

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 6TH - 7TH, 2021 // BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS

A CALL FOR HOLINESS (1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8)

The word, "finally" doesn't mean Paul's almost done with his letter, rather it signals a transition to the rest of what he has to say.

- He asks and urges them to, "please God" in how they walk - for their daily lives to be in accordance with the teachings of Jesus that they were given through Paul, Silas, & Timothy (vs. 1-2).
- Understanding Biblical morality and holiness is centered around, "pleasing God".

Before we knew God, we lived our lives to simply please ourselves.

- Our physical desires were our master (Phil. 3:19), and that led to spiritual death (Rom. 6:23).
- But when we're saved by the work of Jesus and we realize what He did for us, we willingly surrender our lives to Him as a servant.
- We now gladly submit our will to God's when it comes to how He wants us to live our daily lives.

God's will for every follower of Jesus and the way we're set apart for God ("sanctification") is that we willingly choose to, "abstain from sexual immorality" (vs. 3) and learn to, "control our bodies in holiness and honor" (vs. 4).

- In the Roman Empire, sexual purity, abstinence, chastity, honor, and self-control were unknown virtues - "anything goes" was the cry of the day.
- So, what is this "sexual immorality" (porneia) we're told to abstain from?

"Sexual Immorality" (πορνεία, "Porneia") Any sexual practice that occurs outside of the God-given boundaries of sex between a husband and wife.

- Extra-marital sex (adultery) (Ex. 20:14, Deut. 22:22) - Pre-marital sex (fornication) (Exodus 22:16-17, Deut. 22:20-21) - Homosexuality (Lev. 18:22, Romans 1:26-28, 1 Tim. 1:10, Lev. 20:13) - Pornography (Matt. 5:28, Job 31:1)

A sign that someone doesn't know God is that they are controlled by the, "passion of lust" (vs. 5) - this means Christians are to be different!

- When we are sexually immoral, we "transgress and wrong" others, even if we don't realize it (vs. 6).
- Sexual immorality is never a victimless crime - it hurts others and it defiles, debases, and harms your mind, body, and spirit.

Paul then gives three reasons for sexual purity.

1. God will avenge the disobedient (vs. 6b) - there's always forgiveness and healing available for the repentant, but for the disobedient there's only judgment.
2. It's the life God has called us to live (vs. 7)
3. To reject God's teaching on this is to reject God and the Spirit He's given us (vs. 8) - the person who ignores this teaching isn't rejecting the teaching of man, but they are rejecting God Himself.

God is the architect and master designer of human sexuality, so He knows how it's intended to work.

- Sex is a gift that's like fire - it's powerful and it can lead to untold destruction if it isn't managed...
- But if it is managed, it can lead to pleasure, comfort, life, beauty, protection, and all sorts of other amazing things.
- Whose will for your sexuality are you living for?

A CALL FOR LOVE (1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-10)

When it came to "brotherly love" (Philadelphia, kindness and affection towards other believers like they're family), Paul had no need to instruct them (vs. 9).

- Because of their connection with God ("taught by God"), this idea of showing love towards other believers was something they knew well.

Even though they knew the importance of showing love, it never hurts to be reminded.

- Even though their love was being shown to "all the brothers through Macedonia", Paul urges them to, "do this more and more" (vs. 10).
- There's always room for us to grow when it comes to love in our hearts.
- Growth in love usually involves some level of pain because it requires forgiveness if we've been wronged, sacrifice, mercy when it isn't deserved, and us choosing to release offenses.

To grow in love towards our brothers and sisters in Christ also means that we love not in word and speech only, but in deeds (1 John 3:18).

- It means we stop just saying that we love others, and we take steps to meet their real, tangible needs through serving within the church and community.
- Where do you need to grow in brotherly love? Do you need to work on forgiveness? Mercy? Releasing an offense? Serving others?

A CALL FOR DILIGENCE (1 THESSALONIANS 4:11-12)

There might have been some small issues happening within this church related to the idea of them being a spiritual family as the church.

- The first issue might have been that some believers had no healthy boundaries and were prying into what others were doing in the name of, "family interest".
- They were being "busybodies"- going around as everyone's personal Holy Spirit.

The 2nd issue could've been that people who were perfectly capable of earning their own living were mooching off others within the church, taking advantage of others' generosity and hiding behind this idea of the church being a spiritual family.

- Yes, the church is to be a spiritual family that cares for the needs of its own - but that doesn't mean it enables laziness or irresponsibility.

"...TO ASPIRE TO LIVE QUIETLY"

We are a culture obsessed with entertainment, novelty, drama, and excitement (TV shows, cable news, social media, sports, etc.).

- We so often get addicted to the thrill of the next big thing and don't know to get quiet and listen to God, stay out of drama that doesn't involve us (gossip), and we lack contentment and peace.
- When we take time to be quiet and at rest, we can listen to God and know Him better.

"...TO MIND YOUR OWN AFFAIRS"

This doesn't mean that we live apart from or have no concern for each other within the church, and never practice confession, transparency, or vulnerability within relationships.

- It just means that we honor healthy boundaries - within someone else's family, marriage, finances, or personal lives.
- It means we don't gossip, assume, or judge.

"...TO WORK WITH YOUR OWN HANDS"

Responsibility, diligence, and industry honor God, help others, and serve the community and the church.

- Laziness, entitlement, and idleness dishonor God, place burdens on other people, and stagnates the community and the church.
- Work is worship (Col. 3:23), it's good for you (Gen. 1-2), and it's God's plan for the progress of society and the church.

"SO THAT YOU MAY WALK PROPERLY BEFORE OUTSIDERS..."

The unbelieving world should be able to look at our lives, relationships, and work ethic and see integrity, purity, and character.

"...AND DEPENDENT ON NO ONE."

They also shouldn't see any of us "mooching" off each other or the system, but rather us being responsible and working as we're able to work.

THE COMING OF THE LORD (1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18)

There were some misunderstandings happening within this church concerning the return of Christ.

- It seems like the believers here thought that those who died before Christ returned would miss out on the glories of the Kingdom.
- Death in the pagan world (and in our modern secular world) was a subject matter that was grim, sorrowful, and mysterious. It was filled with superstition and speculation.

But we're not to be "uninformed" about the fate of those who "sleep" (vs. 13).

- As Christians, we grieve the death of our loved ones, but if they knew the Lord Jesus, we don't grieve as those who have, "no hope".
- The difference for us as believers is that we have the assurance of resurrection in death because Christ rose again (vs. 14), therefore we will also rise.

Whatever Jesus does, His people follow. Wherever Christ is, His people will someday be (Jn. 14:3).

- Therefore, since Jesus rose again from the grave, we will also rise again from our graves.
- Christians who have died before Jesus returns are by no means at a disadvantage (vs. 15).
- When Jesus comes back in all His glory, the "dead in Christ shall rise first" (vs. 16) - they will come out of their graves and get resurrected bodies before anybody remaining on the earth.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW??

2 Cor. 5:8 "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord", Luke 23:43 "Today you will be with me in paradise".

- To die in Christ is to lose our body temporarily and go to be at home with the Lord - our bodies are in the grave waiting for the resurrection, and our souls are with Jesus (conscious, not "soul sleep", where we're asleep waiting for the resurrection).

Those alive and remaining on the earth until the coming of Jesus will be, "caught up to meet Him in the air" (vs. 17).

- Those who remain will be carried away by a miraculous display of the power of God to the place where the Lord is.
- Ultimately, our final resting place is a new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem where we will be, "always with the Lord".

"THEREFORE, ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS"

The fact that death is not the end for us should be of great encouragement (imagine the alternative).

- The fact that this world and all of its brokenness is not all there is should be of great encouragement (imagine the alternative).
- The fact that we will see the Lord and be with Him should be of great encouragement to us!

JESUS IS COMING BACK. THEREFORE, LET'S LIVE HOLY LIVES (VS.1-8)

- (VS.1-8) - God's will for all of us is to please Him by abstaining from what we were saved from, what was killing us, and what put Jesus on the cross. If you struggle in this area, agree with God on it and find accountability and help.
- (VS.9-10) - All of the offenses we've carried, the unforgiveness we held onto, and the mercy we refused to extend will seem so ridiculous and silly when we see Jesus, face to face. There's always room for us to grow when it comes to love in our hearts and lives.
- (VS. 11-12) - The worldly voices of novelty, excitement, and drama will someday be exposed as meaningless when Christ returns. Whose voice was the loudest in our lives as we waited on His return?
- (VS. 13-18) - This world and all of its brokenness is not our home.