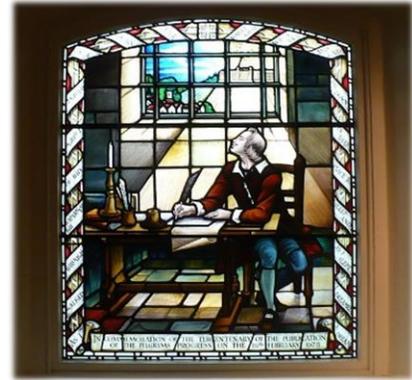


July 23, 2020

## Good morning, Everybody.

Last night after the service I had an opportunity to cross paths with Luke Bachman, and I asked him about his family. The answer was that after a long trip, they've arrived safely here in Greenville. And they're settled nicely in for a period of quarantine. After that we should be able to see them in the services at church. So glad to hear it!



You also may have received the word that Ellen Doyle arrived back in Cameroon late yesterday. She's rejoicing. There are still health needs, of course. But her desire is to be on the field; whether completely cancer free or not. She certainly needs our continued prayers.

### *Am I my brother's keeper?*

What's the answer to that?

Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, . . . encouraging *one another*. . . (Hebrews 10:24, 25).

So I have a little request this morning (smile).

One of the most difficult things about church life during this virus crisis is that we lose sight of each other. And therefore of the opportunities to come alongside each other that we normally enjoy. The Bible word for what I'm thinking about by, *come alongside*, is (I'll transliterate it), **parakaleo** (all short vowels except for the **o**). That word is translated with over a dozen different English words. They include (and you'll want to note these to catch what I'm going to request), *appeal, comfort, conciliate, encourage, exhort, implore, invite, plead, and urge*.

Could you take a look at those words again? And maybe even one more time (smile)?

Did you do it? Can you rattle off a couple of them without looking?

Can we try it together? Ready? That word for *come alongside* is translated. . . ?

O.K. Here's the request.

If you're aware of somebody in the congregation who seems to be hurting or lonely or struggling in some way, is there one of those words that you could take as your guide for how to *come alongside* that brother or sister in the next few weeks? Here's why I'm wondering about that.

One of the most true-to-life metaphors that God uses of us as Christians is the word, *sheep*. We are *sheep* individually, and we are a *flock* all-together. There are lots of aspects in which those images are appropriate, but one that I'm thinking of very much at this time is our vulnerability to predators; especially the Chief Predator, the Devil. A *roaring lion*, the Word of God says (I Peter 5:8).

Let's think vividly about that for a minute.

We've all seen these fearful yet fascinating documentaries that include footage of a pride of lions or a pack of wolves stalking a herd of prey. What are they looking for? A **vulnerable possibility**. A small, or sick, or old, or young, or overly confident individual. And when they spot it, what then do they attempt? They attempt to **isolate it**. To cut it out of the herd, get it all by itself, run it nearly to death, dog its heels, and finally to surround it, leap up to seize its flanks or its neck, bring it to the ground, and then finally to clamp down on its throat until it dies. You shudder even as you relive the moments that you viewed it on your tv.

But that's exactly the way it works out in the wild, and that's the way it works within the flock of the church.

God tests his people in various ways; through delays, disappointments, fatigue, loss, inter-personal conflicts, illnesses, temptations, etc. Those are times when we're weakened considerably. Others, even those close to us, aren't entirely aware of what's going on in our lives. Or even if they are, our instinctively commendable efforts to bear our own burdens without complaint, results in everyone's thinking that we're doing pretty well. But maybe we're not.

So here's what's challenging within the life of a church. First, to be sufficiently up-to-date with one another. And that's been made *much* more difficult these last four to five months. We're not together several times a week. We're not serving together. We're simply not seeing and hearing each other very much.

And then secondly, the challenge is to know how to serve each other wisely. Does a brother or sister in Christ need an *encouragement*? A time of prayer together? A time of weeping together? A little *comfort*? Some . . . (what were some of the other ways that word *parakaleo* was translated)? Maybe some *tangible* (translate that, *cashable, drivable, readable, wearable, even edible* (smile) ) expression of love?

Who are you aware of that hardly anyone else in the *flock* may know as you do, simply because that person/family is more *visible* to you? More *accessible* to you? Does that person or that family need you to *come alongside* them right now? Think about it just for a minute.

O.K., well, you get the idea. But let's not let anyone become isolated and *attacked* if there's anything that we can do about it by being (1) aware (*vigilant* is a Bible word for it) and (2) actively *coming alongside*.

### A Bible Counsel

Do you need *vitality* today (what the Bible calls *life*)? Do you need *peace* for the rest of the day? Here's a Bible statement that legitimately can be rephrased as a Bible counsel.

To be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:6b; KJV).

The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:6b; NASB).

Try underlining the counsel. To be spiritually minded. The mind set on the Spirit. And may the Lord give you *life and peace* this afternoon and evening (smile).

Praying for You Today,

Pastor Minnick