

How You Ought To Walk 9, 1 Thessalonians 4:9

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The following is a presentation of Edward Reformed Baptist Church, West Monroe, Louisiana.

We're going to continue on in a similar thought. Now, I was noticing earlier this week as we were kind of coming down to the end of this section in verse 9, we've got about three more messages in this particular section, and probably by the end of this month, Lord willing, we will have completed this section in 1 Thessalonians, and I was noticing that the section that comes after this is the one that everybody associates with 1 Thessalonians, the coming of the Lord, you know, the raptura, this is the rapture passage. And I mention that because I hope that in these weeks together as we have studied 1 Thessalonians up to this section in chapter 4, that we've gotten a vastly different look at the Gospel; that we have gotten to see what God is really doing in the Gospel; and that we have seen what our responsibility as believers is in terms of what we are to believe, but then also how we are to express that in how we live, and I hope that what we have studied thus far will begin to inform us in our studies in these coming weeks of what the day of the Lord, the coming day of the Lord really means, and that we not just fall back on what we've always heard but that we let the scriptures teach us, right? Now, I admonish y'all or encourage y'all to do that and I take that encouragement too, that we let the Scriptures inform us. So would you join me over these next several weeks and as we press on through 1 Thessalonians in doing that? And not just in 1 Thessalonians but in everything that we hear from God's word. Let God's word change us, amen? Does that sound like a deal? Will you all do that with me? Good. Amen.

Well, as we look at our time tonight, we're going to be looking at a singular idea in our message tonight and that is that the call to holiness is God's direct instruction to his children. Now that's a simple statement that holiness is God's instruction to his children directly, and if we are not careful, we may run past this proposition and not really give it a lot of thought, but I want us to understand that it is a biblical principle taught within the Old Testament and the New Testament that as believers we are taught directly by God; that yes, God uses the agency of pastors and of parents to teach us things, but that the indwelling Holy Spirit of God speaks to us directly and that we are hearing from God, and that as we hear his word proclaimed or we hear catechisms or we hear songs, those

other things that are based in God's word, that God is speaking to us directly, and that there comes a point in time where as a believer there are just some things that are assumed, there are some things that we assume are right and proper within our life. As an example, in many of the instances within the Gospels, Jesus does not say things like, "I think you heard it said." He says, "You have heard it said." He assumes in the life of those who are listening to him during those Gospels and to his disciples, he's assuming a bare minimum, a basic understanding of a believer, of a child of God so that he can say, "You have heard it said," and that would resonate with people, "Oh yeah, I've heard that said." Now in that particular text Jesus says, "You've heard it said of old, you shall not do such and such, but I say to you that if you have those thoughts and intentions in your mind and in your heart, that you are guilty of breaking that law already." That's the Sermon on the Mount. But Jesus assumes certain things of believers and that's a right and proper assumption because there comes a point in time in our lives as children of God, as ones truly possessing salvation – now listen – we all want salvation, right? We all want to escape the hell fire, right? I hope we all do, but salvation is much much more than that. Salvation is a right standing with God. Is a renewed fellowship with God. It's abundant life not only in the age to come but in the here and now. Salvation is much more than going to heaven. Salvation is being in the presence of God.

Now we can't get our minds around that. That is a wonderful thing to think on, that God has given us salvation and in that salvation, he has given us his Spirit, and in the giving of his Spirit, he teaches us, he instructs us directly. The hedge or the warning in that is that if we are unwilling to receive the instruction that has been given to us, then I don't think we have the right to call ourselves Christians. So that's kind of the thought for tonight.

As we go through this time tonight, we're going to be considering four propositions under this heading. The first one is this: that the believer's connection is assumed. I've already said that there are certain things about the Christian life that is assumed. Well, our connection with God is assumed. Now I'm going to develop that a little bit further here in just a moment so don't get all squirrely with me just yet. The second thing I want us to see tonight is that the believer's instruction is assured. Now we're using a bit of alliteration here tonight to help you remember these things. The connection is assumed and the instruction is assured, and then thirdly, that the believer's affection is assimilated. It's brought all together. So we are going to be talking about those three components tonight as we look at this verse, 1 Thessalonians 4:9 in which the word of God through the Apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica in verse 9 says this,

9 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,

Now that's pretty straightforward. There is not a lot of intricate language there. There is not a lot of deep-seated meaning. Grammatically this is probably one of the most straightforward verses that Paul has offered in the entirety of the Thessalonian corpus of 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Mechanically, let me just mention a couple of things to get us started here. There are no written, there are really no other verbal forms other than just some straightforward indicative verbs within this verse with the exception of two which

is "to write" and "to love." Both of those, the phrase "to write" at the very beginning of verse 9, and "to love" at the end of verse 9 are both present active infinitives. Infinitival phrases. And they bring with them the idea, the semantic nuance if you will or the translational understanding, of a gained ability. Now, I'm going to mention this a little further in both places but Paul is saying, "Look, there is no need for someone to write to you. You need not gain the ability of understanding because somebody has written something to you, because what you need to know has already been written. What you need to know has already been given. What you need to know has already been expressed. You've already heard it. You've already understood it. You've already taken it into yourself and you've already, we pray, made it part of who you are. There is no need for someone to write to you."

Well, what is it that was written? What is it that we know? To love one another. Now that's simple, right? To love one another. Not just to endure one another and not just to put up with one another or not just to have an affinity for one another that says, "Well, I like them as long as they are nice to me." But no, to love one another. That's simple. You see, that's all part of the believer's connection being assumed. Paul says here in this first part, "Now concerning brotherly love," concerning love for one another in this historical grammatical context it would have been the loving of the other brothers and sisters in Christ, other believers, Paul says, "Now concerning this practice of loving one another, there is no need for anyone to write to you." Now Paul has already said to the Thessalonian church in some other places that they were living in light of the Gospel; they were rejecting dead idols and turning to a living God; they had begun to shun the worldly practices and live in the holiness of Christ; they had begun to control themselves and abstain from fleshly immorality and live in the righteousness that God had brought to them. They were already doing it but we've already seen in chapter 4 that Paul says to them, "What you're already doing, do more and more and more. Grow in this righteousness. Grow in this holiness. Grow in this living in Christ." So there is a component of this that Paul is giving them one of those, "Atta, boy! You've heard what we've written. You've seen what we've written. You are applying it to your life and, man, amen! Good going! Way to go! Atta, boy!" But there's a component of this where he is warning them, "Don't become complacent in the good works that you are doing."

You see the, there are just certain parts of a Christian that are assumed and those parts of a Christian that are assumed is the connection. Now, we look for fruit. Don't misunderstand me. We look for fruit every day in the lives of believers. For those who say they love Jesus, I've mentioned this several times over the last several weeks, for those who say, "I love Jesus," we ought to be looking to see if their love of Jesus is really manifest in their love for Jesus' word and their love for Jesus' people. Those are two fruits of loving Jesus that are very tangible. If I say I love Jesus, then by necessity it's assumed that I love Jesus' word for Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments," right? And if I love Jesus, then it's assumed that I love Jesus' people, I love other brothers and sisters in Christ, you see, for the Scriptures teach us that we are one body. We were singing about that earlier. We are one body with one Spirit, one Lord. 1 Corinthians tells us that we are one body with one baptism, one Spirit, one profession, one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we love God's people. We love Jesus' people. It's

completely contrary to rational thinking and to the Scriptures, it is unknown to the Scriptures to have people say, "I love Jesus," but they don't love Jesus' word and they don't love Jesus' people. You just don't find that in Scripture. You find it in Scripture but it comes to us in the form of wheat and tares and you can guess who the tares are, or the sheep and the goats, and we know who the goats are. It's people who have a resemblance of Christ but no real love of Christ.

So there are just some things that are assumed about a believer, the believer's connection. Paul is just saying, "Look, in this area of what you have been commanded to do in brotherly love, there is no need for me to write anything else to you. You already know what it is that you ought to be doing." In 1 John 2: 20-25, we find a similar idea. 1 John says,

20 But you have been anointed by the Holy Spirit, and you all have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he made to us--eternal life.

A couple of things I want us just to note here in this idea of a believer's connection is assumed. First of all he says, "But you have been anointed by the Holy Spirit." We saw in Titus 3 this morning that that anointing of the Holy Spirit is regeneration and renewal. As a matter of fact, if you're interested in that, you can go to Titus 3:3-5 and Paul is talking about that the salvation is brought about by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Now that's not a mystical anointing, that's a regeneration. As a matter of fact, Paul says, "by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and by his renewal, his making all things new."

So here in 1 John, the Apostle John is affirming that, that as a believer we have been anointed by the Holy Spirit. We have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. We have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit. To put it in simple terms, the Holy Spirit lives in the life, lives in the body, lives in the person of every believer. That's how you become a believer. When you become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you've only done so because the Holy Spirit has indwelt you and opened your eyes to the reality of the Scriptures, opened your heart to receive those Scriptures, opened your ears to hear the preaching of the Gospel, and opened your understanding so that you might know what all of that is. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that the worldly person, the depraved lost person, doesn't accept the things of God because they are foolishness to him and they are foolishness to him, he says in chapter 2, because the things of God have to be spiritually discerned. Well, how do we gain spiritual discernment? By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and when the Holy Spirit indwells us, then we begin to understand and love and appreciate the word of God. That's what 1 John is saying.

You have been given that and he goes on to say, and you all have knowledge. You have been given an understanding of the Scriptures. I don't know, this doesn't really, it's not part of my testimony, but there are some among us who probably the Lord saved at a later age in life, and I want you to think about the difference between something just as simple as this: Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so, right? Y'all remember that song? "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong, they are weak but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me." Do y'all know that song? Sounds pretty simple, right? Deep theology in that song. Think about your view of that song prior to your regeneration. Probably just thought it was a trite little kids' song and that's what little kids sing in Bible school just to make them happy, but think about that song after your regeneration. Yes, a simple concept that Jesus loves me, no argument, but the Bible has told us how Jesus loves us. It tells us that we are weak and he is strong and we praise him because of his love. I don't know if you ever thought about that before. You see, you have knowledge. You have knowledge of what that song, simplistic as it may be, really means. Where did you get that? How did you go from it's just a little children's kiddie song that they sing, to man, there's some really good theology in there? How did we get there? By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The knowledge that is given to us, he says you all have knowledge.

He says, "I write to you not because you do not know the truth but because you do know it." John says, "I'm writing this to you because you know what the truth is." John is not writing a discourse on the mechanical attributes of truth, although there is an awful lot of description about truth in 1 John. But that wasn't his purpose. His purpose wasn't didactic. There is your big word for today, didactic. That means teaching. His purpose was to draw them to live in the truth, okay? He says, "I'm not writing to you because you don't know the truth, it's because you do know it and because no lie is of the truth." He's saying, "You know what the real deal is, now let's begin to apply it." You see, there is a connection between the believers in 1 John and the truth of God that's assumed. John's saying, "Look, you know it. You just need to get up and get going and do it."

He goes on to say, "who is liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ." That sounds really simple but what was going on in the days of 1 John is they were probably gnostics, people who were engaged in the gnostic heresy, running around saying Jesus was just this good teacher. Jesus was not divine, he was just a man. Now they were really complicated in their presentation because they would say that the divine and the fleshly could not live together; that the divine or the spiritual was all good and that the flesh or the fleshly, the earthly, was all bad, and those two things just simply could not mix and they were saying Jesus was either divine and not human, or he was worldly and earthly having a human body and not divine. Now you take your pick but that's what they were saying and the strange thing about it is two of the major heresies within orthodox history, within church history, have surrounded one of those two: either Jesus was human and not divine or he was divine and not human. But the Scriptures teach us that Christ was both divine and human and what we don't understand in our human way of seeing things, God certainly can put those two things together because as the angel said to Mary at the announcement of Jesus' conception, "All things are possible with God."

They were saying Jesus was not the Messiah for various reasons and John is saying, "Look, you know the truth. You know that it was possible for Jesus to be all God and all man at the same time." If you're interested in that from an academic standpoint, you can go and Google the hypostatic union, and that's a doctrine in orthodoxy that talks about Jesus being all God and all man at the same time, how that worked, and there has been a lot of ink spilled over the years on that very issue. But John is saying, "You don't have to debate that question." And by the looks of your faces this evening, you're not debating that question either. You're accepting that Jesus was divine and human all at the same time because you have knowledge, because there are certain things about your relationship with God that's assumed. We've moved beyond debating these particular points. We accept them as being true.

He goes on to say, "and this is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father." We could spend hours on this, how in our modern day people are not just saying, "Oh, Jesus is not real. God is not real." But logistically that's exactly what they're saying. Let me give it to you in the form that I've already introduced this evening. I love Jesus. How many people, do you know people that say that, "I love Jesus"? Y'all know people that say that? I know people who say that but then they just don't do what Jesus says. Well, that's denying the Son. That's denying the power of God. That's denying the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And the reality is that they are from the antichrist.

Now that's a harsh thing to say and I say it with great trepidation, but the real deal doesn't deny Christ. Do we fall short in following Christ? Yes, we do. We are all sinners. I'm not saying we don't, but when we fall short, the conviction of the Spirit in light of Christ's words comes very quickly to mind and we know we're not where we ought to be, right? Have you ever, not the dark, the proverbial dark alley, I'm sure we've been there too, have you ever been in a dark alley that you just know you don't need to be there? You don't see anything wrong, you don't hear anything wrong, but you've just got the sense that you don't need to be there, have you ever been in a spot like that? Have you ever been pondering a decision in your life, something that you think that you want to do and you know it's not the right decision and you know you don't need to be there but you still travel down that road anyway? That conviction comes because the Spirit of the living God is inside of us. That's part of the connection that we assume.

Going on. He says, "Let what you have heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you have heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and the Father." John is just saying to us that we've heard these principles. We don't need to make the Gospel complicated and I think many times we do. Is there a depth of theology and philosophy and understanding of the Gospel? Certainly, but the Gospel is so straightforward and simple, not simplistic but simple, that a child can understand it, right? But the Gospel is so deep that very learned men have devoted the entirety of their lives to the study of the Gospel and have but scratched the surface of its depths. There are things of the Gospel that come to us in a way that we can understand and we can understand it straightforwardly. God doesn't want just to be confused. God is not a God of confusion,

he is a God of order. He is a God of straightforwardness. He is a God that says plainly to us, "This is what I expect."

And John says, "Let what you have heard," those kinds of things, "abide in you." Don't just write them down on your outline, and as I said this morning, to put in the back of your Bible and never to see the light of day ever again. If that's what you're going to do with your notes, let me encourage you just not to write notes. You're wasting your time. If you're just going to write them on a piece of paper and stick them in the back of your Bible and two years from now you're going to pull them out and go, "Oh, wow, this is a big stack of notes. I need to get rid of them." There they go. Don't do it. You're just wasting your time.

"Let what you have heard abide in you." I've described abiding in the past as two people living in a one man pup tent. I don't know if you've ever seen that but in certain venues, camping venues, hiking venues, they make these little one man pup tents. You know, it's one of those ones that you pull it out of the bag, and have you ever seen those canned biscuits, that you pull the label off and you twist the can a little bit and it goes poof! You know, the biscuits are all over the place. Well, they make some pup tents that are like that. You pull it out of the bag and as soon as you pull it out of the bag, it goes poof! And it's there. It's a one man pup tent. There's just enough room in that tent for one person. Trust me, it's tight with one person, but abiding is two people living not just for a weekend but all the time in a one man pup tent. Do you want to make it even better? How about three people living in a one man pup tent? The point is you know your buddy and you know your buddy really well. You're in close proximity with your buddy, right? That's the illustration. Let what you have heard from the beginning live like two men in a one man pup tent in you. Be in close proximity with what you have heard. Know what you have heard intimately. Know it backwards. Know it forward. Know it inside. Know it out. Know it in English. Know it in Greek. Know it in Latin. Know it in Swahili. Know it in whatever, but know it.

"Let what you have heard from the beginning," it's not a new message, it's a message that's been here for a while, "abide in you. And if what you have heard from the beginning actually is abiding in you, then you also will abide in the Son and the Father," and that's because what you are hearing are the words of the Son and the Father. Jesus said, "The sheep know my voice," right? The sheep know the voice of the shepherd and they come to the shepherd. They don't come to just anybody, they come to the shepherd. It's an amazing thing, this principle. I'll give you an illustration and I hope I'm not belaboring it too much. Tonight when we go home, it's funny, we get home and our little dog is at the house and if we've been good parents, we haven't left him in the dark. I think we left a light on for him. I don't know exactly what he does when we're gone. I know he sleeps some. He naps some, but he kind of at certain times has a sense that it's probably pretty close to the time for us to come home and it wouldn't surprise me at all if he's not kind of sitting on the couch looking out the window waiting to see the car turn into the driveway. But when we come in and we park in the back and we come in the back door, when you open the back door and you look down the hallway, you always see him standing in the same spot and he's kind of hiding halfway behind the couch and he's

looking down the hall, and he's looking to see who's coming in that back door. And when you open that door, you see him and either Nancy or I will say something to him. When he hears our voice, then he steps out from behind the couch and his tail is going 90 to nothing. Why is that? Because he recognizes our voice. Now there have been those that while we have been gone on trips and so forth, we've asked to watch after our dog and they can attest to you that when they open the door and he's behind the couch and they say something to him and he hears their voice, he doesn't come out from behind the couch, he runs underneath the couch and he will not come out until we come home because he doesn't know their voice, right?

Do you see? The intimacy of knowing God's voice and hearing God's voice in the things that we have heard, you see, there is just a part of a believer's connection that is assumed. We don't have to fuss about that. We don't have to debate those. We don't have to question those. It's just, it is. Paul says, "In terms of brotherly love, there is nothing, there is no need to write to you about these things." We just assume that it's true.

A believer's instruction is assured, that's the second thing tonight. "Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God." Isn't it tragic, isn't it just an absolute tragedy to survey the majority of modern evangelical life, churches, Christians, supposed Christian homes, supposed believers, who all have this hope of salvation in Jesus Christ but who for the vast majority are just wandering around in the darkness of ignorance. It's tragic, you see, because in our world today, we have boiled faith down to a prayer that we pray or a card that we sign, and that's all faith is. It's just a declaration that I want to be in the club. And faith is a living thing. Faith is not a one-time event. Faith is something that we pursue every moment of every day. In the life of the believer, there is never a waking moment that we're not pursuing faith. And it doesn't mean that faith is elusive, that we never catch it, but it's something that when we taste of it, as the Scripture says, "Come and see and taste to see that the Lord is good," when we taste of it, that we just need more. And I don't mean need more in terms of an addiction. I've heard of faith described that way, that people will say, "Well, faith is just like this really good drug. You take your first hit and then, dude, you've just got to have more." No. No, it is something that governs us and in a sense it does control us but it doesn't control us in an overbearing way. It's something more like this: that in maturity I see the love that God has for me and through faith, I'm trusting him, and I just don't want to be anywhere else.

I'm going to use that statement, think back to the days when you were dating. I do that every so often, a couple of times a year probably. Think back to your dating days. Do you remember the time in which you just thought you were going to be sick if you weren't near the person that you were dating? Now I pray that that person is the one you married, okay? I pray that you did that. But when we were dating, and we have all had those experiences that somebody that we were just very connected with, man, we just didn't want to be anywhere else, right? I don't know what happens in modern homes today but when I was younger, we used to talk on the phone for hours on end. Now those were not cell phones, those were land lines so you weren't worried about minutes. But you know, you've heard the story of people calling and saying, "Man, I called your house all day

yesterday and the phone was busy. What was the deal? Was the phone out?" No. No, the kids were on the phone. They were talking on the phone. Some of you are shaking your head. You know what it's like. You didn't want to be anywhere else other than in the presence of that person, right? Now come on, work with me. Y'all know what I'm talking about.

That's faith and it is not the desire to be in faith as an intellectual concept, it's the desire to be in the presence of Christ. And you know, I just don't see the majority of folks who call themselves Christians having that passion. "Christ? Oh yeah, he saved me and I'll call on him when I need something, but in the meantime I'm just going to do my own thing." No. No. Could that be why so many of our marriages are messed up? That we apply that same kind of idea that we have about Christ to our spouses? "Oh yeah, that's my wife and she cooks for me and cleans for me and, you know, when I need something, she's there, but in the meantime I'm just going to go and do my own thing." Is it any wonder marriages are falling apart? Is it any wonder that kids are being abandoned by both parents when we have that idea? You see, faith is more than that. This idea of being taught by God, as a believer, as a child of God, do you not understand that God has given you the best gift you could ever have? Ever. Ever. It is not salvation, although that's really good, it's his Spirit.

I said some time ago and I was critical of the song and I'm still critical of the song, "I've got a mansion on a hilltop." That's an old song and, man, a lot of our senior saints love that song. Dude, man, I caught a lot of flak last time I said that's just a theologically bad song. "Oh, Brother Rusty, I've got a mansion on a hilltop." No, you don't, and if you're hoping for that, you've missed the purpose of heaven and here's why: God has already given us the very best of what he has. What makes us think that a mansion is the best that God has for us? What makes us think the streets of gold are the best that God has for us? What makes us think that the pearly gates is the best that God has for us? They are not. They are just descriptions that John used to try to describe heaven for us. That's not what God has given to us. God has given us the best already and it's himself. It's his Spirit. It's his Son. It's his presence. And believer, child of God, you are instructed by God himself. We need not fear the man behind the curtain because there is no man and there is no curtain. He is the great and powerful God and he is not a God that is in a crystal palace somewhere out there handing down mandates and dictates with an army or a police force that forces us to do it. He is a Father who teaches us as if a father teaches his children. Yes, he draws us up on his knee and says, "Now look, this is how the cow eats the cabbage."

Paul says you don't need anybody to write to you about brotherly love because you've been taught already by God. You're being taught right now by God. You see, a believer's instruction is assured. God doesn't leave us in the immaturity of our faith. If we are immature Christians, we do so at our own choosing, our own sinful rebellious choosing. I've said many times that through all of the things that I've experienced in life and the roads that God has walked me down, and some of the roads that the Lord has ordained for me in my life have been really good. Well, they've all been really good roads. Some of them have not been very pleasant. Some of them have been very difficult. There have

been many faults and failings and fallings on those roads for me, and I've said despite all of the painful and bad things that I myself have perpetrated in my own life, I don't have any regrets. I wouldn't go back and change a thing. Not a thing. The roads that I have walked down by God's ordination have been roads that have brought me to maturity, that have brought me to gentleness, they have brought me, I pray, to humility, and they have grown me into the person that I am today, and to change those things of the past would mean to change me, and I don't know that I want to change me because I have a belief that I am exactly where God wants me to be right now. It doesn't mean that I'm not going to continue to grow. I pray that I do, but I am where God has brought me. He's been instructing me. He's been instructing you. That instruction is assured. We are being taught by God.

In John 14, we find a similar thought. He said,

25 "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you [this is the Lord speaking to his disciples]. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. 28 You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe."

Jesus, it's interesting in this middle section of the Gospel of John starting at about chapter 14 and I would argue going all the way through Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus is devoting himself to the instruction of his disciples. He's giving them lessons just like this. I mean, it's just boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. He's preparing them and that's the instruction that he's giving to us. Here he says, "I have spoken these things to you while I'm still with you. I've given you the revelation." Now look, the canon of Scripture had not been completed yet. The disciples couldn't flip over to Acts and go, "Oh yeah, this is what's going on." And they couldn't go back to Matthew and say, "Well, you know Matthew said this, Lord." But they had the living Christ and so Jesus is saying, "I'm telling you these things instructively."

But he says, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send," in my stead, "in my name, he will teach you all these things." Jesus is saying, "Look, guys, I realize that in these three years, man, all the stuff you've seen. You can't possibly remember all the stuff that you've seen." Remember, John tells us in his Gospel in chapter 21, that these were just some of the things that Jesus did and that he did many more things other than this and John said, and I don't think he was being metaphoric here, he says, "If we wrote down all the things that Jesus did, all of the books in the entire world would not contain all the things that Jesus did." Okay? And the point is that the disciples saw all kinds of things that Jesus did. Not materially or radically different than what we have already recorded for us, but, you know, in keeping with what we already have recorded.

You know, Jesus healed a bunch of people. He cast out a lot of demons. He may have fed 5,000 or 4,000, 2,000, 3,000, 15,000. You know, who knows? We have the highlights. We have the major teachings in the Scripture but Jesus did a whole lot more so Jesus is saying to his disciples, "Look, y'all have seen all kinds of stuff and I don't expect y'all to remember everything that you've seen. I don't expect you to remember me healing that lady over here in this other village over there. I don't know, say she was deaf, you know, and I healed her. You probably will forget that. I don't expect you to remember everything I've taught you. Man, for three years I've been giving it to you bam, bam, bam, bam, bam. Hey, I know, y'all got that glazed over look. You've got that deer in the headlights look and you're just like, 'My brain can't take any more.'"

And Jesus says, "I know that but I'm going to send the Helper and when the Helper comes, he will teach you these things, he will remind you of these things. He will bring to your remembrance all that I've said, all that you've seen, all that you've learned." Dude, how great is that? That we don't have... I mean, should we memorize things? Certainly. Should we remember stuff? Certainly, especially Scripture, but in the remembering, the Spirit helps us remember what we've learned. He helps us to remember the things that we've assimilated and brought in and the notes that we've taken, and that's why I say, please take notes. Just use them, okay? Study them. And you know, this has happened to me, I have a study Bible that I've used for many years that when I would go to church or when we went to a conference or when I heard somebody speak, I purposely had this big old honking, it's almost like a family Bible. Have you ever seen those family Bibles? They used to be on coffee tables. You don't see them so much anymore. But I mean, dude, this thing was like four feet across and that was closed, you open it up and it's like boom, right? Big old study Bible. I'm trying to be graphic here. And I had notes written all in this thing. You know, I'd hear a message and I'd go, "Dude, that's good," and I'd write it down. "Man, I never thought of that before," and I'd write it down. And in the study Bible and it's on my desk, I still use it. I flip through there from time to time and I turn a page and there's a note on there and I go, "Wow. Yeah, I remember that." Now two seconds before that, I had no remembrance of that particular message or that thought, but I turn that page and there's that note and I go, "Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah. I remember that. That's good."

That's the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that he'll give the Holy Spirit and he'll bring to our remembrance all these things we've heard. Well, why is that? Because our instruction is assured. Look, I wrote notes for a quantitative method. I found those notes and I looked at those notes and I said, "Dude, I don't understand that any more today than I did 20 years ago when I took the class." Right? I have to admit there are some Hebrew notes that are in the same category. Why is it that I can look at a note from a sermon from 20 years ago and go, "Wow!" and I can look at a note from a college class 20 years ago and say, "I ain't got a clue." It's the Holy Spirit. We're being instructed by God.

I've got to move on. I'm going to be long-winded.

"Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." You see, the result of God's instruction is that we have boldness. We can approach the throne room of God boldly.

Why is that? Because the dividing wall, the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom. It was torn in the flesh of Christ and we have boldness. We don't have to be afraid. You don't have to be afraid. Should we be discerning about physical circumstances? Is someone going to cause us harm? Is this an unsafe place? Certainly. I'm not saying throw that out the window but in terms of what God is doing in our life as we are being instructed by him for his glory, we don't have to be afraid. I think that's why we read this morning Paul saying, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel. Join me in suffering. Don't be ashamed of me. Don't be ashamed of Christ. Don't be ashamed of the Gospel. Be bold."

I think we need more people in Christendom today to be bold. We've taught several generations that Christianity is meek and mild and soft and there are components of Christianity that are meek and mild and soft. Our Savior was meek and mild. When he was being crucified, he never raised an insult, a curse. He never cried out. He was silent as a sheep going to the slaughter. But Christianity is not milk toast. It's not soggy. It's not weak. It's not flimsy. In particular we need strong men with calluses on their hands who have a softness of a Christian heart.

There is boldness. Don't be afraid. He said, "You've heard me say I'm going away and I'll come to you. If you love me, you would rejoice because I'm going to the Father." Jesus is saying, "Look, yeah, I know you're going to be grieved that I'm leaving. You love me. I love you." And we hate parting. Parting is such sweet sorrow, right, Shakespeare said. We grieve when we're not in the presence of those that we love but he's saying to them, "Look, this is the Father's will. Have you not heard what I've been saying for the last three years," Jesus said.

As we're instructed – now listen to me – as we are instructed by God, we no longer look at things on surface appearances. We look at things through spiritual eyes. There comes a point in time when people leave a fellowship. They leave a fellowship to go and plant another church. They leave a fellowship because God has called them elsewhere. They leave a fellowship because they have a God-ordained calling to another job or another vocation or another ministry. There are times when people leave churches and we're grieved by that, but the grief is greater when they leave for self-centered reasons as opposed to leaving for godly reasons.

So it takes maturity to know when is the right time to go, I mean, when God is calling us out to go somewhere else. By the way, don't worry, I'm not going anywhere. I'm not saying that, okay? I'm staying right here, as far as I know. But you see, it takes maturity to view things through spiritual eyes. It's tempting to move on because I don't like something or another, or it doesn't meet my creature comfort. It's tempting to do that but it's a much deeper spiritual issue being instructed by God and understanding what the will of the Father is when we say, "I have invested so much time here and I really don't want to go, but I know that I have to because of what God is doing in my life."

My point here is that that's all the results of God's instruction. When God is instructing us in the way that we ought to go, when God is instructing us in what is proper, when God is

instructing us in what is his will, then when we see things in the world that don't line up with what God is saying is right, we have a choice to make. Do I follow the will of God in what he's leading me to do which I know is going to be very painful or do I just stay where I am because that's what I'm used to? And that's in every area of life. That's everywhere. What God leads us to many times is not the comfortable thing, it's not the convenient thing, it's not the thing that we're used to. It's his thing.

And Jesus is saying, "Look, I'm going away and, yeah, it would be a lot more comfortable for me to stay and grow old and teach you all these things over 20 or 30 years, but that's just not God's plan." And they were grieved. They were physically grieved at the death of Christ. Terrified. Frightened. The point is that a believer who has a connection that is rightly assumed has an instruction that is assured. There is no need for us to write to you about this issue of brotherly love because you're being taught by God.

Well, what are we being taught? That's our final point this evening and I would be remiss if I didn't catch it here. We're being taught by God directly to love one another. The believer's affection is assimilated. The word "assimilated" means "to be incorporated." It means to take the various components, bring them together in a whole. I'm sure there's somebody in here who likes to bake cakes, right? Do you like to bake cakes? We like to eat cakes, I understand that, but somebody's got to bake them. Yes, I know you can go to the bakery and you can go up to the little baker's window and there will be this nice cake under this plastic dome already made for you, and sometimes we do that, but the really good cakes come to us in the form of egg, flour, and milk. You see, I don't bake. I'm on the eating side, not the baking side. We take ingredients and we assimilate them into one whole, one wholistic unit that we call a cake, right? Now, one reason I don't like baking is because baking is pretty precise and that's probably why I'm not a very good baker, that when it says you need 1 ¼ cup of flour, that doesn't mean a cup is good enough and it doesn't mean 1 ½ or 2 cups is better. It means 1 ¼ cup of flour. When it says a tablespoon of shortening, you can't, I'm finding out that you can't really substitute other things for shortening. If it's got to be animal shortening, if it's got to be lard, by golly it's got to be lard, and as unhealthy as that is, that's what it's got to be. And if you need a pinch of salt, by golly you'd better get you a little measuring spoon that says "pinch." That's what we have at our house. Because if you get the proportions wrong or if you substitute things that won't work, it won't work. That's why my biscuits look like hockey pucks. I have yet to be able to make biscuits big. All my biscuits are small, okay? My bread is the same way. So I think I'm going to give up on baking. I'm just not a baking person.

But the point is assimilation is taking all these individual units, all these individual ingredients in their correct proportions. Let me highlight that, that I follow the recipe as the recipe demands. Now look, cooking anything else, cooking prime rib, cooking roasts, cooking pork roast, you know, hey, get it close and that's good when you're cooking meat. That's why I like cooking meat, it's easy. Baking is something different. Assimilation is taking things in their proper proportion and mixing them together as it is prescribed and, by the way, did you know that biscuits, you don't really mix that stuff up really good, that you leave it kind of sort of mixed? I didn't know that. Man, I'm in there

with a mixer, just got to get it all mixed up. Maybe that's why they're flat. I don't know. At least that's what Lisa says that's what the case is. So I told you, I'm not a good baker.

We've got to do it in its right proportion and its right methodology and we take all these components and we put them together in this whole, and if we do it by the recipe, then it comes out the way its supposed to. The believer's affection is assimilated. The believer's affection brings together all the biblical components that are given to us in Scripture as being the correct components of Christian affection, and we do it in the correct proportions, and we mix it as the Scripture has taught us to mix it, and when we do it as the recipe tells us, which is the Scripture, then it comes out as it ought to and it's a beautiful thing. There are a lot of ways affection can go sideways and it's not my purpose tonight nor would I have the time even if I wanted to, to talk about all the ways that affection gets in the ditch so let me just says this: that according to this verse, that there is no need for anyone to write to us about brotherly affection because we've already been taught by God what it is that we're to do and what we're to do is to love one another.

Now I mentioned that phrase, "to love one another," to love is the infinitival part of that and infinitives typically mean a gained ability. To gain the ability to love. Now the word used here is agapao. It's not phileo. It's not, well the other one has escaped me. There are four different words for love in the Greek New Testament. Phileo is brotherly love. Eros is erotic love. Storge is the affinity. You see, the Spirit brings it back to our remembrance. It's not any of those, it's agape. It's agape love. It's fidelity. It's faithfulness. It's committedness. It's a love that's not based on chemistry. It's not a love that's based on a common identity necessarily. It's not a love that is, it's certainly not a love that is erotic. It's not a sexual love. This is just being committed to one another. This is looking out for each other's best interest even when that best interest is not being reciprocated. Alright, do y'all follow me?

He says God has taught us in the methodology of gaining the ability to love one another, to be faithful to one another. Now that's an interesting thought because if through the teaching of God we are gaining the ability to love one another, that tells me that in our natural condition before we start this process, that we're not loving one another as we ought, at least, and that there is a growth in maturity in loving one another. We are growing to be mature in our fidelity. We're growing to be mature in our faithfulness. We are learning how to confront one another lovingly, committedly, faithfully, with the word of God without just absolutely slamming each other in the head, right? We're learning how to be gentle. We're learning how to be kind. We're learning how to be self-controlled. And we're doing that through God's instruction.

You see, this affection that we're talking about is taking all these various and sundry components from here and from there, from this experience and that experience, and the right proportions and get it all right and mixing it correctly and following the recipe, and sometimes that's a lengthy process. I believe that's another reason why I don't like baking. I've got, they call it a simple, I can't believe they termed it this, simple bread recipe. Simple, because you've got to take all this stuff, you've got to mix it all up, and by the way, I learned and the bakers in the group are going to go, "Well, yeah. Hello?" But I

learned that you just can't put cold milk in your yeast and have it work. It doesn't work. You've got to heat up the milk. You've got to heat up the water and the yeast and get that all going and you can't heat it too much because I said, "Well hey, if 30 seconds was good in the microwave for heating it, 5 minutes ought to be better." Boy, it was boiling and that didn't work. Simple bread recipe.

You mix all this stuff up and you've got to preheat it and all that garbage stuff, jazz, and then you've got to let that bad boy sit for about three hours. I'm like simple is wham, bam, throw it in there and you're done. That's simple. Yeah. That's why I make hockey pucks. You've got to let it sit for three hours and once you let it sit for three hours, oh by the way, it's got to sit in a buttered greased bowl with a damp towel over it. I'm like, "How weird is that?" After it sits for three hours, you've got to take it out and you have to punch it down. What? So I'm sitting there bam, bam, bam, bam. Hockey pucks. The point is, y'all going to know all about my baking experience before it's over. I guess the purpose of this is I like homemade bread so why don't you start making it for me? It's a joke but I would accept it.

The assimilation is a process, okay? It doesn't happen overnight. You can't be saved today and be a whiz at loving other people tomorrow. If there's anything in ministry that I've learned, that's it, that I fall short consistently in loving other people. You see, the believer's affection is assimilated, it's grown, it's brought together, it's mixed together in right proportion and it's done according to the recipe.

"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us," Romans 12:4-6. We're one body and, yeah, we've got all kinds of different folks but that's the beauty of Christ. That's the universality of the Gospel. It would be an incredibly boring place if we were all alike and we would be even more dysfunctional than we already are because everybody would want it their way. Of course everybody wants it their way anyway.

So a believer's connection is assumed, the believer's instruction is assured, and the believer's affection is assimilated. John 6 and we'll close on this.

44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me--

You see, God's instruction is only given to his children, the children of the devil are instructed by their father. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. I mean, look, John 6:44 is probably one of the clearest declarations of God's initiation of salvation of any verse in the Scripture and the mechanics of it, there is some grammatical stuff but, look, I've analyzed it. I personally have gone through this text with a fine-tooth comb and was astounded at how straightforward it is grammatically. I mean, we're not necessarily looking for participles and those kinds of things, they're indicative

verbs. They're straightforward verbs and Jesus says, "Look, the reality of life is nobody comes to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Unless God moves on your heart, it ain't gonna happen.

So the children of God are instructed by God and the children of the devil are instructed by the devil. That's just the simple straightforward teaching in the Scriptures. Either you're lost or you're saved, that's another way of looking at it. Those who are saved will learn the principles of God and if you're not learning the principles of God, I think it is fair to say that you're not saved, that you're probably lost because Satan says, "Study? Ah, you don't need to study. You've got it. Find out what that all means? Oh, dude, that's just going to make your head hurt. Don't worry about it." Right? "You love Jesus, that's all you need." There are going to be thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people who will line the road to hell and the whole time saying, "I love Jesus." Are you being instructed? You are being instructed but who are you being instructed by?

The result of God's instruction is resurrection. He says, "And I will raise him up on the last day. No one comes to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." That's a promise. Look, you've heard me talk a lot about meditation and study and pouring yourself into God's word, investing yourself in God's church, and you go, "Look, I'm giving. I'm giving. I'm giving. I'm giving. What's in it for me?" Well, first of all, that's a wrong way of looking at it. We don't do things within the kingdom so that we can get something out of it. But there is a promise, eternal life, and not just eternal life because I would hold that everybody has eternal life, but eternal life in that we are in the presence of God. Now, you might split hairs and say, "Well, damnation and reprobation, that's eternal death." And yes, you're correct according to the Scriptures but it's not annihilationism. There are people who are going to spend all eternity in torment. The process of resurrection is God's direct instruction.

Now listen to this, this is fascinating to me. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets," of these folks that are being raised up on the last day because they've been drawn by God, that "they will all be taught by God." Do you see? That's why I say if you're not being taught by God or if you're spurning the teaching that God is giving you and you're not paying attention to it and you're doing your own thing, that you really don't have the right to call yourself a Christian. This verse makes it clear. You're not going to come unless God calls you. If God calls you, you will come. And if God has called you and you have come, you will be raised up on the last day but in the meantime you're being instructed by God. And if you're not willing to be instructed by God, I don't think you can bank on being raised up in the last day and the proof of God's direct instruction is the drawing of a changed nature.

"Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me." Hey, there is no doubt in that statement. "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me." When God opens our awareness of his word, when he convicts us with the sword of his word, when he illumines our minds and opens our hearts, the result is we come to Christ.

I hedge to mention this at this late hour but, you know, that's basically the point to irresistible grace, that when God moves upon a heart, the result is salvation. When the Spirit indwells a person, the result is always 100% without fail regeneration. Always. There is nobody on the face of this planet within human history ever who has received the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and not been saved. And I know what you're thinking for you sharp ones, you're saying, "Yeah, but Rusty, Hebrews 6:6 says what about the person who has tasted of the grace and fallen away?" Well, that's a whole other discussion for another day. That's not one who has received regeneration and fallen away, that's one who is religious with the appearances of regeneration and think they have it but the reality is that they don't. The writer of Hebrews has an awful lot to say about religion.

God's call to holiness is his direct instruction. It's assumed. It's assured. It's assimilated. That's triple A. I pray tonight in the hearing of God's word that he would speak to all our hearts and that we would not run away from but run towards God's instruction. Amen.

Let's pray.

Father, we do praise you, we do glorify you, we do thank you, Lord, for your word tonight. And as always, Father, you have granted us much grace, grace upon grace, to cover much ground in a very short period of time. And Father, we're no better than the disciples and our minds glaze over and we're saturated with truth and there is just some stuff that we don't or can't take into ourselves but, Lord, your Spirit, you've promised to give us your Spirit that would bring to our remembrance all the things that we've heard. So I pray, Father, that in the quiet corners of our minds as we unpack these things that we've heard tonight, perhaps over the next several days, that we wouldn't just forget about them but, Lord, that your Spirit would bring them to our remembrance and that we would receive the instruction that you give to us.

Father, I pray that you would use your instruction to grow us in maturity and that, Lord, we would always run towards you and never away from you. And Father, at those times where we find ourselves out of your will, that you would give us a very sharp rebuke and bring a very poignant conviction but grant us repentance in the moment and confession that we might be restored to you, that Father, as your people we might live in holiness and righteousness and be the examples, the salt and the light to the world that you've called us to be.

We love you, Father, we thank you for your word to us and your instruction for us. We praise you for the Lord Jesus who made all things possible and for your Spirit who guides us through this process of assimilation. We ask, Father, that you be glorified not only in this hour but in the things that we do in the hours to come by your grace. Father, we love you, we thank you, we praise you and we ask all these things in your name. Amen.