

## THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

### "Christian Love and Life"

1 Thessalonians 4:9, 10

#### Introduction

1. The closing comments of Paul have commenced (4:1). The subjects he undertakes include Christian morality (vv. 1-8), Christian love (vv. 9, 10), Christian ambition (vv. 11, 12), and Christian comfort (vv. 13-18).

2. It must be affirmed without apology that Christian teaching (doctrine) is an important facet. Admittedly, it is an area of human endeavor which has caused unusual and unfortunate discussions. However, it is impossible to foster any ministry without giving some teaching. Where the line is drawn between "essentials" and "non-essentials" is arbitrary, but something must be taught. Christian tenets cannot be ignored.

3. Handmaiden to teaching is conduct. The specific sort of conduct underlined here is love of brethren. Paul argues that this is expected and necessary. It is a spiritual mandate. The manner by which believers are to love is given. It must be:

#### 1. OBEDIENTLY

##### a. Compared

The subject of morality (vv. 1-8) was apparently unheeded by the Thessalonians or at least they had reverted to pre-redemption days in this matter. But the subject of love had not been ignored. There was no need for Paul to give a long excursus on the subject. Brotherly love is generally exhorted in the Bible (Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1-3; 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:8; 2 Pet. 1:7). The pattern is not love of kin by blood, but kin by His blood.

##### b. Considered

To love is a matter of obedience to something which is "taught by God." The original term here means "God taught." It is only found here in the New Testament (cf. John 6:45). It is as if God Himself demonstrated the subject! It is noteworthy that the object of the "God-taught" concept is "into" or "with a view to" the love of one another. This is a present active infinitive, hence

continuity in love. Since the verb used means love by choice, it is a strong expression of intention. It is the same type of love which God has for the world (John 3:16).

## 2. TOTALLY

### a. Personally

Paul does not allow for any personal predilection to love one brother over another. There are to be no factions. There is no room for divisions here. Love is to be expressed toward every believer! The only limitation is that of the opportunity afforded a person to love. The same sort of approach is made to prayer (Eph. 6:18).

### b. Geographically

Thessalonica was in Macedonia. No area around there had escaped the love which emanated from the church in that city. Competition and any ill will were absent from the church. They had good relationships with all the brethren of the province.

NOTE: In accepting the principle of love in the terms described, one must guard against indiscriminate acceptance of concepts and persons incompatible with the Word of God. His moral and spiritual standards remain. Acceptance in love of "brethren" cannot enforce agreement with what is rejected by the Word. It is at this critical juncture that fundamentalists and neo-evangelicals part company (cf. John 13).

## 3. INCREASINGLY

As in every area of Christian conduct, so here, there is the call for growth. One cannot rest on a measure of attainment. There is always more ground to gain (Phil. 3:14). There is always room for improvement.

Conclusion There is no point zeroing in on brotherly love until one is a brother/sister. This comes through faith in Christ (John 1:11-13). Family love is in the family!