

I THESSALONIANS 4:9-10
WALK IN LOVE!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Thessalonians chapter 4 as we continue our study in Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica. Over the last several weeks we have been looking at how this church in Thessalonica was born, how it grew in the Lord, how it was established and now we are in a section that continues from chapter 4 of I Thessalonians on to the end of the letter, chapter 5. And this section deals with how the church is to walk.

Let's face it, a church that is not walking, is not applying the things of God to their lives, is crippled! And think about walking for a minute. There is the casual walk, the walk because you are in a hurry, there is that timid, scared walk, the joyful walk, and so much more.

What some have done is limited their walk and they only do this or they only do that and for them, that is their walk. I think Paul is going to show us, as we are going through this section, that our walk is manifested in many different ways.

For example, last time we looked at the idea of walking in holiness. And Paul makes the point that we should abstain from sexual immorality, it is the will of God that we walk in holiness! And if you doubt that or try to justify your immoral behavior, Paul tells us, **“For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given His Holy Spirit.”** I Thessalonians 4:7-8.

Let's face it, in our day there are many who call themselves Christians that are living immoral lifestyles. Now I don't know their heart, all I can do is look at their actions and their actions reflect that they are not a child of God because they are rejecting the things of God in their life.

Also, God has given to us His Holy Spirit so that He may show us how we are to walk. Notice, it is not the *“Happy Spirit”* but the *“Holy Spirit.”* That is what God is doing in our lives, making us holy, making us like Him. And the work that He has begun in us, He will complete!

This morning, as we continue looking at how the church is to walk we are going to see that the church is to walk in *LOVE!* The result, “I will love them when they love me!” Or, “What is in it for me?”

That truly is not the love that God is speaking of. That is a Hollywood type of love that will give to get something in return. And when you are not getting anything back or you are not getting what you think you deserve, then you move on to someone else and that cycle can go on and on because you will never get everything that you want if that is the kind of love you are living for!

Way back in the third century Tertullian reported that the Romans would say this about Christians, “See how they love one another.” I like that because it is a witness. I look at Facebook today or other social media places, and I don’t really see that a lot. Jesus said that they will know we are Christians by our love for one another and what a witness that is.

He did not say they will know we are Christians if we complain, argue, fight with each other. Love is a powerful witness and we will see that in our study this morning. Before we get to our text let me share with you this story that will help set the stage for what we will be talking about. We are told,

A young boy was overheard asking his playmate, “Wouldn’t you hate to wear glasses all the time?”

“No,” came the answer, “not if I had some like my Grandma’s. She always sees when people are tired or sad, and she knows just what to do to make them feel better. One day I asked her how she could see that way all the time. She told me it was the way she had learned to look at things as she grew older.” After thinking for a minute, the first boy concluded, “Yeah, I guess you’re right. It must be her glasses.”

As Christians, we need to be like that grandmother. We should look at our neighbors as our Savior did. He always had compassion on the masses. Jesus Himself said that He came “not to be ministered to but to minister” (Mark 10:45), and He is the example we should follow. A few years ago there was a cartoon that showed a little child stumbling over some stones in the road. With a look of hurt surprise on his face, he asked his mother, “Mommy, why don’t you look where I’m going?” That says it well. Our responsibility as believers is to look not only on our own things, “but every man also on the things of others” (Phil 2:4).

Paul W. Pruyser said, “Next to God, man should be the highest in [our] value scale . . . it is a fact that persons who love and find fulfillment in other people will also find happiness for themselves.” Yes, being concerned for the welfare of others does bring happiness. But our highest motivation should not be to get all we can out of a relationship; rather, it should be to obey our Lord and Savior. He has commanded us to love one another, as He has loved us.

- Henry G. Bosch

Now think about that. Was it her glasses that help her to see these things? Of course not, it was a heart of love that took the time to look at people and see where they were at so that she could minister to them, love them as Christ loved her! What a wonderful example that is for us, especially in the days we are living in where we see so much anger, so much hate, so much fighting, so much intolerance! We see so much!

So, my prayer as we go through these verses this morning is we would see how the church is to walk, in love. And when I say, "***the church***" I am not speaking of some building, I am speaking of you and me! We are the church and thus, these are lessons we need to take in and apply to our lives so that our love is a witness to the lost and an encouragement to the saved!

One writer summed this up for us like this,

Christianity is a shoe-leather faith - a living, practical faith that hits the streets in normal, everyday life, affecting everything from believers' simplest attitudes and most mundane actions to their profoundest thoughts and noblest deeds. Although any religion should affect the way its adherents live, no false religion - no matter how high its ethical standards - can genuinely transform the lives of its followers in a way that restrains the fallen flesh. Only by belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ does the power of God transform lives so that what believers profess they are able to live. The apostle Paul's continued insistence that the Thessalonians live that way was the motive for the practical expressions in this passage.

- John MacArthur, I Thessalonians 4:9-10

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in I Thessalonians chapter 1 beginning in verse 9 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this morning.

I THESSALONIANS 4

VERSE 9

Here in verse 9 of I Thessalonians chapter 4 Paul uses two different Greek words when he speaks of “**love**”, and we will look at both of them because they are important for us to understand that there is a difference. First of all, we see “**brotherly love**” or the Greek word PHILADELPHIA, (fil-ad-el-fee’-ah) and that truly is the meaning, brotherly love.

We see the city of Philadelphia is called the “**city of brotherly love**” although, they have kind of lost that reputation. Let me explain. We are told,

Philadelphians, don’t freak out, but the City of Brotherly Love has just been named the angriest city in America.

The website Thrillest gave us the unwanted honor.

They even said calling Philadelphia “the City of Brotherly Love” is ironic.

They cite the reputation of Philly sports fans, including Flyers fans throwing bracelets on the ice, and of course, Eagles fans throwing snowballs at Santa Claus, as part of the reason Philadelphia tops the list.

“Some of the elements are similar to Boston - the insecurity when comparing themselves to NY that manifests itself as over-the-top bravado; the penchant for street festivals devolving into public urine and vomit competitions; an accent that sounds like someone threw a chainsaw into a trash fire filled with gravel, etc.”

Some call it anger, but we prefer the term passionate.

- <http://philadelphia.cbslocal.com/2016/06/02/philadelphia-named-angriest-city-in-america/>

That can be the problem with brotherly love, it can wax and wane depending on how we feel. And that also goes for us as Christians. We can love our brothers and sisters in the Lord one minute and then the next, we despise them, hate them, are angry at them, won't even talk with them.

Why is that? Because of that flesh nature that we still carry around with us and it tries to resurrect itself. Paul had this struggle as he wrote in Romans 7, **“For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. . . . O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”** Romans 7:15-20, 24.

What we see here is the battle of the wills. The will of the flesh, which Paul did not want to do and yet did; and the will of God which Paul wanted to do and yet failed many times. And I think we would all agree, we want to do right, we want to do good and yet we do that which we don't want to do and we, as Paul, cry out, **“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”** Romans 7:24.

You can just hear Paul crying out, wanting to be delivered from this flesh life and we all struggle with that. And the wonderful thing here is that Paul does not leave us in the dark, he does not leave us in a hopeless situation. Paul tells us who can deliver us from this body of death, this flesh nature that keeps trying to hinder our walk with God.

In Romans 7:25-26 we are told, **“I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”**

You see, Paul understood that as long as he was in this mortal body there would be this conflict between the flesh and the Spirit and it truly was a battle! And I see here that Paul is acknowledging his own inability to win this battle, that he is in this bondage you might say, this struggle.

Paul is asking to be delivered from this condition, this body of death and he uses the Greek word, RUOMI and it carries with it the idea of being rescued from danger! Often it was used of a soldier who would go onto the battlefield to the aid of a wounded soldier and carry him to safety, to rescue him, to deliver him!

And keep in mind this **“body of flesh”** is the place where sin lives and sin expresses itself and Paul wants to be delivered from it!

Now in Paul’s day this idea of being in bondage to this body of flesh was a vivid illustration. You see, in an area near Tarsus, the place where Paul was born, there was a tribe of people who lived and they inflicted a horrific penalty upon a person who murdered another.

What they would do is they would take the body of the dead man, the man this person murdered, and they would fasten it to the body of the living man, this murderer. In fact, they would tie the body shoulder-to-shoulder, back-to-back, thigh-to-thigh, and arm-to-arm and then they would drive the murderer from the community and into the hot Mediterranean sun! Some feel that they tied them face-to-face, body-to-body, which is even worse!

You can imagine what this was like and it was not pretty but effective I guess. And keep in mind that these ropes were so tight that he could in no way free himself. And after just a few days in that hot Mediterranean sun the rotting, decaying body would inflict its poison upon the living murderer! This rotting tissue would spread to the flesh of the living body!

And what was the outcome of all this? It was death! You see, as he walked helplessly in that hot Mediterranean sun with no one to help him with this dead, decaying body tied to him, he could have cried out, **“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”**

And I think Paul’s point is this. He is saying that this illustration is what we as Christians feel like at times, like we are carrying around a dead, rotting, decaying corpse and it seems hopeless.

And our deliverance comes from the Lord Jesus Christ! One writer summed this up like this. He wrote,

Paul’s primary emphasis in the present passage, however, is not on the believer’s eventual deliverance from sin’s presence but on the conflict with sin that torments every spiritually sensitive child of God. He therefore ends by summarizing the two sides of that struggle: So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. In the poem Maud (X. 5), one of Tennyson’s characters yearns, ‘Ah for a new man to arise in me, that the man I am may cease to be!’ The Christian can say that a new man has already arisen in him, but he also must confess that the sinful part of his old man has not yet ceased to be.

- John MacArthur

So, this brotherly love we want to do and I think we reach out and do the best we can, but we fail many times. And I think that is why Paul uses this second Greek word for, “**love**” here in I Thessalonians chapter 4. In verse 9 he says, “**. . . for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.**”

Here Paul uses the Greek word AGAPAO, (ag-ap-ah’o) for “**love**” and this is speaking of an unconditional love, a love that keeps on giving and giving in spite of what is done to us.

And I think most of us would say, “I can’t do that!” And you are absolutely correct. There is no way that the flesh can do that because the flesh is interested in self and not others. We can fool ourselves and others but eventually that flesh nature will be seen and it is not pretty!

This kind of love, this agape love is not something we can manufacture but it is something that God pours into our lives and thus, it should be manifested in our lives as well!

In Romans 5:5-8 we see this played out for us as Paul wrote, “**Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**”

Notice what Paul is saying here. He says that this hope does not disappoint us. What is he speaking of? I believe he is speaking of our salvation. We will not be disappointed because we put our faith in something that was false, something that was not real. Look at the many people who place their hope in a god of their own imagination and in the end, their hope tragically will be put to shame, they will be disappointed! But not for those who put their faith in Jesus Christ!

Now I know, some of you are thinking, “Okay, we put our faith in Jesus Christ and yet, how can we be sure of this salvation?”

That is a great question and we can look at the accuracy of the Bible. We can see historical speaking it is accurate. Archaeology proves it is accurate. Scientifically it is accurate. Prophetically speaking it is accurate with over 25% of the Bible or more speaking of future events and many of them have come to pass with 100% accuracy! And we can go on, but I think you get the picture.

But here in Romans 5:5 Paul gives to us another reason why we can be so sure of this salvation that God has given to us. It is because God has poured out His love, His *AGAPE LOVE* into our hearts and it is that unconditional love that can only come from God.

He has placed it there and thus, we can be assured of our salvation, that we have security in our salvation, that it is an eternal gift. You see, it is this love that is sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit that makes this hope certain for us.

Paul put it like this in Ephesians 1:13-14, **“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”**

And folks, this *AGAPE LOVE* is never used for man’s love of God, for man can never fully love that way. It is speaking of God’s love for us and as you look at verses 6 through 8 here in Romans chapter 5 you will see that. And here in verse 6 of Romans chapter 5, when it says that **“Christ died for the ungodly”** the Greek word **“for”** is HUPER. It is a word that speaks of “for the sake of, in behalf of, instead of.”

We see this in John 11:50 where we are told, **“nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.”**

The word **“for”** here is the Greek word HUPER.

Also, in Galatians 3:13 Paul tells us, **“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).”** And again, HUPER is used here.

You see, He took our place, instead of us He did this and only He could!

Now, who are these undeserving people that Christ died for? They are the ones that Paul was speaking of in Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20 and he drove home the point in Romans 3:23 when he said, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** It is sinful man, which includes you and me!

Now man is in that condition and impotent to do anything about it, he is sick, he is without strength. Then God steps in at the appointed time or the proper time, the perfect time to pay the penalty for our sins, for the ungodly, you and me!

Listen to how Spurgeon put it: “If Christ died for the ungodly, this fact leaves the ungodly no excuse if they do not come to him, and believe in him unto salvation. Had it been otherwise they might have pleaded, ‘We are not fit to come.’ But you are ungodly, and Christ died for the ungodly, why not for you?” You see, there is no excuse!

And here is God's love for us. He didn't die for the good, the lovely, the likable, but God died for sinful, fallen, rebellious mankind and it is illustrated for us in a powerful way as Jesus said in John 3:16-17, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**"

This truly is God's ultimate proof of His love for us. You see, Paul tells us that a person may sacrifice his life for the "*right kind*" of person but God didn't die for a good person, someone who deserved it, a righteous person, but for sinners and thus, His death on the cross of Calvary is a demonstration of His rich love for us, it is the ultimate proof because we surely don't deserve it!

Again, we have read this verse often, but it is powerful as it shows us what God has done for us. Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, "**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**" That is God's love for us!

Now back to verse 5 of Romans chapter 5 for a minute. God's love does not just trickle into our lives, but the Greek word EKCHEO, (ek-kheh'-o) speaks of gushing out, spilling over and we can know this because the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to this truth of God's love in us and for us!

Jesus said regarding the Holy Spirit in John chapter 7, "**... 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.**" John 7:37b-38.

For that to take place you must be filled with the Holy Spirit and then He will overflow in your life as you surrender to Him, allow Him to be in control of your life. The Holy Spirit is the Divine agent who exposes to the believer the love of God!

As I have said, the ultimate proof of God's love for us is that He died for those who didn't deserve it, those who were at war with Him! And thus, as this love of God is poured out into our lives, overflowing our lives, it will touch the lives of others as this story tells us. And keep in mind that this is a love that can only come from God. Natural man does not have the ability to do these things. We are told,

During the Revolutionary War there was a faithful preacher of the gospel by the name of Peter Miller. He lived near a fellow who hated him intensely for his Christian life and testimony. In fact, this man violently opposed him and ridiculed his followers. One day the unbeliever was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death.

Hearing about this, Peter Miller set out on foot to intercede for the man's life before George Washington. The General listened to the minister's earnest pleas, but told him he didn't feel he should pardon his friend. "My friend! He is not my friend," answered Miller. "In fact, he's my worst living enemy." "What!" said Washington. "You have walked 60 miles to save the life of your enemy? That, in my judgment, puts the matter in a different light. I will grant your request."

With pardon in hand, Miller hastened to the place where his neighbor was to be executed, and arrived just as the prisoner was walking to the scaffold. When the traitor saw Miller, he exclaimed, “Old Peter Miller has come to have his revenge by watching me hang!” But he was astonished as he watched the minister step out of the crowd and produce the pardon which spared his life.

- Daily Bread

I know, an unbelievable story and yet it is true! And folks, as unbelievable as that is, it is just a shadow of what God has done for us. You see, Jesus did not only produce the pardon for us, but He died to produce a pardon for us!

And thus, as Paul said in Romans chapter 8, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Romans 8:35, 38-39.

That is the love of God for us and that hope we have in Him will never disappoint us. May we not forget that, the depth of God’s love, the richness of God’s love for us that can never be taken away. He can’t love us anymore than He already does nor can He love us any less!

And thus, here in I Thessalonians chapter 4, in verse 9, we see Paul say, **“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.”**

Who is teaching us this kind of love? It is God! How is God teaching us this kind of love? Through His example and through the Word of God! As we see the love that God has for us, and we truly don't deserve it, we then can go and give the love of God to others, not by our efforts but by surrendering to the Holy Spirit and letting Him overflow our life!

Think of it like this,

The more we realize our dependence upon God, the more we shall realize our kindred with our brethren. It is as with a circle of men standing all around the circumference at a distance from each other. If each one of them takes half a dozen steps towards the center, they will stand wondrously nearer each other.

As we press toward "Jesus in the midst" we draw closer to each other. The electric spark of love to Christ will combine the different elements into one. Cleaving to the one Shepherd, the sheep become one flock, held together not by the outward bonds of a fold, but by the sweet attraction that fastens all to Him.

- Practical Bible Illustrations from Yesterday and Today

I like that. As we draw close to Christ we are drawing closer to each other. I think a great example of this kind of love is seen in the relationship between David and Saul's son, Jonathan. In I Samuel 18:1-4 we are told, **"Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt."**

What we see here is that after David gave his explanation to Saul about how he killed Goliath, then Jonathan and David were kindred spirits. They were both men of faith. And I believe it was that faith they had in God that brought them together.

They both believed and acted upon what God had said, by faith and it was this that knit their hearts together. You see, I believe Jonathan heard all that David said, and he heard of David's great love for the Lord and as we have seen, Jonathan had that same kind of love for God.

It is as Trapp wrote, "No doubt but David spake much more than is here expressed, abasing himself, and exalting God, as sole Author of the victory over Goliath."

Paul, in Ephesians 2:14-16 makes this point as he tells us that it is God who draws us together. He wrote, **"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in the ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity."**

Isn't it interesting when you look how we often choose friends? It is not based upon a person's relationship with God, but often what they like and what they don't like.

Those kinds of relationships won't last because they are not built upon a solid foundation, for as feelings change, as likes change, so do relationships. But if our relationships are based in Christ, they will last.

But why is that? Because God has taken that deep-seated hatred, not only between Jews and Gentiles, but also that hatred between us all and He has nailed it to the cross of Calvary.

The unity, the breaking down of the walls of division is not found in social causes, or in compromise, or for the sake of unity itself.

True unity can only be found and accomplished through Jesus Christ. He is our peace. He is the reason that we can come together and fellowship, study the Word of God, pray together, and share communion together, for we are brothers and sisters in Christ. Our hearts should be knit together just as Jonathan and David's, for we too are men and women of faith, a faith that is rooted and grounded in Christ!

Think about it, how many of you would hang out with me if it weren't for Christ? Don't answer that one, but you see what I mean!

And we see Jonathan give to David that which belonged to him; his robe, armor, sword, bow and belt. Jonathan was the King's son and the throne was his, when his father died. And yet, what I see here is that Jonathan was acknowledging to David that he is the next King, he freely stepped out of the way because he saw God's hand in all of this!

Do we have that kind of love for not only our brethren, those who are in Christ, but for people in general? I hope so and I will also say this. This kind of love, this agape love can only come from God and we must then walk accordingly, walk in love!

Now as much as these Thessalonians loved people with the love of Christ, listen to what Paul says next here in I Thessalonians chapter 4.

VERSE 10

As you read this you can see that Paul starts out by saying, “Hey, you guys are doing a great job. You are ministering the love of Jesus Christ throughout Macedonia. That is awesome!” And if Paul ended there it would have been great, but he doesn’t!

He then says, “**that you increase more and more.**” I will paraphrase that. “I know you guys are doing great, but! You need to even do better. I know things look good, but there is more you can do. You can love more and more and more. So, don’t stay where you are at, but keep on loving!”

Why would Paul build them up and then bring them down? I don’t think his intention was to bring them down. Yes, they had that Philadelphia love for people, that brotherly love for them, but Paul wants that love to be much richer and much deeper.

Paul wants them to put forth that agape love for people, that love that can only come from God into our lives and through our lives and touch the lives of others!

And I want you to be aware of how God works. You see, we may pray, “Lord, help me to love others more. Help me to have that agape love that comes from you. Less of me Lord, and more of You!”

And do you know what God does? He brings people across our paths that have needs, they have issues and those are some of the meanest, nastiest people at times. And we think, “Lord, I want to love people but how can you bring someone like this across my path?”

“You did say you wanted to love with My love, right?”

“Yes, Lord!”

“Well, this person you think is so mean, so nasty, so hateful, did you know that I love them so much that I died for their sins?”

“Well, of course Lord!”

“Now, go and love them with My love!”

You see, perspective is everything and I think we need to understand that. Remember what John said in I John 3:16-18, **“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”**

John is saying what Paul is basically saying here. We know what love is, we know what agape love is because we **“are taught by God.”** In other words, we have His example for us to follow. He laid down His life for us and we should do no less for others.

Our love should not only be heard, but it should be seen in the things that we do for people. And when we do them may we do them with joy in our hearts because we are serving the King of kings and Lord of lords!

You see, as we pattern our lives after the Lord we are learning how to love as He loves, sacrificially! And as we love with that agape love then that brotherly love will be correctly manifested in our lives!

Let me show you what I mean with this story. We are told,

Robert Louis Stevenson had a remarkable power of attaching hearts to himself by the very magnetism of his personality, as well as the kindness of his behavior.

A recent book of remembrance of his life in Samoa tells that one day when the cook was away Stevenson told another servant, Sosimo, just to bring him a little bread and cheese for lunch to his writing-room.

But to his surprise he was served an excellent meal - an omelet, a good salad, and perfect coffee.

“Who cooked this,” asked Stevenson, in Samoan.

“I did,” said Sosimo.

“Well then, great is your wisdom.”

Sosimo bowed and humbly corrected him, “Great is my love!”

It was love that gave skill and deftness to his hand, and added welcome to the feast.

- Practical Bible Illustrations from Yesterday and Today

You see, we do things out of love. That is what Jesus tells us in John 13:34-35, “**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**”

Now here’s the thing. We can allow things to get in the way of receiving God’s love or we can let things get in the way of expressing God’s love to our brothers and sisters in the Lord. And please hear me out on this.

If you are doing that now you are living in rebellion against God, you are in sin. I know, some of you may not agree with that statement, you might be thinking I’ve gone a little too far. But listen to what John tells us because he went just as far.

In I John 2:9-11 John tells us, “**He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.**”

I find it interesting that when we are involved in situations like this we can justify our behavior, why is that? Because we have closed our eyes to the truth, blinded them so we can't see.

Tragically, over the years there have been people who have left the church for some dislike, not doctrinal reasons, and they see me out at the store or wherever and they won't even talk to me. I think that is sad. Some do and I am thankful for that. But I have no problem with fellowshiping with those who have left the church, they are brothers and sisters in the Lord. The only exception would be if they were living in sin and refused to repent.

And if you have a problem with this, then listen to how Jesus prayed for us in John chapter 17 because He lays it all out and if you still think this is not an important issue, then you truly do have a problem.

Jesus said beginning in verse 20 of John chapter 17, **"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."** John 17:20-26.

Did you hear that? Jesus is praying for us and asking that the love that Jesus and the Father share we would also share with each other. That is the kind of love God desires for us. And I will tell you this, the only way we are going to love that way is if we draw close to God because as we do, we are drawing closer to each other as we each are drawing closer to God!

And if you are struggling here, what is the solution? Repent before God; restore the relationship with the brother or sister in the Lord. Make no mistake about it, people are watching us, what are they seeing? *Walk in love!*

Now there is one more thing we need to talk about and this is also important. You see, when we talk about love we think love means just accepting what anyone says or does. Now think about that for a minute. If that were true, and it is not, would that really show the person you love them if you just accepted anything that they said or did? Absolutely not!

I realize that may be shocking to some of you but think about it. If you saw your child doing something wrong and you just let them continue to do it, that would show you did not love them.

For instance. Many parents think it is cute when their young child picks up a swear word and uses it. Not sure why they think it is funny or cute but they laugh, the child laughs and it continues on.

But, as the child gets older and continues to do this, it is now a problem. No, it was a problem back then but it was not dealt with. And the lack of concern just shows they did not love that child as much as they said they did or they would have dealt with it back then!

As Christians, we love people but we don't love sin. That is just the reality. Thus, we don't condone Christians living in sin or teaching false doctrine. True love will speak to the person with the idea of restoration and not destruction!

And we follow the biblical example. When we see a brother or sister in sin we don't go to the phone list and spread it around. We speak to the individual. If they receive what we are saying and repent, praise God, they are restored.

But what if they don't. Then we get one or two more people who can also come alongside of us and explain to them our concern. We are not ganging up on this person, but we are trying to encourage them to repent and get right with God. If they turn to God, repent of their sin, praise God.

If they don't, we bring it before the leadership of the church and they will deal with it. And if they still refuse to repent and get right with God, then they are asked to leave. It may seem harsh but it is all done in love with the idea of restoration.

What the church has done today, and it did it back in Paul's day, look at the church in Corinth, its acceptance of sin and by acceptance they believed they are showing love to that person!

Listen to what Paul said in I Corinthians 5:1-6, **“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles - that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?”**

The church in Corinth was allowing this young man to have sexual relations with his step-mother, his father's wife! And instead of dealing with this issue, instead of mourning over this sin, they were glorying in how tolerant they were, how loving they were!

Paul is saying that is wrong, the opposite is true. You are not showing love here but you hate them because you are allowing this young Christian man to continue in sin and for this step-mom, she was an unbeliever and your actions were not drawing her to Christ but allowing her to continue in sin!

And this is not that difficult. Sexual sin is *SIN!* Thank you, I know, that was deep. No, it was not deep, it was obvious and yet, this church saw no harm done and many today feel the same way as we see same-sex marriages, having sex outside of marriage as well as many other sins accepted in the church. They need to be dealt with and not ignored and true love will reach out and try to help!

Paul said to turn this young Christian man who refused to repent over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. Paul was concerned about his spirit. And when he did repent, we are told back in II Corinthians to restore him back into the fellowship of the church! That is love!

As I close this morning, listen to this true story. We are told,

William Gladstone, in announcing the death of Princess Alice to the House of Commons, told a touching story. The little daughter of the Princess was seriously ill with diphtheria. The doctors told the princess not to kiss her little daughter and endanger her life by breathing the child's breath. Once when the child was struggling to breathe, the mother, forgetting herself entirely, took the little one into her arms to keep her from choking to death. Rasping and struggling for her life, the child said, "Momma, kiss me!"

Without thinking of herself the mother tenderly kissed her daughter. She got diphtheria and some days thereafter she went to be forever with the Lord.

Real love forgets self. Real love knows no danger. Real love doesn't count the cost.

The Bible says, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

- Source Unknown

And here's the thing. Brotherly love is not something that we achieve and then we no longer need to strive for it. It needs to be practiced continually or else it will begin to fade away, it will begin to die!

Make no mistake about it, we are to walk in love and it is the love of God poured out into our hearts that then flows outwardly and touches others. As Paul has shown us here this morning, we are **TAUGHT BY GOD** regarding this love and we are to **INCREASE IN THIS LOVE**, not become stagnant!

Remember our opening story of the young boy who was overheard asking his playmate, "Wouldn't you hate to wear glasses all the time?"

"No," came the answer, "not if I had some like my Grandma's. She always sees when people are tired or sad, and she knows just what to do to make them feel better. One day I asked her how she could see that way all the time. She told me it was the way she had learned to look at things as she grew older." After thinking for a minute, the first boy concluded, "Yeah, I guess you're right. It must be her glasses."

As Christians, we need to be like that grandmother. We should look at our neighbors as our Savior did. He always had compassion on the masses.

As Paul said, "**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.**" I Thessalonians 4:9-10.