

# Study 6: Brotherly Love

## Introduction

Philia is one of the four Greek words for love which include *philia*, *storge*, *agape*, and *eros*. It is often translated to mean brotherly love. It often connotes a deep friendship demonstrating trust and mutual affection. Before starting this study, take a moment and reflect on this term. Have you ever experienced brotherly love? What does it look like and what results from it?

A genuine brotherly love creates a synergy between people that is greater than the sum of the parts. In the passages we explore today in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-18 we see that Paul is calling us to experience and demonstrate brotherly love to others. Paul is essentially calling the Thessalonians to create the glue that holds the church together and strengthens it through brotherly love and the promise of the coming resurrection. We should be encouraged in this lesson to deepen our relationship with God and fellow believers. We might also be inspired to demonstrate brotherly love to others who either do not know God or are struggling in their faith.

## Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

*<sup>9</sup> Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, <sup>10</sup> for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, <sup>11</sup> and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, <sup>12</sup> so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.*

## Discussion

1. Verses 9 and 10 suggests the Thessalonians have “brotherly love” for one another. Brotherly love refers to a deep affection seen in close friendships. It is the kind of love that exists because of our spiritual relationship forged through our common relationship with Christ and being children of God through our faith. **If we exhibit “brotherly love” how should we treat other Christians?**
2. In verse 9, Paul mentions you have no need for anyone to write to you regarding “brotherly love” because you have been taught by God to love one another. **What do you think this means?**
3. It helps to have subtle reminders and encouragement to love others like we see in verses 9 and 10. **What are some of the common issues we encounter throughout our day that make it difficult to love? What are some practical ways that we can move past these obstacles to be more loving, even in the face of difficulty?**

4. Paul implores the Thessalonians to take three actions in verse 11. **What are those actions? What do these actions have to do with exhibiting brotherly love?**
  
5. In verse 12, Paul offers two motivations for the instructions given in verse 11. **What are those motivations and why are they important?**

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-14**

*<sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.*

### **Discussion**

The Thessalonians, like most other pagan communities of the day, did not believe in life after death. They believed that without the body, there was nothing. So when Paul came and preached about the resurrection, he was mocked and misunderstood by many because to them the notion of rising after death was ridiculous and inconceivable. We live in a similar world today where many perceive the resurrection as impossible. Yet, Revelation offers hope in that through true repentance and turning towards Jesus Christ, there is life after death. Paul is bringing that hope to the people of Thessalonica in verses 13-14. Through these verses Paul is seeking to cut through the preconceived notions of the pagan world and demonstrate that Jesus has the power bring eternal life.

6. Paul's suggestion that he does not want believers in Thessalonica to be uninformed acknowledges his understanding of the pagan culture many of these believers grew up in. Paul wants to be clear to them that there is life after death through Christ, which is a difficult concept for the Thessalonians to understand and grasp. Paul suggests to them not to grieve like unbelievers do. An important point here is that Paul is not saying don't grieve. He is simply saying that grief is different for believers than it is for others. **What hope do we have as Christians when a fellow believer passes from this life? Therefore, how is grief different among Christian believers?**

7. Verse 14 states that because we know that Christ died and rose again, we have confidence that he will return with those believers who have already passed. We live in a fallen and sin-ridden world and there were many examples of that on display throughout 2020. **Given the promise over verse 14, how should we live our life to others, particularly non-believers?**

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-18**

*<sup>15</sup> For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord,<sup>[a]</sup> that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

### **Discussion**

8. Read Matthew 24:30-31 and contrast Jesus' account of revelation and the rapture with Paul's account in 1 Thessalonians. **What are the similarities and differences between the two descriptions? Given Paul's purpose as a New Testament prophet how can we explain any observed differences?**
9. Paul's emphasis on uniting those who have already died with the believers still alive on Earth is also a reassuring message to the Thessalonians. **How do these reassurances distinguish Christian believers from nonbelievers and how do they reinforce the call to show brotherly love toward one another?**
10. In verse 18 Paul suggests that we should encourage one another with these words. **As believers, what are some ways we can encourage others (who are struggling) with the promise and hope of Christian brotherly love and the resurrection in these verses?**

### **Closing/application**

In this passage we have explored Christian brotherly love and the promise of Christ's return and the resurrection. We are encouraged with the guarantees that the believer will not face

judgment of separation from God, the believer will be resurrected at the return of Christ, and that if Christ comes during a believer's lifetime the believer will be raptured to be with Christ. With these guarantees Paul's sincere hope is that believers will trust in God and deepen their faith through him while spreading God's love and Gospel to others, while also encouraging others to deepen their faith as well. His hope for nonbelievers or those who doubt is to find Christ as their personal Savior and that these nonbelievers will learn to put their trust in God. In order to accomplish this, believers need to come along side the nonbeliever and show Christ's enduring love to them. So we should be encouraged to engage with the rest of the world armed with these hope we have in Christ, being ambassadors for Christ.