

world. One of the prime motivations all of us who are married should have well in mind, is that ultimately our marriage relationship should portray the eternal love of God for all who are His through faith in Yeshua.

the Lord is the avenger in all these things – That Paul emphasizes the fact that the Lord is the “avenger” (ἐκδικος, *ekdikos*) of all things includes the fact that anyone, and particularly someone who professes to be a believer in Yeshua, who seeks to disrupt the bond between a married couple, can expect to experience the wrath and/or discipline of God. This is because the marriage bond is a sacred covenant, and even if in our modern society a great many have jettisoned such a concept, the truth remains. Here is another time the scriptures emphasize the very high value of marriage. This does not mean that those who have experienced divorce, or a break-up of their marriage, are outside of God’s ability and desire to forgive. No! When true repentance and a heart that seeks God’s grace approaches Him to be forgiven, the answer is always “Forgiven!” Yeshua died to pay for all of the sins of all those He would save eternally. But the point still must be emphasized: marriage is to be viewed as being for a lifetime and thus both husband and wife ought to strive to make this the reality.

... just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. – This indicates that when Paul was there in Thessalonica, he taught God’s perspective on marriage, and undoubtedly made it clear that marriage as God intends is far different than the pagan practices. Once again, this reminds us, even in our modern world, that we must constantly go to the Scriptures to learn, be reminded, and practice God’s commandments and His desire for us as we live in this fallen world.

7–8 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity but in sanctification... – What does Paul intend to emphasize when he opens our verse with the statement that “God has not called us for the purpose of impurity”? There may have been some who were joining the believing community with the false understanding that God’s infinite “love” allows a person to remain active in a life-style that was widely accepted by the pagan culture of the time. But Paul intends to make it absolutely clear that God’s “calling” results in the one called being transformed

through the process of sanctification, to live in a way that conforms to God's holiness and would therefore be a "light" in the world of His holiness and His love.

Now Paul goes on to give the positive exhortation, after describing in detail that which the true believer in Yeshua must fully reject, i.e., the perspective of fallen mankind which seeks to satisfy one's own desires as an ongoing, top priority.

The basis of Paul's exhortation in this verse is the foundational truth of God's "calling" (*καλέω, kaleō*), that is, the method by which God brings to Himself all those He redeems, giving them the gift of saving faith (Eph 2:8–10), granting them eternal life with Him, and enabling them through the power of the indwelling Ruach, to live as redeemed witnesses of His glory, power, love, and grace.

Paul thus emphasizes the inevitable reality of God's sovereign "call of salvation" upon all who are redeemed, noting that such a "calling" always results in "sanctification" (*ἁγιασμός, hagiastosmos*), that is, a manner of living that more and more conforms to the holiness of God in all aspects of one's life. Such a transformation brings a process of maturing in the faith, utilizing the "means of grace" in order to put to death the "deeds of the flesh" and becoming more and more conformed to the very image of Yeshua as revealed in the inspired scriptures of the Bible. The primary "means of grace" are: (1) The Scriptures, the inspired Word of God which is the very foundation upon which the will of God for His people is made known, (2) Prayer, by which the believer maintains a constant communion with God and is enabled to be more and more cognizant of the Spirit's leading and will as it pertains to the individual believer, and (3) Fellowship within a community of believers, which is essential for spiritual growth and strength, enabling mutual encouragement, edification (growing in one's life of faith), serving others, and being an example to others of how the life of faith is lived out.

Yeshua, in His parable of the wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14), illustrates the divine call or invitation as pertains to the kingdom of Heaven. In the parable, a King gives a wedding feast for his son but the invited guests fail to attend. The King therefore sends out his servants to implore the guests to come, but they refuse and even kill the King's servants. The King was rightly enraged and sent his armies to destroy those people and burn their city. Then he instructed his servants to go to the main highways and to invite anyone they met, "both evil and good," to come to the wedding feast. As a result, the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. When the King himself arrived, however, he found one man who was not properly attired for the occasion.

He asked, "How did you get in here without wedding clothes?" The man was speechless, but the King ordered his servants to "bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v. 13). Then the lesson of the parable is given: "For many are called, but few are chosen" (v. 14).

In this parable we see demonstrated in "story form" the "effectual calling" to repent and believe unto eternal salvation. The one who thought he could attend without having the proper attire represents those who think they can please God out of their own power, their own "religious rituals," and their own definition of what is right or wrong. The concluding "many are called but few are chosen" points to the fact that those whom God has called to Himself, are those who are thereby given faith to believe and thus to become recipients of the gift of God's salvation by the payment for sin procured by the death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Yeshua on their behalf.

... *So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.* – The English "So" with which v. 8 begins, is the Greek *τοιγαρὸν* (*toigaroun*), which is made up of three Greek words, *τοί*, *γάρ*, and *οὖν*, all having the general meaning "therefore," but when combined makes a bold statement in terms of introducing a conclusion in the sense of "for that very reason."

Thus Paul has made a very clear contrast in these two verses, between those who maintain that they could consider themselves to be true members of the *ekklesia* while remaining active in the pagan culture of Thessalonica, and those who have demonstrated a true acceptance of Yeshua and who therefore continue to have their lives changed to become more and more conformed unto the holy life commanded by God Himself.

Note how emphatically Paul makes it clear that the life required by God is not to be equated with the "rules" set forth merely by human authorities or man's innovative efforts in creating their own "religions." To reject the message of Yeshua and His apostles, a message based clearly upon the extant Scriptures of their time (i.e, the Tanach), is not merely to reject the Apostolic message but to reject the one and only true God and the very work of redemption which can only be enabled by the work of the Holy Spirit.

We should also note that in the Greek of v. 8, the phrase "God who gives His Holy Spirit" utilizes a present participle for the word "gives" (*διδόντα* < *δίδωμι*), thus, "giving," which emphasizes the continual, "ongoing work" of the Spirit in the lives of all true believers in Yeshua.

This is a most important statement of the scriptures, for it reminds

us that “man-made religion” is not only worthless but also constitutes a rejection of God Himself, a rejection of the Ruach HaKodesh Whom God has given to every true believer, and a form of idolatry, as Paul notes in his epistle to the Colossians.

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (Col. 3:5)

Surely what Paul means by this is that those who “claim” to be true believers in Yeshua, but whose lives are filled with impurity and conformity to the sinful world, are actually living in a way that constitutes a full denial of the Spirit. For it is the very work of the Spirit within the true believer to bring conformity to Yeshua and is therefore contrary to the sinful and godless life condoned and practiced in our fallen world.

Such a bold statement of Paul once again emphasizes that the Scriptures are the inspired word of God and thereby must be received as the very “measuring stick” against which all things must be placed to affirm what is of God and what is not. Very often “man-made religion” may take on the form of piety and religiosity, and may be advertised as having great value, when in fact, in God’s view, it is an entity “without breath.”

9–10 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...,

Now as to the love of the brethren – Paul begins v. 9 with the Greek particle *Περί* (*peri*), which literally means “now concerning...” He does so to introduce the basic concerns he has without mentioning any of the details. And the basic concern he has is to emphasize the need to exercise true, strong, and abiding love for one another within the believing community, which he commonly denotes with the word “brethren” (*φιλαδεφίας*, *philadelphias*). This is a term that carries the sense of “having affection for an associate” and is not emphasizing something unique to men (i.e., *male gender*) since it is regularly found in ancient Greek texts to describe the love between siblings, both brother and sister.¹ Thus, its use in texts of the Apostolic Scriptures means proper and

1 BDAG, “φιλάδελφος, p. 1055.

mutual love among members of a local messianic assembly.

It surely is clear that one of the enemy's arsenals is to seek to create division within the local assemblies of believers in Yeshua. All too often we tend to set aside the very high priority the Scriptures place upon truly caring for one another within our local *ekklesia*. What is more, the enemy must know that in our remaining sinful nature, we are already prone to engage in *lashon hara* (לִשְׁוֹן הָרָע), "gossip" or "evil speech" against others within the believing community, something that brings division and turmoil which is what the enemy enjoys.

The scriptures are clear about the sin of "gossip" or "evil speech" by which a person seeks to diminish the value of another person by casting that person as being a someone who is to be despised. Such gossip as attempts to diminish a person's character in the eyes of others, is grouped together in the Scriptures with a host of utter sinful behaviors.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, (ψιθυρισμοί) nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (1Cor 6:9–10)

For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders (καταλαλῖαι), gossip (ψιθυρισμοί), arrogance, disturbances; (2Cor 12:20)

... you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; – The Thessalonian community of believers had surely been well taught by Paul and therefore know what is true and right in the eyes of God. In using this language, Paul is not reprimanding those who make up the assembly of believers in Thessalonica but is carefully reminding them that having been given the truth of the Scriptures they must be diligent to live out what they know to be true and what they confess themselves to be, i.e., those whose supreme desire is to "walk in the footsteps their Messiah, Yeshua."

...for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. – Here, once again, Paul undoubtedly is pointing them to the Scriptures which they possessed, and reminding them that it is the very word of God, giv-

en through the prophets, that forms the very foundation and ongoing instructions for how the believer in Messiah Yeshua is to act and be a living testimony of His grace, love, and redemption. Paul refers to believers being a “new creation in Messiah Yeshua” in his second epistle to the Corinthians.

Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2Cor 5:17)

But in our text, when Paul uses the phrase “taught by God,” he is not actually referencing a given text of scripture from the Tanach, but is undoubtedly referring to the work of the Ruach Who indwells all believers in Yeshua and teaches them through the whole of Scripture to love others even as the Almighty has loved them. Surely there are texts in the Tanach which teach believers to love others even as God has loved them.

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD. (Lev 19:18)

But the primary reality is that when, through the work of the Ruach, a person is drawn to faith in the Messiah, he or she has a growing recognition of the love of God to make redemption possible, and having experienced the true love of God, will desire to love others even as they have been loved.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (Jn 13:34)

This commandment is “new” only in the sense that the full reality seen in God’s love in sending Yeshua, Yeshua’s willingness to die for those who would be saved, and His resurrection stands as proof of the success He accomplished in paying for sins. This established forever the unshakable foundation of salvation by faith in God’s securing eternal life for all those He would draw to Himself and grant them the gift of saving faith. Thus, if God has loved all of His redeemed people in such a miraculous and eternal way, then surely those whom He has redeemed should, by the power of the Ruach, learn to love one another in the manner in which God has instructed and enabled.

...for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more...

Paul commends the believing community in Thessalonica for their obvious ability and willingness to love one another. He states that they “practice it (i.e., love) toward all the brethren” in their locality. In the Greek, the word translated as “practice” is actually simply the Greek word *ποιέω* (*poieō*) “to do, to carry out an obligation, etc.”¹

...excel still more – But Paul urges them to “excel still more” in their love for each other. Why is this? There is no indication in the text before us that the believers in Thessalonica were only “half-heartedly” expressing genuine love for one another. Rather, the reality is that there will always be things, events, etc., that often “get in the way” of truly loving one another. Obviously a genuine love for each other will include confrontations when needed, but such confrontations must be done from a genuine heart of love and not for self-gain. The true motivation that is described as “love” must put the person being confronted as having the greater need for genuine love and thus to be approached accordingly.

Yet even beyond the time when a member of the community needs to be confronted in order to warn them regarding something that needs their attention, there is always the need to grow in our ability to love one another and thereby to help each other to grow in the faith and remain stalwart in serving the Lord by serving one other.

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Messiah, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (Eph 4:15)

As the local “body of believers” is strengthened through “that which every joint supplies,” we see that the more everyone within a given assembly understands that no one is superfluous, the more genuine love for each other will abound.

Once again, it is the enemy’s intention to cause dissension and to raise troubles within the local community of believers, but we have the ability, through the work of the Spirit, to love others as God intends, and thereby to strengthen each other for the glory of God and the testimony of our glorious Savior, Yeshua. Yet in order to do this, we must

1 BDAG, *ποιέω*, p. 839.

grow in our ability to love others, to recognize our own weaknesses, and individually to make growing in our faith a top priority. Surely it is through the testimony of the gathered community, giving witness to a watching world of the grace, love, and glory of God, that will inevitably be used by God to bring others to the faith He will grant them.