

“Competent To Counsel”

September 2, 2019

Colossians 3:1-11

Thank you for an opportunity to preach God’s Word again today. Please find with me the fifteenth chapter of Romans.

Have you ever given someone a warning? Parents, have you ever used the phrase “I warn you. If this ever happens again ...”

One of the most necessary things in existence is also one of the least desirable things in existence is a warning. For example, how many of you would heed a tornado warning? How about an evacuation warning?

In ancient Israel it was important that someone be designated to alert the people if an attacking army was coming. He was called a watchman. His job was to be alert. And, if he saw an impending invasion, he was to blow a specific call from his trumpet. For example, Ezekiel 33:1 says this. “...*if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: (3) If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;*

(4) Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.”

Some of us; many of us; don’t believe respond well to warnings and don’t take them very seriously.

A number of mid-western cities in the United States today are using cutting edge technology to warn people when a tornado is about to strike. As soon as the weather satellites tell them just where a tornado is about to strike, a very loud tornado siren sounds. They’ll also alert people by both television and radio. They use telephones. They even use

social media to announce it. And, in one location, they’ll send a text to every single cell phone inside the danger zone.

But. There’s something that is now frustrating the authorities. People simply won’t heed the warnings; the repeated warnings; the sirens, the public service announcements telling them that a tornado is about to strike.

Following the tornado that hit Joplin, Missouri in 2001, researchers discovered the reason why so some people refuse to heed the warnings. Quote “Most people don't run for shelter at the first sign of danger but, instead, search for information to confirm it.

... And if you don't provide them with the information they need, what you're actually doing is guaranteeing the time people spend searching is longer rather than shorter.”

“That's how human beings are wired. Nothing is going to change that," said Dennis Mileti, a sociologist and retired director of the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado in Boulder, a national clearinghouse for disaster research...They're sitting there saying, “OK, I don't want to deal with it. I don't want to have to worry about it. I want to assume everything is going to be OK.” That's why the person will wait for that secondary confirmation. They'll say, ‘I've really gotta know it's going to hit me.’”

And, in some places, they’ve changed their methods to something called “impact warnings.” An example of an impact warning is quote “You could be killed if not underground or in a tornado shelter.” And they found that even *that* isn’t effective. People, in general, refuse to heed warnings.

[Found on <https://www.mprnews.org> “Why Don’t We Pay Attention To Tornado Warnings?” by Dan Gunderson May 14, 2012].

How about you? How are you with warnings? For example, if I pointed you to a Bible passage that is a clear

warning from God that you should not do a particular thing, would you listen? Will you obey?

Find with me the fourteenth verse of Romans 15 and follow as I read. Romans 15:14 *“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able [competent] also to admonish one another.”*

I’ve titled today’s message “Competent To Counsel.” Shall we pray?

Suppose you were driving down Main Street here in town and you saw someone with a sandwich sign on his back with the words “Repent of your sins today. Jesus Christ is coming soon.” You already know how you’d react. You’d count that man as a crackpot; an eccentric and a fool.

You see, it’s not only tornado warnings that you won’t listen to. It might even be something from the Bible.

When it comes to God’s will, the Bible presents it in two ways. One, there’s the sovereign will of God. And two, there’s the revealed will of God. No one can change the sovereign will of God. That’s His eternal decree. God’s eternal decree is only His to know and to execute. And, we know nothing about it until it happens.

But, the revealed will of God is whatever is found in the Bible. In Scripture we find specific direction. And we’re often given warnings in the Bible; sometimes repeated warnings. These are often described as “God’s permissive will.” God tells us what to do or to not do and then we are given the choice to obey Him.

Now, why the topic of warnings today? Look a little closer with me at Romans 15:14 *“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able [competent] also to admonish [warn, counsel] one another.”*

There are three areas of spiritual growth that Paul puts his finger on in this verse: goodness, knowledge of the truth, and

a specific ability as it relates to other Christians; the ability to admonish; which means “to warn” and “to counsel.”

So, this line “able also to admonish” is this “also competent to counsel and warn.”

Some of you might have read the book by Christian counselor Jay Adams called “Competent to Counsel.” It’s a great book in many ways. I’ve read it. And, basically, it’s a philosophy on counseling. What’s the philosophy? As *your* life develops into a Christ-like example to others, you are in a position to admonish, warn, and counsel other people.

And, Dr. Adams adds, counseling does not require a doctorate. Instead, it’s a mutual caring for your brother or your sister. It’s simply being a compassionate helper in a time of need. You don’t have to be a medical doctor to give good counsel to someone. It has more to do with helping people one on one with their problems and struggles and showing them how to apply the Bible to daily life.

I know you are going to say to me “Leave the counseling to the professionals.” I know you are going to say “Live and let live.” But, folks, there’s a level of counsel that you give and receive every week of your life. I know it’s true in my life. Think about someone who came to you this week and asked your opinion or your advice. Did you refuse to offer your counsel? Of course, not. So, no, counsel is not out of your league. And there is a constant need for counsel between Christians. Now, granted, there are some Christians who just won’t listen to anybody’s counsel. But, as you’ll see in a minute, when someone isn’t ready to receive a word of admonition, a warning, or counsel, it’s better to do the one thing that will help in every case – pray *for* and pray *with* that person.

Folks, I know exactly why we relegate our counseling to quote professional counselors. It’s because we are a society that has, on the whole, left the Bible in the dust. A Christian

is a little Christ. And it's normal for a Christian to be filled with His Spirit so that we can be used by the LORD to touch other lives for Him. Each of us, every one of us, has a Bible. It's not a theology book. It's a book on how to live life *today* in this world. It's not a book for Heaven. It's a book for now. It's a book that addresses the problems you and I face every day. And, among the greatest joys of your life is this: walk with God and He uses you to help other souls to know Him and to obey Him.

Now, by the way, please don't read into my words here. There clearly are occasions and times when a brother or sister in the LORD isn't able to provide the needed counsel. So, yes, there are Biblical counselors available whose focus is providing counsel to others every day and every week. Their experience is often necessary in some situations.

Here's what Dr. Adams says about the need for counseling. "Whenever the process of sanctification slows down (or halts) in a Christian's life, and he is not able to rectify that situation (for whatever reason), he needs the help of other believers who can direct him to God's answers to his problems and how to bring about a change that honors Him."

And, isn't this what Paul says about the Christians in Rome?

Romans 15:14 "*And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to **admonish** [warn, counsel] one another.*"

First, then, Christians are called to admonish, warn, and counsel each other.

And, let me say a word about how you know that a person is able to do this. You are competent to counsel because you see some things about God and life that really do work. And you also know that someone you know and love will benefit by *your* personal growth.

And the LORD isn't asking you to be "Miss Fixit" or "Mr. Repairman." God is not calling you to become a fruit inspector and to begin looking at others and finding their faults. No, never. Instead, be a man or a woman of prayer and wait on God's time to provide counsel to those who come to you for counsel. God isn't calling you to force your counsel and warnings and admonitions on others. God knows when that person is ready to receive your counsel. Let Him open the door. But, when He opens it, take that person to the LORD and to His Word for help.

Do you see Paul's message here? It's that admonishing, counseling, warning, for Christians, is mutual. It's informal. You need it. I need it. It's God's will.

When you read your Bible, it's always good to ask "what does this word mean?" God gave you a mind and a heart. And your relationship to Him, to the world around you, and to others is both mind and heart. You really can't learn God's word if you separate your mind from your heart. You can clearly see this when you see how this word is used in your Bible.

So, how is this word used in your Bible? When Paul was leaving the seaport city of Ephesus to travel to Rome, he met with the Christians at the dock. As he boarded his vessel, he turned to his friends and fellow Christians with these words. Acts 20:31 "*Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to **warn** every one night and day with tears.*"

This is the exact same word as you found in Romans fifteen.

First, then, Christians are called to admonish, warn, and counsel each other.

Second, do you care?

Did Paul care? Yes. He cared to the point of tears. He cared to the point of warning, counseling, and admonishing his brothers and sisters in Christ day and night. Can you see

the quality of compassion and love behind Paul's counsel? Paul spent his life on behalf of those who were saved, warning, admonishing, and counseling them.

So, how do you relate to your brothers and sisters in Christ? Are you aware of someone in your life, maybe right here in today's service, who is struggling and has needs? Are you willing to serve them by being the kind of counselor that is connected to them, a brother or a sister who walks with the LORD?

Folks, it's not only my job to challenge you to apply God's Word to your heart and life. It's your job too. You too are able, competent, to counsel, admonish and warn. The question is "Are you willing to care?"

I Corinthians 4:14 *"I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I **warn** you."*

How many times does the LORD command you and me to love our brothers and sisters? Sometimes it's a letter as Paul says here. But notice how Paul sees the Corinthians Christians. He sees them as "my beloved sons."

Since Christ's love has been poured out into your heart by the Indwelling Holy Spirit, you too can express that love to others by what you say to them and do for them. Your sister in Christ is your beloved sister. Your brother in Christ is your beloved brother.

Apart from Christ's love, we can't really care to the point of admonishing, warning, and counseling others. Are you not concerned when someone you know is doing something that is detrimental to themselves or others?

It's true. People, in general, don't heed the warnings they are given. But, should you not warn, admonish, and counsel? Just because many of the people of Joplin, Missouri didn't heed the tornado warnings, that is no reason to the warning.

Warn, counsel, admonish because you love your sister or your brother.

First, then, Christians are called to admonish, warn, and counsel each other.

Second, do you care?

Third, love the Word and live the Word of Christ.

Colossians 1:28 *"Whom we preach, **warning every man**, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: (29) whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."*

This word "warning" is the very same word as we found in Romans fifteen.

As you know, no one is exempt from counsel. "Every man" says Paul. We all need it. We often need it and yet, we don't want it because it will call for change.

Now, by nature, you may not think you can counsel someone. By nature, you think you don't need counsel. But, God has given you His Word to do it.

It becomes God's Word in you and it becomes God's Word through you when you live those words.

Colossians 3:16 *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and **admonishing one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."*

Now, I'm going out on a limb here today with this. I think that you might be handing out counsel, admonishment, and warnings more often than you realize.

Let's say you have a friend who has a problem with drugs, or alcohol or pornography or anger or depression. Can you think of someone right now? And, when they came to you for help, did you refuse your help? Or, did you take time to bring counsel to them? Did you not direct them to the LORD and His Word?

But, listen folks, here's my warning to you today. When people come to you with their *own* problems or with the problems of a family member or friend, don't warn, don't

admonish, and don't counsel without directing them to the Book that has the answers; the truth; the Bible.

Your Bible is better than any book in existence. It's alive. Neglect it; it's dead – to you. Believe it and it's life to you. Hebrews 4:12 *“For the word of God is quick [alive], and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder [apart] of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*

Please give your advice and counsel and warnings and admonishment with and from the truth of the Bible. A while back a woman came for quote “counseling.” Her husband had found another woman. He'd moved in with her. One of the passages we read was Romans chapter seven. We read it together. Her response “I didn't know that that was in the Bible.”

God has a way of allowing us to experience some very difficult things so that when we turn to Him, His Word becomes The Source for our answers. You'll see things in your Bible in a much clearer light when you face problems.

Colossians 3:16 *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and **admonishing one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”*

You see, when you let His words live in you – richly, as the greatest book on wisdom in existence, you, like the Romans, are able to admonish someone else. And with what? With the Psalms, with hymns; even with spiritual songs. The LORD's word is His answer to depression, to drugs, to children killing children in our schools, to children and adults who can't figure out if they are male or female, to gang violence, to immorality, to anger, to selfishness and every other problem as well as every other sin. Let *His* words live in you today; and tomorrow you'll have a renewed ability to admonish, warn, and counsel.

Are you beginning to see who it is that God intends to be the counsellor? He says “admonishing, counseling, warning **one another.**”

First, then, Christians are called to admonish, warn, and counsel each other.

Second, do you care?

Third, love the Word and live the Word of Christ.

Fourth, listen to the counsel of those who are “over you in the LORD.”

I Thessalonians 5:12 *“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and **admonish** you; ...”*

Who are the ones who are “over you in the LORD”? These are your parents, your teachers, elders, Pastors, etc. But, that's not all. It's also those who are spiritually mature. Some of you have much more experience because you've been through things in which the LORD has taught you and you've learned. You've applied His Word and His heart to your life. You may not be an elder or even a teacher in the Church. But, yes, when you have someone over you in the LORD, it's because, to some degree, they have traveled the exact same road you have and they've found that God's ways are always best. So, folks, it's always best to heed their counsel. It's God's way.

And one final thing. In any group, in any family, in any organization there will always likely be someone who is unruly; who hasn't yet found out what it's like to surrender all to the LORD.

Paul says this to you. I Thessalonians 5:14 *“Now we exhort you, brethren, **warn them** that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded [the discouraged], support the weak, be patient toward all men.”*

Are you aware of someone who's unruly? The unruly are those who are quote “out of place.” They won't or don't take care of their responsibilities either at home or at work or in

general. They are like the prodigal son. They are wasters. They refuse to adjust their lives to the benefit of themselves or others. Paul says that these people need your help. They need your time and counsel.

Folks, you might today be among the unruly. You might realize after seeing this passage, that *you* are the one being warned; that *you* are in need of admonishment and counsel. Don't let the words of the Holy Spirit go in one ear and out the other today. Do something about your life. Exercise your will and submit your heart to the LORD. Confess, if there's a sin, and ask Him to change your heart. He will – every time and in every case.

II Thessalonians 5:10 says this *“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. (11) For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.*

(12) Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. (13) But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

*(14) And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. (15) Yet count him not as an enemy, but **admonish him as a brother.**”*

The Scripture is plain. To counsel, to warn, and to admonish is what God has call each of you to. Is it messy? Yes, sometimes it is. Is it right? Yes, it is. Is it God's will? Yes, it is.

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God only enables what He commands. God directs and then we let Him have His way with us.

Now last, what should you do when you counsel, admonish and warn? Here's what you can do. Do the greatest thing ever. Bring your friend or loved one to the Cross for his/her answer.

You see, the *only* success anyone here can find in the Christian life is when we let Jesus Christ have full control of our hearts. It's *His* life in you that will enable you to walk as He walked. Nothing else will do.

The Cross is the answer for sin and the Cross is the answer for problems in our lives; every problem. Yes, you can change by sheer power. But, determination will never last. You'll run out of steam after a while. Dependence upon yourself is not God's goal for your life. It's dependence upon Him for everything, in every circumstance, with everybody.

When someone has a need, a problem, a situation where they aren't able to overcome a particular sin, they will want to come to you. They'll want to go to someone who will care and someone in whom they can have confidence will direct them with good counsel. Let that person be you. Why? Because it's a simple fact that you've surrendered. You've let the LORD do in your heart what needed to be done. And it's now time for you to let Him use you to admonish, warn, and counsel a brother or sister in Christ.

In conclusion, would you pray this prayer with me in light of today's study? “LORD, thank you for changing me. Please let me be Your counselor today. In Jesus' name, amen.”

Now, it might be that you've never been saved. If so, you aren't really able to praise the LORD.

Today, though, you can come to Him for salvation and forgiveness of all your sins. He paid the full penalty for your sins. And He's right now ready to completely forgive you of every sin you've ever committed. Will you pray this prayer?

- **I Admit** – that I am a sinner and in need of a Savior (Romans 6:23)
- **I Abandon** – self-effort and realize I cannot be saved by my works or efforts (Acts 16:31)
- **I Accept** freely Christ's payment for my sins, required of the Father (John 3:16)
- **I Acknowledge** Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior (Acts 4:12)

So, what will you do with these precious words from the LORD's heart this week?

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 396 "Breathe On Me"