

**1st Thessalonians 4: 9-12; “To Lead a Quiet Life”, Sermon # 18 in the series –
“A Persevering Faith”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
April 29th, 2018, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

Here in this passage, the apostle Paul gives the believers in the church at Thessalonica, certain definite things that they should do in relation to aspiring to lead a quiet life. I hope that each person who is a Christian here today will remember that it takes grace to do the least thing or the best things in the Christian life. “Without Me you can do nothing”, says the Lord Jesus. So let us ask ourselves as we contemplate this passage – In what ways will my faith grow and be strengthened by aspiring to live a quiet life? And as we look at our verses we see that there are three benefits that will come to our life by means of our having this aspiration.

1st of all – If we aspire to lead a quiet life, our faith will grow and be strengthened by means of love. (Verses 9 and 10)

I suspect that there are many Christians who desire to lead a quiet life. They desire to enjoy the good things of life and their relationships with people, and they would especially like this to be the case when they get to their older years; when they begin to think about retirement. But is there really retirement for a Christian? I am sure that there is retirement from our jobs; the occupation which has kept us busy for so many years. But as I read the Bible I do not see that there is any retirement from our being servants of Christ. This goes on until our death, and on into eternity. As we think about this life, there are not many people who seem to be able to find a quiet life, whether they are believers or unbelievers in any age of Church history so far. In the case of unbelievers, even if they have enough money to purchase a quiet place to live; they are still often troubled with the cares of the world, or by the fears of what they may lose; either their money or their health or both.

In the case of believers, like these who we have been studying, who lived in Thessalonica, they were beset about with persecution. They were experiencing many troubles and difficulties related to their faith. They realized the reality of the truth which Jesus stated in Matthew 10: 34, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth.” “I did not come to bring peace but a sword.” “For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.” This doesn’t sound like peace and quiet to me. It is evident that even though we may aspire, that we may not always be able to live a quiet Christian life; at least outwardly.

There are times when Christians do get to take a vacation. But this wasn’t the time for a vacation for these dear Thessalonian Christians. They simply could not take a vacation and get away from it all. We used to sing that old song of John Bunyan’s, years ago, at Community Christian Fellowship. It’s called the Pilgrim Song. “My rest is in heaven, my rest is not here; so why should I murmur when trials are near?” “Be hushed my sad spirit, the worst that can come, will shorten the journey and hasten me home.” And yet, here in these verses, even though they were experiencing these great oppositions and the hatred of unbelieving people around them, Paul was still urging them to aspire to lead a quiet life. If you look in the Dictionary, to aspire means “to pant or long for, to attempt, or to try to attain”. It means “to aim at, or to seek ambitiously for” that which you long to do. This is what Paul urges the believers in Christ in the church of Thessalonica to do. He is saying here, that the aspirations of a Christian should include the desire to lead a quiet life of communion with God without that quietness leading to asceticism.

But let’s think about our text once again. How does a Christian live a quiet life then? Verse 9 says – “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia.” “But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more...”

Here Paul turns from talking about marital love and abstaining from sexual immorality, to speak now about brotherly love. The words in the Greek (concerning brotherly love) are ***peri tes philadelphias***, meaning the love of brothers and sisters in Christ for one another. Paul did not feel any great need to write to them, to explain this love to them. For he reminds them that they themselves were taught by God to love one another. They were doing so, towards all the brethren who were in all Macedonia. What form did this brotherly love take? Well, I think that we can grasp what it means if you will turn over with me to 1st Corinthians 13 with me for a few moments. Love was something, as Paul says here, that was taught these believers by God Himself. Love is a grace which is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us, he says in Romans 5. But it is also something which we should increase in more and more in the Christian life, in accordance with the definition which we find in the Scriptures.

But this does not always happen for every believer. Indeed the increase of love is not something that happens automatically. It is something God gives us as a grace, but it is something also which needs further definition and practical outworking in our lives. Love is portrayed for us here in very definite terms which each Christian should pursue. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.” “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” So you see here, that you may have much by way of God’s Spirit working in your heart, and Christ’s grace which has been given to you, and still not have love.

If we lived in Paul’s day, we might be speaking with different kinds of tongues, and some of us might have had the revelatory gift of prophecy. Some might have had the great revelatory gift of understanding the mysteries of the Scripture. You could have had the gift of extraordinary faith which conveyed the ability to remove mountains, and yet you could still be missing the most practical, the most basic necessity to use those abilities which were developing in your life – You could be missing Love. It is essential, therefore, that you understand that you must have this brotherly love to establish the good of any gifts of grace or knowledge that you are given. This is how we must apply it to ourselves today. If we do not have this holy loving consideration of how our knowledge or our gifts are affecting other believers around us, we are really not doing them any good, and we really are not glorifying God by our use of them. What an awful condition; to strive hard to selfishly attain to cultivate your own spiritual goals, and yet at the end of it all, to find that you are nothing; you have failed to learn the lesson of love!

Years ago now, one of the pastors at Community Christian Fellowship used to say to us when I was a young Christian, “Love knows how to behave.” How then does love behave around other people? And how does it behave especially around other believers? Verses 4 and following tell us. “Love suffers long and is kind.” It is patient with people and it bears with them. It is kind. That is, you love the other person as you would want to be loved. Love looks, and it tries to be friendly and warm and affirming with every other believer, if possible. It looks at the brethren, and indeed all men, to see how it can help and give to them good things, in the expressions of your face and in helping them, by giving them your attention and listening to them. A person filled with brotherly love will be thinking, “What can I do for this person that will show them more of Christ?” “Love”, it says in this text, “does not envy; does not parade itself, is not puffed up.”

Love doesn’t say – I have to have what you have, either in relationships with other people, or in material things. Love is not focused on getting attention from other people so that it will be noticed, or thought to be great. Love isn’t puffed up; that is “having a big head”; thinking that you are somebody great and smarter than everyone around you; saying, “Look at me”. “My thoughts and my abilities and my actions are what you need to keep your eyes on.” That is nothing but pride. “Love does not behave rudely.” It is not rough, harsh, forceful, or demanding of people around you. It is polite in a caring and thoughtful way. It does not try to force other

people to disclose what is personal to them, or that which should be kept confidential and private. It is not insulting. “Love does not seek its own.” It is not selfish in its orientation; everything revolving around you and getting what you want. “Love is not provoked.” That is, if something is said to you which you do not believe is right, you will not retaliate with a similar statement or observation concerning the person who said this to you. If something is done to you which is not right, you do not return evil for evil. You return good for evil, and you overcome the evil by that God-pleasing means.

“Love thinks no evil.” It does not meditate on what it can do to undermine or get back at people. It does not meditate on what it can do to make other people look wrong or silly. It does not deliberately try to make others to look bad or worse than they are. “Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.” That is; love does not rejoice in any sin against God or man, but rather it rejoices in the truth of the Scriptures being lived out in other people’s lives. It rejoices to look at things as they really are, and not to superimpose something which is not true on other people, or upon the situations of life that they are involved in. This is how love behaves. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things endures all things. As it says in 1st Peter 4: 8 – “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.” It does not disqualify, and reject other believers who they disagree with, over various issues of life, but they will endure long, and they will believe and hope that every relationship can be made right. Indeed, they will make concerted efforts to see that this can come to pass. Let us ask ourselves whether this is the way that you think? Are you increasing and abounding in love, more and more? Is your faith working by means of love? I think that if you can say that it is, that you will find that you will be leading a quiet life in the sense that your conscience is clear, and you will come to know, based upon this truth of the Word, that God is pleased with you.

Now 2nd – If you aspire to lead a quiet life you will find that you will be satisfied to mind your own business. (verses 11 and 12)

Paul says in verse 11 that the believers in Thessalonica should “aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind their own business, and to work with their own hands, even as he had commanded them”. To lead a quiet life you cannot be a busy-body, meddling in other people’s affairs; being more concerned to know their business, than you are to pay attention to your own. Some people are like this, and they forfeit their peace and quiet because of it. The reason that people are busy-bodies is because they think that by this means that they can personally benefit from knowing more about you than they really need to know. They think that the knowledge of other people’s private affairs is their greatest business and profit. They pride themselves in being in the know. Knowledge is power and they would wield it.

But this verse says, “mind your own business”. You don’t need to be a gossip, and you don’t need to know more about other people’s private lives that they choose to reveal to you, unless you are a person in authority that needs and requests that information. There are many things which are personal and private which never need to be revealed to other people. There are other times when a person becomes a busy-body and they will not mind their own business because they have taken too much upon themselves; thinking that they have authority to intrude where they really do not. I haven’t time to delve into this now, and I do not believe that you will need anything but this general explanation.

But to be more to the point: The concern of the apostle in these verses is laziness; a person finding out by intruding into the personal lives of others, how he might be able to get himself into a position where he does not need to work. He can mooch off of other people’s goodness and hospitality. The problem is stated more in depth in 2nd Thessalonians 3, verse 10 and following. “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” “For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.” “Now those who are such we command and

exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” If we compare this with what is being said in 1st Thessalonians 4 we can see that it is a very good thing to be able to mind your own business and to work in quietness and to eat your own bread. This requires paying attention to your own business and being diligent in it. “Do you see a man who is diligent in his business?”, it says in Proverbs 22: 29? “He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men.” It is a very good and necessary thing to learn to work with your own hands.

And what is the good outcome of your minding your own business and doing your work as unto the Lord; doing it with diligence and working hard at the calling which the Lord has given to you? You will be able to live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness. You don’t have to have great riches to lead this quiet Christian life. Listen to Proverbs 17: 1. “Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife.” And listen also to Ecclesiastes 4, verse 6. “Better a handful with quietness than both hands full, together with toil and grasping for the wind.” So this is the right kind of labor that we wish to pursue. It is not the work of a busy-body; it is the work of one who is godly. This is what brings quiet to the heart. It is God’s presence with you and the fellowship and communion which you have with Him while you are doing your work. “Godliness with contentment is a means of great gain,” it says in 1st Timothy 6: 6. There is one final benefit of living a quiet Christian life. It is –

3rd – That in aspiring to live a quiet life you will grow in your being able to walk properly toward outsiders. (verse 12)

... “that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.” Your testimony, the testimony of how you conduct yourself in your business during the week, is very important to God. It is important that you “walk properly” toward those who are outside our church. It is important, not only that you be diligent, but that you be a person who is holy, helpful, and humble. To walk properly is to remember the maxim which is given to us in Micah Chapter 6, verse 8. “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” The questions that you should ask yourself are these: Am I just in my business dealings with the people that I work for, or who work for me? Do I do what I say that I will, for my boss, or for my employees, when I am working for or with them? Do I think about the benefit that will come to my boss or my company by my labor? And do I labor as unto the Lord so that they will truly be benefited?

Am I as a worker or as an employer honest and straightforward in the way that I conduct myself in my business, or are there complaints against me; that I am not doing things in a right or kind or caring way? Am I a person in my life, both public and private, who loves to show mercy to people? Can I say that I am not being harsh, not being demanding, but being gentle and kind? Am I a person who is humble; not so much wanting or desiring great things for myself, but rather desiring good to come to others and glory to come to God. A believer who aspires to a quiet life will find that it is very much conducive to a life of humility. God is well-pleased with it. Let us pray that we shall be able to live a quiet life, and be well-pleased with it as well.