

## Shoe-Leather Faith

### 1 Thessalonians 4: 9-12

The opening verses of this chapter dealt with the lives of believers and their responsibility to maintain godly character and integrity before the world. Paul left them a stirring exhortation in [Vv. 1-8](#). These verses are a continuation of that exhortation and the apostle continues to provide sound doctrine regarding our witness and behavior among men.

This is a topic we have dealt with quite extensively as we have moved through this blessed book verse by verse. Some might think that it is a bit redundant, but I am convinced we need daily reminders and challenges to present ourselves in a way that pleases the Lord. There are many professors of faith, but far fewer actual possessors of faith. This is not something we should take lightly or without consideration. As the children of God, we have an obligation to present ourselves pleasing unto the Lord every day and in every circumstance.

We may fail to realize it, but the world around us is watching our lives. They have heard many who profess Christ, only to see their actions betray their words. The world is looking for those who are real. We have the privilege and obligation to present our faith to the world.

As I studied these verses, I discovered a profound statement by John MacArthur. *“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.”*<sup>1</sup> That is an interesting concept: *shoe-leather faith*, faith that isn't kept in the closet or worn only on special occasions, but faith that is worn every day, before the world, and publicly displayed. I would like to consider the [expressions](#) of our faith as we think on MacArthur's statement: [Shoe-Leather Faith](#). The first expression Paul reveals is:

### I. The Realm of our Love (9)

**A. The Exhortation** (9a) – [But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you](#). Paul speaks of the love they have for one another. He reveals that their love is already evident. They are expressing their love one for another such that he doesn't need to mention it, but he humbly reminds and encourages them to continue in that love. (Those who are right with God do not mind being challenged and encouraged to continue in the things they are already doing.)

- We need to look at this a bit more closely before we move on. Many times, in Scripture we find the word love translated from the Greek word *agape*, God's love. Certainly, we ought to desire to love as God loves, without boundaries or preconceived expectations, but this speaks of another type of love in which we are responsible. The phrase [brotherly love](#) is translated from the Greek word *Philadelphia*, and yes that is where the American city got its name, the city of brotherly love.

This is love that binds our hearts together; develops a deep affection for and commitment to each other; it moves us to act on behalf of the welfare and needs of others.

**B. The Instruction** (9b) – *But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.* They really didn't need such a reminder, but Paul instructs them again anyway. He declares that even if he failed to encourage their love for one another, God Himself teaches us that we ought to love each other.

- We know that; we are well aware of that. We know that our Lord declared that love for others was the 2<sup>nd</sup> great commandment. However, it doesn't hurt to be reminded and challenged concerning our love for one another.
- We need to love one another in order to provide strength and stability as we live among this sinful world. We need that love to keep our fellowship strong and to prevent division among the church. A loving church is a strong church. People that are loved and encouraged are less likely to stumble and fall, yielding to temptation. Let us love as God demands.

**C. The Expectation** (9) – Paul was not inspired of the Holy Spirit to pen these words just so the Thessalonian believers would have something to read. He penned these words for their instruction and exhortation. Paul, and the Lord, fully expected them to continue to grow in their love for one another. He expected them to feel the pain of others; he expected them to care for one another and come alongside the weak and needy.

- This word was given first to the Thessalonian church, but it is here for our admonition as well. We too are obligated and expected to love one another! *John 15:12 – This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.* 1 Pet.3:8 – *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:*

## **II. The Reach of our Love** (10)

**A. An Ambitious Love** (10a) – *And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia.* As Paul examined the church there, he realized their love was not reserved or circumstantial. Their love was not offered only to those who were in their immediate circle of influence. They weren't guilty of loving only those whom they were acquainted with or those who held their particular view. *The church there loved all the brethren throughout Macedonia.* They simply loved the church, whether they worshipped together or not. They were concerned about the well-being and prosperity of all believers!

- Isn't that what we need in our day? I know we live in a body of flesh that is prone to hurt feelings and anger. I am well aware there are those who seem a bit harder to love than others, but we are not called to love those whom we choose. We are called to love all the brethren, even those with whom we may disagree from time to time. Everyone may not see things just as we see them; they may not worship or minister exactly as we do, but we are obligated to love them and seek their good anyway.

**B. An Abundant Love** (10b) – *but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.* Paul was pleased with the love they had shown, but he prayed for their love to increase more and more. They loved one another in a way that was pleasing to the Lord, but even then, there was room for improvement. The word *increase* has the idea of “*exceeding a fixed measure, to abound and overflow.*”

- Could it ever be said that we were guilty of loving too much? Do we really love as God would have us to? May we seek to increase more and more in our love for the Lord and others.

**III. The Reflection of our Lives** (11-12) - Dealing with the display of our faith, Paul now shifts his focus from the love we show to the lives we live. He speaks of several areas in which we are to reflect the Lord through our faith. We must reflect Christ in:

**A. Our Wisdom** (11a) – *And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business.* What a profound statement Paul makes to the church. He instructs them to be wise in their lives. They were to “*strive to lead a peaceable and quiet life, not running here and there stirring up gossip and strife, but holding their peace and minding their own business.*”

- One of the greatest hindrances to the church and our Christian faith is the presence of busy-bodies and gossips. Some are quick to pick up the phone and spread a rumor instead of taking the matter to the Lord in prayer. We do the individuals involved, nor the church, any good by spreading rumors and gossip. Much of the ammunition the world uses against the church is supplied by those of the church. Let us lead quiet lives and shut down the old “rumor mill.”

**B. Our Work** (11b) – *and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.* This is yet another simple truth found within the Bible. It is believed, many in Paul's day were so excited about the Lord's soon return that they sold all their goods and began to make preparations for that day. Now, I am not teaching that we should not make preparation and fully anticipate the Lord's coming, but we must continue to work while we are here. Many in that day had given away all they had and no longer could provide for themselves.

- We must be looking for the Lord to come, but yet we must be sensible in the mean-time. I am troubled by those who are unwilling to do anything for themselves, seeking to take advantage of the hard work of others. I know some cannot help themselves, but if we are able, we are expected to work and provide for our own needs. Laziness on the part of believers does nothing to advance the cause of Christ.

**C. Our Walk (12a)** – *That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without.* The church was not to be deceptive or cunning in their dealings. They were to present themselves honest before all men.

- That principle has not changed. Much damage has been done to the church because of those who sought to take advantage of others. We must ensure that our motives are pure in all we do. We need to be mindful of how we present ourselves to the world. Hard work and honesty will go a long way in reaching a man who needs the Lord.

**D. Our Welfare (12b)** – *and that ye may have lack of nothing.* This is not implying that we serve the Lord simply for what we can receive, but it is a promise that God will meet the needs of those who follow Him. If we are committed to displaying our faith in a way that honors God, loving others and living lives that reflect Him, God will care for His own.

- We may never have the riches this world offers, but we can have the peace of God and peace with God. That is far greater than anything the world has to offer and it is something money can't buy!

**Conclusion:** I wonder today, do we possess shoe-leather faith? What does the world see when it looks at us? Are we making a difference in the lives of people? Do we love as God has commanded us to love?

Do our lives reflect the Lord we serve? Surely, we could all love more than we do. I would say that we could live better lives than what we currently do as well. I pray that the Lord will stir our hearts as we continue to seek Him.

<sup>1</sup> The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 & 2 Thessalonians.