

LOVING AS GOD LOVES

*And the effect of
righteousness will be
peace, and the result
of righteousness,
quietness and trust
forever.*

(Isaiah 52:17 ESV)



LIVING A HOLY, QUIET LIFE IN THE WILL OF GOD ...

1. Review: God's will is to make us increase and abound in love for one another and for all so that he may establish our hearts blameless in holiness, 3:12-13.

- (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 ESV) ... and **may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all**, as we do for you, 13 **so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father**, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

TRANSITION: Whatever else we think the Lord is doing as he causes us to increase and abound in love for one another and for all ... what we cannot miss is this – God's refining, purifying work in our lives is what prepares our hearts and minds to receive and obey the practical instructions he gives us on loving more and more. If God is not active in our lives in this way, we will neither hear him nor obey the fundamental truths he gives us that are necessary for us to grow in love and holiness.

Excursus #1: The connection between loving God and meaningful knowledge - 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 ...

I. Loving God is fundamental to knowing what we should know about anything that matters.

- (1 Corinthians 8:1-3 ESV) Now concerning food offered to idols: **we know that "all of us possess knowledge."** This "knowledge" **puffs up**, but love **builds up**. 2 If anyone **imagines that he knows something**, he does not yet know as he ought to know. 3 **But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.**

II. All of us as humans possess knowledge about the many various things related to our lives.

III. This example that demonstrates two different approaches to discerning right from wrong.

IV. Option #1: We approach the subject matter with human knowledge that puffs us up.

Puffs up ... φυσιώω [phusioō] – to make natural; to inflate, blow up, to cause to swell up; to make proud; conceived of as inflating something with air.

The "knowledge" spoken of here is what may be pictured as human breath inflating the concept ... contrasted with the knowledge contained in Scripture as that which is breathed out by God.

- (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV) **All Scripture is breathed out by God** and **profitable for teaching, for reproof,**

for correction, and for training in righteousness.

V. Option #2: We approach the subject matter with a different contrasting perspective of love that builds up rather than puffs up.

Builds up ... οικοδομέω [oikodomeō] – to build a house, erect a building; to build (up from the foundation); to make nearer to fullness or completion.

VI. The person who supposes he knows something knows nothing as to what he should know regarding this subject or any other.

Imagines ... δοκέω [dokeō] – to be of opinion, to think, suppose; to judge, think or believe (something) without being fully settled in mind or opinion.

VII. Many who possess only human knowledge are often very firm in their conviction of having a relationship with Jesus but are blind to the reality that they are not known by him.

- (Matthew 7:22a, 23 ESV) **On that day many will say to me**, "Lord, Lord ..." And then will I declare to them, "**I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.**"

Ethical questions of right and wrong and doctrinal issues are only successfully approached by the person who loves God and thus is building a relationship with him which results in submitting to the same standard of knowledge of right and wrong as God who is holy.

VIII. Loving God is how we build our relationship with God and are known by God.

- (1 Corinthians 8:3 ESV) **But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.**

Known by God ... γινώσκω [ginosko] – to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of perceive.

Being known by Jesus speaks of those who do God's will by submitting to God and his word – not freelancers [*workers of lawlessness*] who make their own spiritual rules to live by.

- (1 John 5:2 ESV) **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.**

Lesson: If we are not obeying God, then we are not loving God, and we are not knowing what we should know. This reveals the person's knowledge of God and his love to be only the empty air of human supposition.

Lesson: If we are not obeying God as to how we are to relate to our brothers and sisters in Christ, then we are not receiving the blessing of his work of holiness in our lives through this.

Lesson: No matter what our puffed up knowledge is telling us, we know nothing that we should know in these matters. But if we love God and love our brothers as God directs us to do, then we are living in and walking in the light of the reality of God.

- (1 John 2:10 ESV) **Whoever loves his brother abides in the light**, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.
- (1 John 3:14 ESV) **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.** Whoever does not love abides in death.
- (1 John 4:20 ESV) If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; **for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.**

Excursus #2: A lesson on the essential differences between human love and the holy love of God as taught by Jesus in Matthew 5:43-48 ...

Purpose: To have a better understanding of God's holy love that expands our vision of what it means to ...
 1) love God ... 2) know God ... 3) love as God loves and
 4) appreciate God's transforming work of love and holiness in our lives more and more.

- I. **The love which we have received as Christ followers and by which we love is God's holy love.**
 - (Matthew 5:43–48 ESV) **You have heard that it was said**, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 **But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** 45 **so that** you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 **For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?** Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 **And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others?** Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 **You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**
 - (Romans 12:2b ESV) ... that by testing **you may discern what is the will of God**, what is **good** and **acceptable** and **perfect**.
- II. **There is a running conflict between what humans say and suppose to be true about love and what God teaches us is true about love.**
- III. **Here the puffed up human version of love teaches people to love their neighbor and hate their enemy.**
- IV. **God gives us his holy love by which we love our**

enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

- V. **Holy love is loving in a way consistent with who we are—like a son of our Father who is in heaven who blesses evil people and good people.**

Explanation – When we only love those who love us we miss the reward-blessing of living like a son of the Father and building up our relationship with God. Only loving those who love us is merely the puffed up, self-defined love that all humans practice. God is neither needed nor desired for this type of love.

- VI. **Greeting and welcoming people selectively is sinful and unloving and reveals the self-defined love which humans practice by default.**
- VII. **We are being who we are when we perfectly love like our Father in heaven.**

You must be ... εἰμί [eimi] – to be; to have the quality of being ... perfect ... τέλειος [teleios] – being complete of its kind and without defect or blemish; brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; that which is perfect.

- VIII. **This is holy love, the fruit of the Spirit love ... by which we love and which has been made ours when and because God first loved us.**

- (1 John 4:19 ESV) We love **because he first loved us.**
- (Galatians 5:22–23 ESV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love ...**

END EXCURSUS

2. **Since God's will for our lives is holiness we are to refrain from sexual immorality, 4:3-8.**

- (1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 ESV) **For this is the will of God**, your sanctification: **that you abstain from sexual immorality;** 4 **that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,** 5 **not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;** 6 **that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.** 7 **For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.** 8 **Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.**

- A. **Necessary information: God's will for our lives is that we will be holy.**

B. Practical, authoritative instruction: Sexual immorality is not holy so we must refrain from it.

C. Vivid contrast: People who know God learn how to control their bodies; people who do not know God follow their passions.

D. Definitive sinfulness: Sexual immorality is not love but sin that oversteps the limits in a relationship.

Transgress ... ὑπερβαίνω [huperbaino] – to step over, beyond; to overstep; to pass beyond limits or boundaries; to overstep the proper limits; of one who defrauds another in business; overreaches.

E. Dire warning: Heed the warning because the Lord is an avenger in these things.

F. Clear, distinct calling: God calls us in holiness, not for impurity.

G. Needed perspective: Whoever contemptuously rejects this teaching contradicts God who gives us the Spirit that we might know truth.

Transition: Since our love for one another and for all is decisive in God establishing our hearts blameless in holiness it only makes sense that he gives us focused, prioritized, practical teaching on the subject.

3. Paul instructs us as to **why** we are to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, 4:9-12.

• (1 Thessalonians 4:9–12 ESV) **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**, 10 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**, 11 and **to aspire to live quietly**, and **to mind your own affairs**, and **to work with your hands**, as we instructed you, 12 **so that** you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

A. We have been God-taught to love one another.

B. More and more love is necessary for the sanctifying work of holiness in our lives.

CONCLUSION: Practical instructions so that we may reach our goal of holy, quiet lives ...

We need to first set this instruction in the context of God making us holy as we love more and more in these practical, mundane, specific ways.

Note: He has given priority to these behaviors by including them in these instructions.

I. Aspire to live quietly.

To make it our aim to lead a life free from disruption and commotion; to keep quiet and not be running hither and thither, but staying at home and minding our own business; being silent and holding our peace.

II. Mind your own affairs.

To carry out our actions and manage our public affairs that pertain specifically to ourselves.

III. Work with your hands.

To work with your hands. Just what it says addressing the peace and provision that comes from good, clean work.

IV. Live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

V. Destination: To live in the will of God, blessed with a holy, quiet life in the presence of God.

• (Psalm 119:164–168 ESV) Seven times a day I **praise you for your righteous rules**. 165 **Great peace have those who love your law**; nothing can make them stumble. 166 I hope for your salvation, O Lord, and **I do your commandments**. 167 **My soul keeps your testimonies**; **I love them exceedingly**. 168 **I keep your precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before you**.

A. The person who arrives here praises God for wise living and for the righteous rules that brought him or her to this place.

B. The person who arrives here praises God for the great peace and confidence of this blessed life.

C. The person who arrives in this place is a hopeful doer of the word of God.

D. The holy quiet penetrates the depths of his soul and yields overflowing love for the truth that brought him to this place.

E. This person confirms and renews his commitment to keep God's word and have all his ways before God.