

The background of the slide features a detailed woodcut-style illustration of several classical figures. In the center, a woman with long, wavy hair and a serene expression looks slightly to the left. To her right, a man with a beard and curly hair is shown in profile, looking towards the left. On the far right, another man with a beard and curly hair looks towards the center. The style is reminiscent of 19th-century religious art, with fine lines and cross-hatching for shading. The figures are dressed in classical robes.

“The Promotion and Protection of Brotherly Love”

1 Thessalonians 4:9–12

4:1–5:22 – Instructions for What Is Lacking

4:1–12

Commands
regarding God-
pleasing Conduct

vv. 1–2

vv. 3–8

vv. 9–12

4:13–18

Instruction
regarding the Dead
in Christ

5:1–11

Reminders
regarding the Day
of the Lord

5:12–22

Exhortations
regarding Church
Relations

OVERVIEW

- Paul continues addressing the “lack” in the faith of the Thessalonians (3:10) as brought to light by Timothy’s report (3:6).
- This section focuses on the concept of “**love of the brethren**” (4:9) as it relates to God-pleasing conduct.
- Paul specifically prayed about this in 3:11–13, and now addresses it in detail.

“Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; and 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; 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.”

—1 Thessalonians 3:11–13

“Now as to **the love of the brethren**, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.”

—1 Thessalonians 4:9–12

- To promote and protect brotherly love in the Thessalonian congregation, Paul asserts three crucial principles:
 1. Brotherly love is an *inevitable consequence* of the Christian life (4:9–10a).
 2. Brotherly love requires *incessant improvement* in the Christian life (4:10b–11).
 3. Brotherly love produces *indispensable advantages* for the Christian life (4:12).

1. Brotherly love is an *inevitable consequence* of the Christian life (4:9–10a).

“**Now as to** the love of the brethren . . .” (v. 9a).



- “Now as to” – introduces Paul’s answer to a particular question the Thessalonians had passed on to him through Timothy.

“Now as to **the love of the brethren** . . .” (v. 9a).

- “the love of the brethren” = *philadelphia*
 - Not an inclusive kind of love—the kind that must be shown to all.
 - But an exclusive kind of love—the kind that is unique to a family.
 - The term was originally used in Greek & Jewish households to speak of love among siblings.

φιλαδελφία

philadelphia / brotherly love

- Paul employs the term here to refer to the close personal kinship between *members of the church*.
- These spiritual siblings are now comprised of:



- Jews and Gentiles
- men and women
- individuals from various social, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

**“... you have no need for anyone to write to you . . .”
(v. 9a).**

- The statement is called a *paralipsis* – a rhetorical device in which a writer introduces a topic while at the same time downplaying the idea of correction (see 5:1).
- Paul uses this approach to emphasize his commendation—to *affirm* before he begins to *exhort*.
- In particular, Paul provides *two affirmations* of their love in vv. 9b–10a.

a) It had been imparted to them by God Himself (v. 9b)

“For you yourselves are taught by God
to love one another”

- “taught by God” = “God-taught” – a term never found elsewhere in the NT.
 - Echoes **Isaiah 54:13** – “All your sons will be taught of the LORD; and the well-being of your sons will be great.”
- “to love one another” – the content of God’s teaching.

b) It had been manifested openly to others (v. 10a)

“for indeed **you do practice it** toward all the **brethren** who are in all Macedonia.”

- What was *God-taught* was made manifest in *everyday life*; what was *supernatural* was observed in the *natural world*.
- **1:3** – “labor of love”; **3:6** – “your faith and love”
- “**toward all the brethren**” – to their siblings in the faith.



“A believer's heart is the garden
where Christ has planted this
sweet flower of His love.”

—Thomas Watson

2. Brotherly love requires *incessant improvement* in the Christian life (4:10b–11).

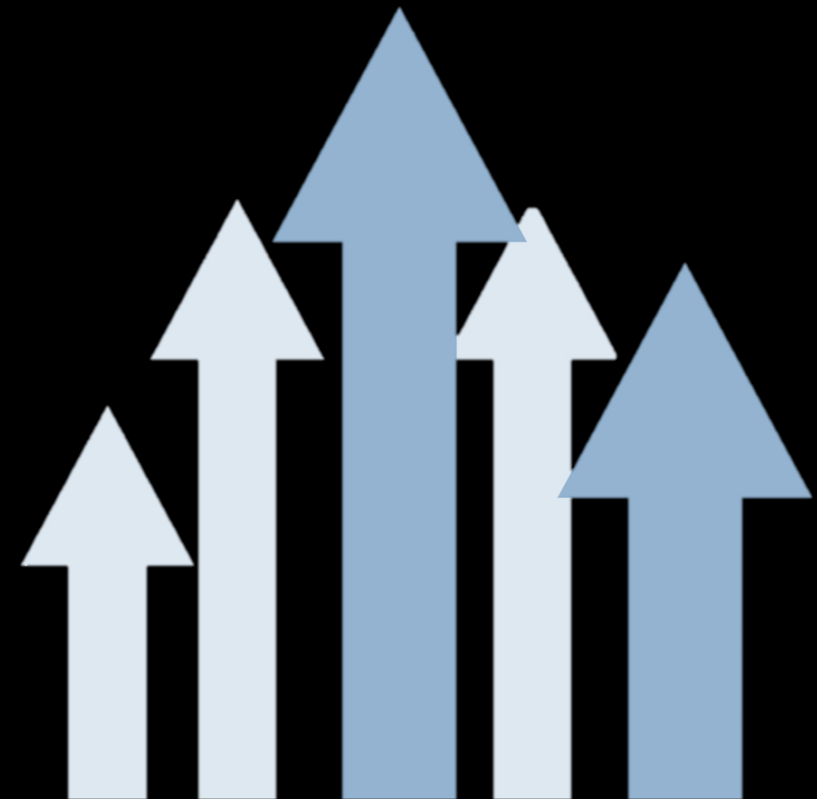
“**But** **we urge you**, brethren . . .” (v. 10b)

- “**But**” – the fact that the virtue had been supernaturally imparted did not negate the need for improvement.
- “**We urge**” = “to exhort” – a verb that aims the will.
- Paul’s exhortation proceeds to explain *four ways* the Thessalonians’ love needed improvement.

a) By loving increasingly (v. 10b)

“we urge you **to excel** still more”

- Paul begins with the chief exhortation related to love's *promotion*.
- “to excel” = “to be in abundance, to have more than the bare necessity” (same as in 4:1).
- In what? *Philadelphia!*





Paul's entire doctrine of *progressive sanctification*
can be summarized by two words:

“love” + “increase”

b) By living quietly (v. 11a)

“we urge you . . . **to make it your ambition
to lead a quiet life.**”

- Paul moves to a more specific exhortation related to love’s *protection*.
- **“make it your ambition”** = “have an intense desire.”
- **“to lead a quiet life”** – a life of peace, tranquility; the opposite of disturbing, rancorous activities.

c) By focusing inwardly (v. 11b)

“we urge you . . . **to attend to your own business.**”

- Paul gives another exhortation related to love’s *protection*.
- “to attend to your own business” = *lit.* “accomplish your own things.”
- *Philadelphia* cannot increase in a context of self-promotion and tactlessness.



d) By working diligently (v. 11c)

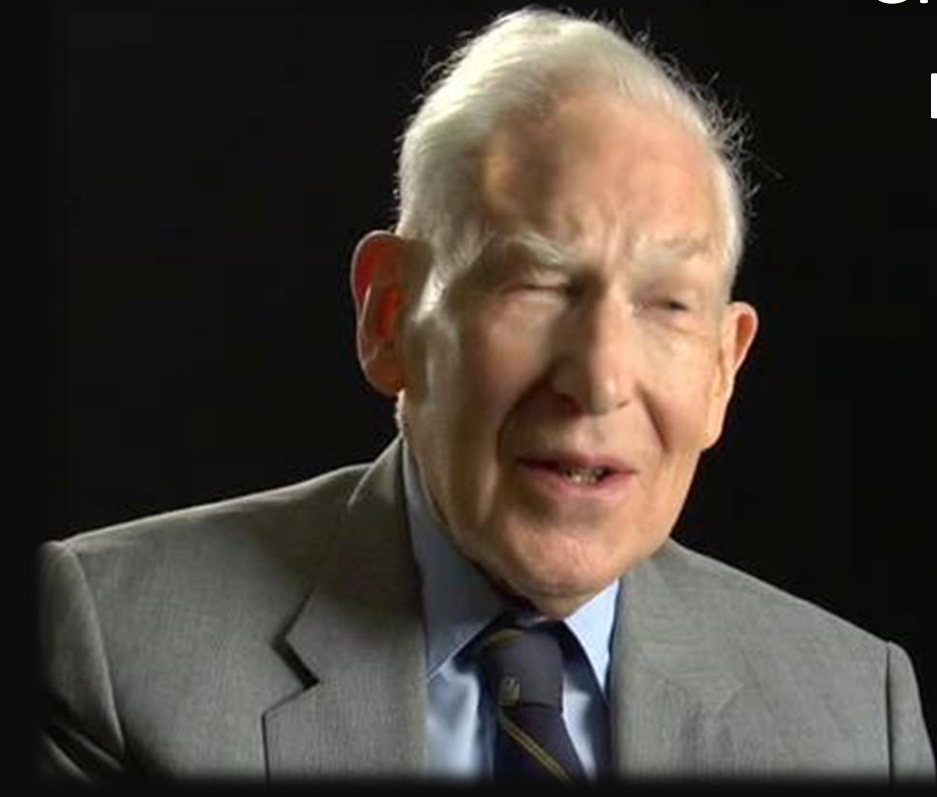
“we urge you . . . **to work with your hands,**
just as we commanded you.”

- Paul’s most practical command, again related to love’s *protection*.
- **“to work with your hands”** – Paul makes a direct connection between laboring and loving.
- There was a disdain for manual labor among the elite and a propensity for welfare in the lower classes.

- Laziness in fulfilling one's responsibilities will lead to the exploitation of *brotherly love*.
- The potential for exploitation will always exist where *brotherly love* flourishes.
- Honest labor will contribute to the promotion of *brotherly love*.
- This teaching was part of Paul's basic Christian ethic: **"just as we commanded you" (v. 11d).**

“All work . . . is oriented to the welfare of other people—directly or indirectly. The answer to the question [of how Christians can view their daily work as ministry] is to be conscious of your work as service to people.”

—*J. I. Packer*



3. Brotherly love produces *indispensable advantages* for the Christian life (4:12).

“so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need” (v. 12)

- “so that” – Paul concludes by identifying the purpose behind these commands.
- In particular, he highlights *two advantages*.

a) To protect one's evangelical witness (v. 12a)

“so that **you will behave properly toward outsiders**
and not be in any need.”

- “to behave” – *lit.* “to walk” (used 2x in 4:1).
- “properly” = “decorously,” “in good form,” “decently.”
- “toward outsiders” – those not a part of “the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1); the same “countrymen” responsible for the hostility (2:14).

“The watching world is not hugely impressed by emotional hype and extremism, but is attracted by ordinary people, living ordinary lives, who demonstrate an extraordinariness seen in love.”

—David Jackman, *The Authentic Church*, 111

b) To promote one's personal wellbeing (v. 12b)

**“so that you will behave properly toward outsiders
and **not be in any need.**”**

- **“not be in any need”** – “be in need of no one.”
- By keeping out of others' business and by keeping busy with their own hands, they would place no unnecessary burden on others in the church.
- The church's charity would be thus reserved for those who truly needed it.

APPLICATIONS

- Is brotherly love an inevitable part of your life?
- Are you committed to improving that love through ever-increasing efforts, humility, selflessness, and being responsible for yourself?
- Are you motivated by the prospect of a purer witness and a more stable lifestyle?

