

## **1Thessalonians 4**

*1 Finally, brothers, 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.*

Paul is about to remind them of what they taught when they were there. He's thankful that they have not slipped back into worldly ways, but he encourages them to keep increasing in godliness. Don't stagnate. God is pleased with our continual spiritual growth. Romans 12:1; Colossians 2:6; 2Peter 1:5-8

*2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;*

As apostles (official representatives of Jesus), they instructed them not to live in the immorality of their culture. God desires our sanctification. 5:23 That is the process of cleansing our lives from all things that are of the flesh. Immorality is becoming as prevalent in our culture as it was in theirs. Paul points out this type of carnal sin as especially damaging and often lists it first. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 While Israel was in the wilderness, the Midianites were able to seduce the men of Israel to worship idols through sexual immorality. (Numbers 25) I think this is so damaging because it strikes at the foundation of relationships, the family unit. The covenant between a man and woman in marriage is the cornerstone of the family unit. When that is cheapened and betrayed, the family is in chaos. The body is dedicated to what the spirit is dedicated to.

*4 that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;*

Some translate this to mean each should be married, and therefore have sexual relations that are approved by God. Hebrews 13:4; 1Peter 4:3

*6 and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.*

People take advantage of others sexually in various ways. Whenever someone is manipulates another to gain some sexual gratification, God promises to punish that action. God did not call us to selfish indulgence at the expense of others. He called us to lay down our lives in preference to others. Hebrews 12:14; 1Peter 2:11

*8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.*

Paul is making it very clear that he is speaking as the Lord's representative. Why? Because he knows how many can justify things. "Oh that is just Paul. He's

a prude. Don't worry about it. You can't help but be immoral now and then." Paul is saying is circumventing that kind of thinking. God, who give the Spirit, is the one insisting on this. If you want the Spirit in your life, you'd better obey on this point. 1John 3:24

*9 Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.*

The Spirit teaches us that we should love one another. We shouldn't have to be taught this point by man, yet we often need to be reminded. John 13:34-35; 1Peter 3:8 We can always increase in love.

*11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*

Christians should not be the trouble making rabble rousers, but the people that neighbors know they can come to when they need comfort and assistance. I think we lose opportunities to share the Gospel because we are taking up sides in issues that are not essential to faith in Christ. When people find us on the other side of one of their pet issues, their ears are closed to what we have to say about Jesus. Of all people, we should be the most dependable, available, and consistent folks around. Sometimes we have to win their respect before they can hear what we have to say. Colossians 4:5

*13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.*

Sleep is a metaphor for death. 1Corinthians 15:51 One of the key purposes for this letter was to explain that those who have died in Christ are not lost or gone. The world has no hope when a loved one dies. *In Thessalonica they have found an inscription that says: "After death no reviving, after the grave no meeting again."*—J. Vernon McGee's Thru The Bible We have a very real hope. 1Corinthians 15:19; Acts 7:60

*14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*

If you die before the return of Christ, your body will lie in the ground here, but your Spirit will be with God. God will bring with Jesus your spirit when Jesus returns to the earth. Your body will be transformed and rise to meet your spirit. 1Corinthians 15:23,51-57; Ecclesiastes 3:21, 12:7; 2Cor 5:8; Philippians 3:21; Jude 14-15

*15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

Those living at the time of Christ's return will not go before those who have died.

*16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*

This last trumpet call is reminiscent of Israel in the wilderness. The last trump meant they were to move to a new site. That is what it will mean for us too. Instead of "Lazarus, come forth!" It will be "Saints, come forth!" Revelation 11:12 Our transformed bodies will rise to meet our spirits before the saints still living rise.

*17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

Then the living believers will be caught up together with them and meet the Lord in the air. We will forever be with Him! Paul was telling them not to worry about those who had died. They would not be left out or forgotten. They will rise again. Jesus was the firstfruits from the dead. The rest will follow in the resurrection.