

## I Thessalonians 4:1-12

### Sanctification and Love

1Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. 2For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of* the Lord Jesus. 3For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6*and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the avenger* in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. 7For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. 9Now 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; 10for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 11and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 12so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need. **I Thessalonians 4:1-12 NASB**

- Our desire: God's pleasure...pleasing God
  - You received instruction from us as to how to walk and please God. (**I Thessalonians 4:1**)
  - ..." I taught you how to walk that you might please God" ... **Wm Conybeare**
  - ..."to continue advancing in the idea you caught from us, how to behave in a way that pleases God...**The Berkley N.T.**

And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him. **John 8:29 NASB**

- ..." I am always doing the things that are pleasing to Him." **John 8:29 Wuest**

6Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18For he who in this *way* serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. **Romans 14:16-19 NASB**

6Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— 7for we walk by faith, not by sight— 8we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. 9Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. **2 Corinthians 5:6-9 NASB**

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8for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 9(for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. **Ephesians 5:8-10 NASB**

- Our direction: The will of God (**I Thessalonians 4:2-3**)
  - The will of God

For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.” **John 6:40 NASB**

1Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. 2And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. **Romans 12:1-2 NASB**

17So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, **Ephesians 5:17-18 NASB**

For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. **Hosea 6:6 NASB**

30I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; 31but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here. **John 14:30-31 NASB**

- His will: our sanctification. (**I Thessalonians 4:3**)
  - ...” That you should be holy.” **NEB**
  - “That you should be pure.” **TCNT**
  - “That you should be consecrated.” **Conybeare**
- Sanctification: our dedication or consecration to God. This word is used both for the process of becoming holy and the result of that process, holiness. To be holy is to be set apart for God. Sanctification is both an event and a process.

17But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. **Romans 6:17-19 NASB**

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30But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." I

**Corinthians 1:30-31 NASB**

13But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. II

**Thessalonians 2:13 NASB**

9Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us for our good*, so that we may share His holiness. **Hebrews 12:9-10 NASB**

11Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; 12and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you; 13so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. **I Thessalonians 3:11-13 NASB**

- Paul is exhorting them concerning the things he had just prayed over them.
- God's will is our sanctification and one central issue is navigating the 'waters of life' in a way that keeps you free from immorality. (**I Thessalonians 4:3**)
- See **I Thessalonians 4:4-8**...self-control is a significant issue.
- Some scholars think **v4** is in reference to control of your own body...
- Some others think this is instruction on how to acquire a wife in a noble and honorable way.
- Regardless, the God-given context for sex is within marriage.
- Christian morality is not based primarily on rules and regulations, but on a relationship with God and others.
- This is the moral atmosphere of the day and the cities Paul was ministering in and it relates to his message to the Thessalonians (see **I Thessalonians 4:1-12**)

It is not surprising that the apostle begins with sex, not only because it is the most imperious of all our human urges, but also because of the sexual laxity – even promiscuity – of the Graeco-Roman world. Besides, he was writing from Corinth to Thessalonica, and both cities were famed for their immorality. In Corinth Aphrodite, the Greed goddess of sex and beauty, whom the Romans identified with Venus, sent her servants out as prostitutes to roam the streets by night. Thessalonica, on the other hand, was particularly associated with the worship of deities called the Cabiri, in whose rites 'gross immorality was promoted under the name of religion'.<sup>13</sup> It may be doubted, however, whether Corinth and Thessalonica were any worse than other cities of that period in which it was widely accepted that men either could not or would not limit themselves to their wife as their only sexual partner. Professor F. F. Bruce sums up the situation:

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A man might have a mistress (*hetaira*) who could provide him also with intellectual for companionship; the institution of slavery made it easy for him to have a concubine (*pallake*), while causal gratification was readily available from a harlot (*porne*). The function of his wife was to manage his household and to be the mother of his legitimate children and heirs.<sup>14</sup>

In his *History of European Morals* William Lecky paints a lurid picture of sexual license during the early period of the Roman Empire. The cities of Greece, Asia Minor and Egypt, he writes, 'had become centres of the wildest corruption', and innumerable slaves from these countries had spread their immorality to Rome.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, 'there has probably never been a period when vice was more extravagant or uncontrolled' than it was under the Caesars.<sup>16</sup> **John Stott- The Bible Speaks Today**

- We need to be taught by God to love one another. (See **I Thessalonians 4:8-12**)
  - This word is found in Greek literature to describe the natural love of children for their father.
  - Paul exhorts them to continue to grow and abound in love for the family of God.
  - This kind of love will empower you to conduct yourself in ways that will influence people who don't know the Lord. **(v12)**
  - "...so that you may live influentially with outsiders..." **v12 – Williams**
  - It will also help with meeting needs among the body of Christ. **(v12)**
  - True freedom is not freedom from responsibility to God and others, but freedom from being centered on ourselves in order to live for God and for others.

Intense focus restricts what you are willing and able to see. And while this approach will keep you from seeing many things, it will also open your eyes to see more of what you hunger for. Self-control is not the ability to say no to a thousand other voices. It's the ability to say yes to the one thing so completely that there's nothing left to give to the other options.