

I Thessalonians 4:9-12 The Conduct of the Believer

We are in I Thessalonians chapter 4. Last week we took verses 1 through 8. So we will take 1 through 8 as our introduction. Today our focus is on verses 9 through 12 of I Thessalonians chapter 4.

We are in the second half of the book. The first half is the first three chapters where Paul talked about The Inspiration of the Believers in Thessalonica and how they received God's Word in the midst of affliction, in the midst of hardships. But now he is in the second half of the letter, The Instruction to the Believers in Thessalonica chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4 is The Testimony of Lord. We studied The Consecration of the Believer last week in verses 1 through 8. But in the total first twelve verses it is Paul talking about the conduct and consecration of the believer, before he gets to the doctrine. Next week, Lord willing, we will study the doctrine of the rapture of the church. But before we get to that, he has got some words to say about those who are anxiously waiting for the coming of the Lord but who are irresponsible with how they live their life. And so he is tackling that first; so that when Christ comes we will be ready.

He started off in verse 1, **The rest therefore, brothers, we request you and we appeal in the Lord Jesus, according as you received from us how it is necessary for you to walk and to please God.** Two things:

1) **how it is necessary to walk**

And that is literally the word *to walk, to take steps*. Paul is concerned about how we take steps in our life. Where our life goes. What we do with our life.

2) **how it is necessary for you to walk and to please God**

The motive for what we do is, he says, "It is necessary that you please God."

In order that you might abound more. So he says, "I want you to abound more." We are going to see that in our text in verses 9 to 12. He wants to see them abound more than where they are at, where they are walking now, and how they are pleasing God now. He says, "I want you to know we are saying these things in order that you might of abound more."

For you know what instructions we have given to you through the Lord Jesus. So these are words given by Jesus, not by man. These are God's instructions, which is why this chapter is called the testimony of the Lord.

For this is the will of God your sanctification. The will of God for every believer is sanctification. *Sanctification* just means *to be set apart*. It comes from the root word **ἅγιος** (hagios) which means *holy* or *saint*. For instance, the term *holy* in Holy Spirit is the word *set apart, holy*. The set apart Spirit. The Spirit that is set apart for God and for God alone. It is also the word for *saint*. It is the exact same word, **ἅγιος** (hagios). We are called *saints* in the

Scripture. So that **ἁγιοσμός** (hagiasmos) or *sanctification* comes from these two words and it means *to be set apart*.

So here is the picture, when the Holy Spirit - the set apart Spirit - comes into my life I become a saint. That is not performance but it is positional. I am set apart for God. And this whole process is called *sanctification*. Once the Spirit of Christ comes into my heart, the Holy Spirit, and sets me apart I am sanctified. I now belong to Christ. That is something that he wanted them to know about their sanctification. "This is the will of God for your life that you are set apart for Him to walk and to please God."

For this is the will of God your sanctification. Then he lists three things:

1) **for you to abstain from fornication**, which is the Greek word **πορνεία** (porneia) where we get our word *pornography* from; which is literally translated *sexual immorality*. Sexual immorality - all sexual activity outside of the marriage bond. Remember last week we studied how Paul said in I Corinthians chapter 6 verses 19 and 20, **Do you now know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought at a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.** Jesus not only died for our sins, but He purchased us on the cross. By His Spirit coming into my heart, I no longer belong to myself. So he says to abstain from sexual immorality.

2) Secondly, verse 4, **That each of you to know to put out a possess his own vessel** (that is your physical body) **in sanctification and honor.** Learn how to keep it in honor and sanctification. Walk in your sanctification. Do not give yourself over to the lusts of the flesh, which he says in verse 5, **Not in passion of lust according as indeed the Gentiles the ones not having known God.** So not according to passion. We are to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Christ.

3) Thirdly, verse 6, **Not to go beyond and to take advantage in the matter of his brother.** *To go beyond*, the first word actually means *trespass*. Not to trespass your brother's sanctification. And *to take advantage*, that is covet what he has. So to be satisfied with what you have, how the Lord gives to you and what He gives to you; relaying here not to trespass on your brothers sanctification, interfere with his own life, trespass in his territory.

On account of that the Lord is the avenger concerning all of these, according to also we spoke to you before and thoroughly testified. For God did not call us upon the basis of impurity but in sanctification. So once we are saved, we are sanctified. We have a responsibility to live and to walk in our sanctification.

Verse 8, **Consequently the one rejecting is not rejecting man, but God, the One having given us His Holy Spirit.** You can say, "This is just Paul's opinion," and get involved in the philosophical debate about sexuality and personal rights. You can say, "Well this is just Paul's opinion." But he says, "No, the person who is rejecting this is not rejecting man," that is, man's opinion, "but he is rejecting God, the one having given us His Holy Spirit." So God has given us His Holy Spirit to live in sanctification.

Which brings us to our verses for today in verses 9 through 12. The Conduct of the Believer, verses 9 through 12, before we get into the doctrine of the rapture, which is verses 13 through 18.

Verse 9 he says, **Now concerning brotherly love.** *Brotherly love* is one Greek word **φιλαδελφία** (philadelphia) which is the designation for the family of God, *love for the family of God*. **Concerning brotherly love** (family love amongst the believers) **you have no need for me to write to you for you yourselves are** - here is the literal translation - **you yourselves are God-taught**. Most translations have it *taught by God*. But it is one Greek word in the text, **θεοδίδακτοί** (theodidaktoi), **God-taught for to love one another**. So he says, "You have no need for me to write to you. You yourselves are God-taught."

What does it mean to be *God-taught*? It means God's people are taught from inside. It cannot be taught with human words. It cannot be taught from a book. It is God-taught from God's spirit within a person's life. You cannot learn it from a manual. This is something that God teaches from inside and is God taught.

But what is God taught? **For to love one another** in verse 9. The word *love* is the word **ἀγάπη** (agape). The love of God is God-taught not human-taught. Paul is making reference that man does not learn to live by other people teaching them. This is not in the Scriptures. **ἀγάπη** (agape) love is a fruit of God's Spirit, Galatians chapter 5 verse 22. God Himself is love, it is His nature. And so He lives within His people and He teaches from within to love.

As we have mentioned to you before, we have studied this word **ἀγάπε** (agape) over many years. And the best definition I have come up with is to be concerned about someone's spiritual welfare. **ἀγάπη** (agape): *to be concerned about someone's spiritual welfare*. God was so concerned about our spiritual welfare that He sent His Son to die for our sins. He cared about our spiritual welfare. God himself is love. And so he says I do not need to really tell you more about brotherly love because you yourselves are God taught from within, by God himself, who is love. Love is not an action. Love is a Person. Just as peace is not a feeling. Peace is a Person. Christ is our peace the book of Ephesians tells us. God's nature is love. For me to love you means that God says, "I want you to share My Spirit in My Nature with other people." It is God taught because He is love. The more I fellowship with Him and the more I learn of His love, the more that love is developed in me. You cannot learn that in Bible Study. It is God-taught, something that comes from inside.

We learn from I John chapter 4, if you have your Bibles you might want to turn to I John chapter 4, not I Thessalonians 4, but I John chapter 4, verses 7 through 21. The great chapter on **ἀγάπη** (agape) love. There will be parts that I will read literally as we go through. I John chapter 4, beginning with verse 7.

Beloved, let us love one another. That is literally translated: **Beloved, we should be loving one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves has been born of God, and knows God.** You see why everyone who has been born of God loves? It is because God's Spirit is living inside of them, and they love. (Verse 8) **He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.** God is a person. ~~God~~ Love is the very nature of God himself.

Verse 9 of I John chapter 4, **In this the love of God was manifested towards us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.** And so, I live through His Spirit living inside of me. (Verse 10) **In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

Propitiation means *satisfaction*. (Verse 11) **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** (Verse 12) **No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.** *Perfected* means *finalized, matured*. So, reading verse 12 again, **If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.** Verse 13, **By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.** (Verse 14) **And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.** (Verse 15) **Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.** (Verse 16) **And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love; and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him.**

Again, mentioning the same thing that we have been talking about only a different way. If we have God inside of us than we have love and love is abiding in us. Verse 17 of I John chapter 4, **Love has been perfected among us in this way, that we might have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world.** We are same as He is in this world because He lives in us. So we can have boldness in the day of judgment. (Verse 18) **There is no fear in love; but perfect love (that is, *love that has matured*) casts out fear: because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.**

I have wrestled with this over the years where people say that if you fear it is because you are not loving. What you need to do is start loving so that it gets rid of the fear. That is not what the text is talking about. The text is talking about the fact that people follow God, follow the Lord, based on fear. And he is saying, "Love that has been perfected casts out fear," so that the basis for everything you do is motivated by love for Christ.

Verse 19, **We love Him, because He first loved us.** It is responsive. I love Him based on His love for me. The more I am involved with His love and His Spirit in me, the more I have a response of love back to Him in my motives.

Verse 20, **If someone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?** (Verse 21) **And this is the commandment that we have from Him, that the one who loves God must love his brother also.** Literally it is translated: **we have from Him that he who loves God is loving his brother also.** You cannot do one without the other.

He is saying to them that they have been God-taught. Going back now to I Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 9, **You have no need for me to write to you for you yourselves are God-taught for to love one another.** It is something that God does from the inside. Not something you learn from the outside. You can hear information about it from the Bible, but it is formed from inside. It is God-taught, not man-taught.

Paul goes on to say in verse 10 of I Thessalonians chapter 4, **For you are also doing it toward all the brothers in the whole area of Macedonia.** He says, "You are already doing this."

You are already loving the brothers, loving the family of God in the whole area of the region of Macedonia." **But we encourage you brothers**, to do four things. Four things by encouragement:

1) **to abound more**

That is number one. Spend more time with the Lord. Spend more time with His word. Be more exposed to His love for you so that you love Him back and your motive of your life is His love living within you.

2) Verse 11 second thing, **and to aspire to be quiet.**

Aspire to be quiet. *Aspire* means *to take aim at something honorable*. James said in James chapter 1 verse 22, **Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger**. Make it your aim to be quiet. You do not always have to be out front talking, unless God has you out front talking. You do not have to be making noise and attracting attention. Aspire to be quiet.

3) Thirdly, **and to practice your own things.**

That is the literal translation, **to practice your own things**. It is just a polite way of saying mind your own business.

4) Fourth thing, **and to work with your own hands.**

Do not take handouts. Work with your own hands. Paul told Timothy in I Timothy chapter 5 verse 8, **If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.**

Ephesians 4:28, **Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give to the one who has need.** So basically, the Scripture says actually you have two families to support. Take care your own family and take care of the family of God. Take care of the needs in the family of God.

That is one of the things that Jesus mentioned in John chapter 13 verse 35, **By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.** And that term *love for one another* is amongst yourselves as Christians. Not the people of the world, not the nonbelievers, but the love that you have for one another, people will know you are My disciples. If there is a need then it is up to you to be responsible to help take care of it. Needs are met in the family life of the believers.

Now all of this, **According as we gave instruction to you.** So Paul says, "I have already given you the instruction. I am giving it to you again as a reminder." But verse 12 tells us what purpose it is. **In order that you might walk properly toward the ones outside**, and secondly, **that you might have need of nothing.** Representative of responsible people who are learning to increase more and more in the love of Christ; returning more towards being quiet than being loud; minding their own business; who are working with their own hands. So it is being a responsible representation of responsibility. And secondly, **that you may have need of nothing.**

The word *lack* in the traditional translations is the word *need*. In order that you might have need of nothing. Make sure you have no need, work with your own hands rather than turning to the nonbelieving relatives to find help. Yet at the same time telling the nonbelieving

relatives that their nonbelieving relatives are lost, while they say, "You tell me I am lost but I can take care of my own household and you are coming to me because you have a need." Paul says, "This is a false representation." Work to abound more in love. Aspire to be quiet. Practice your own business. And to work with your own hands so that you might have need of nothing.

The Christians in Thessalonica, some of them were looking forward to the coming of Christ and they were saying amongst themselves, "Let's quit work. The Lord is coming back any minute, we don't need to keep working and toiling with our hands." And Paul says, "I am more concerned with what the Lord finds you doing when He comes back than the fact the Lord is coming." He is coming all right, but what representation are you making to the people that you live around? Walk in your sanctification. Be responsible.

Let's close with prayer.