

A Quiet Life

1 Thessalonians: 4:1-12

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8/18/2024

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1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 – (NIV)

As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

³It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; ⁶and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. ⁷For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

⁹Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. ¹⁰And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, ¹¹and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹²so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

v1 – Is Paul wrapping up his letter?

Paul's use of **finally** does not mean he is finished. It means he here began the closing section of the letter, with practical instruction on how God wants His people to live.

- The word rendered 'finally' (*loipon*) is an adverbial accusative, 'as for the rest,' and serves to mark a transition rather than a conclusion.

What had Paul taught the Thessalonians when he was with them?

How you ought to walk and to please God: Paul took it for granted that the Thessalonians understood that the purpose of their **walk** — their manner of living — was **to please God** and not themselves. When the Christian has this basic understanding, the following instruction regarding Biblical morality makes sense.

What should the Thessalonians do more and more?

Paul was thankful for the growth he saw in the Thessalonians, but still looked for them to **abound more and more** in a **walk** that would **please God**.

- This means that Christian maturity is never finished on this side of eternity. No matter how far a Christian has come in love and holiness, he or she can still **abound more and more**.

v2 – Was Paul introducing anything new to the Thessalonians?

What Paul wrote in the following verses was nothing new to the Thessalonians. In the few weeks he was with them, he instructed them in these basic matters of Christian morality. Paul knew it was important to instruct new believers in these things.

What was the significance of Paul having shared commandments with the Thessalonians?

These were not suggestions from the pen of Paul. These are **commandments** from **the Lord Jesus** and must be received that way.

- The word translated **commandments** is more at home in a military environment, being a usual word for the commands given by the officer to his men (cf. its use in Acts 5:28, 16:24). It is thus a word with a ring of authority.

v3 – What commandments had Paul passed on to the Thessalonians?

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: Paul gave these commands to a first-century Roman culture that was marked by sexual immorality. At this time in the Roman Empire, chastity and sexual purity were almost unknown virtues. Nevertheless, Christians were to take their standards of sexual morality from God and not from the culture.

- The ancient writer Demosthenes expressed the generally amoral view of sex in the ancient Roman Empire: "We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for the day to day needs of the body; we keep wives for the faithful guardianship of our homes."

What is sanctification?

The idea behind **sanctification** is to be *set apart*, and God wants us *set apart* from a godless culture and its sexual immorality.

- If our sexual behavior is no different than **the pagans who do not know God**, then we are not sanctified — set apart — in the way God wants us to be.

Why should Christians be set apart from the world?

It is God's will for us... Those **who do not know God** do not have the spiritual resources to walk pure before the Lord; but Christians do. Therefore, Christians should live differently than those **who do not know God**.

What kind of sexual immorality do you think Paul had in mind here?

The ancient Greek word translated **sexual immorality** (*porneia*) is a broad word, referring to any sexual relationship outside of the marriage covenant.

- The older King James Version translates **porneia** as *fornication*. *Fornication* is used here in its comprehensive meaning to denote every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.
- The word requires broad definition here as including all types of sexual sins between people.
- God grants great sexual liberty in the marriage relationship (Hebrews 13:4). But Satan's not-very-subtle strategy is often to do all he can to *encourage* sex outside of marriage.

v4 – How are we to live differently than the world?

We live differently than the world when we **possess** our body **in sanctification and in honor**.

- Immorality is the opposite of **honor** because it degrades and debases the self.
- Those who do not restrain their sexual desires act more like animals than humans, following every impulse without restraint.

To whom does this commandment apply?

The phrase, **that each of you should know** indicates that the demand being made applies to each individual member of the church. The same moral standards hold for all.

v5 – What shouldn't we do?

Not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God: This plainly means that the sexual conduct of the Christian should be *different* than the prevailing permissiveness of the day.

- The pagans knew gods who were personifications of their own ambitions and lusts but they did not know the true God, the God who is Himself holy and wills the sanctification of His followers.

v6 – What does sexual immorality do to others?

When we are sexually immoral, we **take advantage of and defraud** others and we cheat them in greater ways than we can imagine. The adulterer defrauds his mate and children. The fornicator defrauds his future mate and children, and both defraud their illicit partner.

- Adultery is an obvious violation of the rights of another. But promiscuity before marriage represents the robbing of the other that virginity which ought to be brought to a marriage. The future partner of such a one has been defrauded.
- Repeatedly in Leviticus 18 — a chapter where God instructed Israel on the matter of sexual morality — the idea is given that one may not *uncover* the nakedness of another not their spouse. The idea is that the nakedness of an individual *belongs* to his or her spouse and no one else, and it is a violation of God's law to *give* that nakedness to anyone else, or for anyone else to *take* it.

What will the Lord do about sexual immorality?

There will be consequences... This is the first of four reasons for sexual purity. We can trust that God will punish sexual immorality, and that no one gets away with this sin — even if it is undiscovered.

v7 – Why else should Christians be sexually pure?

This is the second reason why Christians should be sexually pure — because of our **call**. That **call** is not to **uncleanness**, but to **holiness**; therefore, sexual immorality is simply inconsistent with who we are in Jesus Christ.

- Paul developed this same line of thought in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 6:15-20, concluding with the idea that we should *glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's*.

v8 – What is the third reason Christians should be sexually pure?

Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God: The third reason for sexual purity is because to reject God's call to sexual purity is not rejecting man, but God Himself. Despite the petty ways many rationalize sexual immorality, we still **reject** God when we sin in this way.

Was Paul sharing all this with the Thessalonians because they had a sexual immorality problem?

There is no indication that the Thessalonians were deep in sin. No specific sin is mentioned; it seems that this was meant to *prevent* sin rather than to *rebuke* sin, in light of the prevailing low standards in their society and because of the seductive strength of sexual immorality.

What was the fourth reason Christians should be sexually pure?

We have been given the Holy Spirit, who *empowers* the willing, trusting Christian to overcome sexual sin.

- God has given us the resources for victory; we are responsible to use those resources.

v9 – Why were the Thessalonians reminded of the need to love one another?

That principle is so basic that Paul knew it was obvious to the Thessalonian Christians. The Thessalonians were **taught by God** about the importance of love, yet due to our human nature, we must all be reminded.

v10 – Who did the Thessalonians love?

all the brethren who are in Macedonia: It wasn't that the Thessalonians were without love; their love **toward all the brethren** was well known, but they had to **increase more and more** in their love.

v11 – What should be our ambition?

to lead a quiet life:

Quiet has the thought of peace, calm, rest and satisfaction.

What does the quiet life look like?

The **quiet life** contradicts the hugely successful modern attraction to entertainment and excitement. This addiction to entertainment and excitement is damaging both spiritually and culturally.

Why is excitement and entertainment like a religion for many people today?

- This religion has a god: The self.
- This religion has priests: Celebrities.
- This religion has a prophet: Perpetual entertainment.
- This religion has scriptures: Tabloids and entertainment, news, and informational programs.
- This religion has places of worship: Amusement parks, theaters, concert halls, sports arenas
- Every television and internet connection can be a little shrine.

How can excitement & entertainment become an idol?

The religion of excitement and entertainment seduces people into living their lives for one thing — the thrill of the moment. But these thrills are quickly over and forgotten, and all that is important is the next fun thing. This religion conditions its followers to only ask one question: "Is it fun?"

- It never wants us to ask more important questions such as, "Is it true?" "Is it right?" "Is it good?" "Is it godly?"

Why is living the quiet life so important?

We need to live the **quiet life** so that we can really take the time and give the attention to listen to God. When we live the **quiet life**, we can listen to God and get to know Him better.

Psalm 46:10 – *Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!*

What does it mean to *mind your own business*?

This means that the Christian must focus on his or her own life and matters, instead of meddling in the lives of others. "**Mind your own business**" is a Biblical idea.

But doesn't minding your own business conflict with putting others first?

There is a great difference between the Christian duty of putting the interests of others first and the busybody's compulsive itch to put other people right.

Is minding your own business a call to be a hermit?

This does not mean we should mind our own business in such a way that all are to live apart from one another and have no concern for others, but simply wants to correct the idle triviality which makes men open disturbers of the peace, when they ought to instead lead a quiet life.

What does it mean to *work with your own hands*?

We must recognize the dignity and honor of **work**. Work is God's plan for the progress of society and the church. We fall into Satan's snare when we expect things to always come easily, or regard God's blessing as an opportunity for laziness.

- Manual labor was despised by ancient Greek culture. They thought that the better a man was, the less he should work. In contrast, God gave us a carpenter King, fisherman apostles, and tent-making missionaries.
- There is nothing more disgraceful than an idle good-for-nothing who is of no use either to himself or to others, and seems to have been born merely to eat and drink.

v12 – What should characterize our daily life?

When we combine the love of our brothers with work, we **walk properly**. People who are not yet Christians (**those who are outside**) will see our example and be influenced to become followers of Jesus.

How can we conduct our daily life to win the respect of others?

We should act in an honorable manner, so as to cause no offense. Believers can never be indifferent to the impact produced by their example.

Why is it important not to be dependent on anybody?

It better glorifies God when His children are seen as those who contribute to the general welfare of society, not taking from it.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- We are called to be set apart from the world... we need to curb our compromising!
- We are called to be sexually pure; not like the culture!
- We are called to love one another; God is love so we should be as well!
- We are called to lead a quiet life; be distracted by God, not the world!