

“Brotherly Love”
1 Thessalonians 4:9-10
(Preached at Trinity, September 29, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. At the end of **Chapter 3** Paul expressed his great hope that God would continue His work in them. He writes:
1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 NAU - "may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you; ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints."
2. In **Chapter 4** Paul sets forth practical instruction to the Thessalonians. He implores them to continue walking in a manner pleasing to God. Paul presumes they love the Law of God and are seeking to apply it to their lives. This is true of all believers. Stephen Tyng writes in his "*Lectures on the Law and Gospel*" –
"The redeemed man has the love of holiness, and the desire for holiness implanted in his heart, as a divine gift. He approves of the precepts of the Law in his inner man. He has the law of written upon his heart by the Holy Spirit, and the grace of God which has brought him salvation, teaches him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."¹
3. Paul instructs them in how to work this out practically. He begins with the issue of sexual purity.
1 Thessalonians 4:3 NAU - "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality*"
 - A. Paul was preaching to a generation characterized by wide-spread promiscuity. The cities of Thessalonica, Ephesus, Corinth, etc. were pagan cities. Individuals gave themselves to every sensual fulfillment imaginable knowing no law but self-desire. In this context Paul did not hesitate to set before them God's demand for sexual purity.
 - B. It is a subject that needs to be taught clearly in our generation. We too are in the midst of a very pagan culture that knows little of sexual purity. Christians need to be reminded of our radical break with the paganism of our culture.
4. Paul's instruction is clear:
1 Thessalonians 4:3 NAU - "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;*"

¹ Stephen Tyng, *Lectures on the Law and the Gospel*, (Birmingham, Solid Ground Christian Books, 1846), page 335.

5. This sin is one that demands personal vigilance. Each of us needs to maintain a life of moral purity. Sexual sin has far reaching effects. It is poisonous to our own soul, but it also impacts those around us—our mate and our children. It is also robbery of another person’s husband or wife. To take someone else’s mate is robbery – it is taking what does not belong to us.
1 Thessalonians 4:6 NAU - "*and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these thing"
6. This provides the transition to the next section.
 - A. Sanctification is not keeping a checklist of does and don’ts. In its most basic form, sanctification is simply putting our love on display—our love for Jesus and our love for our fellow man.
 - B. In the context of this passage love will not allow you to take the wife of another man or defile another man’s daughter. Love will not allow you to take the husband of another woman.
7. **Verse 9** turns from the subject of sexual purity to that of brotherly love.
 “Now as to the love of the brethren . . .”
 - A. Love is one of the most important subjects in the New Testament. We find it over and over.
 - B. This was Paul’s continual teaching. No other NT author wrote more on this topic of love. Of the 116 times we find the word ἀγάπη in the New Testament, 75 are from Paul.
8. Paul prayed for them to increase and abound in love so that they would be established in holiness.
1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 NAU - "may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you; ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints."
9. Now Paul applies love to their sanctification.
 This is a wonderful passage. Paul is saying, “I’m going to tell you something you already know. I’m going to tell you about brotherly love, but you’ve already been taught about this by God. God has taught you to love one another.”
10. This was the new commandment taught by Christ.
John 13:34-35 NAU - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
 - A. What is the identifying mark of a Christian? How can we tell if we are truly saved? There is one primary mark. The ultimate way you can tell if a person is truly a Christian is his love. It is the ultimate test of genuine faith.
1 John 4:7 NAU - "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."
 - B. Paul is writing this letter from Corinth. Five or six years later Paul would write a letter to the Corinthian church. In that letter he told them that no matter what else you claim about yourself, if you don’t have love you are nothing.
1 Corinthians 13:1-3 NAU - "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

11. The word for “love of the brethren” is φιλαδελφία - it is a compound word that is simply translated, “brotherly love.”
In Classical Greek it referred to brothers by birth. In the New Testament it takes a higher meaning, referring to brothers in Christ.
Romans 12:10 NAU - "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;"
12. Paul says they already possessed a knowledge of this love.
- A. Paul uses the phrase, “taught of God.” In the original it is but one word, θεοδίδακτος – some have suggested that Paul coined the word. It is the only time it is found in the NT.
- B. How did they receive this knowledge? Paul says God taught it to them.
1. You don’t have to be taught something that is a part of your nature. You don’t have to be taught to breathe. It comes naturally. The Christian loves.
 2. Paul had just reminded them in **Verse 8** that God had given them the Holy Spirit
1 Thessalonians 4:8 NAU - "So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you."
a. The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration. He has kindled genuine love within us. Paul wrote in in **Romans 5**
Romans 5:5 NAU - "the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
b. The Holy Spirit is the power of our sanctification.
Ephesians 3:14-16 NAU - "I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,"
1 Thessalonians 1:5 NAU - "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction"
- C. Paul is saying love is integral to their salvation. It was evidence of God’s work in them. In this sense, they did not need to be instructed regarding love. The Holy Spirit prompted them to love their brethren.
Paul says in **Verse 10** that they were already practicing this love.
1 Thessalonians 4:10 NAU - "for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia"
13. So why does Paul tell them something they already know and were already practicing? Simply because they were lacking. This is true of every area of our life. We are lacking.
1 Thessalonians 3:10 NAU - "we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?"
14. They were already practicing brotherly love, but Paul instructs them to excel in it more and more. He uses the exact phrase he used in **Verse 1**
This speaks to an uncomfortable truth.

- A. On one hand the New Testament speaks clearly about the relationship of love to Christian conversion.
The Christian is marked by love. Love identifies us. Love is what we are. The work of the Holy Spirit in us is love – “The fruit of the Spirit is love.”
1 John 4:7-8 NAU - "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."
- B. On the other hand, love for the brethren sometimes eludes us. We have not yet reached perfection. We need to give attention to our love. We need to be admonished to love. We need to be corrected when we do not love.
15. Paul commended the Thessalonian church. Love was on display. They were a loving church.
1 Thessalonians 4:10 NAU - "for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia"
16. How about Trinity Baptist Church. Are we a loving church? We are if we are a true church. As individual members, we love one another if we are true Christians. What does this love look like?
- I. Brotherly love is a family love
- A. Christians are a part of a common family – the family of God.
1. Not only are we united with Christ, this union has resulted in our being united with one another.
 2. Remember the words of our Lord as He defined His true family
Matthew 12:50 NAU - "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."
- B. We are to express family affection.
1. Family members care for one another, defend one another, are mindful of the needs of one another.
 2. Sometimes family members will disagree with one another. But disagreement does not weaken the love relationship.
Love creates forbearance, patience, forgiveness.
 3. And family love guards against favoritism, jealousy, envy.
This is important in the local church where segregated groups weaken the bond of the body.
We must guard against the danger of a segmented love – love for some while neglecting others. In such an atmosphere division is inevitable.
Love results in the sweet fragrance of harmony.
Colossians 3:12-14 NAU - "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

II. Brotherly love is a sacrificial love

A. Love is willing to put others before yourself

Philippians 2:2-4 NAU - "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

1. Sacrificial love gives honor to others

Romans 12:10 NAU – “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;”

2. This demands a deep humility – It demands looking outside of ourselves. It demands being mindful of the needs of others.

3. In the context of the local church, it means outdoing one another in service

B. Love is not selfish”

1. There are two types of contrasting persons in the world.

- There are those who are selfish. Their very existence is wrapped up in themselves. They are miserly in their time and possessions. They seek everything to their own advantage. Paul states that love “does not act unbecomingly” This selfishness is unbecoming for a Christian
- There are those who are generous. They are big hearted and openhanded. They freely share of their time and their possessions.
- Motivation is important—honest self-examination is essential. There are those who are selfish even in their giving. This is true of much of the philanthropy of the world. They give because it makes them feel good about themselves, not from a genuine love for others. Christ isn’t the motivation.

2. Love enables us to take our eyes off ourselves. It removes all selfishness and creates within us a spirit of generosity

1 Corinthians 13:5 NAU - "it does not seek its own"

ESV - "It does not insist on its own way"

CSBO - "is not selfish"

3. Selfishness creates a sense of smallness. If you are selfish your world becomes confined to the narrow sphere of yourself. You are concerned only about those things which have a direct effect on your own life. Everything is considered in terms of “I, Me, Mine.” Love enlarges our heart and causes it to extend to others.

4. Selfishness has the attitude: “What is mine is mine.”

“What is yours is mine”

Love’s attitude is: “What is mine is yours”

5. We must remember that we are uniquely tied together – we are one.

C. This selfless love characterized the early church

1. They sold possessions to meet the needs of others

Acts 2:44-45 NAU - "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need."

2. Thessalonica was located in Macedonia. These churches showed remarkable generosity in Paul's collection for the poor.
2 Corinthians 8:1-5 NAU - "Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, ⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, ⁵ and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God."

III. While conflict will surely arise, love creates a spirit of forgiveness and forbearance

1 Corinthians 13:4 – "Love is patient"

1 Corinthians 13:5 – "is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong"

1 Corinthians 13:7 – "bears all things"

A. The brethren are full of imperfections in this life.

1. Sin still plagues all of us – all of us are in a great battle that rages on daily
2. The beauty of grace is that God sees beyond our imperfections. He gazes beyond our sin looking upon the righteousness of Christ. He takes pity upon our failures. As those who have received grace we should be gracious.
3. Love gives us a mind to bear with each other in compassion and patience
Love creates forgiveness
Ephesians 4:32 NAU - "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."
4. How wicked it is to withhold forgiveness from our brother when God has forgiven our infinite debt

B. Offenses are bound to come

1. Someone may say an unkind word. They may do something that you consider offensive.
2. Will you take offense? Will you hold it against them?
3. Such forbearance is contrary to fallen humanity. Human nature seeks revenge. Human nature wants personal satisfaction. But the meekness of Christ leads us to be patient with our brothers and sisters.

IV. Brotherly love zealously watches over our own holiness and that of our brother
Love for Christ gives us a passion for all that glorifies Him.

A. To love our brother is to desire his holiness

Galatians 6:1-2 NAU - "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ."

1. It demands that we look first and foremost to our own heart
2. We have a duty to encourage one another in holiness
3. We must continually hold Christ high before one another

- B. Our church is only holy if each member is holy
1. Remember, we are a body. When one part of the body is sick the whole body is affected
 2. We must strive to press one another towards greater and greater holiness. **Hebrews 10:24-25 NAU** - "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Conclusion:

1. Remember, love is the chief distinguishing mark of Christianity. We are not justified by love, but love is the fruit of true saving faith. 17th Century Pastor John Davenant wrote: "Justifying faith sanctifies and purifies the heart; but a heart void of love is not sanctified or purified. Everyone who believes with true and justifying faith, has a right to eternal life. But these things are united in no one who is void of love."²
2. But we have not yet been perfected. Sin still plagues us and sometimes the brightness of our love for one another becomes obscured. Paul reminds us that we must strive to excel in our love for one another **1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 NAU** - "you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰ for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more," **Romans 12:10** – "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love;"
3. Do you find the love of God in your heart? Have you felt God's love poured out within you? If not, you may be resting upon your own works rather than upon the love of God poured out through His Son.

² Davenant, John, *Colossians, Geneva Series of Commentaries*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009) page 67.