

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

***Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. <sup>10</sup> And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, <sup>11</sup> and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, <sup>12</sup> so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.***

In our study of 1 Thessalonians we have come to a very practical portion of Scripture. The Apostle Paul packs a great deal of truth into just four verses. My goal this morning is to TRY and explain what these verses mean and then to suggest how they apply to us today.

Last week we looked at God's command to avoid all sexual immorality, and I feel it is a very serious issue for the American church. We are all being attacked by immoral sex everywhere we go ...it's not hard to understand why Paul spoke so frankly about this topic.

After I preached that sermon, I received comments that people thought I was a little more fired up than normal ... and I probably was (it's a BIG issue) ... I was really hoping someone would step up and get some help in their personal fight of sexual immorality.

I mention that simply to say that today I face a different problem. The words of our text are not as sensational today. It is STILL God's Word and still very true ... and the danger is that we skip this small section and move on to the next BIG thing (which in our text will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ) but that would be a mistake because we need to hear what God is saying to us today.

Our passage contains two great pieces of advice for the church. The first is in verses 9-10 and the second is in verses 11-12. Each one describes what the church SHOULD be doing in the world.

Paul begins by reminding them of their duty to practice brotherly love.

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(You are doing great things. You are great lovers; BUT you will need to keep it up! Never stop!)

The word for “brotherly love” in Greek is a word that everyone here already knows. Literally in Greek the word is philadelphia. It’s a word that outside the New Testament almost always is used for the love of family members for one another. It comes from two Greek words that have been joined together:

**philos**, which means “tender affection, fondness, devotion.”

**adelphos**, which literally means “one born of the same womb.”

So the word philadelphia literally means “tender affection for those born from the same womb.” It’s easy to understand why the early Christians adopted this word to describe Christian love.

Jesus said, “You must be born again” (John 3:3). To be born again means to receive new life through personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Let me illustrate. I have three children—Faith, Justus, and Charity. They are all very different. But they all come from the same place.

They may grow up in go in completely separate directions. Faith may be on the mission field somewhere, Justus has talked about joining the military, and Charity possibly may be living with Anita and I (We don't know where her Down Syndrome will take her). They all have different personalities, different habits and hobbies, different likes and dislikes. Yet one thing will bind ALWAYS them together. They came from the same place. There is a bond between them that time and distance can never break ... Anita York was their mom and Tim York was their Dad. Man! They are 3 of the luckiest kids alive!

The same truth applies in the spiritual realm. Everyone who belongs to Jesus is connected to me. And I owe all of them brotherly love!

Note three facts about this brotherly love:

**1. It is taught by God himself.**

*“for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.”*

The word translated “taught by God” appears nowhere else in the New Testament. It speaks not of a lesson learned in a classroom but of truth learned through a relationship. What's the best way to learn Spanish? Live among people who speak Spanish.

The same is true regarding love. You learn to love by associating with loving people. You don't learn how to love in a classroom. “Class this is the proper way to give a hug. You put your arms around the huggee, and then you pat nicely on the back.” No ... you learn to hug when you surround yourself with people who hug!

Love isn't taught, it's caught. Because we are a part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> birth, we have shared in the EXPERIENCE of Jesus, we know His basic nature, which is love. So NOW, love ought to be the most natural thing for us as believers to express.

You can't even have the 2<sup>nd</sup> birth until you understand God's love for you.

That's why Paul doesn't have to teach it. He says you KNOW it, let it keep on working in you.

## 2. Love reaches out

***"And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia."***

Mentally underline that phrase—"all of God's family". That's not easy to do. Most of us love some of the brothers, maybe even most of the brothers. But all of them? That's a tough assignment.

It's hard because most of us have some inner qualifications. We don't like this group or that denomination. Maybe we're not comfortable with people who speak in tongues or with those who use a Prayer Book. We may even distrust people who have a different worship style that we do.

God's kingdom is not limited to graduates of one seminary or members of one denomination or to people who look, think and act just like us. God's kingdom embraces all believers in Jesus Christ no matter who they are or what church they happen to belong to.

See ... The love of God is not limited—not by nation or ocean or tribe or tongue or custom or clothing or race or politics or any other human condition. When the love of God captures us, our hearts begin to grow as big as his—reaching to the ends of the earth.

## 3. Love grows

***"Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more"***

What does it mean that our love should increase?

What is EVERYONE in the world looking for? A feeling of being loved! They are not all looking for it in the right places or even in the right ways ... but this IS what everyone is looking for.

Research from George Barna shows that when the unchurched are asked if they were ever to look for church; what WOULD they look for? The answer is always the same: They would look for a caring church.

Not just a friendly church or a relevant church or a church with plenty of programs for the kids. And not just a church where the Bible is clearly taught. As good and essential as those things are, they don't touch the deepest need of this generation, which is for a place where they can be loved truly and deeply. When the people of the world find such a place they stand in line to get in.

This was the primary attraction of the early church. They had no buildings, no fancy programs, no large budgets, camps, no radio or TV, no standardized curriculum; in fact they had none of the things that we consider essential for success. Yet nothing could stop them.

In just three centuries Christianity conquered the Roman Empire. How did it happen? It was said of the early Christians, **"Behold, how they love one another."**

One Roman writer put it this way: They know one another by secret marks and signs ... And they love one another almost before they know one another.

But here's the danger for US today, C.S. Lewis pointed out that *"we may talk so much about loving people in general that we love no one in particular."*

The church is supposed to be a **community** of love. We owe it to the Lord, to each other, and to the watching world.

Let brotherly love abound more and more.

There is a second instruction we must take seriously.

***<sup>11</sup> and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, <sup>12</sup> so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.***

THIS was a much tougher section of Scripture to understand. The more I read it; and the more I read commentary on those TWO verses. The more I seem to get lost.

I want to read it and go, "BAM! There it is. We are supposed to lead a QUIET life. (I like that because normally I am a quiet guy) and we all want to feel that our normal life is THE right life, right?

Mind your own business, don't be afraid of work. And THAT kind of life is going to be enough to win the respect (maybe even the salvation) of the unbelievers.

And SOME of my personal commentary that I added may be right.

But there is more to these two little verses than that. First, these verses lead into a fairly large section of Scripture that speak about life after death and the second coming of Jesus. That's a GIANT topic and everyone has opinions it.

SOME think that THESE two verses are saying this: Be quiet about your whacked out views of when Jesus is coming back. Just live like He would want you to live. That's what earns you Christian respect. And don't quit your job EVERYTIME someone makes a prediction that in 3 weeks Jesus is coming back. If He is coming back, we should be living our lives FOR Him ... however that looks in each of our lives.

And THAT might be a correct view too.

BUT these verses also follow a section of Scripture that where we are supposed to love and care for one another. If someone is a Christian, then they are like family, and we should take care of them!

Well we know that there are always people in the crowd who are looking for the loop holes. Trying to get the EASY life at no cost.

There may be some Christians in Thessalonica who are NOT working ... they are living off of the “Christian” welfare system. While they are NOT working They are “partying like rockstars”, and Paul is telling them to lead quiet lives ... get a job (if you can), and provide for your family.

A life of godly work will earn you the respect of those around you.

Which one is the RIGHT view?

Well, here’s my conclusion for this week. Right now, I think this is a continuation of the LOVE section that we looked at early.

For us to be able to love like God wants us to love ... we are going to have a “quiet life.” We are going to have to take care of our own spiritual business. I have to make God’s Word alive in my life! If it’s not ... then I’m dead.

If because of my “quiet time” then I draw close to God ... then my life shows my belief in God.

Are there times, when I am supposed to share my faith with those along my daily path? Yes, that is a Biblical mandate. But there are also times I am supposed to “Mind my own business”, and allow God room to work.

Like I said, I struggled through those last tow verses. But I do think God wants us to grab SOMETHING.

I have seen God moving in someone’s life lately. And alongside my interpretation of this Scripture ... I have asked him to come today and share with you.

I wanted him to share with you how he does and where he does his “quiet life” ... Randy Payne come and share with us.