

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Verses 1-2:

--(1) **Finally then.** . . changes the direction of the letter and could be translated: *For the rest.*

--**brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus.** . . the Greek for **urge** means to *beg* or *intreat* and was used between those of equal rank. Paul only uses it with this fellowship and the Philippians (**Phil. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:12; 2 Thess. 2:1**).

--**that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God.** . . They were doing the things Paul gave to them as an apostle of Christ and he was encouraging them to more! This was no rebuke, just a stimulant to growth.

John 15:2: Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

--They knew that their goal was to walk with God and please God. This is intuitive Christianity as taught by the life of the Holy Spirit. ***Are we trying to please ourselves without displeasing God? If so, we are still first and God is second!***

2 Corinthians 5:9: Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

--(2) What does a pleasing walk with God look like? What had the Thessalonians received from Paul, Silas, and Timothy?

--**for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.** It looks like keeping the commands of Jesus Christ.

--Paul and the other apostles were not just making up their own versions of Christianity!

Matthew 28:19-20: Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.

--In fact, the Greek word Paul uses for **commandments** was a semi-military term. It referred to a chain of command. Paul saw the commands of Christ as orders coming down from the Superior Officer.

--To a Christian, the orders of Christ are not *options*, they are *obligations*. I love God and others by keeping His commandments.

John 14:15: If you love Me, keep My commandments.

1 John 5:2-3: By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

Verse 3:

--Now, Paul gives God's commands regarding human sexuality.

--These commands were radical even in Paul's day. The Roman sexual ethic was sex with legal wives, slaves, concubines, and temple prostitutes was fine (male or female). It was only considered immoral to commit adultery with another man's legal wife. Basically, everything else was accepted by Roman society.

--**For this is the will of God.** . . . Paul couldn't state it any clearer. Do you want to know the will of God for your life now and forever? Here it is!

--**your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;** You and I have already been set apart for God's purposes. We *are* sanctified—like the OT temple.

--The idea of *sanctification* or *holiness* in the biblical sense was totally absent from Pagan culture and literature. It came into Jewish society through God, and specifically, the character of Jehovah.

Leviticus 19:2: Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

--The Greek word for **sexual immorality** is *porneia*. That term describes all sexual activity outside of God's design in marriage. The Jew would think of **Leviticus 18** which covered: looking at, or looking for the nakedness of others (porn in our day); incest; adultery; abortion; homosexuality; bestiality; and whatever else the pagan cultures around them did; etc.

Verse 4:

--There is a bit of debate about what Paul is speaking about here. Is he saying: 1) Each should have their own wife and live with her in God-honoring sexuality? or 2) Each should know how to live holy in their own body?

--The context and Paul's history clearly make his reference to the stewardship of our physical bodies. Paul speaks of our bodies as **vessels** in **2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:21**; never our wives as vessels. Even when Peter speaks of the wife as the weaker vessel (**1 Peter 3:7**) he is referencing her physical body.

--Also, Paul exhorts saying **each of you & your own.** . . . speaking to believing men and women—not just husbands. This is not just for pastors or "holy" Christians but all Christians.

--**should know how.** . . . means that this is a habit learned, not a magic impulse. We need to develop self-restraint and self-denial as a learned reflex.

Verses 5-7:

--**(5)** This is how we would all live if we didn't know God, or have His Holy Spirit! But we do!

--Christians should not live **in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God.** What does that mean? And animalistic response to physical desires—living like pigs.

Jeremiah 5:7-9: When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlot's houses. They were like well-fed lusty stallions; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish them for these things? Says the LORD. And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?

--American culture is well-fed, and given over the animalistic lusts and passion. The moral and cultural rot of which is felt all around us—and so dark—we don't want to think of it.

--(6) What does God say in Jeremiah and here? That ***the Lord is the avenger of all such!***

--What exactly does Paul mean when he says ***that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter?*** I think Paul leaves the statement ambiguous because there are so many ways *defrauding* happens sexually—in a marriage, with a virgin, slaves, etc.

--However it works out, a line has been crossed and a person is claiming or taking more than they have a right to. They are taking advantage of and defrauding.

--Paul is warning hidden or blatant sexual sinners that God will take the side of the wronged person—or victim—in these scenarios. ***Forewarned*** is to *solemnly testify*.

--The Holy Spirit is soberly warning those offenders, but also, encouraging those harmed. God will avenge. They don't need to. (Of course, we are to allow local authorities to play their role. This was said to those who mostly had no such recourse as you and I do today in America.)

****Romans 12:19: Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.****

--(7) God's calling will *never* include sexual uncleanness. God is not in the business of seeing sinful men and women happy in their sin. God is in the business of making sinful men and women holy. Once they are holy, they will be happy.

*Tozer (I Talk Back To The Devil): *"In many churches Christianity has been watered down until the solution is so weak that if it were poison it would not hurt anyone, and if it were medicine it would not cure anyone!*

Now I want to bring you to my postulate that most present-day Christians live sub-Christian lives.

I repeat: Most modern Christians live sub-Christian lives!

Most Christians are not joyful persons because they are not holy persons, and they are not holy persons because they are not filled with the Holy Spirit, and they are not filled with the Holy Spirit because they are not separated persons.

The Spirit cannot fill whom He cannot separate, and whom He cannot fill, He cannot make holy, and whom he cannot make holy, He cannot make happy!

*There you have it—my postulate that the modern Christian, even though he has accepted Christ and has been born again, is not a joyful person because he is not a holy person."**

--Because abuse is so prevalent in our day, I feel the need to say that if something was done to your body outside of your consent, you are not impure. They only touched your body. Not your Spirit.

Verse 8:

--Interestingly enough, Paul is anticipating resistance to this command. He makes it clear that two consenting adults do not make a consenting God.

--Refusal to obey was a refusal to obey the command of Christ, a rejection of the will of God, and resistance against the leading of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis is on **His Holy Spirit**.

--First, all sexual sin is a despising of God.

***2 Samuel 12:10: Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.**

--If you are a married Christian man or woman, do not despise God and His provision in your life through your spouse.

--Second, all sexual sin is a step against the leading of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20: Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

--God will help if you come to Him and humble yourself. The Holy Spirit is more powerful than all sinful desires.

Verses 9-10:

--(9) Paul assumes brotherly love—*Philadelphia* (**Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:7**)—as innate to true spiritual life in God.

--This church was doing just that, as they were taught in the heart to do so, not by man but by the very inward teaching of God. Paul uses an uncommon word to express the (similar phrases in **Jn. 6:45 + 1 Cor. 2:13**—being taught of God and the Spirit) idea of God as the primary Teacher of this love.

--You and I are followers of Jesus Christ, who gave Himself to the world in love. Entered our pain, loved His parents and brothers and sisters, loved strangers and friends, He loved the high like the Pharisees and the low like the publicans and prostitutes, loved His enemies and loved His disciples to the very end. He loved us by giving Himself as an offering for our sin. He rose again and put that same Spirit of divine love into our hearts and lives!

--Love was so prevalent in the early church that Ananias and Sapphira had to fake love to fit in!

John 13:34-35: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

--Jesus gives the world the right to judge our Christian profession by their observing our love for each other. Do you think there were no disagreements in this church? No heated feelings in the face of persecution, the lazy abuse of goodwill, and doctrinal confusion with the Lord's return?

Even in our disagreements! + Cannot fight sin with sin

--The world needs to see the love of God in action! There is no love out there. There is no healing. No wholeness. No true good. The world is full of perversion, selfishness, hatred, and indifference. The Church should be different.

--The church in Thessalonica was living out the supernatural love of God—there was no way their love could have reached the whole area of Macedonia and not first reached those of their own fellowship!

--Paul then urges them to continue the things they were already doing. To make it their aim to increase in those things. In confusing times, love those who are around you, especially those of the household of God! *Are my words and actions in the Spirit of love Christ lived and commanded?*

Verse 11:

--***That you aspire to lead a quiet life.*** . . A life restful and not disruptive to others.

--Does God have anything to say about personal aspirations? Certainly!

--We should make it our zealous goal to lead a simple and restful life.

--The language here is also very unique. You could say *seek strenuously to be still* or *be ambitious to be unambitious*. You could even say I will “shine” by leading a quiet life.

--There was apparently some spirit of restlessness in the church that worried Paul. We don’t know exactly what, but isn’t it the same today? Basically, everything in life: media, TV, politics, and society in general are seeking to move you in and out, this way or that, up or down, here or there—less simplicity, less restfulness, less peacefulness, less silence.

--Very rarely do we ever hear a call to simplicity! The world is always pushing to bigger, funner, richer, more visible, and viral. God is not!

--Simplicity must be intended, chosen, and cultivated. This life will not happen magically. It will require choices between things, it requires saying no, it requires humility, surrender, contentment, and godliness—most directly, a quiet life requires a shift from worldly aspirations to heavenly aspirations.

--If the Lord were to come, the best way to find them would be living a quiet life of love.

--***to mind your own business.*** . . To do our own work and manage our own affairs. We are to make it our aspiration to mind our own business—a phrase that translates easily.

--To ***mind*** is to habitually do—as opposed to single acts—or busily commit to. Our ***business*** is our personal duties—the things that we are directly responsible for.

--How many right now are pressured to jump into the fray of things beyond them? But when we do, what happens after the social media posts, protests, arguments, or TV appearance?

This is not an excuse—some are called to lead in specific causes, but most are not (I am thankful for John Perkins + godly politicians + abortion ministries + sex trafficking, etc.)!

--How often are we pressured into watching, thinking about, worrying about, talking about, speaking about, posting about, and debating about things that have little or nothing to do with us—all while the trash still needs to go out, the dishes still need to be washed, and our actual friend still needs a phone call or prayer, and children’s ministry still needs a volunteer, and our neighbor hasn’t heard the gospel!

--We want to fix a cause—or all of America—but our marriage is falling apart. We want to pontificate on political moral choices, but we can't stop looking at pornography. We are ready to argue doctrinal positions, but our kids are angry, scared, or broken because we don't know how to control our temper, tame our tongue, put down the bottle, or say: *Forgive me*.

--I need to mind my own business—not other's interests, responsibilities, families, or friends.

--Yes, there is great wisdom in these words. It begins between you and God, you and your spouse, you and your children, and if then that is not enough, and God gives you more, you will be ready to be about your Father's business in public too. *Here, too, we remain followers of Jesus, who humbled Himself and, in an unpopular town named Nazareth, quietly proved His love and faithfulness in the home circle for thirty years. All this before His public ministry began.*

--In our immediate context, I must also mention the voyeuristic reality of social media.

--Social media is virtually the exact opposite of minding our own business. So many people are striving and aspiring to be seen by men or compare themselves with others! *Every stat and study—religious or secular—shows that social media leads to: depression, cutting, eating disorders, broken relationships, loss of attention span, fragmented thought processes, loneliness, pornography, and suicide.*

--The world system makes us restless and worried about everyone else's business. The Christian is never called to entertain themselves by absently perusing the personal aspects of other lives.

--Do we really think the loving Jesus we follow looked at people that way? Do we imagine our Savior or His disciples could have swiped or liked their way through our social media morass as we do?

--The truth is, most of us would never want to look at social media or TV if we began to see it as Jesus does. *Compassion as sheep without a shepherd, weeping as we see rebellious children who will not be gathered under His wing Vs. buying lies meant to steal, kill, and destroy!*

--Why is this applicable? If we want to aspire to a quiet life, we must get out of other people's business and start habitually committing ourselves to what relates to us. *Stay in your lane!*

--***to work with your own hands***. . . is to provide for our own needs.

--We should aspire to honorable work that provides for us and others. This was not a church filled with rich people. Paul gives no exhortations or warnings for the wealthy. This was a blue-collar church that worked with their own two hands.

--God sees honor in manual labor. Jesus sanctified the trades with His own sweat and blood. Greeks saw manual labor as something for slaves, but the Jews all had to learn a trade and saw honor in it.

--Obviously, this looks different for each of us, but it is a clear command. They watched as Paul labored to make tents for his needs and theirs!

--Please God where you are and allow Him to call you to something else if He sees fit. How many men were called to follow God when quietly working: Moses, David, Elisha, Amos, Nehemiah, the disciples, etc.

Verse 12:

--What does this produce? A life that earns the respect of outsiders. This quiet and simple life is God's powerful witness to the crazy world around us! We are even called to pray for it (**1**

Timothy 2:1-4).

--***and that you may lack nothing.*** . . . Meaning we are not dependent on others. We can provide for our own and those in need.

--The outcome of such a humble life is a good witness and good provision.

--What type of life do we actually dream about? What if you lived and served unknown? What if you had no followers and never did anything viral? What if you didn't have a large farm, beach house, or penthouse? *HG TV/PINTREST dreams!*

--What if you were a single man or woman who lived in an apartment and provided for themselves, gave to the needy, served others, loved the church, and pleased God? What if you were a shepherd, fishermen, or carpenter who did the same?

--What if you lived quietly, worked decently, and loved deeply? That beautiful and pleasing life is there for all of us! Satan wants you to dream about, worry about, and aspire to things that He knows will leave you empty and broken and ultimately destroy you.

--Paul says, the Lord is coming soon, and the best thing for us is to walk with God, please God, keep His commands, love one another, then love each other more, and allow Jesus to come and find us quietly and decently going about our ordinary work.

--Aspire to that type of life because it will witness to the restless unsaved and please God. That is a life worthy of the gospel.

--This is what God has called the vast majority of us to. Make it your aspiration! *I want to stack up all the normal days that I can get!*