



## **TRULY LOVING ONE ANOTHER:**

### **1 Thessalonians 2:7-12**

***Pastor JD Farag***

This is such a time as we petition your throne and ask you for your grace, your mercy, your strength. your healing touch on those who are on a bed of suffering. Lord, we do pray for Sandy and ask, Lord, that you would just miraculously heal her and for John as well. Lord, I pray, reluctantly, for myself. That you would also heal me of this asthma, cough, and sickness. Don't let it in any way be a hindrance or distraction to the teaching of your Word today, Lord. Bless the teaching of your Word we pray, in Jesus name. Amen.

All right. I'll have you turn in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. Our text will be versus 7-12. However, I want to begin in verse 6. Once you are there, I'll ask you to stand, if you're able. If not, that's alright. You can follow along as I read. But for the sake of context, I want to begin at verse 6.

The Apostle Paul is writing, actually, defending himself. He continues in that defense in verse six saying, [Pardon me] "We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ, we could have asserted our authority.

Instead [verse 7] we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children. So, we cared for you because we love you so much. We were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well. Surely, [verse 9] you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship. We worked day and night in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

[Verse 10] You are witnesses and, so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children. Encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into his Kingdom and glory.

Lord, bless and anoint the teaching of your Word today. Bless it to our hearts, the application and understanding of it to our lives. We pray, in Jesus name. Amen. You can be seated. Thank you. Okay.

I want to talk with you today about truly loving others. Specifically, what it means to love one another. What it looks like to love one another. And what that love one for another will actually be like. Here in our text, the Apostle Paul is opening up and pouring out his heart



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to these believers. He's very, I guess for lack of a better word, honestly, expressing to them how much he truly loves them. It's almost like he's grasping for the right words to adequately express this deep love that he has for them. In so doing, I see 3 ways he expresses this. That love can be both known and shown when we truly love one another, as we're commanded to do.

The first way is in versus 7 and 8. It's that of "just caring". Here, Paul says that he loves them and he cares for them. He likens it to, get this, a nursing mother who loves and cares for her infant. Once again, I have to confess that as the pastor of this amazing church. This is as searching of my heart as it is convicting to my heart. The reason is because I have to ask myself, "Do I love you that much?" I love you. God knows that I do. God knows my heart. I hope you know how much I love you. But I don't know that my love for you is that of a nursing mother who loves and cares for her infant.

I'm sure you've heard that saying, "People really don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Have you heard that before? Would you agree that that is so true? What Paul is saying here is, "I love you so much. It's as much as a mother cares and loves her infant that she nurses and gives of her very life. The lifegiving nourishment from that mother to that infant. That's the love that I have for you and it manifests in this care. It could be said of the Apostle Paul.

Would to God that it could be said of every single one of us. They really care. I mean, they really care. They really care about me. It's not this... You know how we do it, right? It's re l "surfacy". How you doing? Do you really care how I'm doing? Or are you just asking me, how am I doing? Because when we ask somebody, "Hey, how you doing?" We don't expect them to respond with something like this, right? "Oh, I'm so glad you asked. Do you have a minute?" Wait. I was just saying, how you doing? And expecting you to say, Hey, I'm great. How are you?"

Even when we greet each other in church, right? Just this morning, everybody, "Hey, Pastor, how you doing?" I just give him, give them, give you, the same answer every time. "I'm blessed" because I am. But how about this question? How are you really doing? Oh, do you really want to know? Do you really care how I'm doing?



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That's what the Apostle Paul is saying here. If you really love people, you will really care for them, about them. This brings us to the 2nd way. It's in verses 9 and 10. It's very interesting because it's sacrificing. Listen to what Paul says to them. He is saying to the Thessalonians where he only spent, some believe, about 3 weeks there before he was run out of town, some believe. He tells them to remember what he did when he was there with them for that short period of time.

He says, "Surely you guys remember our toil and hardship. As we worked night and day to preach the gospel to you so as to not be a financial burden on you. You remember, right?" In other words, we worked during the day and ministered during the night. We worked all day and ministered all day. We worked all night and ministered all night. Because we didn't want to be a burden on you. We wanted to preach the gospel to you.

What's interesting is that Paul had the right to receive their financial support. But chose not to from this Thessalonian church, not all of the churches. He did receive, in fact, financial support from other churches. In his first letter of the church in Corinth. Chapter 9:14, he writes, "In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. "Don't muzzle the ox", in using another metaphor.

To the churches in Galatians chapter 6:6, he writes, "Let him who is taught the Word share in all good things with him who teaches." What is he saying? He is saying that the laborer, those who labor in the Word, are worthy of being supported financially. So, at this time, we are going to receive an offering. I'm just kidding. We don't even receive an offering here. We have an Agape Box for the benefit of our online church. We have 2 boxes on the back walls.

But I think that the take away from this is that Paul was willing to make this sacrifice for them because of how much he loved them. Think about it in the context of what Paul is writing to them. He's talking to them about the love that a mother has for an infant. As we are going to see next, the love that a father has for his children. It is this parental type of love that is willing to sacrifice everything for the benefit of their children. For those of us that are parents or grandparents, I mean, how much will we sacrifice for our children? Why? Because we love them so much and that's why we do it.



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That is what Paul is saying here. This brings us to the 3rd way in versus 11 and 12. It's that of encouraging. Notice with me that Paul goes from the love of a mother, in verse 7, to the encouraging from a father in verse 12. I don't know if it's possible to overstate the importance of the role. That both the father and the mother have in the life of their children. The family is a microcosm of the family of God.

Do you ever think about it like this? You and I, are siblings in Christ, if I can say it that way. Which might explain, in some ways, why it is that we have sibling rivalry within the body of Christ, the family of God. We are sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters in Christ. Our God is our Heavenly Father.

It's a microcosm. Really, a picture of what is awaiting us in heaven for all eternity. There's something I want to point out here and I want to spend the rest of our time on it. It's concerning Paul's love for these brothers and sisters there in Thessalonica. He uses this word for "love" in the original language of the Greek New Testament, agape.

Agape love is the highest form of love. It is God's love. It's not that God has love. It's that God is love. That is who God is. He is love. This agape love is the love that God has for us. It's an unconditional love that is not predicated upon anything. It is also reciprocated in our love for God as well. Agape love, the highest form of love.

That's the love that Paul is talking about here. It's unfortunate, because in the English language we only have 1 word for love. It just changes the whole complexion of it in the Greek language. Because there are 4 words for love. In English, I'll say, God loves me. I love my wife. I love spicy ??? I love you. I love this church. I love my children. I love my wife. And it's the same word.

So you have to kind of distinguish and delineate in the English language between those different kinds of love. Not so in the Greek. In the Greek you have: storge, philia, eros, and agape. They all have a very different meaning.

Agape, again, the love that God has for us. Philia: It's a brotherly love. It's Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. That's where it gets its name from, philia. A love that we have 1 for another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Eros: This is a sensual love. It's



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where we get our English word for erotic. It's a physical, sensual, even dare I say, sexual love.

Then there is storge translated in our Bibles as natural affection. This is a parental love. This is a love that a mother and a father have for their children. In turn, the kind of love that children have for their mother and father. Very interesting, prophetically, we're told when Paul writes to Timothy. In the last days it will be marked by this lack of love, natural affection. That in the last days, 1 of the things that will mark the last days is that they will not have natural affection. That love that children have for parents and that parents have for children.

John's Gospel chapter 13... Actually, may I trouble you to turn there in your Bibles? I just want to talk about this for a moment before we close. Jesus is, basically, summing up the law. He's condensing it. I guess you could even say, in some way, simplifying it. Saying that you can, basically, sum up the entirety of the law with this 1 new commandment.

He says this, verse 34, "A new commandment I give to you that you love one another. [listen] as I love you that you also love one another. By this, all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." In other words, Jesus is saying that the way people are going to know, believer or non-believer, alike. That you are my disciple, that you are following me is by the way that you love one another. That will be the litmus test as to which your discipleship is measured. This is how they are going to know.

Isn't it interesting? Satan knows this too. Let me explain why I say that. If it is by our love one for another that we are known as disciples of Jesus. Then wouldn't it also stand to reason that it's our back-biting one another? Gossiping about one another? The way we treat one another? That would bring into question whether or not we are truly his disciples? to the condition of the church today. Just how Christians treat one another. "Where's the love?" as we say.

I often say that it is such a privilege and a joy to be the pastor of this church. The reason I say that is because this is a loving church. I'll have you know, that there are very few pastors and this is not hyperbole, I mean this literally. There are very few pastors that can stand behind the pulpit in their church and say to their congregation



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that it's a joy to be the pastor of this church. The latest statistic I heard, and it's gone up higher, is that 1,700 pastors leave the pastorate every single month. That's over 50 a day, if my math is correct. Now, granted some for different reasons.

But I would venture to say that, often times, it's because there is no love. There is no love within that body of believers. Do you know what blesses my heart more than anything? I can't even begin to describe to you how much of a blessing it is when we have somebody visit, from the mainland, from our online church, wherever they're from. They'll comment, or they'll send on email in, or sometimes a letter in, and they'll say,

"Man, I have to tell you, Pastor JD, when I stepped foot in your church, I was blown away by the genuine, sincere, authentic love that your people have." Again, I almost really can't put it into words. I guess this is probably as good of a time as any to thank you for being such a loving church. We have never had in our... Give me a second here. It's the antihistamine. That's my story, and I'm sticking with it.

15 years? Yeah, 2004. Pardon me. I was doing pretty good there for a second. 15 years ago, 2004, I actually started the Bible Study. It wasn't until 2005 that we started our 1st official Sunday morning service. So 15 years, we've never had a church split in this church, ever. I praise God for that.

Again, you'll forgive me if I'm repeating myself. But there are so few pastors that can say what I just said. I tell you, I've been in a church, not as the pastor of the church. But in a church as an elder and a lay pastor. Then subsequently, as the pastor of the church. I am sad to say that I have been through several vicious and, I will even say, demonic and satanic church split.

I've seen the devastation that it has caused in the lives of those people. I mean, marriages just blown up. I mean, families just decimated. The children not wanting anything to do with the church, or the Lord for that matter, ever again in their lives. Because they witnessed what had happened. Just this bickering, fighting and backbiting, I mean, it will destroy. It'll destroy a church; it'll destroy a family.



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"A house divided cannot stand," Jesus said. We have to be united in love. This is the kind of love that can only come from God. That's the only way. If you're sitting here asking yourself, "How is it even possible to love in that way?" Jesus answers that question for us when he says, "You can love one another in this way because it's the same way that I have loved you."

I shared this before. I guess this is as good of a time as any to share it again. But many years ago, my wife and I were 1st married. I, in a rare moment of just, I mean, godly humility and love. As a godly husband, I said to my wife these words. I said, "Honey, I love you with a love that can only come from God." I'm expecting her to just start crying, leap into my arms and give me a "velcro" hug. And just say, "Oh, honey, I love you, oh, thank you. I love you, too."

That didn't happen. Not even close. She looked at me. Do you know how like when a dog... I probably should get a better illustration. How like when a dog kind of looks at you like this? Like what? Well, she was kind of looking at me like... "You mean I am so unlovable? You can't muster up enough love in and of yourself? That the only way you can love me is if God gives you a love for me! Am I that lovable?"

I'm like, how did you just do that? It is true. Maybe I could have said it a different but surely, she could have taken it in a different way. But what I was trying to say is that the only way we can love one another is by the love that God gives us for one another.

Are not the 1st 5 commandments summed up in loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength? And loving our neighbor as we love ourselves? Doesn't that sum up the 2nd 5 of the commandments? That sums up the law. If you love God that way, that much, and you love others that way, that much. Then "done deal". "Real deal" love!

That's the new commandment. It sums up the law, fulfills the law. Because, see, if I love you that way, I'm not going to covet. I'm not going to commit murder in my heart. I'm not going to do anything against you that would be hurtful to you. Because of my love, for you. That's why and that's how. It only comes by the power of the Holy Spirit and, by the way, the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

What is the fruit of the Holy Spirit? Love. Love. I want to close with a quote. I think it just wraps it up and puts a bow around it. It goes



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like this. At no other time in the history of Christianity, [pardon me] did love so characterize the entire church as it did in the first 3 centuries. Roman society took note. Tertullian, an early church leader, reported that the Romans would say, "See how they love one another." This is the Roman Empire. The Romans, the non-believers, the world observing the church.

And the world is observing the church. The unbeliever is asking 2 very good and very important questions that deserve an answer. The first question is: Does it work? Does the Christian life work? The 2nd is: Is it real? They want it to work and they want it to be real.

Because they need it to work. They need it to be real in their life. When the world is looking in on the church and they're watching us. They are reading the letter of our lives, as Paul says. What are they reading? Are they reading a love letter? Would to God? When the world looks at us and observes us. That they would say of us, "Wow, they really love each other? My! I mean, you could say all you want about him. But you have to admit they really do love one another."

There's an interesting proverb. We're in the Book of Proverbs on Thursday night in our study through the Bible. I love the Book of Proverbs. But there is a very interesting proverb that can be easily missed at first read. It says this: That the desire of every man, woman and child ever born from the beginning of time is for unfailing love. Love covers a multitude of sins. Love one another, as I have loved you.

Let's pray. Father, thank you. Lord, I was just thinking that love is not something that's taught. It's really a fruit that needs to grow in our lives as we grow in grace. Lord, I thank you that I have the privilege of being the pastor of such a loving church. Lord, would you protect the love that's in this church, one for another? Lord, we want it said of us, "My, how they love one another." Lord, thank you. In Jesus name. Amen.