

1 Thessalonians 4:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

Analysis

But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another—peri de tēs philadelphias ou chreian echete graphein hymin, autoi gar hymeis theodidaktoi este eis to agapan allēlous (περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτοὶ ἐστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους). Paul transitions from sexual ethics to philadelphia (φιλαδελφία, 'brotherly love')—the affection believers should have for fellow Christians. The remarkable word theodidaktoi (θεοδίδακτοι, 'taught by God,' appearing only here in Scripture) indicates divine instruction, not merely human teaching.

How are believers 'taught by God' to love? Through

1. the Spirit writing God's law on hearts (Jer 31:33)
2. Jesus's teaching (John 13:34-35)
3. the Spirit's fruit (Gal 5:22)
4. Christ's indwelling presence (Col 1:27).

God's internal teaching surpasses external rules—believers love not from compulsion but transformation. Paul's commendation ('ye need not that I write') doesn't mean they achieved perfection but that they already practiced brotherly love; he'll still encourage them to 'increase more and more' (v. 10). Divine teaching produces authentic love; mere human instruction produces at best external conformity.

Historical Context

The Thessalonians demonstrated remarkable brotherly love despite persecution and poverty. They cared for one another when society ostracized them, shared resources when conversion cost jobs, and maintained unity despite diverse backgrounds (Jews, Greeks, men, women, slave, free). This love authenticated their faith (John 13:35) and attracted observers. Early church father Tertullian reported pagans saying of Christians: 'See how they love one another!' This supernatural love, taught by God through the Spirit, distinguished the church from surrounding culture's self-interest.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What evidence demonstrates that you're 'taught by God' to love (internal transformation) versus merely complying with external commands?
2. How does understanding brotherly love as God-taught affect your motivation compared to viewing it as human obligation?
3. In what specific ways does your Christian community demonstrate the supernatural brotherly love that attracted observers to the early church?

Interlinear Text

Περὶ	δὲ	τῆς	φιλαδελφίας	οὐ	χρείαν	ἔχετε	γράφειν
as touching	But	G3588	brotherly love	not	G5532	ye need	that I write
G4012	G1161		G5360	G3756		G2192	G1125
ὑμῖν	αὐτοῖς	γὰρ	ὑμεῖς	θεοδίδακτοί	ἐστε	εἰς	τὸ
unto you	yourselves	for	ye	taught of God	are	to	G3588
G5213	G846	G1063	G5210	G2312	G2075	G1519	
ἀγαπᾶν	ἀλλήλους						
love	one another						
G25	G240						

Additional Cross-References

1 John 3:11 (Love): For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

Romans 12:10 (Love): Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

1 John 3:23 (Love): And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Hebrews 13:1 (Love): Let brotherly love continue.

1 Thessalonians 5:1 (Parallel theme): But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

Hebrews 10:16 (Parallel theme): This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

Acts 4:32 (Parallel theme): And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

Psalms 133:1 (Parallel theme): Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

1 John 2:10 (Love): He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

John 14:26 (Parallel theme): But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

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