

1 Thessalonians 4

Sanctification And Love

1 Thess. 4:1-12

Lesson 4a

4:1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort [beseech, encourage] 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 are urging and encouraging them as Christians, that is, those trusting "in the Lord Jesus" for salvation.
 - 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 "finally" to introduce exhortations. (Eph. 6:10; Phil. 3:1; 4:8; 2 Thess. 3:1).

Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

Phil 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things {again} is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

Phil 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

2 Thess 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as {it did} also with you;

- c. This word "finally" 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 [live] 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 "instructions" of the apostles and other inspired men and live their lives in a way that pleased God.
3. "that you excel still more" - They were doing well, but needed to excel [continue to grow in faith and maturity] even more.
 - a. It would be so easy for these Christians or other Christians to become self-satisfied.

b. It would be so 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 given 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. Lit. “by the Lord Jesus.”

a. Jesus has “all authority.” (Matt. 28:18). See Jn. 17:2

Matt 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

John 17:2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

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 [by the authority] of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

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

Luke 6:46 "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

Heb 5:9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

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

4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification [holiness]; *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).

1 Cor 6:11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

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

2. “your sanctification [holiness]; *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.

Eph 5:3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;

Col 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

- d. Christians 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 [body] in sanctification [holiness] and honor,

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

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

a. “Vessel” is from “skeuos” [**skoo** 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.” ASV and ESV both have “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.” (1 Thess. 4:4).

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.”
- McCord “how to gain control over his own body...”

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

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument [vessel] of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; The Greek has “skeuos” meaning “vessel,” but is used here to mean “a man of quality, a chosen instrument.”

Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump **one vessel for honorable [special] use and another for common [every day] use?**

Rom 9:22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience **vessels of wrath** prepared for destruction?

Rom 9:23 And {He did so} to make known the riches of His glory upon **vessels of mercy**, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

2 Cor 4:7 But we **have this treasure in earthen [clay] vessels**, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

2 Tim 2:21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these {things,} he will be **a vessel for honor**, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

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 14:12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

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. The essentiality of 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.

g. 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 who had abandoned God, 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. or their fleshly desires or both.
- b. Most Gentiles then and now fit the description in Romans 1:18-31.
- c. Some, at Thessalonica, had turned from idolatry and immoral behavior to God. (1 Thess. 1:9).
- d. There is no evidence that any of the brethren were now idolatrous.

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. Some understand this to mean they were not to go beyond God’s will and engage in extra-marital or pre-marital sex. This was true, but it does not seem to be the meaning of this verse.

b. Others believe Paul shifts here from the subject of sexual purity to business matters.

1) The word “pragma” [**prahg** mah] translated “in the matter” means “a thing done, fact, deed, work, transaction.”

2) Some believe Paul is affirming that neither would God overlook their sinful business practices.

3) This seems to be the meaning of this admonition.

e. It is hard to be sure if Paul is still talking about sexual purity or sinful business practices in this verse.

d. We can be sure Christians are to live by the highest moral standard that requires sexual purity and honesty in business affairs.

2. “because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things” - God will not overlook or tolerate sexual immorality in its many forms nor will he tolerate sinful business practices.

a. “avenger” is from “ekdikos” [**ehk** dee kahs] meaning “avenger, one who punishes.”

b. Vengeance belongs to God. (Rom. 12:19).

Rom 12:19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath {of God,} for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

c. God will punish evil doers of all kinds. (Gal. 6:7,8).

Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

Gal 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

d. "in all these things" includes sexual sins and any other sin including being dishonest in business.

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. 6:11).

Eph 6:11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

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

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 [holiness]"

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* [holiness] 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. 6:19-20).

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.

2. "who gives His Holy Spirit to you"

a. Christians receive the indwelling measure of the Holy Spirit at baptism. (Acts 2:38).

Acts 2:38 Peter {said} to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

b. The Holy Spirit dwells in each Christian. (Acts 5:32; Rom. 5:5; 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6; 1 Jn. 3:24).

Acts 5:32 "And we are witnesses of these things; and {so is} the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Rom 5:5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Rom 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you

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.

2 Cor 1:22 who also sealed us and gave {us} the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

Gal 4:6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

1 John 3:24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

c. It is very possible some of these Christians at Thessalonica 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).

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.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

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