

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

I THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

LESSON: A NEW WAY OF LIFE—March 17, 2019



HISTORY:

In chapters two and three, he reminded them of their past - how he had come to Thessalonica and shared the gospel with them, and how they responded to it; how he rejoiced in the Thessalonians' persisting faith and love, and beseeches God to strengthen them in holiness. He ends with (3:11-13) Paul now knowing that all that was done for the Thessalonian believers was not done in vain as he continued to pray for them. He now lifts up a twofold prayer request. Paul asks God for himself to permit him to go visit the church again. And a prayer for the church—that their love will both increase and overflow—that their hearts would be strengthened and be unblameable in matters of holiness before God.

LESSON: I. EXCELLING IN HOLINESS 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

1ST—4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren,— The word "*beseech*" (*erotomen*) means to ask or request. By calling the believers, brothers, Paul was expressing deep affection and care for them. Paul was tenderly requesting his dear brothers to continue to please God in their daily walk, but with an urgent request. It was a necessity that carried with it great blessings for obedience and terrible judgment for disobedience (the displeasure of God).

1ST—4:1b ...and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. This begins a major new discussion in this Book (First Thessalonians 4).

1. The exhortation was based upon the Lord Jesus. It was what the Lord Himself had taught. There is no greater authority than the Lord. He is the supreme Majestic Being of the Universe. Therefore, the exhortation is urged by the highest authority—the Lord Jesus.
2. The believers had been taught by Paul and his companions how they ought to walk and please God. They had sat under the teachers and preachers of the Word. Therefore, they were without excuse, for they knew exactly how to live and to please God. The word "*ought*" (*dei*) means **must**; meaning it is an imperative, a necessity. Once the believers had heard and been taught how they should live to please God, they were responsible to live a new way of life. Pleasing God was not an option—it was a duty!

The emphasis is on now on purity. Immorality is the rampaging monster that destroys more lives, families, and nations than any other single evil. The Christian life is often described as a "*walk*." Walking is a picture of moving (action) forward and progressing step by step and day by day. The exhortation is seen in the following facts:

1ST—4:2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3. The exhortation involves the actual commandments of the Lord Jesus. This is a repeat of verse one: keeping commandments of the Lord Jesus is not an option. In addition, it has been given by the Lord Himself. Therefore, it must be kept, regardless. We must walk; we must grow day by day more and more to please God.

Note in verse 1 that Paul acknowledges the fact that his readers are already living according to Christian standards, he is merely encouraging them to continue to grow as they already have.

1ST—4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:— Paul lets them know this is truly the "*Will of God*..." There is no higher "*Will*" than the "*Will of God*." The word



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"sanctification" means to be set apart and separated. Therefore, as it relates specifically to sexual purity, keep oneself entirely away from fornication. The **Will of God** is moral purity. This letter is intended for the Thessalonians as well as us today.

- Set yourself apart to God and His **"Will"**, and abstain from fornication.

1. **Sanctification** in this new way of life means abstaining from fornication.

The word **"fornication"** (*porneias*) means sexual intercourse between two people who are not married. The believer's body belongs to Christ, which means that we are to honor Christ with our bodies. We are to take the sexual drive and energy of our bodies and use it as He has instructed. The major commandment is sanctification, that is, moral purity.

1ST-4:4 **That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;**— Paul lets the believers know what they should know—**"how" to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour** (the word **"how"** is not in the Greek text). Leon Morris points out that the word **"vessel"** (*skeuos*) can refer either to a person's own body or to a person's spouse (The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p.75).

- Know how to have power over your body in consecration and respect.

2. **Sanctification** in this new way of life means that a person knows how to control his body and his spouse.

Now, the Word says, they **"should know."** There is no excuse for disobedience or ignorance. The believer is to know that it is his duty to keep his body pure and their spouse body pure. The word vessel is used of the wife as the weaker vessel (1Pt.3:7). Neglecting, ignoring or abusing one's spouse can bring about temptation and can contribute significantly to the spouse becoming unfaithful and impure. **The point is:** the believing husband and wife are to know that they must keep themselves and each other in sanctification and honor by keeping clear of all sexual sin. They must not set themselves away from each other to dishonorable and immoral situations.

1ST-4:5 **Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:**— Paul simply lets the believers know what they should already know—This was especially important for the Thessalonians as Gentiles. Sanctification in marriage was something brand new for the Thessalonians who had come from obviously corrupt Gentile culture. They grew up not knowing God, and now that they had turned to God they needed to know and conform to Christian standards.

- Know not to behave like the Gentiles who didn't know God having a strong passion of lust.

3. **Sanctification** means resisting the passion of lust.

Note the double emphasis, that is, the wording, **"lust of concupiscence."** It means a strong passion of lust, the enslaving power of lust. When a person begins to lust, he can soon become enslaved to lust; he can be held by the grip to such a degree that it is almost impossible to break the bondage. This is true with the.....

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| i. passion for sex. | v. passion for sexual conquest. |
| ii. passion for pornographic films and literature. | vi. passion for touching. |
| iii. passion for manipulation. | vii. passion for romantic and immoral reading. |
| iv. passion for exposure. | |

The passion of lust is the way of the world. It is not the way of God. It is the lifestyle of those who do not know God. It does not mean that they do not know that sexual immorality is wrong, but it means they have rejected God and His commandments. They have chosen to live in the passion of their lusts. The believer is commanded to please God and to keep the commandments of the Lord Jesus. Therefore we are to sustain from fornication—from all forms of immoral sex (Read: Rom.1:18-32).

GJW



1ST-4:6 **That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger**

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of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. Several words need explanation here. *First, "beyond"* (*Gr hyperbainō*) means quite literally to overstep or break laws. *Second, "defraud"* (*Gr pleonekteō*) *his brother*, denotes taking advantage of, robbing or cheating someone through greed. *Third, "in any matter"*, that is specially the matter which has just been mentioned—unethical sexual activity. **An example:** when a man does not live with his own wife as he should, but instead commits adultery with someone else's, he must know that he has violated, or robbed his brother by so doing, and that he deserves the vengeance of God. There are four reasons why we are to live pure lives, and the reasons stand as a severe warning to us.

- Don't in any matter wrong and defraud your brother.
- 1. Live pure lives because **Immorality** defrauds and cheats a bother, Fornication steals from a person. The person who seduces the unmarried steals from the person seduced and from the future spouse—steals the person's:
 - i. heart
 - ii. affection
 - iii. thoughts
 - iv. purity
 - v. body
 - vi. innocence
 - vii. trust & trustworthiness

That's what the enemy does, he comes to steal, kill, and destroy. It's that simple—that tragic—that terrible. It steals one of the two major partners of a family. The pain and hurt always linger to some degree and the commitment and ability to totally surrender to the other/spouse always suffers to some degree.

- Know that you are not to avenge your brother.
- 2. Live pure lives because **Immorality** shall be avenged by God. Society does not make the rules for man's behavior; God makes the rules. He has given the intimacy and preciousness of sex for marriage and only for marriage. And He has made it perfectly clear that any sex outside of marriage will not only be judged, but He will personally avenge the guilty party. Why? Because the guilty party...
 - a. stole the life of a person (spiritually speaking).
 - b. broke the person's trust and innocence for the rest of his life.

1ST—4:7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. God did not call us to uncleanness. **"Uncleanness"** means defiled, impure, or polluted. This kind of conduct is the opposite of holiness. This still is referencing to sexual immorality.

- Know that you are not called to be impure, but to be holy.
- 3. Live pure lives because **Immorality** is not God's call; holiness is. Uncleanness and holiness cannot go together. Fornication cannot go with holiness in the new life. When God called us to salvation, He does not call us to live unclean lives, giving us the license to go from person to person. Such immorality...
 - i. destroys genuine love for self, and for others.
 - ii. destroys trust and trustworthiness of self, and of others.
 - iii. destroys discipline and control of self, and of others.
 - iv. destroys true care and concern for self, and for others.
 - v. destroys ego and esteem of self, and of others.
 - vi. destroys confidence and assurance in self, and in others.
 - vii. destroys loyalty and commitment within self, and within others.
 - viii. destroys freedom and will within self, and within others.
 - ix. destroys justice and fair treatment of others, and lastly.
 - x. destroys family and even a nation.

God never calls a person to do such terrible things. He calls us to holiness—to live lives that are set apart to Him and to purity, to our spouses and families. God calls us to build strong character and communities, strong families and nations. God calls us to holiness so that we can be strong enough to reach out to a world that reels under the awful weight of suffering and death. Uncleanness disintegrates (breaks down) character and society. Holiness is total devotion to God; you're being set apart unto God. Holiness builds character in society to look



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and live like Christ. All the things the enemy wants to steal, we are to keep holy—our heart, affection, thoughts, bodies, innocence, trust and trustworthiness, and purity.

1ST—4:8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

The word "*despiseth*" means to reject. Most persons reject this commandment of God as being *old fashioned* and *unacceptable* in an intellectual and enlightened society. This is similar to Lk.10:16, where Jesus gives authority to the apostles, and literally explains, "**Whoever listens to you, listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me; the person who rejects me, rejects the one who sent me.**" *Listens* refers to (*obeys*). And "*despise*" and "*reject*" translate the same Greek word.

- Know that the man you're despising is not him, but it's God who has given us the Holy Spirit.
- 4. Live pure lives because Immorality is a sin against God. "*The one who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God...*" The idea is that the preacher or teacher may be able to do little to us if we disregard the commandment, but God can take vengeance, and He will. Every human being who ever breaks the commandment shall receive the vengeance of God—unless he has repented and sought the forgiveness of God.

II. EXCELLING IN LOVE 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-10

Every believer should be ambitious to please God. This passage gives four practical ways that we should be mindful of that pleases God.

1. Grow in love more and more (4:9-10).
2. Study to be quiet (4:11).
3. Do your own business (4:11).
4. Work with your own hands (4:11).

1ST—4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

Paul continues to encourage the Thessalonians in their Christian walk letting them know that he really didn't need to touch on their brotherly love, because they have already been taught by God to love one another. In the Greek the word love is not the word that is usually used for love. The word that is usually used for Christian love is "*agape*", but here it is "*phlladelphla*", a very special kind of love, brotherly love, that exists between the brothers and sisters within a loving family, brothers and sisters who truly cherish each other. The kind of love...

- i. that binds each other together as a family, as a brotherly clan.
- ii. that binds each in an unbreakable union. That holds each other ever so deeply within the heart.
- iii. that knows deep affection for each other.
- iv. that nourishes and nurtures each other.
- v. that shows concern and looks after the welfare of each other.
- vi. that joins hands with each other in a common purpose under one father (*The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p.80*).

Note: Paul says there is no need for him to exhort the Thessalonians to love each other as brothers. Nevertheless, he does. Why? If there is no need, why does he encourage them to love each other? There are two reasons:

1. Therefore, as God's servant, Paul was driven to follow God; to stir the people of God to continue to love each other as brothers. This was and still is an absolute essential for the church.
 - a. Christian believers need each other in order to make it through life. Living for Christ is not easy in a corrupt world that offers the bright lights of pleasure but ends up in suffering death. We all face temptation. We need the love of each other in order to stand against the temptations and to walk through the sufferings of life.
 - b. The greatest threat to the church is that of internal strife and divisiveness. Nothing destroys the ministry of a church any quicker than criticism, grumbling, murmuring, gossiping, selfishness, cliquishness, and ambitiousness-- to have one's own way or to secure some position.



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The point is this: God actually teaches believers to love each other as brothers qualifying God's works within our hearts to stir us to love each other. He arouses the thoughts within our minds—flashes the thought across our minds—the thought that we should love each other as brothers. Therefore, we are to grab hold of that thought stirred up within our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and love each other.

1ST-4:10 **And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;**— For the Thessalonians, Macedonia was home. If we cannot love those at home, how can we love others far away? Therefore this leads Paul to definitely urge them to go beyond.

2. The Thessalonian believers were noted for their love, not only within their own church, but throughout all Macedonia. But they were not yet perfected in love. No person is! Therefore, there is always the need to grow and increase in love, more and more, because they were taught by God to do so.

III. EXCELLING IN WORK 1 THESSALONIANS 4:11-12

1ST-4:11a **And that ye study to be quiet,**— What does that mean? The word "*study*" (*philotimeoma*) means to be ambitious; to strive eagerly; to seek with all the energy a person has. The very meaning of the word "*study*" shows the supreme importance of quietness. Remember the church at Thessalonica was facing two critical problems:

1. It was facing the problem of persecution.
2. And the problem of some criticism and divisiveness against Paul.

The point is this: we are to live a quiet and peaceable life before each other. We are not to be critical and divisive toward each other. We are to walk in a quiet and meek spirit out in the world. We are not to be abusive and arrogant in witnessing and in dealing with the world.

POINT:

- *Although a believer is hurting, he needs to be heard, and the only way he can be heard is for us to be quiet and listen to him.*
- *The world is hurting—everyone in the world has or have had some hurt. Therefore, we must be quiet and listen for the hurt so that we can do what Christ said: minister to them.*
- *Also, the world needs the gospel, but the gospel cannot be effectively proclaimed in the midst of noise—not effectively and not in an appealing way. Noise pierces the ear and distracts. There must be quietness of atmosphere and mind for the gospel to have its most effective impact.*
- *Believers must study to be quiet instead of studying to be critical and divisive. You can hardly be effective when you share your faith with others, and people don't respect you. Whatever you do, do it faithfully and be a positive force in society.*

1ST-4:11b **...and to do your own business,**— What does that mean? It means "**mind your own business.**" Can you believe the Word of God says this? Why? Because too many are busybodies and meddle in the affairs of others. What is it that causes a person to meddle in the business of others?

- A person meddles because he is critical by nature.
- A person meddles because he fails to see his own shortcomings and failures.
- A person meddles because he does not have enough to do.

What the busybody needs is to become so occupied with the things of Christ; to undertaking the mission of Christ that he has no time to meddle in the affairs of others. This exhortation is strong.

1ST-4:11c **...and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;**— The Thessalonian believers became so excited over the return of the Lord (His Second Coming) and the promise of being with Him forever that in their zeal, they abandoned their jobs. The result was catastrophic. They now had to sponge off the other believers in



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order to survive. Their action had been most unwise. Therefore, Paul commanded them: "**work with your own hands**"—quit sponging off others. Two reasons are given for labor:

- Man is to subdue and gain dominion over the earth in all its unregulated and catastrophic forces (Gen.1:28).
- Man is to work to provide the necessities of life for all men (Gen.2:15) and family (1 Tim.5:8).
- Man is to work in order to have enough to give to the needy of the world (Eph.4:28).

The exhortation is clear. The inactive, lazy, complacent—all are to hear the clear command of God: "**Work with your own hands.**" The old expression says, "**Idle hands are the devil's workshop.**" When someone isn't busy, they're in prime location for sin.

1ST-4:12 **That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.** We are to set examples for the unbelievers. It would be wrong and harmful to their testimonies to depend upon the church to feed their families if they were able to work. The world is always looking at the actions of Christians. Therefore, their level of commitment will always show their true motivation for action.

1. We must labor in order to walk honestly before outsiders, that is, before the world of unbelievers. Of all people Christians must set a dynamic example of work. One of the very purposes for which man has been put on earth is to work.
2. We must labor in order to have no lack, not having to beg from others for the supply of their wants.

The Thessalonians had to suffer much from the people who did not believe in Christ, but we are always to remember that pleasing God will always be the right motivation for our actions to walk in holiness, love, and diligence; focusing on nothing else but God alone. And the right instructions will always come from God.

SUMMARY:

With this chapter Paul begins a series of practical exhortations related to the Christian's walk. Paul with urgency was tenderly requesting his dear brothers to continue to abound more and more. They knew the commandments of God which was the Will of God. They were to abstain from fornication (*all kinds of immoral sexual acts*); knowing how to control their body and resist lustful passions. A person is not to defraud his brother in any matter. The reason for purity is that immorality cheats and wrongs a brother, but it shall be avenged by God. God did not call us to uncleanness but to holiness. Immorality is not God's call, holiness is. Therefore, the person that refuses to live by this commandment is not disobeying man's rules but disobeying God who gave His Holy Spirit (**4:1-8**).

Paul knew of the Thessalonians brotherly love because they were taught to love one another by God. This leads Paul to urges them to increase more and more in love. In fact, they were loving all the believers even in Macedonia, but they were still to go beyond and increase more (**4:9-10**).

They were to live a quiet life, mind their own business, work with their own hands, so that they might walk/live as honest examples lacking nothing before those that are outside the church (**4:11-12**).

APPLICATION:

Maybe you've hardened your heart against this Word. It's not up to me to convince you. If you're rejecting this, you're not rejecting me; you're rejecting the Holy Spirit who is gently calling you to repentance. Holiness (or sanctification) is not something that believers attempt to muster on their own, God brings it to pass! We are told to walk in holiness, walk in love, and walk in diligence which is demonstrated in action.

