

Thessalonians, Part 9: Love Each Other More and More

1 Thessalonians 4:9 ESV (Pg. 574) Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, **10** for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, **11** and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, **12** so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

- I. Last week we talked about how Paul urged the Thessalonians to pursue holiness, because the will of God was for them to be sanctified¹. Part of that sanctification would include refraining from sexual immorality² so that they would be distinct from the pagans around them, and that they would not violate their brothers and sisters in Christ. They were also to recognize that God was an avenger against all evil, who would not tolerate sexual impurity. Lastly they were reminded that they were never redeemed so they could remain in sin, but to live and grow in God's holiness.
 - A. Last week's text focused on transformation that makes us more like God in our character; this week the emphasis will be on the way we relate to one another.
 1. This dual responsibility that believers have toward both God and one another was central to Christ's message. **Matthew 22:36 ESV** "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" **37** And he said to him, "**You shall love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **38** This is the great and first commandment. **39** And a second is like it: **You shall love your neighbor** as yourself. **40** **On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.**"
 2. In other words, the whole requirement of the Bible is summarized by these two commands: love God and love others. John tells us that if someone says he loves God, and hates his brother, he is a liar³. Conversely, we cannot sincerely love people if our love doesn't flow out of our devotion to God.
 - B. To love each other is a constant refrain of the New Testament. In fact we are given multiple, distinct commandments in the New Testament concerning how we are to relate to one another, and many of those are repeated several times.
 1. For example, the commandment to "love one another" is repeated 17 times⁴; attributed to Peter 2 times, Jesus 4 times, Paul 5 times, and John 6 times.
 2. On top of this, there are commands to serve one another, bear with one another, forgive and encourage one another along with 25 other specific commands⁵ concerning our treatment of brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - a) It is God's will that a state of deep affection, service and commitment exist between members of his body for as long as there is a church.
 - b) **Hebrews 13:1 ESV** **Let brotherly love continue.**
- II. It is very interesting, then, that Paul does not command the Thessalonians to work at loving each other. "**Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you**" Paul doesn't need to supply further instructions in this matter. Why? "**for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another**" It would appear that he recognizes that deep love already exists in their fellowship, because God has taken the initiative to show them the great need to be devoted to each other.

- A. What does Paul mean when he says God has taught them to love one another? He is saying that the Holy Spirit, by a mysterious working of faith, causes us to love one another, in a way that we could never generate on our own.
1. Love is not natural to any of us. It is far easier to criticize, shove, and demand our own way than it is to love.
 - a) While it's true that we may certainly have feelings of affection for certain family members and friends, we all know how easy it is for even those to be disrupted by abuse, betrayal, or even disappointment.
 - b) It is receiving the love of God, demonstrated for us on the bloody cross of Christ, that teaches us how to love better than anything else can.
 2. In the hearts of those who place their trust in Christ, God does a fantastic miracle in our hearts, making us to love even our enemies, like Christ did!
- B. This is only an act of God brought about by the rebirth. **1 John 4:7 ESV** Beloved, let us love one another, for **love is from God**, and whoever loves has been **born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.**
1. John says love is "from God". God is the center and origin of all true love in all that exists. While sinners like us can be stirred with feelings of love and affection, all of our love is corrupted by our fallenness.
 - a) If you're married (and honest!), surely you can see how selfishness has crept into your relationship with your spouse often. Is any relationship you have with friends or others not also been affected by sin?
 - b) But one of the things that God intends to do in the lives of those he redeems is to make us love, and to do so increasingly sacrificially; so that we are mirror reflections of the way that Jesus loves all of us.
 2. Loving one another demonstrates that we have been "born of God" (born of the Spirit⁶), and that we "know God". Anyone's claim of a relationship with God that is devoid of demonstrated love is immediately proven to be false.
 3. This is because unlike all of us, "**God is love**". These 3 words are the basis of all true theology. Everything God does is driven by his great love. So whenever God causes dead sinners to be born again, we begin to look and act a lot like him, just like naturally born kids resemble their parents.
- C. **"So the way that faith and the Spirit combine to bring about love is that the Spirit works his miracles (including love) through faith. When we exercise faith, the Holy Spirit is flowing in the channel of that faith with love-producing power."** Pastor John Piper⁷ What Piper is saying is that without a constant clinging to Christ through faith, you have no hope of the Spirit producing real love in you.
1. For Paul, the love the Thessalonians had for each other was proof of their genuine faith and the presence of the Spirit's power working in them.
 - a) **1 Corinthians 13:1 ESV** If I **speak in the tongues** of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** And if I have **prophetic powers**, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have **all faith**, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, **I am nothing**.

- b) Often, people will look for miracles, signs, and wonders as the evidence of the Spirit's presence. They might even say that a church without the regular occurrence of such things is either cold or dead. But that was not the Apostle's position! He celebrated the love that proved authenticity.
- D. **“(loving each other is) indeed...what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this *more and more*”**. All throughout their region, the Thessalonians were known as people who love well, and yet, Paul encourages them to grow in their output of sacrificial love.
1. Although the Holy Spirit works in our hearts through faith, each new day in the life of a Christ follower will bring greater opportunities to sacrifice more of ourselves for the benefit of others.
 - a) We will be offended and sinned against in order to learn how to forgive those seem to painfully or constantly wrong us.
 - b) We will be exposed to the need and suffering of others so we can learn to move toward them with a gentle and sincere heart of compassion.
 2. Remember, we don't love in our own strength to build a reputation of great piety. Rather, God insures that we are faced with frequent opportunities to grow in love toward others (even through difficulty) for a few reasons:
 - a) First, so that he will be glorified. **Luke 6:35 ESV** *But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.* We glorify him by acting like we belong to him, because we do! If he is loving (and has loved us), we must be also.
 - b) Second, the character of Christ is formed in us when we love others well. No one loves people like Jesus Christ does! He pursues his enemies and makes them his friends, and calls us to do the same. **John 13:34b ESV** *...just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*
 - c) Last, the world is impacted with the truth of the gospel in a way like no other when we chose to love (even when it's hard). **1 Peter 2:12 ESV** *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*
 3. This kind of love was played out powerfully this week in a video posted on the internet as a man pointed his brother's killer toward the love of God, and then he forgave her himself, and even embraced her.
 - a) Many on social media were aghast that this black victim would extend mercy to the white killer, thinking that outrage was the proper response in the face of such terrible injustice.
 - b) But that's exactly what the gospel does. It makes us love when the world screams, “Hate! Take your vengeance!” This kind of love doesn't necessarily make you popular. In fact, it will probably offend many.
- III. After celebrating the love that was present at Thessalonica, and encouraging the people there to continue to grow in their devotion to one another, Paul shows them how that would look in their situation when he tells them to **“aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you”**.

- A. When Paul says to aspire to live quietly, he is instructing them not to be trouble-makers, or meddlesome, or gossips or busy-bodies. They are to live in such a way that people can trust them, and even enjoy them. They are not to be antagonistic, or burdensome, or exhausting to those around them.
 - 1. Everyone knows someone who thrives on controversy, and loves to stir up trouble. They are always focused on the worst possible scenario, and talking about people behind their backs, and never in a positive way.
 - 2. But Paul says to “live quietly”. This means that we don’t always have to bless the world with our opinion on every political, family or church-related issue. The gospel frees us from that. Many of us would do well to post 1 Thessalonians 4:11 prominently on our computers or devices, and get in the habit of reading it before we ever begin to post to Twitter or Facebook!
- B. Paul then says to “mind your own affairs”. If Paul were talking to a 21st century audience in Texas, he would say, “Mind ya bidness!” He is saying that it’s not always necessary to “rock the boat”. We all like to tell others to mind their own business, but most of us resent it deeply when someone tells us to do so.
 - 1. You and I must learn to keep out of things that are of no concern to us. That does not mean that we shouldn’t press in when the people we love are in danger, despair, need or drifting into sin. So how do you know when to speak up and when to back off?
 - 2. I would say that when there are no damaging or gospel implications, back off. By that I mean if someone’s physical, mental, spiritual, or emotional health are not in jeopardy, then it’s none of your business and keep quiet.
 - a) If someone has preferences that differ from yours, but that don’t put their souls or safety at risk, be quiet, back off, and mind you own affairs!
 - b) But if someone is in real jeopardy, press in, ask questions, but even then do it gently, privately and with a deep awareness of your own weaknesses and tendency toward sin⁸. Don’t gossip! People need to trust you, and if they can’t, you will do way more harm than good.
- C. Next, Paul says to “work with your own hands”. The point is that some people will tend to let people love, serve, and provide for them, which is good, and yet many of those people will never reciprocate. This seems to have been a problem in Thessalonica as we will see when we get into 2nd Thessalonians.
 - 1. It’s wonderful when people care for our bodies and souls in our time of need, and I hope that everyone who calls our church home experiences that blessing from time to time; but the love we experience as members of Christ’s Body is meant to be reciprocated, not hoarded.
 - 2. I would love to see the day when all of us have trained ourselves to come to church with our senses honed in on those who might need us; our encouragement, our time, our skills, our money. I hope we speak up when we need something, but that we quickly look for others to bless in return.
- IV. Paul says that living like this allows us to “walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one”.
 - A. God has never intended the members of the church to live *independently*. John Donne famously said, “No man is an island” and that is never more true than in the church of Jesus. We need each other, and were meant to serve each other.

- B. But God also never called us to be entirely **dependent** on each other either, where some of us (usually the pastors, elders, and other leaders) are the givers and everyone else gets to be the takers.
- C. Instead, the church was always meant to be a community of **interdependence**; where all of us lean on each other, serve each other, both giving **and** receiving a benefit of supernatural, Christ-like love.
 - 1. This is why at our church, most weeks we have different lay people serving communion to you. In doing so, they are serving you Christ; his body broken and his blood poured out. Christ is presented for you to feast upon in the community of brothers and sisters that is the church of Jesus Christ.
 - 2. It is symbolic of what we are called to do everyday, in every interaction with each other. Share the gospel! And we are to share the gospel with everyone in every interaction.
 - a) When someone is lost in sin, we share the gospel of God's love and mercy in the cross Christ so that they can be made alive in him.
 - b) But when a believer is sick, or in need, or depressed, or backsliding, do you know what they need? The same gospel that introduced them to Christ in the first place. We never graduate from it!
- D. And it is the greatest act of love that we can do for each other to share this gospel and call each other back to faith in Christ Jesus. This is what we will do today at the Lords Table.
- V. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Announcements:

Visitor Info / Offering

Life Groups Tonight

Corn Maze Fellowship, Sunday, October 27th, 5:30pm: The Maize At'I Do Farms

Missions Offering (w/ Leslie Walt)

Benediction: **1 John 4:7 ESV** Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9** This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world

that we might live through him. **10** This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **11** Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:3

² See 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

³ 1 John 4:20

⁴ John 13:34-35, 15:12, 17; Romans 12:10, Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:22, 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 3:23, 4:7, 4:11-12; 2 John 1:5

⁵ Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50); Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16; 15:5); Do not pass judgement on one another (Romans 14:13); Welcome one another (Romans 15:7); Greet one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14); (Husbands and wives) do not deprive one another (sexually) (1 Corinthians 7:5); Wait for one another (1 Corinthians 11:33); Comfort one another (2 Corinthians 13:11); Agree with one another (2 Corinthians 13:11); Serve one another (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10); Bear with one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13); Be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32); Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13); Sing to one another (Ephesians 5:19); Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21); Do not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9); Teach one another (Colossians 3:16); Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16); Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11); Build one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:11); Seek to do good to one another (1 Thessalonians 5:15); Exhort one another Hebrews 3:13; Stir up one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:25); Do not speak evil against one another (James 4:11); Do not grumble against one another (James 5:9); Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16); Pray for one another (James 5:16); Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9); Clothe yourself in humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5)

⁶ John 3:5-8

⁷ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-does-the-spirit-produce-love>

⁸ Galatians 6:1-5