

Love's Testifying Ethic

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[0 : 00] Well, thank you very much for having me, and thank you for that worship. Worship team, that was amazing and just uplifting. I love to sing the worship to Christ, any chance we get as a church.

Thank you, BK, for inviting me to be here. He was letting me know. I didn't even know he was in Japan for his anniversary, so happy anniversary. And a little bit about me.

I am like a, I'm from, I'm the associate pastor at Prairie Chapel, a church in Abbotsford. And that church is growing by God's grace. It has exploded, as BK said.

And so I'm really enjoying the ministry there as the associate. I'm over the youth and the young adults and in the pulpit and counseling and all the rest. And, well, a little bit about me.

I did grow up in Maple Ridge, now in Chilliwack, so I'm getting further away. And before I started ministering, I actually went down to college.

[0 : 56] Yeah, I met Ryan Devlin and had a wonderful time there. The best part about it was that I met my wife, right? I met my wife in California.

She's from California. She's here with us today and my three kids, so you can say hi later. But I met my wife there, and I somehow convinced her to come back to BC with all the rain.

I don't know how I did that, but I did. I convinced her to come back here. And we saved up eventually after college, went back to seminary in 2016 at the Master's Seminary.

And then we just got back here in 2020. So we've been back and forth, back and forth. And, again, I don't know why we left that sunny state to come back to the rainy lower mainland, but that's because the Lord called us to do that.

So it's great to be more connected with these churches. I've gotten to know BK and a couple of other pastors in the area, David Corrente. I've ministered with Chris and Lisa and Josh and Jade and a bunch from your clan here, your churches, this church.

[2 : 02] And so it's just been a joy to get to know you guys. Thank you for those of you that helped out with Camp Equip again. We just had a wonderful time up in Stillwood there and ministered to the youth. Wonderful time to co-labor together for the gospel with you guys and really encouraged by the partnership in that.

Well, if you turn over into your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians 4, BK read that chapter for us. And we're going to be looking at a few verses from that chapter today.

And as we do turn in your Bibles, I just want to orient you to a little bit about what's going on in this book or what this book is really about.

BK mentioned it was written to a young church, a beginning church, a thriving young church. And that's exactly it. If you were to take 1 Thessalonians as a book as a whole, it's really boiled down to Christianity 101.

It's the basis and the essential tenets of the faith that we need to understand and what it means to follow Christ. And so I say that because, yeah, there was a group of believers that received the gospel.

[3 : 14] Brand new converts that received the gospel when Paul and his missionary team arrived in that city of Thessalonica. And they received the message of truth, Christ Jesus, and they also experienced persecution almost instantaneously.

And so there were some that rejected that reality of the gospel and rejected Paul and his missionary team. And so eventually what happened was Paul and his team got kicked out of Thessalonica and that church went into persecution.

So it was really just, if you read it in Acts, there's the narrative in Acts, there's two weeks where Paul gets to spend time with this church. And in parts of them, the essential tenets, as I said, of

what it is to be a Christian, what it is to follow after Christ.

And so as soon as he's able to, really as soon as he's possibly able to, he writes a letter to them as he desires to continue that work in them through the writing of letters.

And see that they're thriving in that Christian community. They're thriving as those who are following Christ. And to root them in the gospel.

[4 : 25] And what's encouraging is that what you see is, and all throughout this letter, is that the seed of the gospel fell on good soil. They were, in fact, bearing fruit. And Paul just needed to remind them and encourage them as to the nature of their faith.

And so really practically, this book answers questions like, what is true discipleship? Or how do I persevere in hardship? You know these Thessalonians, as I said, they were hit with some nasty persecution as they turned to Christ.

The Judaizers came after them and were trying to drive away any inclination to follow Christ. And we'll look at that more later today. But also, how are we to love one another?

This question, or this book answers that question for us. And then as we read, how does it all end? What is the hope of the Christian today? What has been the hope of the Christian since Christ was resurrected?

And all throughout this book, it answers these practical questions of what we are and how we are to continue to walk faithfully in Christ.

[5 : 37] And so specifically, what we'll look at this morning is what is God's will for us in relation to one another? Verses 1 to 8 that we read there were pertaining to personal holiness and conduct before God.

And then in verses 9 to 12, there's these really practical exhortations. You can say appeals for our Christian lives to promote this healthy fellowship among one another in the church.

And I just want to ground you with something really clearly. It's really about when we think about what we do as followers of Christ, everything is about reflecting the character of God.

As you look at these appeals and these commands, these exhortations, keep in mind that Christ's followers, we do what we do. We live the way we live in obedience, not just because it's a good thing or it's the right thing, but because it reflects the character of who our God is.

And so every day you wake up, you have the ability as a follower of Christ, you have the privilege to live out your life according to the character of God, reflecting the very image of God as you live your life.

[6 : 56] And so that's what we're going to look at. We're going to see how the character of God is reflected through these exhortations. And really it promotes unity in the body.

And then also it serves, as we'll see, as an apologetic to the watching world. God uses our lives. You realize this. I know you've been taught this. God uses our lives as an appeal, as a defense to what is happening around our concentric circles, what's happening in the world around us.

The display of his character in your life is an apologetic. And these verses are going to explain how that happens. We'll look at excelling and loving one another, peaceful living amongst one another, attending to your own business, working hard.

All of this so that Christians would shine a light in the culture before men, as they've done throughout all of the ages, so that the unbelieving world would know who God is through us.

And by grace they would come to know Christ. They would see what we're about and they would bow their knee to Jesus Christ and be saved. And so let's look at this text here.

[8 : 14] We'll read the passage together. 1 Thessalonians 4, 9 to 12 is what we'll be going through. Let me read that for us. Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you.

For you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. For indeed you do practice it towards all the brethren who are in Macedonia, in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and to attend to your own business and work with your own hands or with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly towards outsiders and not be in any need.

Now if I were to ask you this morning, what is something, what is maybe the main thing that characterizes living a spiritual, godly life?

What are the hallmarks of someone who says, quote unquote, this person is spiritual, like this person is mature? Maybe you'd say something like, well, they're probably a missionary.

Missionaries need to be godly, right? Or maybe it's, they can quote half the Bible from memory. Or they have theological textbooks memorized. They know doctrine like the back of their hand.

[9 : 34] And what you see in the first part of this text, brothers and sisters, is that really to live a spiritual life, to be godly in what you do, is to actually love one another.

To love one another. To love your brothers and sisters in Christ. And what we find in this text is that our love for one another is essential. It's essential. It's essential for maintaining a thriving church. A thriving operating body of Christ. And if you take a quick inventory from the New Testament, you know that, and you won't be surprised, that love is actually the epicenter of every angle of expression in the Christian life.

Let me give you a couple examples of that, that you'll recognize clearly. 1 Corinthians 13.1. If I speak with tongues of men and of angels and do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

So the spiritual gift that so many were clamoring for in the early church, speaking in tongues, languages. And the text says that if you have such giftedness, but you lack love, it profits you nothing.

[10 : 55] And so the passage goes on there to say that love is actually expressed in what? In patience. Kindness. Love is patient. Love is kind. It's not jealous.

It's not arrogant. It doesn't seek its own. On and on it goes. And love is supreme and superior even to the showiest, if you will, of spiritual gifts.

And without its presence in us, all of our efforts in the Lord will be null and void. How about Ephesians 4? Love is the ultimate key to, as I said, persevering in unity with the body, right?

And so you read in Ephesians 4 too, it says, With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Love binds us. Love connects us. Love makes sure that unity will be the winner at the end of the day. And then here in our text again, verses 9 to 10 is the priority that we are encouraged to consider, to love the brethren and to excel in our lives in loving each other.

[12 : 09] And it's one of the most, as I said, most spiritual in the true senses of the word, most spiritual, most mature things that we can grow in, that we can exalt God through, and it's to love one another.

And verse 9 explains how that all begins. How that actually began in the church, how the church actually is able to carry out that command to love.

Look at verse 9 again with me. Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

Now this verse represents what we call a paralipsis. What is that? Paralipsis. Just a rhetorical writing device. That's all it is. Whereby writers mention something that they pretend they're going to pass over, but they actually want to talk about it anyway.

And so it's like this. You can see what Paul is doing. I don't need to write to you to love one another because you're taught of God. But let me tell you anyway.

[13 : 15] Right? Let me tell you anyway. And you understand this. Many of us have done this with our kids as parents when we would maybe go out for groceries or maybe you'd actually get a date with your wife. You go out there and as you're leaving you're telling the kids that the household rules.

They know the rules. You've told them a hundred times. But as you're walking out that door, what are you saying? You're saying, let me just, I know you know the rules, but let me just tell you the rules one more time.

Let me just expound on them one more time so that you treat each other kindly. And that's what's happening here. Paul wants to expound on this reality of love and the fact that they need to excel in it.

And it says that they are taught of God to love one another. Now, what does that mean? The Greek word means God taught, literally God taught.

And really, it's actually a word that Paul has made up here, found only in Thessalonians. And what does that refer to? Well, is that a privilege given only to the first century Christians?

[14 : 22] Or someone who actually knew the apostles? Was that the only thing that was privy to their life? Was this reality? And no, that's not true. The phrase here is actually so specific.

And if you do a little groundwork in the Old Testament, you'll find that there's this clear connection to what Paul is talking about. And I mean, some of you, even in your Bibles, probably have the reference.

And so you can follow along. It's from Isaiah 54, 13. As I like to say, if the Old Testament usually, the Old Testament, nine times out of ten, is an answer key to the New Testament.

If you don't know something happening in the New Testament, the theology is probably pulled from the Old Testament. And you can figure it out by going back and looking at what the writers were trying to pull out of those books.

And so let's let Scripture interpret Scripture here. And the Bible explain the Bible. And come away with an answer to what this means or what Paul is referring to.

[15:22] So go ahead, if you want to follow along. Isaiah 54, 13. And let me just give you a brief overview. Isaiah. Isaiah. Isaiah. It's a sweeping view that we see in Isaiah 54 of God's promises of restoration to Israel, to his people.

And you would know that this prophecy was against a spiritually bankrupt people, guilty of their transgressions. God's purposes for them was that he would judge them for their iniquities, for their sins.

But there's this promise. There's always a promise of God for his people that once he had punished them and judged them, there was this promise that they would then return to God.

That there would be a blessing. That he would pour out blessing unlike anything that's ever been dreamed of. Unmatched in its makeup in every way.

God would gather his people with compassion. He would be their God and he would redeem them. And his loving kindness would be upon them. And then you get to Isaiah 54, 13.

[16:36] And it says, let me just reference. And then it says, all your sons will be taught of the Lord. And the well-being of your sons will be great.

And so this passage in the context is looking forward to a time where the age of salvation, where God will have this beautiful relationship with his people.

So tightly knit, so personal that God would be called their teacher. And what the New Testament makes clear is that this age of salvation is inaugurated.

It does begin after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And so what's beautiful is that Christians, you and I, in the church, we taste the first fruits of this promise.

We get to partake of this promise. And it's proven by the fact that we also are taught of God. We also are taught of God.

[17:40] Okay, sure. Sure, I get it. I'm following it. But what does that actually mean? And while there's further passages to flesh that out and to explain that for us, books like Ezekiel and Jeremiah, they add layers to this idea of what being taught of God will actually look like.

Some of these passages you probably understand are New Covenant passages and things that really are, again, about the promise of the restoration of what God would do in his people. And so if you'd like, you can go to Ezekiel 36.

I'm going to read a passage from Ezekiel 36, verses 26 and 27, to really discover what it means that God is a teacher, what God is going to do to bring about this reality.

Ezekiel 36, 26 to 27 says, What this text describes is a, unmatched, as I said, unmatched, transformative reality in which God promises to give his people a new heart, replacing their stony, dead hearts with hearts of flesh, characterized, as you see there, by this endowment of his own spirit, strong enough to transform the person from the inside.

And this renewal of God's spirit placed in a person, enabling them to love and follow him and obey him and walk faithfully after him is beautiful.

[19:37] And you see also in Jeremiah, I'll read this one for you as well, a little bit more of what this looks like, adding layers to this. Jeremiah 31, 31 to 34.

Speaking of the new covenant again, behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by my, by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them and on their heart, I will write it and they will be, and I will be their God and they

shall be my people.

They will not teach again each man his neighbor and each man his brother saying, know the Lord, for they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the Lord.

For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin. I will remember no more. And so here it is, something fundamentally changes, will fundamentally change with the people of God in the new covenant.

[20 : 51] And we are all taught of God to love. And your obedience to this command, because we are, again, we have the beginnings, the first fruits of this promise in the church, your obedience is hardwired.

Your love is hardwired when the Lord saved you. That's what the text is detailing here. That's what Paul is referring to. The theology of the promises of God here. And he says, I don't have to write to you.

I know that you are saved and that the fruit will be born from your life to love one another because you're taught of God. Really practically, have you ever noticed when someone gets saved?

I love testimonies. I'm sure you guys love testimonies as well. But most of the time when you hear a testimony, you hear of somebody who is an unbeliever and hated people, hated life, angry at the world.

And when God saves them, the reality of those new covenant promises, when God saves them, the spirit is put within them, they're taught of God to love.

[21 : 56] They have the ability, is what Paul is saying. They have the ability, they're hardwired to love when otherwise they never would. We love because he first loved us, right?

We love others because Christ first loved us and then poured the love of God in our hearts through the Holy Spirit whom he's given to us. Romans 5.5.

And now, of course, this new ethic of love doesn't get lived out perfectly all the time. We don't just naturally walk around loving our neighbors and loving our wives and loving our coworkers and whatever else.

In fact, love in the church is at times very difficult, disruptive even. And so real life here, it's unfortunately not always a practical reality that we know. Church can get messy.

Church can be a challenge. It can be a challenge to love one another in a sacrificial way. But again, understand verse 9. Grasp that every true believer, every true believer is moved to a complete ability to love.

[23 : 06] Something that was completely impossible to live out before because God will transform the heart. God will bring about this transformation through the Holy Spirit whom he places in their lives.

In your life. And so every Christian on this earth has been given the raw material, let's say, to love. It's in the DNA of what it means to follow Christ.

That Christ would give of his spirit to us. It's a new ethic born out of the new covenant given to us by Christ. And now in the case of, as I said there, DNA, which is embedded internally and it manifests, right?

It starts to manifest externally, intangibly. That's what we understand about love. And verse 10, as we move to verse 10 there, it says that, well, you start to see really the premise of how a transformed life lives out this act of love.

It permeates every area of your life. And as I said, we make an effort to practice this. We make an effort to live this out.

[24 : 16] And so this premise to love and what God is doing in our lives to love others, we see an example of this, a beautiful example actually, in the early church. In the early movement of the church in Acts, you see the followers of Jesus explode with this desire to love and to care for one another.

Acts 2, Acts 2 describes a church and the gospel taking root and the gospel is preached. And by the end of the chapter, there's this whole community of believers that are extending themselves to one another.

And Acts 2, 42 to 47 says, they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship and to breaking of bread and to prayer.

Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who I believe were together and had all things in common.

And they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all as anyone might have need. Day by day, continuing with one mind in the temple, breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.

[25 : 31] Praising God and having favor with all people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day, those who were being saved. They were sacrificing their time.

They were sacrificing their resources. Their efforts were directed towards those in the community, the church that needed, that were in great need. If you ever boil that down, what is that?

That's love. That's a real good definition of biblical love, a self-sacrificing for someone else's gain. That is love. And this has been the ethic that has grounded the church in its inception and has carried the church all throughout history.

In the early church, even just in the next centuries, believers were genuine, selfless for one another. And you could see it.

[26 : 29] The outsiders took notice of this and were astounded at the compassionate life of a Christian in the first and second centuries. And I have a primary source of a man named Aristides the Athenian.

He was a believer. A Greek philosopher who wrote a defense to the Roman Emperor Hadrian between 124 and 133 AD. So really 70 years after this letter to Thessalonians is written.

And his emphasis about the Christian community and the fact that they loved one another is so beautiful. Let me read that to you. It says this.

They, the Christians, do not worship strange gods. And they go their way in all modesty and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them.

And they love one another. And from widows they do not turn away their esteem. And they deliver the orphan from him who treats him harshly. And he who has gives to him who has not without boasting.

[27 : 32] And when they see a stranger they take him into their home and rejoice over him as a very brother. For they do not call them brethren after the flesh. But brethren after the spirit and in God.

And whenever one of their poor passes from the world each of them according to his ability gives heed to him. And carefully sees to his burial. And if they hear that one of their numbers in prison or afflicted on account of the name of their Messiah.

All of them anxiously minister to his necessity. And if it is possible to redeem him they set him free. And if there is among them any that are poor and needy.

And if they have no spare food. They fast two or three days in order to supply the needy with their lack of food. They observe the precepts of their Messiah with much care.

Living justly. They observe. And they observe the solemn day of the Lord. As God has commanded them. Now can you imagine hearing that from an unbelieving perspective?

[28 : 36] Like the Emperor Hadrian. Surely it would seem like an exaggeration. This would seem like utopia. A community that acts like this.

With great joy. I mean all the philosophies of the world have sought for centuries. To have something like this. And it's never been attained. And so it stands out in such rarity.

The natural question is where does this come from? Why are Christians the way that they are?

When Christians live this way. The origin of this kind of love.

Does get brought into question. And that's the point isn't it? That's the point that we talked about at the beginning. It's an apologetic.

It's not our natural inclination to live by this definition of love. It's not our natural inclination to really sacrifice for others.

[29 : 34] Maybe you've had this experience or experience like this where a colleague or a family member, a friend, asks why you live the way that you live.

Why do you give up your time for the church? Why do you go and meet for coffee to encourage somebody? Why do you travel to Stillwood in the rain to play camp?

Good time guys. It was a good time. But it opens up the conversation, doesn't it? It opens up the conversation of the origin of such love that God has poured into the hearts of his people.

And so you can see how spiritual, how mature, how godly the act of sacrificial love can be. And loving sacrificially is what was exemplified for us from Christ himself.

In Jesus' last moments of teaching before he went to Calvary to give his life for us, Jesus issued a command that has been passed down to us all. A new commandment that I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

[30 : 56] And by this, men, all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. And so Jesus promised that love would be our defining mark.

When we live in love for one another, it's the simplest and true mark. It's the authentication of our claim to be Christians. And that's our definition.

Christ is our definition. It's found in Christ. The act of sacrificial love is found in the gospel that we devote ourselves to. Love is defined through sacrifice and through the ultimate sacrifice of the Son of God.

In John 15, 13, Greater love has no one than this, the one who laid down his life for his friends. 1 John 4, 10, In this is love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

In Romans 5, 8, But God demonstrates his love towards us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Christ died for us. Christ died for us. Christ died for us.

[32 : 06] I appreciate the way one theologian put it. He said this, God the Father has taught us to love one another by giving us his Son. And then God the Son has taught us to love one another by giving us his life.

And God the Holy Spirit has taught us to love one another by giving us new life. So when the Holy Spirit comes into the heart of the believer, the believer is born again and gives you God's love.

And this is what we need to replicate in our own lives as those who claim to follow Christ. We love through giving up. We love through serving for the good of someone else.

That's what verse 9 and 10 really expound for us. And so let me just package that again for you.

The Christian has been taught to love by God. And this definition of self-sacrificial love is found in Jesus Christ.

And so then there's going to be tangible fruit of a life of a Christian. And so what's the next step?

The last part of verse 10 there, Paul says, Well, you're taught by God to love.

[33 : 17] Now excel still more. Excel in that area. Grow in that area. And how do we do that today? How do we love the local body, our church, in day-to-day living?

What does it look like? And we would say, Well, we just, in order to excel, we need to add kindling to the fire. We need to feed the spark that God has placed in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

And so there's a number of texts that jumpstart this reality in different areas of our lives. 1

Corinthians 13.5, we referenced this earlier. It instructs us that love takes no account of wrong suffered.

We've all had wrongs done to us. We've all been hurt by somebody. But we're not supposed to keep a tab, right? We're not supposed to keep a tab of wrongs done to us.

In fact, we're supposed to forgive as Christ has forgiven us. What about Galatians 6.2? Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. It's loving to bear another person's burden.

[34 : 22] Are we doing that in the church? Do you know someone who's going through a really difficult patch and we said, I'm going to go and I'm going to meet with them. I'm going to pray with them. Because I want to excel in my love for the body of Christ.

1 Peter 4.9, be hospitable to one another. Having people over your house and being hospitable is loving. That's joyful. Philippians 2.3, regard one another as more important than yourselves.

All of these one another's that we know so well all throughout the New Testament is how love is fleshed out for us. And Paul says we just need to excel in these areas.

Pick one of these. Go through the New Testament. Find one of the commands to love and ask yourself, am I following that? Am I trying to do that weekly? Not out of a duty, a cold dead religion, but out of a desire to show love to a person because Christ has loved me in such a sacrificial way.

Our God-given purpose is to engage in these areas and to be active in these areas. Because if you're not actively engaging in these things, not looking for ways to excel in the area of love, you're going to coast.

[35 : 41] You know what it means to coast. I went down a hill on the way here and I coasted. You take your foot off the gas. There's nothing really propelling you and eventually you come to a stop once you stop coasting.

Christian communities, Christian churches need to excel in love because what's the antithesis to growing and abounding in love in the church? Well, it's to stop loving each other. Deeply from the heart. When we allow the opportunity for our flesh and our sinful natures, we begin to, as Paul says in Galatians 5, we actually begin to do the opposite. We'll start to bite and devour one another. Galatians 5, 14. For the law is fulfilled in one word. In the statement, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. If you start to pick, if you start to suspect and resent one another, the church begins to erode. [36 : 44] The church and the fellowship begins to be something that is destroyed. A lack of love really nullifies the testimony of the gospel and it breaks apart the people of God. And so you can understand why Paul is so concerned with this when he talks to us from Galatians 5. For indeed you do practice it towards all the brethren, Corinth and Macedonia, but we urge you, brethren, excel still more. Oh, verse 11. We move now to three more commands that are rapid fire in that verse there. And make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and to attend to your own business and to work with your hands just as we commanded you. And so what do we see there? Lead a quiet life. Attend to your own business and work with your hands. These are practical. Again, these are pragmatic. Verses that speak to the value of comprehensive Christian living. And it's interesting because he leads with this prominent idea of living a quiet life. And the word just means at peace or at rest. Especially arriving at a peaceful time after tribulation. [37 : 58] Like silence after speech. Rest after labor. And you know this section, understanding the background of this section will really help us. Because in the historical account in Thessalonica, Paul understands that his readers are really excited about the return of Christ. Which has actually distracted them from their need to live in the here and now. Now Christ's return, of course, will be glorious. It's the hope of the believers. He's going to anchor them in that in the next few verses. But the church has often had the temptation to over-focus on end times. And to not be connected to what's happening around them in the day-to-day. Things like newspaper theology, I'm sure you've heard of that. That really distract people from the main mission that Christ gave us. Of the growth in the church and maturity, growth in holiness and even evangelism. And so, to be sure, as I said, this book is headed towards the reality of explaining the return of Jesus. Grounding the Christian in the future hope of that. [39 : 12] But right now, Paul wants them to focus on the present reality in a reasonable governance. A quiet life takes into account the return of Christ. But it works diligently, peacefully, towards a point in time. Not anxious or restless about the end times. And so, possibly what was taking place was that earthly interest had been kind of devalued in their eyes. And so, Paul wants to remind them. Paul wants to remind them of the harmony between what he's teaching here and what Christ even said. When Christ was at one of his last discourses or teaching with one of his last discourses before his crucifixion. He spoke in a parable describing the return of an overlord to his kingdom after a period of absence. And his parable was to encourage his followers to be alert, but understand and work and labor while they waited for his return. Matthew 24, 44 to 46. It says, And so, Jesus instructs his followers during his absence to simply busy themselves with faithful doing. [40 : 45] And work that he has put them in charge of. And so, of course, there's a balance of living a quiet life, a faithful life. And also the need to proclaim the gospel. And that's clear even from Paul's own life. Gospel proclamation requires a boldness and a reverence and a push for what God is doing in the world. And we need to be bold in that. But he also just says, but also lead a quiet, just ordinary, call it a boring life. That's godly. Love your people. Love your church. Love your family. And the last two commandments there is to make provision for your household and work hard. Attend to your own, basically, attend to your own business and work

with your hands.

And I think in these pursuits, it demonstrates for the believers that there's no division between the sacred and the secular activities. For all of us, for all that's done in Christ, right?

[41 : 53] Whether we eat or drink, we do all to the glory of God. And so Christianity finds nothing inconsistent between honest toil and personal holiness.

All things believers should do are to be done in service to Christ. One guy said it this way, if we cannot be holy, one theologian I was reading, if we cannot be holy at our work, it is not worth taking any trouble to be holy at other times.

The sacred and the secular.

They meet together. And so it's an honoring thing to support your own family, to work hard with integrity. It's a godly thing to do. It's something that Paul wants this young church to excel in.

And even for us today, we can remember this and say, yes. Amen. Amen. I will work hard unto the Lord. Everything I do has a purpose. Everything I do is spiritual.

[43 : 03] And so in conclusion, verse 12, we talked about this beginning. It's really the so what, the why. And it's why we love, why we live peacefully, orderly lives.

And why do we carefully work hard? The so that in verse 12 there. You'll walk properly towards outsiders and not be in any need. Live in this manner to love your brothers and sisters and to win the respect of the outsiders.

Orderly conduct among ourselves preserves our testimony. And as I said, it also is a testimony to onlookers who see the church, who see those people that are Christians and can understand there's something different about how they live.

It's that simple. Conduct yourselves with wisdom towards outsiders, making most of the opportunity, Colossians 4 or 5. And so that's the thrust of the passage.

That's the thrust of what Paul is getting at here. God has changed you. If you're in Christ, he has given you a new heart. His love is poured out and he has instructed you.

[44 : 16] And your impulse to love others, to love those in the church is God-given. And it's God-glorifying. You're taught by God to love. And while reflecting this love takes many forms interpersonally around us as brothers and sisters in Christ, just keep in mind those who are watching, those who are looking, and let that be something that you can push in on in a way of evangelism.

The apologist Aristides said one last thing. I'll close with this as he commented about the Christian community. He said, And verily, this is a new people.

And there's something divine in the midst of them. Let's pray. Father, thank you for the gospel.

Thank you for the death and the resurrection of our Lord. And the forgiveness that we have. Our sins are forgiven. And we're at peace with you. And we can live it by faith in Christ.

We thank you, O Lord, for the spirit that is eternally working in us. Continues day by day. Your spirit has taught us to love one another. Father, and now we look to our Savior as the ultimate example of how that love fleshes itself out.

[45 : 41] This is an incredible truth. And I pray that it would motivate those here who are in Christ to be a genuine witness for you. Father, encourage those in Christ to excel still more in their desire to love one another.

And to approach the everyday aspects of life and work with diligence. Recognizing that everything they do contributes to being faithful. And being a witness to the lost world.

Use us for your glory, we pray. In Christ's name. Amen. Amen.