

AM 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

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[0 : 00] Bibles to Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. In the Pew Bible it's page 1189, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

And we're going to read a short passage. This evening's passage is going to be much longer. And that will deal with the glorious subject of the Lord's second coming.

So if you're interested in the future and the Bible's teaching about the Lord's second coming, then I'd encourage you to come back this evening at 6 o'clock for our evening service when we'll look at what Paul teaches the Thessalonians about that subject.

But here in the middle of chapter 4, there's a few verses that are important and we shouldn't skip over them in our study of the letter.

So let's read together from verse 9 of chapter 4. Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you.

[1 : 25] For you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. 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. Let us pray.

Love one another more and more. So says Paul in his exhortation to these Thessalonian believers.

Love one another more and more. Love is one of the marks of the true Christian.

It is one of the ninefold fruit of the Holy Spirit. Love, joy, peace and so forth. Love, joy, peace and so forth.

[2 : 53] It flows out of the new birth. The new birth must always lead, has to lead to a life characterized by love.

And so a loveless Christian is really a contradiction in terms. And as the Apostle John said in his first epistle, We love because he first loved us.

Now you remember from our previous study of this letter that it was love and the labor that that love produced in the lives of these Thessalonian believers that enabled Paul to deduce their election by God.

You remember that in the first chapter where he says in verse 2, We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers, loved by God that he has chosen or elected you. It was that labor produced by love, along with these other marks and characteristics, that enabled Paul to charitably deduce that these people were truly the chosen of God.

[4 : 32] Because God's choice always appears in a life of faith, a life of love, a life of hope.

And it was also Timothy's report. Remember how Timothy was sent when Paul couldn't go to Thessalonica? He sent Timothy instead to minister to them and to bring back a report as to how they were doing.

And it was the good news of your faith and love, Paul says, that brought comfort and joy to the heart of this apostle.

Because their faith and their love encouraged him to believe that they were the people of God, the chosen of God, and that they were walking well as such.

And here in chapter 4, the apostle says regarding love, that there is no need that anyone should write to you. Why does he say that?

[5 : 38] Because he says they had been taught by God. Do you see that? They'd been taught by God to love one another. That's surely a reference to the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

They'd been taught by God himself. This is a work of God in the heart of the sinner. Turning him or her into a believer.

Characterized not only by faith and hope, but by love. And he also says, for that is what you are doing.

I hardly have to write to you about this matter. Because not only are you taught by God, but this is what you're constantly doing. And you also notice what he says there in this section of chapter 4.

That you're doing it to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. This love wasn't just for their own little select group.

[6 : 50] It didn't just involve the immediate members of their church family. But it extended out to all the brothers in this whole region of northern Greece.

But there's a fly in the ointment, as we say. There was something that was spoiling the love of this church.

And Paul, whom we've seen already from what we've read in 1 Thessalonians, was a great pastor of people.

Handles this delicate subject with great skill and wisdom and tact. There was an element within the church. We don't know how big or how numerous this element was.

But this group or element within the church needed to be addressed. Needed to be taken in hand. Their behavior, in certain regards, was not in keeping with brotherly love.

[8 : 01] And so Paul includes a gentle rebuke within the pages of this letter. And you notice that his rebuke, at the end of the section that we read together, where he urges the brothers to do certain things, is basically threefold.

He says, But we urge you, brothers, to do this, to love one another more and more.

And then in verse 11, to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

So the rebuke you notice is live quietly. Mind your own affairs, or we would say, mind your own business.

And work with your own hands, as we instructed you. Two reasons are given for this threefold rebuke.

[9 : 31] But there's also a third, which we can draw from other relevant passages of the New Testament Scriptures. But in this passage, two reasons are given. Reason one, aspire to live quietly, mind your own affairs, work with your own hands, for this reason.

To maintain a good witness before outsiders. You see, the way they were currently living was not doing the church any favors.

The way they were living was worthy of blame, rather than being blameless. And you remember what Paul had prayed for them at the end of chapter 3?

Look at those words of his prayer. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you.

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you. So that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

[10 : 54] His prayer and you notice how his teaching within the epistle, his urging, his admonishing, his prayer and his teaching and his admonishing, admonition, they're all closely interrelated, interlinked.

Increase and abound in love for one another and for all so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness.

It's interesting that before he brings the application of the word, before he admonishes before he urges them to do anything, he prays for them.

It is God who works in us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. And if we really believe that, then we ought to pray that God's will would be done in our own lives and in the lives of others before we then go to those people and say, look, I come to you in the name of the Lord.

There's an area of your life which is not bringing glory to him. I would encourage you to think about this. To change your ways.

[12 : 31] to walk in the Lord's commandments that others might see it and praise God for the godliness of your life and the good works that it produces.

rather than just going marching in without prayer, without intercession, without calling upon God's help to produce the fruit of the Spirit's work in the life of the believer and then just on a human level seeking to encourage, to exhort, to admonish.

This is the Lord's work. Sanctification is the Lord's work. Without him we can do nothing. The apostle prays before he urges and admonishes but you notice the things that he prays for and the things that he urges in the lives of these people are interwoven.

They're one and the same thing. So the first reason is that there would be a good witness maintained among outsiders and that there would be nothing done by the members of the church that would bring shame or that would bring reproach upon the Lord or upon the gospel or upon the reputation of the church.

And then the second reason that he gives in this passage is that they may be dependent on no one. And that's especially related to the threefold exhortation.

[14 : 37] Aspire to live quietly. Get on with things quietly. Mind your own affairs. Concentrate on the work that you have to do and work with your own hands.

Work hard. Be diligent just as we instructed you so that you may walk properly before outsiders. Maintain the good reputation as we've seen. And he says be dependent on no one.

We should endeavour as God enables us and in the circumstances that we find ourselves in. We should endeavour to stand on our own two feet as we say.

We should work hard to provide for ourselves and our families as circumstances allow. Paul is here doing what he tells the church to do in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 verse 14. He's admonishing the idol. This element within the Thessalonian church who were unruly.

[15 : 43] those within the fellowship who were dodging their own responsibilities and duties and who were skipping work for whatever reason.

Some of the commentators say it's because they thought the Lord's return was so near at hand that there's no point working. They were going to prepare themselves and watch for the Lord's return.

men. Well whatever the reason they were bringing the faith of the church into disrepute by their idleness.

They were not following either the instructions that the apostle Paul himself gave in his teaching nor you remember the outstanding example that he left them when he was ministering among them.

Look at chapter 2 and verses 9 to 12 where he says for you remember brothers our labor and toil. We worked night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you that we are not.

[17 : 00] You are witnesses and God also how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct towards you believers. For you know how like a father with his children we exhorted each of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

God will So these are the two specific reasons mentioned here in this passage. Aspire to live quietly.

Mind your own affairs. Work with your own hands. reason one to maintain a good witness among outsiders and reason two so that you're not dependent on others when you could be depending on yourself your own hard work.

But there's a third reason and I draw this from something Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 28 where in speaking about the transformation that grace the grace of God in the gospel brings into the life of a sinner he says let him labor doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Here is love in action. I am able to work hard to give myself to honest work whatever that work may be it's honest work so that I may meet not only my own needs but that I may also have something extra that I can share with anyone in need.

[19 : 21] Do you see how love looks out from self and looks towards others to the needs of others and asks how can I supply that person's need need.

And this I can't help but be drawn to something Paul teaches in Philippians chapter 2 about the mind of Christ.

Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. Remember that great passage? Philippians chapter 2 and having spoken about Christ's condescension the one who was in the form of God considered equality with God not something to be grasped and held onto at all costs but made himself nothing by taking the form of a servant coming in human likeness being found in fashion as a man humbling himself further to obedience and the ultimate obedience of death on a cross and then having written that short little piece of rich exalted doctrine of the person of Christ towards the end of chapter 2 the apostle mentions two men who in their own ways were examples of what it means to have the mind of

Christ in us the first one was Timothy of whom Paul says I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare they all seek their own interests not those of Jesus Christ but you know Timothy's proven worth Timothy doesn't put himself first because he has the mind of Christ he's genuinely concerned for your welfare and the second person mentioned in that chapter is a man called Epaphroditus of whom Paul says receive him in the Lord with all joy and honor such men for he nearly died for the work of Christ risking his life he was a worker he was a hard worker he nearly died for the work of

Christ risking his own life what we have here can be traced back through the lives of men like Epaphroditus and Timothy and even the apostle Paul to the Lord Jesus Christ himself the mind of Christ think of the love of God in Jesus Christ do you remember Peter's sermon to Cornelius and his household and how Peter introduces the Savior to them by saying in such a wonderful little summary of Christ's life as recorded by the gospels he went about doing good isn't that a wonderful summary of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ he went about doing good think of how much good in the days of his earthly ministry the

[23 : 28] Lord Jesus Christ did turn with me to Matthew's gospel and chapter four just to read a couple of verses I think these little snippets that we can get from the gospels are just so informative Matthew chapter four and read from verse 23 towards the end of the chapter and he went throughout all Galilee all Galilee notice that teaching in their synagogues plural synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing notice this every disease and every affliction among the people not surprisingly then verse 24 so his fame spread throughout all

Syria and they brought him notice the terms all the sick those afflicted with various diseases and pains those oppressed by demons epileptics and paralytics and he healed them and great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis and from Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan those few verses depict a really intense busy ministry and again in Luke's gospel chapter four Matthew four Luke four easy to remember look at Luke four and look at from verse 38 and he arose and left the synagogue and entered

Simon's house now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever and they appealed to him on her behalf and he stood over her and rebuked the fever and it left her and immediately she rose and began to serve them now this is where it gets interesting for me here in this context now when the sun was setting so it's towards the end of the day he must have been exhausted all the teaching and the healing and the ministering to all kinds of people in vast numbers now when the sun was setting all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them and demons also came out of many crying you are the son of God but he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak because he knew they knew that he was the Christ and when it was day so this is the next morning the next day he departed and went into a desolate place the other gospels tell us it was to pray to pray and the people sought him and came to him and would have kept him from leaving them but he said to them

I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well for I was sent for this purpose and he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea oh my friends think of those long days meeting the needs of multitudes and yet how from morning till nightfall he made himself available to teach to comfort to heal and to bless and yet he rose very early while it was still dark why because he knew that the blessing came from heaven and that the strength to minister came from the endowment of the Holy Spirit he didn't trust in himself but as the second Adam he always and only trusted in his heavenly father when he was weary and tired and thirsty he still took the time to offer the living water to a

Samaritan woman at the well John chapter 4 do you remember how he said on that occasion to his disciples that his meat and his drink was to do the will of the one who had sent him and to finish that work the disciples you remember on another occasion recalled one of the Old Testament scriptures concerning the Messiah and how it was written that zeal for God's house would consume him and Jesus was a man of zeal and of action and this comes across so strongly in the gospels especially in Mark's gospel that portrays Jesus' ministry of one of rapid progress and action and above all you can call to mind that great text in the middle of Mark's gospel where Jesus understands his ministry in these terms he is the son of man who came not to be served but he came to serve and to give his life a ransom for many so in the Lord

[29 : 27] Jesus Christ we see worked out in everyday actions the love of God this is love not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins and what need we all have guilty as we are of sin and rebellion against God deserving of everlasting punishment but what love is this here is one who is willing to work ever so hard so that he might give us what we truly need I want to close by drawing your attention to this saviour and in particular to two of his amazing sayings in the gospel of Matthew the first is in

Matthew 11 28 where he says come to me you have a need and he says come to me you labor you're heavy laden but come to me and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light friends this is our saviour he's a man of love a man of grace what is your burden what are you laboring at come to him he says and I will give you rest the second text is found in chapter 23 of the same gospel verse 37 that wonderful picture of

Jesus Christ weeping over the rebellious city of Jerusalem oh Jerusalem Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not how often would I have gathered but you were not willing reminds us of words of Isaiah 65 2 that Paul quotes in Romans 10 21 where God says all day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people such is the love of God towards sinners in the gospel of

Jesus Christ we love him we love one another we love full stop because he first loved us and the apostle says to these people and he says to us God says to us through his word this morning but we urge you brothers to do this more and more I wonder is there anyone here and you have a big issue a big problem a big blockage if you like within your heart and you find it impossible certainly you find it very very hard to love the unlovely

I wonder is that because you have not yet experienced the grace and the mercy and the love of God in Jesus Christ because when you realize the blackness the darkness the depth of your own sin and guilt and what that sin and guilt deserves and how much God has loved you and cleansed you from that sin and guilt if you've experienced that then it transforms your understanding of those who've offended us in whatever way and it enables us to begin to love them and to forgive them just as the Lord has loved us and forgiven us may God bless his word to us this morning let us pray