

The Importance of Brotherly Love

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Preacher: Guest: Scott Rosen

[0 : 00] We're good back there? All right, well, I'm very glad to be back with you this morning.

As Brother Greg mentioned, Andy Nup was here last week, and he told me he really enjoyed his visit here, and I'm glad to be back as well. If you don't like my preaching, though, I am back next week.

So you may want to stay home or find another church if that's the case, but hopefully it will be a blessing. This morning we'll be in 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 9 through 12, if you want to turn there.

So 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 9 through 12. While you turn there, as Brother Greg also mentioned, Brother Andy and I are both from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary, down, of course, in Virginia Beach, where I serve as a registrar and also have the blessing of going to school there.

And just by way of making a little plug, if it's okay, we do offer a Master's of Biblical Studies program that you can complete online, and that gives you 39 credit hours in systematic theology and hermeneutics and similar studies.

[1 : 09] So if that's something the Lord might lead on your heart, just as a layperson, to get deeper education in the Word, I'd be happy to talk to you about that, or you can visit our website, search for us, and it might be a blessing to you.

But nonetheless, we're glad to be a blessing to you this morning and last week and, Lord willing, next week as well as we share the Scripture. And this is what the text tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4, starting in verse 9.

The Word of God says, 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, 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, to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

May God bless the hearing and teaching of His Word, and let's turn to Him in prayer. Oh, heavenly gracious Father, Lord, we thank you, Father, for your love for your people.

[2 : 26] And the grace and mercy of the Gospel. We pray for Pastor Jeff overseas as he teaches and ministers there. And pray for our assembly here this morning, Lord, to come under the hearing and teaching of your Word.

May you help me, Lord, convey the truth of your Scripture. And Father God, may you give us ears to hear, to learn, and to grow. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray these things.

Amen. Well, this passage of Scripture, perhaps, as you look at it, might seem a little mundane. Maybe it's an odd choice of Scripture for just a one-off sermon as we haven't worked our way through the entire epistle to this point.

And that might even become more clear to you if you are familiar with the preceding passage and then the subsequent passage. Prior to this, in the verses earlier in chapter 4, Paul spends his time talking or exhorting the Thessalonian believers on the issue of morality, not to be conformed to the Greek culture around them and how they just treat behavior between the sexes or even in immorality among the sexes, in a very casual, licentious manner.

And in some ways, that reflects the way our own culture and all nation is going. And so you could see that being a sermon that would be convicting and helpful during our present era for so many people who struggle in that capacity.

[4 : 02] And then the next section itself is also a particularly interesting one because it deals with future events, with the end times, as I see as the rapture of the church there.

And that, of course, is complex and a difficult passage as well. But here in the middle, we find a passage that doesn't seem to go into such immediate application and also doesn't seem to have the same depth of theology.

Yet in it, I think we find an important message. And not only that, these other passages we spoke about help provide an important context to what we'll discuss this morning.

Thinking about the subsequent passages that deal with the end times, it helps us give the context in which the Thessalonian believers, where their mindset is at this time. Because you might recall that Paul has to exhort them in verse 13, not to grieve as others do, who have no hope.

In some sense, the Thessalonian believers, we won't go into all the details, but they're concerned about certain people not missing the Lord's return, somehow would be left behind or passed over during this time period.

[5 : 15] And so the concern is that they are so focused on future events that they miss what's right before them at this time.

Paul, of course, wants them to look towards the future. He calls them to that, but they have to have a more balanced approach. And I think our present passage calls them to that more balanced approach.

Paul encourages the Corinthians along the same lines in 1 Corinthians 1, verses 7 through 8, so that you are not lacking in any gift as he speaks to them, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ's return is, of course, paramount to our understanding and hope, but who will sustain you to the end guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There's a sustaining, there's an ongoing process. It's not just about focusing on the return of Christ. There's something between then and now or when he spoke to the Thessalonians at that time.

[6 : 16] Believers cannot be so focused on the return of Christ that they fail to take this life seriously. Perhaps you've heard the phrase before, being so heavenly-minded that you're of no earthly good.

That's what we need to avoid, and Paul admonishes them along those lines. In the parable, the 10 minus, you may remember, in the book of Luke in chapter 19, he shares this parable where he says, Therefore a nobleman went into a far country, Christ speaking here, to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.

Calling 10 of his servants, he gave them 10 minus, and he said to them this, Engage in business until I come. So the nobleman goes off. He will return.

Yes, look towards the king eagerly, but be mindful of our present business while we do so. Well, what about the previous passage where Paul is admonishing them about immorality, about fornication?

How does that influence and impact this passage? Well, there Paul's giving a negative command, the sort of things you want to avoid if you're going to live a righteous Christian life, avoiding impurity.

[7 : 28] But now he's transitioning to something related, but yet different. Previously, he was talking about those things that corrupt a man. But here he's calling on the Thessalonians and Christians to embrace those things that make a man or make a man have a righteous walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

You might recall this from Ephesians chapter 4 and verses 22 through 24. Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

You see, the Christian isn't just to put away things that are bad, and sometimes that's our temptation as we are exhorted from the Scripture, to put away things that corrupt us and undermine our testimony in our walk with the Lord.

Yes, that's important, but there's a putting on as well, pursuing that which is righteous and which is good. And Paul's comments here coincide with that command.

Yes, mortify the immorality in your life, but also run after what is good, what is holy. And so, what is Paul's instruction along those lines?

[8 : 47] What is Paul driving at that we should do in this present world by not being too consumed about the future? What is our business here? And also, instead of what we should just put off, what should we add to our life?

What should we embrace? Well, if you look at verse 9, it seems pretty clear. What Paul calls us to is brotherly love, mutual love. The underlying word I think you're probably all fairly familiar with, which is Philadelphia.

If you're familiar with the city in Pennsylvania, you know its nickname is the city of brotherly love. We have a seminary professor, Dr. Daly, who likes to call the city of brotherly shove, that does not always live up to that moniker, but nonetheless, that's what it means.

It means that it's, the city at least supposedly should reflect brotherly love, because that's what the Greek word means. Greek speakers and Hellenized Jews would have recognized that as a common term being used for the fidelity, the love between biological or even adoptive siblings, brothers and sisters.

Maybe that's not always the case, but it should be the case and tends to be that brothers and sisters love each other, have a deep affection for each other. But Paul here is expanding that meaning beyond your biological siblings, your immediate family, for he's applying it to all Christians, all Christians being family members.

[10 : 06] And therefore, as Christians, our love for one another within the assembly and in the broader Christian sphere should meet or even exceed that that we would have for our own natural siblings.

Paul tells us elsewhere in Romans chapter 8, verse 29, that Christ is the firstborn among many brothers. And again, in Galatians 6, 10, that we are part of the household of faith.

So there is a clear emphasis that we as Christians are part of a family and that we need to embrace that. We need to make that an important part of our life. And Paul adds an interesting phrase here in verse 9 when he discusses this.

He says, at least by way of translation, I'm reading from the ESV, he says, you have no need for anyone to write to you. He says, I really shouldn't have to write to you about this.

And it's kind of strange that he would add that parenthetical note here. And there's probably a few reasons. One is general. In general, it should be so innate to being a Christian that it's almost like no one should have to tell you to love your brethren, to love your fellow Christian.

[11 : 15] If you are a Christian, you should naturally want to love your brother and sister. But there's also a more specific component as well. Paul is talking to the Thessalonians.

And if you look down in verse 10, he says that the Thessalonians really are an exemplary, an example of this because they have shown love for other Macedonian churches.

And if you look all the way back in the first verse of chapter 4, Paul commends the Thessalonians for generally walking in a way that pleases God. So he is commending them. In some way, he doesn't have to say anything because they're doing such a great job already.

And I think there might be an application here for all of us. Think about this. Paul can speak in such a way that he almost doesn't have to give them a command or exhortation because they're doing a great job in serving the Lord and reflecting this truth.

And maybe we'd ask ourselves, could the same be said of us in our assembly or individually? Would Paul or somebody be able to write about us and say, this is true, but I really don't have to explain too much about this because you're doing such a great job.

[12 : 24] Is that true for us? Of course, even if we are doing well, it's always good to have a reminder about this, about having a strong testimony and reflecting this seriousness, reflecting the gospel of Christ.

And so no doubt he wants to include this here because while people may be doing well for a season, you don't always do well just because you're doing well at this time. So Paul does bring this up. But there is still this universal sense that all believers really shouldn't have to be exhorted on this point because of how natural it should be in being a Christian.

And Paul gives a reason for that. He doesn't just leave it at that. He gives an explanation as to why this should be so self-evident. For the Thessalonians, yes, because of the way they behave. But for all Christians, he adds this.

He says that Christians are taught by God to love one another. In verse 9, let me be paraphrasing a little bit there. The word for being taught by God, I think as the ESV puts it, is actually a word, it's just one word in the Greek, and it is a word Paul invented.

There's no real evidence in Greek literature that that word was used before to be God taught. That is a word he invented because I think what Paul wants to do here is emphasize just how important this is as he instructs his fellow believers that we are God taught in this manner.

[13 : 46] And Paul actually says something pretty similar elsewhere. In Romans 5, 5, he says, God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

So if you are a born-again Christian, if you are truly regenerate, you have the Holy Spirit, and at that time, God's love has been poured into your heart, into our hearts.

It's something that is specifically coming from God and should be innate to all Christians. And then John goes into a little bit more detail in his gospel where he tells us it was written by the prophets referring to Isaiah and they will be taught by God.

Well, we would be taught many things by God, but one thing Christ clearly taught was, of course, the second great commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. There is to be a love for others and in particular other believers.

In fact, John goes on and clarifies this more in his epistle. As you might recall in 1 John, a mark of being a true believer. John emphasizes just how critical this is to the Christian walk.

[14 : 48] One example in that epistle in 1 John 3, 14 is, we know we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.

It's actually a mark of whether you're saved or not if you truly love the brethren. Not that you don't have times or issues with people or there's times when you're less loving or more loving, but if there's no disposition at all towards loving your brothers, what does he say here?

You haven't passed out of the world of death into the world of life. Put another way, you were never regenerate. So it is of the utmost importance to understand this command as Paul puts it here.

But I'm still not troubled but intrigued by the way Paul phrases this. He says, I don't have any need to teach you this.

And it brings back to memory to mind many years ago in a different educational program I was taking a public speaking class, a rhetoric class, and the professor said, you should never use the phrase, it goes without saying.

[15 : 56] Because if it goes without saying, then really there's no reason to say it, right? You're not showing respect to your audience. You're telling them something that's obviously true and if it's not obviously true then that phrase doesn't make any sense.

So don't use that phrase. But the Apostle Paul wasn't in my class, was he? Because it seems like he says in verse 9 something pretty similar by translation. You have no need for anyone to write to you.

So is the Apostle Paul committing a rhetorical faux pas here? Is he wasting the reader's time by making this statement? After all, there's no need to write to anyone about this.

Why bring it up? Well, we can have a good time with that, but he is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's not wasting anybody's time, is he? And I think the reason he emphasizes this is because what he is discussing is really of the utmost importance as we saw in John's epistle to the Christian life and testimony.

Maybe to help us understand this a little more, recall the Lord's remarks to Simon the Pharisee when the Lord went to his house. There were other Pharisees there. But the sinful woman comes in and she kisses and washes the Lord's feet and Simon and the other Pharisees are appalled by this.

[17 : 13] And we don't go through the whole text, but this is how the Lord responds at least in part. I tell you, speaking to Simon, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much, but he who is forgiven little loves little.

If Christ is your Savior, some of you may have been saved as younger children, some later on in life, you need to recognize how much you have forgiven. If you were saved as a child, you may not have gone down the path some people were saved later on have.

But you should know that if God and his sovereignty did not lead you to illumination of the Scripture early on, what your life would likely look like because of your natural sin nature, and if you were saved later in life, you probably don't need too much of a reminder of just how corrupting sin can be in your life.

If you are a Christian, you have been forgiven much, and therefore your natural tendency should be to love much because you are the recipient of such love.

And this should be particularly evident in your interaction with other Christians. Once again, the Lord's speaking in the parable in Matthew 25 and verse 40. I think this relates to Christian interaction, how Christians interact with each other.

[18 : 39] And the king, representing Jesus, will answer them, truly I say to you, as you did to one of the least of these, my brothers, you did it to me, as you did to other Christians. And here Paul is speaking of the necessity of brotherly love.

But look what Jesus is saying here. The way you act toward your fellow Christian, your brethren, is a reflection of your faithfulness and love for Jesus Christ.

therefore, perhaps we can pause and consider the exhortation here by asking ourselves some questions. Are you or I harboring grudges against other believers, either in the assembly or other Christians in other churches?

Are there things you're unwilling to let go or resolve? Is how you treat other Christians the reflection you want to have of your love for Christ?

People looked at how you treat other Christians. Will that reflect well on how you love and appreciate Christ? Is it little or is it not there at all? Well, Paul says, of course, that he shouldn't have to write these things because this love flows or naturally flows from a converted heart.

[19 : 57] But he does write these things. And Matthew does. And John does. We find this throughout the Scripture as well. These are words that God in his sovereignty inspired and preserved for us.

So we need to ask ourselves, are we heeding them? Would Paul write a similar commendation to us individually or corporately as a church in how we pursue such love towards other believers?

believers? Well, returning to Paul's comments in verse 10, we sort of mentioned this already, but in verse 10 he provides a reason why he commends them along these lines.

That is, the Thessalonians. For that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. So they are showing love to all the brothers throughout Macedonia.

Paul, as we saw, gave one reason that they are showing love because they have been taught by God. But a second reason is that they are demonstrating. There is an outward demonstration that this love imbues them.

[21 : 01] It flows through them by their actions towards other believers in the region. You may recall that Thessalonica was a Greek city. It is actually still a Greek city. I think it is spelled a little differently these days.

And it was in the region of Macedonia. I believe Macedonia is sometimes referred to all of Greece, but in this time period my understanding is it refers just to this region where Thessalonica is located. So it is a part of Greece and there is other churches spread out throughout the region.

And in some way, in some manner, the Thessalonians have been reaching out to these churches and demonstrating kindness and love to them. And Paul is commending them along these lines.

In fact, if you look at the language here, it says, for that is indeed, that is indeed what you are doing to all the brothers. That indeed is emphatic. It is capturing the sense that you see in the original language.

There is something exceptional about how these Thessalonians are behaving. And I think what it is is it is not that they are just loving other believers within the assembly, but they are going out of their assembly and showing love to other believers in the region, in Macedonia.

[22 : 03] It actually says here, I don't know if it is clear from the translation, but they are showing it to all or the whole of Macedonia, indicating that they are not just going out to a couple sister churches and showing love to them, which is of course a great thing to do, but they love all the churches.

Whether they are actually reaching all of them, that is not clear, but there seems to be an intent there that they want to show love and support for all these churches. So there is this just outflowing, outpouring of love for other Christians, even those not in their assembly.

They want to make sure they are taken care of. And we don't know exactly what Paul is referring to, how they show this love. It may have been in multiple ways, but we do get a hint in 2 Corinthians 8, 1 through 2, where Paul talks about the extreme poverty, you might remember, the extreme poverty of the churches in Macedonia.

And so it seems likely that they provided some sorts of economic support to these churches in Macedonia. It may be that Thessalonica, being a very prominent city, kind of like Corinth, the people who went to church there and the churches there were a little bit more affluent.

They had more resources and they were willing to share those resources with the provincial churches in Macedonia that were poor, that didn't have as much. We don't know exactly what they did, but clearly they loved much and most likely they were sacrificially giving.

[23 : 18] As we see later when Paul talks about working with their hands, it probably wasn't like everyone in Thessalonica was wealthy. There were still common laborers, but they may have had a little bit more resources at their disposal, which they were willing to share with their brothers and these other churches.

Yet, despite this example of the Thessalonian sanctification, so we've already seen that Paul commends them. We even can compare ourselves properly against them, seeing as would somebody commend us in the same way.

And there's real examples of them doing these things. So they're sanctified. They're doing a great job. But Paul doesn't stop there. He says, we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more.

So you're doing a good job, but I want you to do more and more. Literally progress more. Keep in this direction. And Paul's actually prayed previously for the Thessalonians along these lines.

In chapter 3, verse 12, he says this, And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you.

[24 : 22] So you see, no matter how great you're doing, there's still a need to beseech the Lord to do more and to progress more in an area, not just to rest on what you're accomplishing now, as good as it may be for the Lord.

We need to continue to strive to do so, and Paul's encouraging them to do this. But Paul here, as we see in this prayer, is he's not just resting on his own exhortation. Of course, as he writes this, this is the inspired word of God.

But he's not just resting upon his own exhortation or his own words. He is not just trusting in human initiative. He turns this and gives this over to the Lord. He lifts this up in prayer. Perhaps there is an example or an application for us here.

Because as we've talked about a number of times, this loving kindness should be attendant to being a Christian. It should be natural for being a Christian. But aren't there times that that proves difficult?

You know, we can take very simple examples where it's pretty clear we did something wrong and we just need to own up to that and apologize or we need to accept somebody else's apology. But sometimes issues can be a little bit more challenging, right?

[25 : 25] And there can be personality issues, tensions that are underlying, animosity, complexity issues. Maybe it's not even clear who's right and who's wrong. Maybe both parties are wrong. And so it becomes more challenging.

But this isn't a reason to turn away from the command to love that we're given here. Instead, it's to follow Paul's example to beseech the Lord to allow us to overcome our bitterness or self-interest in order to love others.

Not to try to do it in our own power. Seek the Lord and how he might allow us to overcome our own self-interest so that we would be loving and comply with this commandment.

And Paul here, just staying in this verse here in chapter 3, verse 12, at the end he says, as we do for you. So he's praying for them to continue to abound in love in this way. He says, as we do for you.

And what Paul's referring to there is that he and his companions set an example for the Thessalonians. So part of the reason why the Thessalonians may have just excelled so much in this area is because they saw the example of Paul and the others who were ministering there.

[26 : 33] It helped them have an example to follow to convict them of this. And I think by way of application, perhaps we can ask ourselves or look inwardly and say, perhaps we should pursue the same path of being an example to others in church.

That if somebody were to see us as being quick to forgive and quick to apologize and quick to make things right and not keep long accounts against other people and be bitter and such, that would spur them as well to do this.

To either be convicted of how they're behaving or have just an example of how to behave as a Christian. And what that can do is create a virtuous cycle of love and forgiveness, tolerance within the body that maybe other people aren't doing it, but we can follow Paul's example and be an example ourselves within the assembly to other Christians.

And in all this, as we speak about others, it is important, of course, Paul emphasizes this, to show love to the brethren. That's his key point here, the key point to the passage. But it goes beyond simply showing love within the assembly.

It also has the benefit of reaching others. And the Lord says the same thing, I think, fairly famously in John 13, verses 34 and 35. Some of you may have committed to memory where he says, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you.

[27 : 54] You are also to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have loved one to another or for one another, depending on your translation.

It's not just that showing this kindness to our spiritual family allows us to have this unity and love within ourselves, which is, of course, important. But consistency in this area is also a testimony to the world, which should convict them of their own lack of love.

If any of you have been in any secular environment, as I'm sure many of you have been in your businesses and the like, you know that doesn't come frequent. There's gossiping and backbiting and businesses and any organization, politics, things of that nature.

And people can see that and see the difference between the church, they have interaction with somebody who's a member of a church, and their own place of work or other location. And the Spirit can use that to provoke them to repentance and ultimately to faith.

Such love is as evangelistic as it is righteous. And it's not just some speculation there. Paul actually says pretty much the same thing. If you look down at verse 12 in our present passage, he says, part of the reason for this exhortation is that so that you may walk properly before outsiders.

[29 : 07] The primary reason to walk properly before outsiders is to be a testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. to evangelize for the gospel. Well, we might ask ourselves from all this, Paul tells us how important loving is for multiple reasons.

But how do we do this? How do we demonstrate this mutual, familial, brotherly love to our fellow Christians? Well, in some ways it might be self-evident, just simply showing kindness to one another, making sure that we're kind and gentle in how we interact with each other.

Encouraging one another. We can encourage one another in the same way Paul has here when he encouraged them, commended the Thessalonians for just the love they show. If you see that in somebody else in your assembly or in other Christians, you can encourage them along those lines of how much you appreciate their Christian walk or their example in a certain area.

Or even if somebody is down, being able to encourage them from your own experience and from the scripture to pray for one another. Sometimes I've always been encouraged when I see a couple brothers maybe go back to church after a service and just pray with each other.

That's a way to show love. Or you do pray for somebody later on. You don't just say I'm going to pray for you and then you don't do it. But you actually pray for them later on and you make sure to commit that.

[30 : 22] You show love in that way. You're willing to help out in a difficult situation. A lot of times maybe medical issues come up and somebody needs somebody to watch their kids during the day or needs a ride or some other way, providing some food or something like that.

I'm sure you're already doing that in your assembly but if that's not something you're involved in, maybe it's encouragement. That's a way you can express that love to other believers, putting yourself aside and doing something else to help them out in a challenging situation where the world wouldn't necessarily do that.

And even humbly and gently exhorting each other as necessary. Sometimes that sounds counterintuitive, right? But if you see somebody going the wrong way and they're a Christian, it's more loving to gently, the right way, approach them and encourage them in the right direction, it's actually unloving to just stand back because then, yeah, there's no conflict, right?

But you're just protecting your own self, not trying to help somebody else. That's a way to show love. Paul alluded to a way we talked about that you can show love to others as the Thessalonians did where they provide some financial support.

We need to be careful in this area. We don't want over-dependence and Paul does admonish us along those lines as well in the letter. But if somebody is in a tough situation, if they need a car repair and they just can't afford it or something like that, just step in and help if you have more resources if God has blessed you in that way.

[31 : 45] Or you can give to the church. Most churches have some sort of elders or deacons fund and you let the church understand where there's needs and just anonymously give and the church is able to take care of needs that arise.

Or as the example the Thessalonians gave of giving to other churches, whether in missionary support, supporting other ministries, you can do in that way, sacrificially giving in a way to help brothers with limited resources.

And while all those things are true and important, I think testified through scripture, Paul gives us here three specific ways he has in mind in which the love he commands us to can be manifested or you can pursue that love with a greater degree or a greater zeal.

And they are found in verse 11 and I'll just give you the three of them. It has an outline but you can see all of them in verse 11 for yourself. One is aspiring to live quietly.

The second is to mind your own affairs. And then the third is to work with your hands. In the second letter to the Thessalonians, you might recall that Paul tells them that you need to work quietly, that you need to work quietly.

[32 : 55] Some people in there were idols, idol workers or non-workers I guess was the case. And so Paul says work quietly. Well, the phrase there is pretty similar in the original to what we see here is live quietly.

So in second Thessalonians tell them to work quietly. Here he says to live quietly. And in second Thessalonians where he talks about working quietly, that's in contrast to the idea of some of these people who were slothful.

They weren't industrious. And because they weren't industrious, they had a lot of free time on their hands. And because they had a lot of free time on their hands, they became busybodies. They were, that's even the word that's used through translation.

They were busybodies. They were meddling in the affairs of others unnecessarily and irritating other people while they were doing so. And the idea here of living quietly is pretty similar.

That's not just in terms of your industry and work. It means in general you should live lives that refrain from antagonizing other people. That doesn't exclude earnest evangelism, of course, or appropriate confrontation of fellow believers.

[33 : 55] It doesn't preclude doing the right thing. Paul's saying unnecessarily provoking people. We may provoke people if we confront them rightly. And of course, evangelism can always be offensive to people as they suppress the truth and unrighteousness.

That's not what's being discussed here. But it is discussing not being an antagonistic individual. And what does that look like? Well, the church father, Philo, not writing under inspiration, of course, but he gave a pretty good description of the opposite, what not living quietly looks like.

And this is his description here. He, that is somebody not living quietly, is a vulgar man who spends his day meddling, running around in public, in the theaters, councils, and assemblies, meetings, and consultations of all sorts.

He prattles on without moderation, fruitless to no end. He confuses and stirs up everything, mingling truth with falsehood, the spoken with the unspoken, the private with the public, the sacred with the profane, the serious with the ridiculous, not having learned to remain quiet, which is the ideal when the situation calls for it.

Pricks up his ears in excess of bustling busyness. Well, Paul doesn't tell us exactly what it means to live a quiet life, but it's the opposite of this. It's the idea, I think, that somebody shows a lack of restraint, somebody who's not being quiet shows a lack of restraint in the public arena.

[35 : 18] And the type of person who in the civil society doesn't have this restraint usually is the type of person who's also very opinionated and vocal in the local church as well in the wrong way.

Paul probably remembers his own experience with societal unrest when he was in Thessalonica, if you remember in Acts 17, where there he'd stirred up trouble, but he did so out of preaching the gospel, but he wouldn't want to see that repeated unnecessarily if that didn't have anything to do with sharing the gospel message and serving the Lord.

And so, and there's many applications here, and I need to be careful as a guest speaker as I share some of them, but let me just make one comment here about something a number of commentators observe.

Very observed, that it's probably likely that a number of people in these churches in Thessalonica were taking Greco-Roman politics a little too seriously. That was a little too important to their lives.

I'll leave it at that, but what is clear is that being a boisterous person who always needs to make his opinion known, both in the church and without, particularly in an obnoxious manner, is not consistent with living a quiet life.

[36 : 33] When you do that within the church, it undermines the God-given leadership and provokes disunity among the brethren. And when you do so outside the church, it causes the skeptics and the pagans to attack the church on grounds other than the gospel.

At the very least, the apostles encouraging believers to keep a low profile and not draw necessary attention or the wrong attention to themselves. Consider what Proverbs 29, 11 says, A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

You don't want to be the boisterous person that draws attention to yourself. Well, flowing from this exhortation, there's also the instruction here in verse 11, to mind your own affairs, or as we might put in more common terminology, mind your own business.

Mind your own business. If somebody tells you to mind your own business, they mean this has nothing to do with you, you stay out of it, right? Well, Paul's essentially saying that here, is he not? I think it further advances the idea of not being this busybody, not being an idle person, not having this time to meddle in the business of others, something that Thessalonians and us should not be involved in.

But I think it has a specific application, and I think this is what Paul is driving as well, within the local assembly. You see, instead of tending to your own business, your own vocation, and your family concerns, there are people who try to govern the church illegitimately, and stir up controversy in the assembly.

[38 : 14] And the reason I think that's what Paul is driving at is towards the end of this level there, in chapter 5, he adds this admonition, where he says, in verse 12 to 13, we ask you brothers to respect those who labor among you and are over you, that is the elders, the leadership, in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

And then also, be at peace among yourselves. So two things there, submit to your leaders, and don't be a burden to your fellow congregants. And I think this is what Paul is driving at in minding your own business, minding your own affairs.

When you behave in a manner that is unloving in this way, you undermine those who God himself has said in Hebrews 13, 17, that watch over your souls.

So your elders watch over your souls. You're not doing yourself any favors by undermining them. And you're also undermining the unity and love in the assembly. By way of an anecdote, I was a lay elder like Brother Greg up in a church in Massachusetts.

And during the COVID, the height of the COVID situation, of course, we had a lot of restrictions. I think it was probably more so up there in Massachusetts than it was down here.

[39 : 28] But nonetheless, it was very restrictive. We couldn't go to church for many months. And when we did, there were limited things we could do. And we had one brother in the church who was very concerned that we were not taking the Lord's Supper.

That was a very valid, valid concern at this time. And so he approached us, I think he approached me directly, with some suggestions on how we might be able to accomplish that. And we as elders discussed it over and we just felt that at a time it wasn't feasible, his suggestions.

But he did so when making his recommendations with a humble spirit, with a righteous motive, and he was very thoughtful. He was a thoughtful man in this. And when the elders came back with him and just said, we don't feel, brother, at this time that we can do what you're suggesting, he accepted the opinion and caused strife, and he didn't express a bad attitude.

I think this is an example of a loving individual along the lines of what Paul's discussing here, whose concern was for respecting those God put into leadership and having peace in the assembly.

This was more important to him than getting his own way, which no doubt he thought was the correct way and had some very valid concerns. An unloving person, however, or one behaving in an unloving manner, is willing to shake a local assembly to its core to get his way.

[40 : 47] No matter the effect it has on God's people, those he puts in charge, or even outsiders who would mock the division and the strife from the church. Somebody who would not consider what Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way.

It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Once again, can this be said of us as we interact with those in our assemblies, whether a leader or a lay person?

And then Paul adds one final admonition here as to how we would show love to other believers, other brothers. Work with your hands, he says. You might ask, what does that have to do with any of the preceding concepts?

[41 : 56] What does it have to do with brotherly love? I mean, we know that being quiet and being non-antagonistic is beneficial within the church, it promotes unity, and it doesn't provoke outsiders and spares us persecution unnecessarily.

But what would your form of labor have anything to do with this command, this cry for love and your brothers? Well, I think it does coincide, what's already been discussed, about not being a public spectacle.

You see, if a Christian is seen as making an honest living and has a respectable job that isn't tied up in the politics or even the ruthlessness of the business world, he's less likely to bring reproach on the church by the pagan world.

Like with living a quiet life, a non-controversial, productive vocation allows the believer to pursue being an exemplary citizen.

While Paul is promoting this here and promoting this in a way to show love to others, it's actually a very counter-cultural suggestion that he's giving.

[42 : 59] Because in the Greek culture, particularly among higher class people, you would want to pursue the loftiest career possible. That's how you identify yourself. And of course, is America so much different than ancient Greece in that capacity?

Probably not. Probably not. Well, it should be noted, we do need a word of caution here by application, that this passage isn't calling for us to avoid all non-manual jobs.

So I wouldn't want anyone to go out tomorrow and quit your white-colored job on the basis of this passage. Such an application is a little too bold. And we see examples in the scripture that reinforce that.

In the Old Testament, men like Joseph and Daniel had administrative positions, very high administrative positions. Even the role of the minister, while not typical vocation, of course, Paul does say that there is a right to compensation, and this is not a manual position.

It, in fact, has a scholarly aspect, not to be puffed up in your own knowledge, of course, but to be able to rightly discern the word of God. And in 1 Corinthians 9.14, it says, in the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

[44 : 10] So this isn't a command to avoid any job that requires scholarship or knowledge and isn't manual in its nature. However, Paul, by his own example, was actually willing to set this aside and set this aside for the Thessalonians out of love for the church.

In 1 Thessalonians 2.9, he says this, For you remember, for you remember, brothers, our labor and toil. We work night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you the gospel of God.

So Paul had the right to receive support and to live off being a gospel minister, but he set that aside. He was willing to do manual labor, as we know, being a tent maker, maybe doing some other things as well, to make a living so that it wasn't a burden to others.

And likewise, the Thessalonians are to set aside their ambition in this Greek world and idleness and personal preference out of love for their fellow Christians and even for unbelievers.

And Paul tells us, if you look down the last verse in our section, verse 12, the benefit of being so industrious and working in this way is twofold. One, it gives us a good testimony, that is, as he puts it, walk properly before outsiders, and two, self-sufficiency, being dependent on no one.

[45 : 20] In regard to the first, the person who pursues a manual labor vocation or at least a simple vocation or career doesn't get entangled in corporate or social politics. He doesn't need to scheme or strategize to be successful.

He doesn't chase after badges of success. And he doesn't present himself to others as a big shot. Doesn't puff himself up. Whereas in the second case in terms of dependence, somebody in this situation, particularly a manual laborer, he has a skill that is valuable and can produce tangible results.

That's something that's in demand. His compensation is tied to his industriousness. So pretty much the more you work, the more you make. It's not a question of who you know. It's a question of what you're doing.

Even those who may not agree with his faith will still need his services. But you've got a burst pipe. You probably don't care what your plumber believes as long as he comes over and stops that. The pagan world might take offense to the gospel of Christ, but if a Christian is going to shut off his water, he's okay with that.

And along those lines, somebody in that position would almost always be able to maintain at least a modest living, being able to support the church, being able to even help other people in the church without those skills.

[46 : 36] Well, we could say much by way of application. Once again, I would emphasize that the exhortation here is not to avoid all non-manual labor, but there are considerations to take for some of you who are younger people, maybe if you start careers in a few years, keeping this in mind, or even those of us who are more advanced in careers and such, things that we might need to take into consideration.

And I certainly say this as somebody who has always worked in an office job. I have really no manual labor skills at all. And prior to being in seminary, working in technology and data analytics, the sort of thing that nobody needs outside of the corporate world.

So I'd be entirely worthless in a practical situation. Maybe I can mow your lawn or something like that. So I say that with that background.

But nonetheless, it is something that should inform us, something that we should consider. And at the very least, we need to be careful about not letting our career or financial ambition cause us to be unnecessarily competitive or dishonest or ruthless.

That can't be how we proceed as a Christian, even if you're in the business world. We should never be puffed up in our career status that provokes envy and resentment from others outside, but even in the assembly.

[47 : 49] There's nothing special about you. God gave you certain skills. Praise the Lord for that. But don't be proud of it. We should not do things to ingratiate ourselves, the powers in the world system through flattery or sin, of course, or disclaiming our faith.

So if we have to suffer the burden of not being promoted because people don't want to be around a Christian, that's just how it goes. We shouldn't put that aside for the sake of financial success. That's not our goal or purpose here in this world.

And when it comes to dependence, I think, Paul, we won't go into too much detail about this, but I think Paul may have had the Greek system in mind when he was talking about this, at least to some degree. And to go very quickly through it, in the Greek business world, they had a system where you had a mentor and you had protégés.

And these mentors, if you were involved with one of those men, he would be able to give you business and give you connections. Somewhat we see similar things in this world today. And the more people he influenced, the more broad his network was.

And so it was this sort of symbiotic relationship. Well, what would happen to a Christian who was in this network and his mentor is a pagan, he's a believer, and he doesn't like what his mentor is doing.

[48 : 58] He could lose that relationship and he would lose pretty much all his business context and could be impoverished, become dependent upon the church. Well, the danger may exist at least to some degree today.

I mean, a skilled laborer can always work for himself, but the person who's dependent on the world business system may not have the same option. I mean, think of somebody who's a VP in a company or something like that, and it's all he's ever known is being a corporate executive.

And then one day as a Christian, he's faithful and he's terminated because he's not going to go along with something like Pride Month or something similar to that. He gets terminated. And other companies won't touch him because of his supposed bigotry.

And now he becomes at risk for being incapable of earning a living and becoming dependent on the church even though he had a very high profile role. But this is something that a Christian that trades is a little bit more insulated from.

Now, these are just largely considerations, but as you think of how our world starts to look more and more like the Greco-Roman pagan world, we may realize some of these scenarios sooner than we may think.

[50 : 06] And so it's something I would just encourage us to take into consideration. But overall, what Paul is encouraging us towards in all of these admonitions is to live the simple life.

One that doesn't draw unnecessary attention to ourselves or entangle ourselves with the affairs of the world. We want to be able to help the church have a more favorable environment to exhort men over their sin and cause them to repentance and faith in Christ and to conserve our resources for those who are truly needy, who truly need the material support of the assembly.

And all this brings together Paul's call for brotherly love among the saints and certainly within the local assembly. We are called to embrace the spirit and how we are God-taught through the Bible to show love and kindness and tolerance and patience, especially for those who are redeemed in Christ.

We are called to be generous with our money towards Christ's church to brothers and sisters who are truly struggling in the gospel mission locally and around the world. We are called to live simple lives that reflect well upon Christ and his church while not making ourselves a burden to the church.

We started off talking about some of the the preceding section and the subsequent section. The previous portion of the letter calls for believers to put aside the enticements of the flesh for the sake of the gospel for the church.

[51 : 37] And the next section calls for Christians to presently be encouraged by Christ's return and not be fearful, not be too concerned about the future. And this section bridges those concerns where likewise put aside the sins of the flesh but also put aside self, self-aggrandizement tears we see here.

And in the future look towards the coming of Christ but for the time being show this love to your brethren and to outsiders in this present world.

Paul puts it this way in Romans chapter 12. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

Repay no one evil for evil but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Does this and what we discussed describe you, Christian? If not, this is a call to seek God's help to live your life in a way that better conforms to the love of Christ.

[52 : 55] If you're an unbeliever, does this convict you? I mean, can anybody attain to such a love naturally? I don't think you'd see that in your own workplace and elsewhere or in yourself.

Our sin nature actually repels us from such selflessness but yet God still commands it. So the call here for you is to embrace the Christ who can give you a new heart and a new mind and will free you from the selfish disposition that presently condemns you.

Let's pray. Father God, I thank you for your word. I don't want to stand up here and pretend I'm anything I'm not.

I'm just grateful for the opportunity to share your text. I know my love is cold compared to what's called here. and I don't doubt that there are others who feel the same way.

Praise the Lord that you are merciful to us. Help us love others in our own assembly more. Love other Christians more. Love others who are lost and dying more.

[54 : 08] And Father, if anyone here are hearing this message, Father realizes that they don't love this way at all and aren't yours and aren't Christ's brother. Oh Lord, may your spirit quicken them, call them to repentance for the love of Jesus Christ.

It's in Christ's precious name we pray these things. Amen.