



**How to Live in an Over Sexed Culture
Sanctification = Holiness
Yes, This Includes Sex Too!
1 Thessalonians 4:1 – 12**

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When I was in the Air Force, I learned, once assigned to a Security Forces squadron, that we would get visits from time to time from higher headquarters. Most times they were friendly visits, but on a regular schedule, we would get another kind of visitor. One who was interested in what we were doing, how we were doing it, were we following the directions, and how effective we were when we did it. Whenever a



team got off a plane and told you “Hi, we are with the Inspector General and we’re here to help.” You knew life as you knew it has now ended for at least a couple of weeks.

We would be watched, measured and examined to see if we knew how to do everything we had learned and been taught, and do it correctly as well.

And we would be happy about it too.

Paul knew he had not been able to address everything with this brand-new church. There may be a few holes in their teaching that need to be filled in here or there.

Life does that. It produces questions for us in our walk with Christ as we transition from sinner to saint.

In the first 3 chapters, we have learned that Paul was not able to pour into the lives of the new believers in Thessalonica as he wanted to. He and the team were forced to leave due to persecution and the persecution did not end for the new church just because Paul and the team left.

The stress and squeezing they experienced at the hands of others caused great concern for Paul, enough to make him send Timothy to find out if the church is ok and dealing with persecution well. As he began the letter to Thessalonica, it is obvious that the report was good, and Paul was rejoicing along with the team.

But that was not the only mission that Timothy was there for. The church was happy to see him, and Timothy made some observations that he would pass on along to Paul. Yes, they are dealing well with persecution, but there are a couple of issues involving their becoming more like Jesus. We call that sanctification in the scriptures.

Or in other words, yes, there were a few holes that needed to be plugged. Paul is now moving to address some of those things.

1 Thessalonians 4:1–2

“Finally then, brothers and sisters, we request and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received instruction from us as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel even more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.” (NASB 2020)

If your translation starts off with finally, you need to know this, Paul is not wrapping up his letter. Not even close. The phrase in the Greek is λοιπὸν οὖν (loipon oun).

The first word, loipon, means “remaining; the rest, remainder... henceforth, henceforward, as to the rest, besides, finally, but, now, furthermore.” (Mounce 2006, 1202)

The other word, oun, “then, now then, then, thereupon, therefore, consequently.” (Mounce 2006, 1228)

This is one of those cases where the KJV nailed it in my mind.

1 Thessalonians 4:1

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.” (KJV)



Paul is not wrapping up, but he is moving on to some of “the findings” that Timothy reported on. He is a bit reluctant to go there since they are under persecution, and he was not there to correct them appropriately as they began doing life as new believers.

Nonetheless, Paul at the same time shows considerable reluctance to get at “what remains to be said,” which serves as further evidence that friendship is still the primary thrust of the letter. Basically his appeal is that “we are about to repeat instructions that you have already received from us”; his reluctance to put it this way probably stems from Timothy’s report that for the most part the Thessalonian believers are living properly. (Fee 2009, 139)

Paul will still call sin, sin. But there is persecution, and they are doing very well in that light and with the team having been there only a few weeks.

This is very different from what he will later write to the folks in Corinth. He was with them for over a year. There, he calls sin, sin. And he also names, names.

His word choice here in verse 1 reflects some of that reluctance. He gets what they are going through but either through the questions they asked Timothy, or simply through his observations, a bit of correction appears to be in order.

First, he appeals to them as brothers and sisters and then requests and exhorts them in the Lord. This is a 1st century AD way of gently getting to the topic and making sure this is not simply Paul dumping on them, but in the Lord and His teachings, he had provided instruction that needed to be reemphasized.

Paul tells them part of the teaching the team did was practical living instructions. How to do life in a pagan culture after coming out of that culture. He reflects that they are indeed walking as they should, but rather than say a few of you could do better. He simply tells all of them to aim for more excellence in Godly living.

Yes, Paul covered doctrine in his teaching of these new believers. They know what they believe, but he also covered the day to day practical as well. The culture that they lived in was no different than the one we live in. Immorality was common, and before Jesus, they all were involved in it.

One of the gods worshipped there was Dionysius. The “features of Dionysus worship—processions in which imposing effigies of Dionysus along with his symbol, the phallus, were carried; ecstatic dances to the accompaniment of flutes and drums; excess of drinking wine and feasting at banquets; and so forth.” (Weima 2014, 12)

Folks were coming to Christ from that. This is no different than folks coming to Christ today in our sexually confused culture.

Yes, they do indeed love and follow Jesus, but when you live in a permissive culture, and you do not get continuous sound teaching, you may still reflect some aspects of the culture.

I love working with new believers, especially those who are growing and wanting to follow Jesus not just doctrinally, but also practically in their day-to-day living.

A Biblical worldview does not simply drop out of heaven on top of you the moment salvation occurs. Sanctification, the process of becoming more and more like Jesus is a participatory process that happens in real time.



Everyone moves at different speeds too. We are part of a fellowship that desires to make disciples, which means there will be those in our fellowship who are spiritually mature with a Biblical worldview, and on the other extreme it means there will be those who are babes in Christ just starting to grow and are learning what parts of their current worldview they need to throw away.

When Paul and the team were forced to leave, they left a fellowship that was about 2 weeks old in the Lord.

When I was in college, I had a job driving a truck route. Part of my job included training new drivers on our processes and helping them learn the route and how to interact with the customers.

I will never forget this brand-new hire who after driving with him about 2 hours, figured out that I was a believer. He told me he had just given his life to Jesus the previous Sunday at Calvary Chapel. I was so excited for him. Everything was new and the Holy Spirit was indeed already at work.

I literally was an answer to his prayer for help. He asked me if it was okay for Christians to do dope? Gulp. Help Lord, what do I say? Enter the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit led me to share with him Galatians 5:16-25. I told him it was a partial list of do's and don'ts for living in the Spirit.

He saw the drunkenness phrase and immediately told me that partying on Friday's was out. I did not tell him that, the Spirit did.

He read the word witchcraft and wanted to know more, I told him the word in the Greek was pharmakeia, we get pharmacy from it. I suggested he pray about what the Lord is showing him in the scripture and spend some more time meditating on the word there in Galatians 5. Thank you, Lord, for the guidance.

The next day, he told me the Lord showed him it meant no more dope.

He said he flushed his stash and determined not to go there anymore. I did not tell him it was wrong, the Holy Spirit did, but I was able to show him the word.

Paul and the team were not there for those moments of discovery and in some cases, the new believers continued on in their normal practices. Later, Paul would write to the church in Corinth about the same topic, but they knew better since Paul was there for almost 2 years. That was not the case in Thessalonica.

As we go about doing ministry, the Lord will bring believers across our path who are at different locations in their walk with Jesus.

The hardest part is learning to listen and then using the word to provide guidance without saying things like "You're still doing what?"

Their culture, just as ours, has the same thing going on in it that folks are being saved out of. In Macedonia, "immorality was so common among the heathen that even Christians were apt to look upon it with a measure of indifference, or even complacency." (Ironsides 1947, 42)

I have counseled more than one new believer who is still involved in a lifestyle they need to separate from.



The Holy Spirit is the one who is doing the work and making the changes. Not you or me. And, unfortunately, folks move at different speeds. Not everyone is flushing their dope within 5 days of coming to Christ. For some, that might take a bit longer to learn. I was told by a brother how long it took him; he finally got it shortly after becoming an intern on church staff. Now he is the most conservative antidrug pastor I know.

We all are individuals, and the Holy Spirit meets each of us where we are when we come to Jesus and then begins the sanctification journey.

Ministry may look different for one who is growing slowly versus one who moving a bit faster. The fear to serve the Lord in ministry here at Calvary may be very real in one where in another, no fear at all. Then there are those that the Lord grows up right in front of us.

Paul wants them all to excel, this is not new truth, but simply a restatement of some of the basics. He is moving them to their next step of spiritual development. Their next step of faith. We are all looking at that next step of faith as we grow and serve the Lord.

For the church in Thessalonica, there is no new truth being revealed here, but simply encouragement on the basics. Here in Thessalonica, the issue is holiness. This is indeed a command, but how would you or I do if we only heard it in passing once and then our teacher had to leave. Then comes persecution. Yes, we are believers and yes, we are trusting in Christ, but there still may be some struggling with immorality, or more specifically, sexual purity.

That was very real for them and also very real in our culture today.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no one violate the rights and take advantage of his brother or sister in the matter, because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you previously and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in sanctification. Therefore, the one who rejects this is not rejecting man, but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.” (NASB 2020)

Paul is now reminding them what he told them.

And what does God’s will call for? For the Thessalonians it calls for renewed attention to their sex lives. At a minimum they should avoid porneia, here a blanket term for the whole range of attitudes and actions which Scripture prohibits (1 Thess. 4:3). This is key to their Sanctification. (Yarbrough 1996, 71)

It is God’s clear will that His people be holy (1 Thessalonians 3:13).

This was difficult for some in Thessalonica to consider in their decision making. Many believers today have the same problem in day-to-day decision making, God wants us to be holy. To be set apart to Him. To be growing daily to be more like Christ and being conformed to Him in doing life. In other words, to be developing a Biblical worldview and lifestyle.

The instructions Paul provides here is designed to provide practical steps for the church.

Practical step one in the process of sanctification and holiness is to abstain from porneia. That is the word used here in the Greek translated sexual immorality.



Paul says simply to avoid it. “Christians are to avoid and abstain from any and every form of sexual practice that lies outside the circle of God’s revealed will, namely adultery, premarital and extramarital intercourse, homosexuality, and other perversions. The word porneia, translated “sexual immorality,” is a broad one and includes all these practices.” (Constable 1985, 701, Constable 1985)

Sanctification is the process or act of becoming holy. Being holy is countercultural, in Paul’s day just as it is today. Paul is reminding the church of this. Why?

Possibly some were still struggling with this and under persecution, the temptation to return to a former lifestyle was something Paul was concerned about.

For the believer today, sanctification involves abstaining, staying away from porneia. This is becoming increasingly hard to do in our culture today just as it was in Thessalonica.

Thessalonica “was rife with such sinful practices as fornication, adultery, homosexuality (including pedophilia), transvestism (men dressing like women), and a wide variety of pornographic and erotic perversions, all done with a seared conscience and society’s acceptance, hence with little or no accompanying shame or guilt. Unlike people in Western nations today, the Thessalonians grew up with no Christian tradition to support laws and standards that forbid the grosser manifestations of immorality. Pagan Greek society apparently did not have civil laws to prohibit immoral behavior.” (MacArthur Jr. 2002, 102)

The church was still struggling with this. No doubt, many of those who were saved, prior to salvation, may have had multiple active partners and business relationships but now everything has changed and for some, that was still a process they were involved in. Now Paul steps in and says, abstain, stop.

For one who does not have a Biblical worldview and has been into self, that is an extreme word. Stop. Paul knows that as believer, the Holy Spirit is in them and in the Spirit, they indeed can stop.

But it was seriously countercultural for many who were coming to Christ. “In Greco-Roman society, marriages were usually family arrangements rather than love matches. Typically men in their middle twenties were paired with young women barely in their teens, whom they usually had never met. So it was expected that married men would have sexual relations with other women, such as prostitutes, female slaves, or mistresses from lower social classes.” (Weima 2014, 261)

Today we deal with open marriages, moves to make polyamory legal, confusion over sexuality, human trafficking, pornography, Gentleman’s Clubs and other assorted in person and online temples to Baal.

In Thessalonica, all one needed to do was go to one of the temples there in town, with the internet, that is no longer required.

Since citizens were expected to participate in the local religious practices and festivals and sometimes were even given funds from civic leaders to ensure such participation, it is reasonable to assume that in their pre-Christian life the members of the Thessalonian church not only were very familiar with the various cults of their city but also had themselves actively participated in many of them. (Weima 2014, 10) Then there were the festivals businesses required employees to be involved in.

Step one, stop saying yes to the culture and simply stop. Say no.

Paul then goes further with step two, instructing them to take control of their bodies, their own vessel in sanctification and honor. This implies that engaging in porneia means one is out of control of their own bodies allowing their own lusts instead to control them.



Paul is being polite but at the same time his euphemistic comments attack two of the worship practices going on in town.

When Paul says “know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification,” that implies the need to learn the knowledge of what is appropriate sexual behavior versus that which is not and falls into the category of porneia. This would be in contrast to what the scriptures teach on the topic.

Paul is using a Greek euphemism here, translated vessel, for the male sexual organ implying mastery or control of the body. And he is specifically attacking two idol worshipping groups there in town, Dionysius and Cabirus.

The cults of Dionysus and the Cabirus, both well established in Thessalonica, made use of phallic images and often involved drunken sexual carousing. (Weatherly 1996, 1 Th 4:3-8)

Paul is telling them with his word choice what is porneia here, this is not what the Bible says is acceptable sexual conduct.

We tend to forget that the Song of Songs is part of the Bible. I was taught in Bible school that this was an allegory of God’s love for Israel or the church. But I find that I agree with Dr. Fruchtenbaum’s view of this book. He says this book shows us God’s view of the marriage relationship and all that is included in that.

The book describes the courtship, marriage, wedding night, and subsequent sexual adjustments of the young couple. These are real historical situations through which God intends to teach lessons regarding the divine viewpoint in the very areas of courtship, marriage, and sex, just as other historical books of the Bible teach us divine principles in other areas. (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 2)

This is in contrast to what Paul is describing the church needs to abstain from.

Paul goes further for the believer than commanding abstinence and learning how to keep yourself in holiness, he also talks about the danger of the mind dwelling on the topic of porneia.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–5

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;” (NASB 2020)

Internet pornography is a real problem today.

Discipline in sexual matters is not for Paul merely a matter of doing what is best for oneself but of recognizing God’s will and his power to enforce it. Immorality therefore represents deliberate ignorance of God and the nature of his call, leaving one subject to God’s judgment. As a secondary but still vital point, Paul also stresses that sexual immorality amounts to a deception of one’s brothers and sisters in Christ and so violates the bond which unites the church. (Weatherly 1996, 1 Th 4:3-8)

When Paul says “not in lustful passion, like the Gentile who do not know God,” he is indeed attacking the pagan culture at the heart of the Thessalonian world and culture. He is talking about the need for a world view change.

He has stated, there is sexual behavior that can be learned resulting in sanctification and honor. But there is also sexual behavior which is not. Lustful passion is the operative phrase he uses. It is the desire to have something which does not belong to you. It begins in the mind and can, unless stopped, become a problem.



Such lust does not merely invade the whole body and outward members; it takes such complete and passionate possession of the whole man, both physically and emotionally, that what results is the keenest of all pleasures on the level of sensation; and, at the crisis of excitement, it practically paralyzes all power of deliberate thought. (Augustine of Hippo 1952, 388)

This is why there are ministries today for those who are struggling with internet porn since it intentionally feeds this reward and disgust cycle.

In a discussion, for those working in Bible translation ministries, about the appropriate phrase to translate this to, we obtain even more insight to what Paul means. “Lustful desire may be translated as “heart desire” or even “genital desire.” In some languages this desire is described as simply “a desire for sex relations,” but if this or a similar expression is used, the translation must make it clear that Paul is speaking of a wrong kind of sexual desire.” (Ellingworth and Nida 1976, 81)

Our culture says love is love, when it is really lust. The Bible has already clearly differentiated here for us there is a big difference between that which is honoring versus that which is not.

Paul continues, it appears that there in Thessalonica, Timothy became aware of, and reported back to Paul, that there were some in the local fellowship who were still living as they used to before becoming believers.

This alone is concerning and points to a need for further teaching thus the letter.

The best answer overall is that at least one case of sexual sin has been an adulterous situation with another man’s wife, or perhaps with a household slave. This would seem at least to account for the doubling of the verb: that no one “overstep the boundaries” and thus “take advantage of (= cheat)”⁴⁸ his Christian brother in this matter. (Fee 2009, 150-151)

This was culturally accepted behavior for the time but was not and is not accepted as normative behavior for a believer.

Those things our culture considers to be entertainment contain stories of allegedly mismatched people, falling apart in their marriage. No let’s bring that into the current culture, relationship, since there has been no marriage, and instead are finding true love in the arms of another. The sex of the other partner is no longer important either just as long as it is true love, the culture accepts it as being honorable and okay. Who cares about the lives of those who have been abandoned and left behind, the focus is on the achievement of true love and everyone should be okay with that.

Or, as was made popular a few years back, love means never having to say you’re sorry.

The Biblical truth is very different than the culture’s swamy cliché filled ideal.

1 Thessalonians 4:6–8

“and that no one violate the rights and take advantage of his brother or sister in the matter, because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you previously and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in sanctification. Therefore, the one who rejects this is not rejecting man, but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.” (NASB 2020)

The Biblical standard is love between a man and a woman, resulting in marriage, between a man and a woman, for life no matter what happens. There is no falling out of love, growing apart, I met someone who excites me, I married the wrong person, she/he got old, and on and on with the excuses that I have heard over the years.



Don't get me wrong, there are valid reasons for ending a marriage.

Hebrews 13:4

“Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.” (NLT)

Yes, there were some things Paul had not talked about, this is not one of them. He made it clear who it is who is the judge in these matters.

It is impossible to sin in the manner of which Paul writes without wronging others; you cannot do it. These are sins that cannot be committed alone; others are injured by such unholy deeds. (Ironsides 1947, 43)

The point Paul is making, porneia is sin. In verse 7, he goes further that God's calling for us is to be sanctified and that is not possible by engaging in impurity, porneia.

God's plan for a Christian includes purifying his life. Sexual immorality frustrates the purpose of God's call. Certain pagan cults promoted unclean ceremonies, but Christ's plans for a Christian are to clean him up. (Constable 1985, 702)

The moment we give our life to Christ, the process begins. The Holy Spirit comes inside to never leave us and as he now has unfettered access to what we have been doing up to now, He starts eliminating all impediments to His mission.

Lifestyle changes are in the books for all who come to Christ. He does that.

World view changes are in the books. He does that too.

Relationship changes are also in the books many times as our circle of friends no longer agree with the new lifestyle we are moving into. He does that as well.

As with all things related to sanctification, it is a participatory process that you and I can say no to at any point in the process and stop, or even go backwards.

When a person comes to know God by faith in Jesus Christ, not only do his attitudes toward sex change, but he also discovers that God gives him the ability to act toward sexual temptation as he could not before. Knowing God is basic to living a holy life. This is why maintaining a vital relationship with God is essential to maintaining a clean walk before God. (Constable 1985, 701)

Maintaining that relationship is important because if we let it slide, then we also lose the ability to combat those temptations we thought the Holy Spirit had under control.

1 John 1:9 is there for that reason. When the Holy Spirit lets us know that there is something we should stop doing, and we decide we know better than He does, then it might get really quiet as, until we do as

He said, there is nothing further for Him to talk to us about. 1 John 1:9 is there for that reason too. We must be abiding in Christ and Spirit filled and Spirit led.

Paul is pretty up front on this. If we reject what he is saying, then we are rejecting God and we are the ones causing an impediment to the Holy Spirit to be able and do His work of sanctification in us.

I have heard those who struggle with sexual sin say it is simply not possible to achieve victory here. I am weak and so will not stop doing porneia. I heard this very clearly when I counseled a man who was



asking for guidance for doing life with his wife and his mistress. I told him to repent, immediately end the relationship with the mistress and confess his sin to his wife. He said no. This was not his first wife nor his first mistress.

As believers, we have all the power we need in Christ. For those who need help, there are excellent ministries to come alongside for a short time and provide help for us as we move through this. But here is the thing, the key does not change. If you are a believer, the confession of sin is point one.

1 John 1:9

“But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” (NLT)

Don’t stop there. Begin to abide in Christ. Oh, and a few practical steps.

As part of your confession and repentance let me give you a bit of practical advice here.

1. Throw away all of the magazines, movies, videos, dvds, books and pictures. Do it today, do not think about it.
2. Reformat your hard drive. Both on your computer and the one in your head. One is easy, the other , that takes some work.
3. Find a brother or sister in Christ who can walk with you in this. In other words, be accountable to someone else about how you do life. No, this is not your spouse.

John 15:4–5

“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” (NLT)

That is a decision you and I must make. We confess and reestablish the relationship and then, as an act of will, we remain in Christ.

That is going to take some work and that’s a good thing because abiding in Christ takes your mind off of what you used to engage in.

How do I do that? How do I abide in Christ?

1. It isn’t about you anymore; it is about Christ. Renounce self and put all your faith and reliance on Him.
2. Pray and ask for the Holy Spirit to baptize you and empower you and do that daily or even more frequently as needed.
3. Feed on His word daily, (John 15:7).
4. Obey His words, do what He commands (John 15:9-10).
5. Make prayer a priority (John 14:12-16).
6. Keep on keeping on.

Here is the thing, Paul was addressing some, in the church in Thessalonica, who had fallen back into the culture. He didn’t beat them up, he offered instruction. Stop, return. Why? “For God has not called us for impurity, but in sanctification.” (1 Thessalonians 4:7, NASB 2020)

It is still our choice. You aren’t broken. Jesus died for all of us and loves all of us.



Romans 5:6

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.” (CSB)

Starting in verse 9, it sounds like Paul switches from findings to a list of questions that Timothy brought back with him. The first one he answers is a natural follow up to the discussion on sexual purity, that is loving one another.

Jesus told us that this would be a major characteristic to be seen by the world as they look from the outside in at the church.

John 13:34–35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (NKJV)

1 Thessalonians 4:9–12

“Now as to the love of the brothers and sisters, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you practice it toward all the brothers and sisters who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers and sisters, to excel even more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we instructed you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.” (NASB 2020)

When Jesus talked about love, He used the word agape. Love no matter what. Paul uses a different word here, most likely the same as the question.

Φιλαδελφίας (philadelphias) - affection for one's fellow believer in Christ—'love for one's fellow believer, affection for a fellow believer.' (Louw and Nida 1996, 292)

For this church to ask this question was encouraging to Paul. Their love for each other was already spoken of throughout Macedonia. Paul tells them this is not a problem that anyone needs to be writing them about.

Evidence of their love for each other was evident. Paul points that they have been taught by God on this topic and they not only exhibit it to those in town, but throughout Macedonia. But there were a few tensions in the body.

We already mentioned that there may have been those who had slipped back into pre-Christ behaviors sexually. They may have wronged or offended others in the church. Paul gives the same instruction as before, excel in what you are doing, do it more in other words.

Yes, he brings up a couple of issues they are dealing with. There were some in the local fellowship who were, well, apparently busy bodies. In fact, due to persecution, some may have ceased working and were relying on others to help and care for them. That may have been necessary for a short time, but once the immediate problem ceased, they were to go back to work. Because they were not working, they were being disorderly and paying more attention to others business over their own.

Of course, we have no one today who does this. We call tend not to call it gossip, we simply tell our story and add, “pray for them.”

In Christ, we are all one. In a class-conscious environment like Thessalonica, that may be a source of some of the issues. This is not a bad question, “within the Christian community itself the question of fraternal love was of paramount importance since the church was open to people of all social classes and any ethnic background. Both the free and the slave were welcome, while Greeks, Romans, Macedonians,



Jews, and barbarians gathered together to share the same cup in the worship of their one Lord. Men and women had equal status, as did citizens and foreigners in this community where common social boundaries were crossed as a fruit of their common salvation (Gal. 3:23; Rom. 1:16–17; Col 3:11). In such a community, it would not be surprising for questions to surface about the meaning of “fraternal love.”” (Green 2002, 203)

Paul has said, excel at loving each other. Aspire to a quiet life and quit stirring up trouble, mind your own business, and get a job.

Paul wants to see the fellowship active in reaching others for Christ and that is what following his instructions would enable.

The Roman world prized those who contributed to the public good and made a difference. It is critical, if we want to win people to Christ, that we win their respect. The apostle Peter says it best, “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Pet 2:12). (Osborne 2018, 100)

There were apparently a few in Thessalonica who were being jugheads for Christ and that wins no one. Thus, the encouragement to excel at brotherly love.

The next question deals with last things and I want to spend some time talking about that.

Next time, we will begin our discussion of the rapture of the church, heaven, hell, sheol, the day of the Lord, and just when this will all become important. Hint, it already is.

ABC's of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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