

1 Thessalonians 4

Sanctification And Love

1-12

4:1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort [beseech] you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk [live] and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel [abound] still more.

1. "Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus" - They is asking and encouraging them as Christians, that is, those "in the Lord Jesus."
 - a. "Finally" is from "loipos" [loi **pahs**] meaning "as for the rest." At times it seems to have the meaning of "henceforth, from now on."
 - b. Paul sometimes used this word to introduce exhortations. (Eph. 6:10; Phil. 3:1; 4:8; 2 Thess. 3:1).
 - c. This word is sometimes found near the end of a letter not denoting the actual conclusion but indicating the end of the epistle was near. (2 Cor. 13:11).
- 2 Cor. 13:11 **Finally**, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
2. "that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk)"
 - a. How they lived was not the community standard or any other human standard.
 - b. They were to follow the "instruction" of the apostles and live their lives in a way that pleases God.
3. "that you excel still more"
 - a. Lit. "in order that you abound more"
 - b. They were doing well, but needed to excel even more.
 - 1) It would be so easy for these Christians or other Christians to become self-satisfied.
 - 2) It would be easy to start pleasing men instead of pleasing God.

4:2 For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of the Lord Jesus*.

1. "For you know what commandments we gave you"
 - a. Lit. "we gave you through the Lord Jesus."
 - b. They were not given mere guidelines or suggestions, but were the commandments of the Lord.

2. “by *the authority* of the Lord Jesus” - The words “the authority” are in italics indicating these words are not in the original Greek, but they are certainly implied.

a. Jesus has “all authority.” (Matt. 28:19). See Jn. 17:2.

b. Whatever we do should be “in the name [by the authority] of the Lord Jesus.” (Col. 3:17).

Col. 3:17 Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

c. Those wishing to be save must be submissive to His authority. (Lk. 6:46; Heb. 5:9).

d. Men have no authority of their own, but they can only bind by the authority of Christ.

4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

1. “For this is the will of God” - Their “sanctification” [holiness] was God’s will.

a. They had been “sanctified” [set apart to live a holy life] at conversion. (1 Cor. 6:11).

b. This “sanctification” [holiness] was not temporary, but was to be maintained throughout the Christian life.

2. “your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

a. The word “sanctification” is used several times in this chapter by Paul.

b. It comes from the Greek “hagiasmos” [hah gee ah **smahs**] meaning “holiness, sanctification.”

c. Christians are to “abstain from sexual immorality.” (1 Cor. 6:18-20; Gal. 5:19-21). See also Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5.

1 Cor. 6:18 Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

1 Cor. 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

1 Cor. 6:20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Gal. 5:19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

Gal. 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

Gal. 5:21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

d. They are to fulfill their sexual desires in marriage, not outside of marriage. (1 Cor. 7:1-5).

1 Cor. 7:1 Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

1 Cor. 7:2 But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

1 Cor. 7:3 The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

1 Cor. 7:4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*.

1 Cor. 7:5 Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

e. On the positive side there is no indication or suggestion there was immorality in the church at Thessalonica, but

there was always a threat of it.

4:4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

1. “that each of you know how to possess his own vessel”

- “ktaomai” [ktah ah mi] means “to get, to have, to possess, to acquire” depending on the context.

- a. “Vessel” is from “skeuos” [skyoo ahs] and means “vessel, body, instrument.”

- b. It is used of a wife in 1 Peter 3:7.

1 Pet. 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Greek literally has “as weaker vessel.”

- c. The Christian is to be pure and “possess his own vessel” may mean in context that the Christian must satisfy his sexual desires in marriage.

- 1) The RSV has “take a wife” as an interpretation of “vessel.”

- 2) This may be the idea, but it is very questionable.

- 3) This would indicate Paul is addressing single men, but nothing in the context suggests the idea that Paul has only single men in mind.

- 4) “Each of you” does not seem to apply only to single men or men only, but to both genders.

- d. Many believe it refers in context to the body of the person. NIV has “control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable.”

- 1) Some scriptures speak of persons as vessels. (Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21-23; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:21).

- 2) The scriptures do not speak of a husband or wife being the vessel of the other.

- 3) The wife is the “weaker vessel” [not as strong physically as the man], but not the “vessel” of man.

- 4) Both are “vessels” of God.

- 5) Both are accountable to God (Rom. 14:12), and are to live righteously. (Rom. 6:19).

Rom. 6:19 I 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.

- e. Each believer living a life of holiness seems to be the idea of Paul’s words

- f. Both interpretations are in agreement with God’s word. The Christian is to fulfill his sexual desires in marriage and keep himself/herself pure.

2. “in sanctification [holiness] and honor”

4:5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles [or the nations] who do not know God;

- NIV renders “Gentiles” as “the heathen.”
 - This would primarily describe Gentiles, but would not exclude Jews who lived and conducted themselves like heathen.
1. “not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles” - Most Gentiles were slaves to their lustful passion or passions.
 2. “who do not know God”
 - a. The vast majority of the Gentiles did “not know God,” but were worshipers and slaves to gods.
 - b. Most Gentiles then and now fit the description in Romans 1:18-31.
 - c. Some at Thessalonica had turned from idolatry to God. (1 Thess. 1:9).

4:6 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*.

1. “*and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter”
 - a. They were not to go beyond God’s will and engage in extra-marital or pre-marital sex.
 - b. Some believe Paul shifts here from the subject of sexual purity to business matters.
 - c. The word “pragma” [**prahg** mah] translated “in the matter” means “a thing done, fact, deed, work, transaction.”
 - d. Some believe Paul is affirming that neither would God overlook their sinful business practices.
 - e. This is true, but it is hard to be sure if Paul is still talking about sexual purity or sinful business practices in this verse.
2. “because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things” - God will not overlook or tolerate sexual immorality in its many forms.
 - a. “avenger” is from “ekdikos” [**ehk** dee kahs] meaning “avenger, one who punishes.”
 - b. Vengeance belongs to God. (Rom. 12:19).
 - c. God will punish evil doers. (Gal. 6:7,8).
 - d. “in all these things” includes sexual sins and any sin.
3. “just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*” - They had been previously warned that God will punish such conduct.
 - a. It is easy to forget warnings and let down one’s guard.
 - b. The Christian must always keep on “the whole armor of God.” (Eph. 6:10).

4:7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

1. “For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity” - “Impurity” is from “akatharsia” [ah kah thahr see ah] denoting “moral uncleanness.”
 - a. This reminder was constantly needed in a pagan world.
 - b. As the world’s morality today keeps declining, believers must be constantly reminded to flee immorality in all its forms [fornication, adultery, incest, bestiality, homosexuality, etc].
2. “but in sanctification”
 - a. Once again Paul stresses they had been called “in holiness.”
 - b. NIV has “but to live a holy life.”

4:8 So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

1. “So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God” - The one who rejects “holiness” rejects God who gives “His Holy Spirit” to baptized believers as an incentive to “holiness.” (1 Cor. 6:19-21).
2. “who gives His Holy Spirit to you”
 - a. Christians receive the indwelling measure of the Holy Spirit as baptism. (Acts 2:38).
 - b. The Holy Spirit dwells in each Christian. (Acts 5:32; Rom. 5:5; 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 6:19-21; 2 Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6; 1 Jn. 3:24).
 - c. It is very possible some of these Christians had also received miraculous measures of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. (Acts 8:14-17; 1 Cor. 12:4-11).
 - d. Christians are to abound in “the fruit of the Spirit” and avoid “the works of the flesh.” (Gal. 5:19-23).

Exhorts To Continue In Brotherly Love

4:9-12

4:9 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;

- “peri de” [peh ree deh] means “but concerning” and some believe this indicates they had sent some letters asking them questions about “brotherly love.” The church at Corinth had written Paul a letter asking questions. (1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1).
 - It is possible they had written Paul, but there is no clear reference to such a letter or letters in this epistle.
 - The words “now as” [but concerning] likely just denote he is changing the subject to brotherly love.
 - “love of the brethren” is from “philadelphia” meaning love of brothers and sisters in Christ. (Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22).
 - Christians are to love all, but are to have a special love for one another.
1. “Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you” - Lit. “now concerning

brotherly love.”

- a. This is a great compliment to these fairly new believers at Thessalonica. They had only been Christians about two years.
 - b. They were known for their “labor of love.” (1 Thess. 1:3).
 - c. These brethren excelled in brotherly love.
2. “for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another”
- a. Jesus had taught the importance of love. (Matt. 22:39; Matt. 5:43,44).
 - b. Jesus also emphasized that love is the badge of our discipleship. (Jn. 13:34,35; 15:12).

4:10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel [abound] still more,

1. “for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia”
 - a. They had shown love for those in other congregations in Macedonia.
 - b. Other cities in Macedonia would include Philippi and Berea.
2. “But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more” - Paul gave a similar admonition in verse 1 of this chapter.
 - a. Christians must never be content with their spiritual progress, but they must keep excelling.
 - b. As long as we are alive, we should keep improving and excelling.
 - c. Here are a few Scriptures emphasizing love. (Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:7; 1 Jn. 4:8).

4:11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to [mind] your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you,

1. “and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life” - This was a life that pursued godliness.
 - a. “hesuchazo” [hay soo **kah** zoh] meaning “to lead a quiet life.”
 - b. Literally the text reads “to strive eagerly to be quiet.”
 - c. It denotes a calm spirit within and a spirit that leads to peaceful behavior towards others.
 - d. They were not to be anxious and troubled within. (Matt. 6:25-34; Jn. 14:1; Phil. 4:6,7).
 - e. This kind of life would promote peace in their dealings with outsiders.
2. “and attend to your own business and work with your hands”
 - a. The one who pursues godliness is not a busybody. (1 Pet. 4:15).
 - b. One who pursues godliness was not a loafer, but worked with his own hands.

- c. Most Christians were involved in manual labor either skilled or unskilled.
 - d. This passage dignifies manual labor, but does not condemn non-manual labor.
 - e. Christians are to engage in honest toil - not stealing or depending on others. (Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Thess. 3:6-12.).
3. “just as we commanded you” - This points back to the time Paul, Silas and Timothy were with them and had established the church in Thessalonica.

4:12 so that you will behave [lit. walk] properly [becoming] toward outsiders and not be in any need.

- 1. “so that you will behave properly toward outsiders” -
 - a. Their conduct should gain the respect of outsiders. The RSV has “that you may command the respect of outsiders.”
 - b. This refers back to: (1) abounding in brotherly love (2) having a quiet spirit (3) giving attention to their own affairs (4) working with their own hands (5) living a life of holiness.
- 2. “and not be in any need”
 - a. Lit. “You may have need of nothing.”
 - b. NIV has “You will not be dependent on anybody.”
 - c. God does not want His people to be parasites.
 - d. Christians are to help believers who are needy. (1 Jn. 3:17-18; Matt. 25:31-46; Gal. 6:10; Jas. 2:14-17).
- 3. God does not find pleasure in lazy Christians. (2 Thess. 3:10).

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