

Pleasing God: A Godly Lifestyle, Not a Checklist

1 Thessalonians 4:1–12

WHAT IS TRUE? Paul calls all Christians to holy lives, emphasizing sexual purity and growing brotherly love for each other. He also urges us to live thoughtfully, considering Christ's return and the coming resurrection from the dead. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, he rebuked them for one sin after another: their involvement with incest and prostitutes, their lawsuits, and their lack of love. By contrast, the apostle did not correct the Thessalonians for any such behavior. Paul only has to urge them to continue living right with regard to sex (4:3–5), holy relationships (4:6), Christian love (4:9–10), and work (4:11–12). We should work hard at living wholesome, responsible lives, not only to please God but also to achieve a good reputation for Christ's church and his people.

1. Paul's appeal to grow in obedience (4:1–2)

- A. How he appeals – like a wise father, he encourages, pleads, urges
- B. Content of appeal – he had given commandments; they knew them and were to keep them. Holy living is the goal, unlike the pagans
- C. Reason for the appeal – walk in obedience and please God (Jn 15:10, 1 Jn. 3:22-24); Converted sinners keep His commands.

2. Paul's appeal to live in sexual purity (4:3–8) ¹

- A. Abstain from sexual immorality; control yourself in holiness/honor. The Thessalonians had not returned to their former life of sexual impurity, but they were being constantly tempted to do so, for they were living in the midst of a pagan society in which fornication and adultery were as common as eating food and drinking water, so they needed constant exhortation not to return to their former life.
- B. God chastens those who live an unholy life (4:6)—God severely chastens those Christians who go beyond an honorable use of the body and defraud their brothers and sisters. The Lord Himself will avenge the defrauded brother or sister; also see Heb. 13:4.
- C. God called us to a holy life (4:7–8)— No Christian is to go beyond a sanctified and honorable use of their body and defraud a brother or sister by committing adultery. God called us from our former unclean life so that we may glorify Him. Our call to live a holy life came not from man but from God. Therefore, all who “despise” (reject) this call despise not man but God.
- D. God gave us His Holy Spirit (4:8)—God gave His Holy Spirit to motivate, lead, and empower us to live a holy life and so we have a burden of conscience when we live an unholy life.

3. Paul's recognition of Thessalonian brotherly love (4:9–10)

- A. No appeal to love one another was needed because Paul had taught them to love one another when he was with them (4:1,2)
- B. No appeal to love one another was needed because God had taught them to love one another through the Holy Spirit (4:9)
- C. No appeal to love one another was needed because they were already practicing love toward each other and to Macedonians (4:10)
- D. They only needed to increase brotherly love for each other (4:10)

4. Paul's appeal to walk right before lost people (4:11–12)

As commanded, we ought to behave properly and independently:

- A. Lead a quiet life as you anticipate the return of the Lord Jesus
- B. Mind your own business and do not be meddlesome
- C. Work with your own hands
- D. Walk honestly before the unsaved so they cannot criticize you and so that you might not fall into sin and trouble yourself (loudmouth, meddlesome, lazy Christians become involved in hurtful things)

WHAT TO DO (APPLICATION)?

- ✓ Commit to know what God Says and Do what God Commands!
- ✓ Avoid sexual immorality of every kind; Respect others! Sexual sin is against the dignity of other people.
- ✓ Assume responsibility for sexual purity; God avenges these sins!
- ✓ God's Word has a purifying effect on one's mind and heart. Scripture points out sin, motivates us to confess, renews our relationship with Christ, and guides us back to the right path. If you are putting off reading your Bible, you may be harboring sin in your thoughts or actions. If so, confess it to God and turn away from such behaviors.²
- ✓ Ensure your loyalty is to God (see v. 8); do not reject the Holy Spirit
- ✓ Ensure your brotherly love toward others shows and is growing
- ✓ Lead a quiet life; mind your business; work and don't be lazy
- ✓ Don't take advantage of others (don't be lazy/dependent on anyone)
- ✓ Because He rose, so shall all believers. We need not despair when loved ones die or world events take a tragic turn. God will turn tragedy to triumph, poverty to riches, pain to glory, and defeat to victory

¹ Roy E. Gingrich, *The Book of First Thessalonians* (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2002), 19.

² Bruce B. Barton and Grant R. Osborne, *1 & 2 Thessalonians: Life Application Commentary*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), 66