

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Introduction

Turn in your copy of God's Word to 1 Thessalonians (page 927 in the Pew Bible).

We are in Week 6 of our sermon series through Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

- **Background**
 - This NT book is actually a letter written by the Apostle Paul, along with Silvanus and Timothy, to the church at Thessalonica (in northern Greece), which Paul founded during the second of his three missionary journeys.
- We are going to be in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, where we will see a **main idea** that: **Christian lifestyles matter.**

With this in mind, let's read our main passage.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

Foundation

Outline:

- 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

(1) 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2

- 4:1
 - Paul continues his encouragement and instruction to the church.
 - "Finally"
 - Paul is transition to new and final thoughts within his encouragement and instruction.
 - "ask and urge in the Lord Jesus"
 - Paul wanted the church to hear and feel the weight of what he is about to say.
 - He is asking them, but more than asking, he is urging them.

- “Urging” comes with the understanding of beseeching.
 - What Paul is asking comes with an urgency and ferventness, AND to add even more weight, he says he is asking and urging in the Lord Jesus.
 - What Paul is asking and urging is not ultimately coming from him, or even his traveling companions, but coming from Jesus.
 - III—Begging
 - Similar to me getting down on my hands and knees pleading for what I am about to say, and that it is coming from the word of God and not me.
 - Remainder is application.
- 4:2
 - Paul reminds the church where the instruction came from.
 - It was from Jesus.
 - This is a point Paul has reiterated to the church several times prior within this letter— 1:8; 2:2; 2:8; 2:9; 2:13; 3:1.
 - Paul is asking and urging the church in Jesus because what Paul and his companions are teaching them comes from Jesus and their living is to be found in Jesus.
 - For Paul, after His salvation in Acts 9, everything was about Jesus.
 - Paul clearly writes in Philippians 1:21, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”
 - For Paul, life was for Christ and death was a gain in Christ.
 - For Paul, he was sold out for Jesus, Jesus was his all-in-all, and death was a gain because of getting to be in the presence of and experience perfect union with Jesus.

- Brothers and Sisters, does this describe us in anyway?
 - Are we sold out for Jesus, is He our all-in-all?
 - Or are we on the fence, letting this and that capture our attention and hinder our relationship with Jesus?
 - What do you need to repent of and surrender that is hindering and standing in the way of your relationship with Jesus?

(2) 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

- 4:3
 - Paul reminds the church of God's will.
 - In this context here in 1 Thess 4, Paul is providing a specificity to his statement.
 - God's will for the church is their sanctification, specifically in the area of sexual immorality.
 - First, how do we know God's will?
 - God reveals His will through His word because through His Word He has revealed what He wants people to do and what He wants them not to do.
 - God doesn't make us guess or play a cosmic game of Wheel of Fortune, but clearly and deliberately gives us His will within the Bible.
 - Church Family, do you want to know the will of God?
 - Read the Bible and allow God to show it to you through it.
 - Second, the will of God for the Thessalonian church was their sanctification.
 - Sanctification—"continual process that Christians go through to become more mature, holy, and conformed into the image of Jesus throughout their earthly lives."

- God wants growth and maturity NOT stagnicity and complacency (we will talk more about this shortly).
- And this sanctification involves every area and aspect of our lives.
- Third, the will of God for the Thessalonian church was sanctification in the area of sexual immorality.
 - The word is “*porneia*” in the original language, which can encompass all sexual sins outside the confines of biblical marriage.
 - Biblical marriage—God defines biblical marriage throughout the Bible as the union between one man and one woman.
 - Thessalonica was a city in Northern Greece, and thus apart of the Greco-Roman world and culture.
 - Sexual behaviors that were contrary and disobedient to God were prominent.
 - Those in the church were saved out of this culture, but still lived within this culture and were sure to face the temptations of the culture.
 - Same for us today.
 - We as Christians are saved out of our secular American culture, but we still live within this culture and are still exposed to the temptations.
 - Paul wanted to be very clear with the church that God’s will was their continued holiness, which caused them to be more like God and less like the world, and this included their sexuality.

pleasing to God and both good and beneficial for us and others.

- Paul is reminding the church now that they are Christians, they may still be within their old culture and its temptations, but they don't have to give in to "the passion of lust" but can utilize self-control to control their own bodies and decisions and actions.
- 4:6-8
 - Paul reminds the church of the importance of the Christian fruit of self-control because of the consequences of its neglecting.
 - Within this specific context and topic of sexual immorality, Paul wants the church to know the following understanding (and we can glean from this as well):
 - If a fellow Christian wrongs another fellow Christian as it comes to sexual immorality, they will not only have to face the consequences from the person they have wronged and their family, from the church family as a whole (church discipline), possibly even the legal and judicial system, BUT also from God Himself.
 - Unfortunately, this was not just something that stayed as a problem in the 1st Century, but is still something the church as to deal with today, as was seen just recently within a sister Baptist church in Owensboro dealing with this issue.
 - Why will God judge this?
 - 4:7 reminds what the Bible teaches over and over—God is holy and expects His people to be holy.
 - And when it comes to holiness, God doesn't play.
 - God cares about the sanctification and holiness of every area, aspect, and

component of our lives BECAUSE we are a reflection of Him and His holiness to the world in every area, aspect, and component of our lives.

- This is true for individual Christians, and true for the local corporate church as well.
- There is no public life and private life as it comes to God's people, it should all be one and the same.
- Who I am and what I do in public should be a mirror image of who I am and what I do in private (and vice versa).
 - True individually and the church corporately.
- God didn't save and redeem us so like a pig to mud we would constantly go back to the filth of the sin and impurity of our former life.
- God saved and redeemed us so that we can experience a new life in Him the includes holiness and righteousness.
- God saves and redeems us, and then as Paul reminds here in 4:8, "gives his Holy Spirit to you."
- Don't disregard God, but continually surrender, embrace, and live life to the fullest for God and through God.

From our time in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, we see a **main idea** that: **Christian lifestyles matter.**

Application

How do we apply this passage to our lives?

- 1 Thessalonians 4:1
- **Main Application—Christian lifestyles matter, especially as it involves what, to whom, and where.**

1 Thessalonians 4:1

- “that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more”
 - Paul is asking and urging in the Lord Jesus that what he and his companions taught to the church and how they disciplined the church, that the church continues to do these things, and continues to do them more and more.
 - **3 takeaways** from this portion of the verse as it comes to our Christian lifestyles mattering :
 - **(1) How matters.**
 - Paul reminds the church that “how” they walked as Christians matters.
 - Being a Christian doesn’t mean we can live however we want and whenever we want.
 - We are not God, we are not Ruler, and we are not King.
 - When we repented and believed and experienced salvation and redemption from God, we surrendered to Jesus and His Lordship and Kingship.
 - We pledged our allegiance to King Jesus, and surrendered to His ruling and reigning over us.
 - How I live matters because I now live in light of what my Lord and King have commanded and given me to do.
 - I am not in control, Jesus is . . . I don’t call the shots, Jesus does.
 - How I live matters because Jesus has a certain way I am supposed to live and He expects me to live that way.
 - Also, now that I am a representative for Jesus, an ambassador of Him, a soldier marching under His banner, HOW I live is a reflection of Him to those I encounter.

- If how I lived after salvation didn't matter, then there is a lot of wasted words and space in the Bible, and why did God waste His time revealing and giving these to us?
- The reason God did is because how we live and walk with God matters, and that is not left up to us to decide on our own, but has already been given to us by our God, Lord, King.
- III—the world.
 - The world wants to tell us to “listen to your conscience” or “follow your heart.”
 - Listening to my conscience and following my heart is what got us here in the first place . . . just ask Adam and Eve.
 - On the contrary, we don't need to listen to our conscience, but listen to God, His Word (made flesh in Jesus and written down in the Bible), and the Holy Spirit . . . AND we don't need to follow our heart, but follow God, His Word (made flesh in Jesus and written down in the Bible), and the Holy Spirit.
 - My heart and conscience will lead me astray but God, His Word, and the Holy Spirit will not.
 - My heart and conscience after salvation are more reliable because they are now being transformed by God and guided by the Holy Spirit, but let us still go straight to the source.
- How are you living, and is it in accordance to God and His word?
- The “how” we live within our Christian lives matters.
- (2) To whom matters.

- Paul reminds the church that “to whom” they walk as Christians matters.
- Are you living to please God?
 - We don’t start our lives out this way.
 - We should but we don’t because of the sin of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.
 - This topic ended up being talked about both in Men’s Study on Tuesday morning and Adult Study on Wednesday night.
 - Adam and Eve were created in the beginning and they lived for God and to please God.
 - After their sin in Genesis 3, every human afterwards is born into sin with a sin nature that causes them not to live for God and to please Him.
 - Though our sin nature causes us not to live for and please God DOESN’T mean that God still doesn’t desire and require this.
 - God alone is God, God alone is deserving of glory, and God alone is deserving of our hearts and lives.
 - You were created to live in a relationship with God and to live for God to bring Him glory and to please Him in all of who you are and what you do.
 - Our sin nature and world leads us to live for and please anything and anyone other than God.
 - And this leads us to sadness, sorrow, emptiness, lacking because we will never find what we need most, what our hearts and souls long for most, and what will fulfill and satisfy us most within sin and the world.

- Joy, contentment, satisfaction, fulfillment and so much more can only be found in God alone and in living for and living to please Him alone.
 - Paul knows to whom the Thessalonian church lives matters because to whom they live determines to whom they please.
 - The “to whom” we live our Christians lives for matters.
- **Where matters.**
 - Paul reminds the church that “where” within their walk as Christians matters.
 - Where meaning where they are going, or we could look at it like this: growth.
 - Growth matters.
 - Stagnicity and complacency within our Christian lives is not okay and not healthy.
 - We need to be constantly growing and constantly striving forward.
 - III—Wade fishing Green River in College.
 - I went to college in Campbellsville, which the home of Green River Lake and where the Green River itself runs through.
 - In college, I went wade fishing down the Green River, and I remember this one time while wading, I came upon this offshoot from the main current that had been blocked off by a fallen tree.
 - The difference in the active water in the main current versus the stagnant water in the offshoot was night and day.
 - The active water in the main current was healthy and thriving WHILE the stagnant water in the offshoot was unhealthy and declining.

- The stagnant water was nasty, foamy, murky, not what water is supposed to be.
- But the active water in the main current was exactly what water is supposed to be.
- Christians that are living truly and obediently, and to please God, are to continue to do this and grow more and more in this, AND they are prime examples of what a Christian is supposed to be.
- Christians that are living falsely and disobediently, and are not pleasing God, are not to continue in this and not grow in this because they are poor examples of what a Christian is supposed to be.
- Alongside this, there may be Christians who were once living truly and obediently, and to please God, but now instead of continuing in this and growing in this, they think they have done enough and grown enough, and have become stagnant and complacent, and they are poor examples of Christians.
- Stagnant and complacent Christians are just as displeasing to God as disobedient and wayward Christians.
- God desires and expects continuation not complacency, stamina not stagnicity, and growth not gunked.
- Contentment is a good and godly thing, but contentment is different than complacency.
 - Contentment still looks for and pursues growth, whereas complacency ignores growth.
 - Contentment=yes . . .
complacency=no.
- Have you become complacent in your Christian life, or are you continuing to grow and mature?

- The “where” we will live within our Christian lives, our growth within our Christian lives, matters.

Challenge/Conclusion

Friends, Christian lifestyles matter, particularly as we have been called out of the world yet still live within the world, and especially as it involves how we live, to whom we live, and where we will live.

As we conclude this morning, during our invitation time and your quiet time this week with God, I want us to pray and ponder this reflection question:

- Main Reflection—Are you living to please God, and is this reinforced in your continued growth in holiness?