave the church. The cards so given us will be mailed in as a group, or you may mail yours directly, if you wish.

5. Here, then, in our petition and covenant card are two forms of action which you as an individual christian can take today to cast your influence for peace. Certainly, these do not exhaust the possibilities. Nor do they guarantee peace. We should continue to be alert to the dangers of our time, and to prepare for them. All the while, however, we can seek to make things better.

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The Scripture points up a very practical method which is available in every day life to make things better. It points out that

III. The peak of christian activity and concern is in words and actions of interest, encouragement, and service for people who are near to you in love and faith.

1. The words of the text, written to christians at ~~Ephesus~~^{Thessalonians}, are:

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up..." Although this was written to christians about relationships with fellow christians, it does not exclude from christian actions deeds of kindness and help to strangers and non-christians.

2. The type of building up of one another to which Paul referred isn't meaningless, wordy flattery. It is, instead, firm and solid encouragement and support. In the case of peace efforts, which have formed our major illustration today, we encourage and build one another up by pointing out that there is something which we as christians can do

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in the world situation to promote peace. We are saying to each other that your individual opinion and efforts are very important. This emphasis on individual worth is at the heart of christianity.

3. There are many obvious ways in which we can build up one another. Expressions of friendship in times of trial; statements of confidence when others doubt ones personality; gifts of beauty when the spirit needs lifting; or gifts of practical usage when the harder needs of life need help. These and many other opportunities exist to build up each other. As strength and confidence and christian faith are strengthened, an individual emerges who has something real to offer to others, so that the ~~the~~ effort to help him has been worthwhile.

Conclusion:

1. Let us summarize now what we have found given by the Scripture, I Thessalonians 5:1-11, as a message for us and our times.

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ture points to grim and terrible possibilities for mankind, as does today's world situation. It also points to a "way out" for christians; a way which demands vigilance, faith and action. The peak of such action is shown in words and deeds of concern, encouragement, and service for those who are nearest you in love and faith; ~~through~~ though kindness to the needy stranger should also be practiced.

3. All of this brings us to conclude that "building each other up" is important and necessary, both to the solution of today's problems and to the preparation of individuals for eternity.

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In Jesus name we pray.

Amen.

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