

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12
The Legacy of Loving One Another

Introduction

1. Review:
 - a. Legacy of Imitation
 - b. Legacy of Ministry
 - c. Legacy of Encouragement
 - d. Legacy of Sexual Purity

2. This week Paul is going to address loving one another, but with a bit of a twist

A. The first thing we learn about the Thessalonians in our passage today is that they were already demonstrating their love for one another (9-10a)

1. They really didn't need any further instruction on how to love one another (9a): **"Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you,"**
 - a. We all know that there are different Greek words for love and Paul uses two of them here in this verse
 - 1) The one he uses in this first phrase is philadelphia, brotherly love, which should be understood as having affection for someone—in the NT it is only used of the kind of love shared between Christians
 - 2) The second word Paul uses (in the next phrase) is agapao which refers to loving someone based on sincere appreciation and high regard
 - b. Now, we all know it's possible to love without affection (e.g. love our enemies), so it's clear that Paul is talking about something more; he's talking about having a fondness, an affection for other Christians
 - c. This concept of brotherly love is an oft repeated one in the NT:
 - 1) In Galatians 5:1, Paul challenged his readers to not allow their Christian liberty to harm other believers, but instead to serve one another **"through love"**
 - 2) In Romans 12:10 he called on his readers to **"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; [by giving] preference to one another in honor"**
 - 3) The author of Hebrews challenged his readers to **"Let love of the brethren continue"** (Hebrews 13:1), even to the point of showing hospitality to strangers (likely a reference to other Christians they didn't know—or according to the Pamperin Paraphrase, to strange Christians <grin>)
 - 4) Peter told his readers to have a **"sincere love of the brethren"** and to **"fervently love one another from the heart"** (1 Peter 1:22)
 - 5) In 2 Peter 1:5-8 he encouraged his readers to grow in their love for one another and stated that possessing and growing in such a quality would **"render [them] neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

- 6) John told his readers that their love for other Christians was evidence of salvation (1 John 4:14) and that we should follow Jesus's example of love and be willing to **"lay down our lives for the brethren"** (1 John 3:15-16)
2. The reason why the Thessalonians didn't need any further instruction in this area is because they were already doing it (9b): **"for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;"**
 - a. Paul had already praised them for how their love for one another continued to grow (READ 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4)
 - b. Here in this phrase we see why—God was teaching them
 - 1) In this verse, it appears Paul made up a word here by sticking two words together because it doesn't appear anywhere else in the NT
 - a) Theos (God)
 - b) Didichatos (Teach)
 - 2) He also speaks in the present tense, **"are taught"**, but it's better understood as **"are being taught"** to better emphasize Paul's point
 - 3) So, Paul's point here is that God is continually teaching them HOW to love one another
 - c. And their love for one another didn't just stop at their local Church (10a): **"for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia."**

B. But, even though they didn't need any more instruction, Paul did take the opportunity to challenge them to excel even further in their love for one another (11-12)

1. In the introduction I mentioned that Paul was going to talk about brotherly love today, but with a twist
2. As we look at these next two verses, you might ask what they have to do with brotherly love, but I can assure you that they do because Paul writes this at the end of verse 10: **"But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more..."**
 - a. Both the **"but"** and the **"still more"** give it away
 - b. He's still talking about brotherly love here, but he wants them to take it up a notch
3. As Paul issues this challenge to "excel still more" he focuses on three areas (11-12)
 - a. They were to **"you make it [their] ambition to lead a quiet life"**
 - 1) What does it mean to make something your ambition? It means to aspire to something or to have a strong desire to achieve it; it implies requiring determination and hard work
 - 2) Grammatically, this phrase applies to all three of the phrases that follow it (lead a quiet life, attend to one's own business and to work with one's own hands)
 - 3) So, their first ambition was to be living a quiet life
 - a) Quite here refers to leading a well disciplined and tranquil life and one that doesn't draw attention to oneself
 - b) Paul reflects this same principle in 1 Timothy 2:1-3 (READ)
 - c) One reason for living a quiet life may have had to do with the persecution they were facing (e.g. not drawing attention and thus increasing persecution)
 - d) However, a second reason is because an undisciplined life often impacts the lives around us in a negative way and that is unacceptable for believers
 - e) Look at 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9

- 4) So, Paul was calling on the Thessalonians to live a quiet and disciplined life so as not to become a burden on other Christians—it is one thing to be in need, and quite another to be a burden

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- b. Second, they were to “[**make it their ambition to**] **attend to [their] own business**” (11b):
 - 1) Have you ever known someone who always seems to be up in everyone else’s business when their own life isn’t quite in order?
 - 2) Take a look at 2 Thessalonians 3 again, this time vs. 11: “**For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.**”
 - a) The NAU uses the phrase “**undisciplined life**”—others use words like idleness, irresponsibility, disorderly—to describe this person
 - b) He writes that they are “**doing no work at all**”—this word for work here indicates something that requires effort and generally refers to doing business, working to provide for oneself,—in other words, they are lazy and not working which means they have to sponge off others
 - c) Finally, he says they are “**acting like busybodies**”—the word Paul uses here actually means to meddle in the affairs of others; one idiom that Louw and Nida suggested might communicate this idea would be putting your spoon in another’s cup
 - 3) Once again, this has everything to do with brother love because lack of discipline, laziness and meddling make one a burden to the body of Christ and it the opposite of love
- c. Third and finally, they were to “[**make it their ambition to**] **work with [their] own hands**” (11c):

Christian scam artist who pulled up behind me at the gas station on his “trip to Toledo”

- 1) Look again at 2 Thessalonians 3:10-15:
 - a) If an able-bodied person refuses to work, then he shouldn’t eat (10)—in other words, other Christians shouldn’t provide for him
 - b) If someone disregards these things, other believers are not to associate with him so he can experience shame (6 and 14)
 - c) He should be admonished (15)
 - d) Some find this harsh, but ignoring these guidelines simply enables the lazy to continue to be lazy
- 2) The example Paul and his companions gave was quite the opposite: READ 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9
- 3) When we disregard Paul’s example, and instead make ourselves a burden to the body of Christ, that’s not brotherly love

C. In conclusion, Paul ends on one final note which reveals two additional benefits of brotherly love (12)

1. One is that when we live this way, it preserves our witness to the unsaved (12a): **“so that you will behave properly toward outsiders”**
2. The second is that **“we will not be in any need”** (12b)
 - a. This is obviously true because when we lead disciplined lives and care for our own needs, we will generally have what we need
 - b. However, it is also true because when a Christian falls on hard times, or finds himself or herself in genuine need, other believers are there to help
 - c. This is why the Church cared for orphans and widows, those not able to care for themselves
 - d. This is why Paul collected gifts and offerings for the saints at Jerusalem
 - e. So, brother love has two sides—not making ourselves a burden to one another, while caring for others when they have genuine need
 - f. In fact, this aligns perfectly with what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:28: **“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.”**