

For a second week, we turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. Paul appeals to Jesus Christ as the Lord who expects holiness in the lives of the Thessalonians: “We ask and urge you *in the Lord Jesus* that your life be lived to please God.” Paul’s language could not be more timely for both the immoral culture of ancient Rome and the moral climate of our day. May we heed Paul’s urgent pleas, seeking to please God with how we use our bodies and how we control our desires – and may our young people follow our godly example in seeking to establish both personal holiness and godly marriages in. Then, they and we will be ready to meet Christ on the Day of His return.

Mon/Tues/Weds: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-13 & Luke 12:32

Walk in His Pleasure

Every mountain range has a deep foundation of bedrock which gives it an enduring place on the landscape. In just this way, the “mountain” of Christ’s return later in chapter 4 depends for its solid place in history on something much deeper and older, namely, the will of God the Father, mentioned for us in 1 Thessalonians 4:3. It is God’s will which underlies all holy living and all preparation for Christ’s return. But how does this Divine will reveal itself? Well, go back to the word in chapter 4 vs 1: “You have received from us (Paul writes) how you ought to **live** to please God.” That word is actually the word “to walk,” so that the KJV puts it this way: “Ye have received of us how ye ought to **walk** and please God.” Here is where the will of God shows its heart and desire for us: God wants our lives to be a “walk,” a “walk” with Him and before Him, a “walking” towards the goal of Christ’s return, a “walk” which implies fellowship and communion.

But how do I know that God wants to “walk” with me in this way and wants to transform me into one of His *holy* followers? Look at the next word in 4:1, which indicates that the Thessalonians received apostolic instruction on how they ought to walk in order that they would learn to “*please God*.” In other words, it is God’s *pleasure* which controls His desire to walk with us! That is precisely what Jesus says in that astounding statement in Luke 12:32, “Fear not little flock; for it is your Father’s good **pleasure** to give you the kingdom” (KJV). God’s kingdom, you see, is a kingdom of grace and divine pleasure! Because it is a kingdom of grace, God is pleased to GIVE, GIVE, GIVE, until our lives cannot help but be conformed to the holy kingdom in which He calls us to dwell. After all, what is the highest gift mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 as proof? It is that He gives us His Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4:8) as the guarantee that we will be sanctified in preparation for Christ’s return! Sing about the Spirit’s role in conforming us to God’s holiness in preparation for Christ’s return in hymn # 330 in our Trinity Hymnal:

Holy Ghost, dispel our sadness,
Pierce the clouds of sinful night:
Come, thou source of sweetest gladness,
Breathe thy life, and spread your light!
Loving Spirit, God of peace,
Great distributor of grace,
Rest upon this congregation!
Hear, O hear our supplication.

Come, thou best of all donations
God can give, or we implore;
Having thy sweet consolations
We need wish for nothing more:
Come with unction and with power,
On our souls your graces shower;
Author of the new creation,
Make our hearts thy habitation.

Thurs/Fri: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 and James 3:15-17**Pure, Peaceable, and Gentle**

1 Thessalonians 4:3 says that “we should be holy.” In our day, no facet of God's will is more ignored than His holiness progressively worked into lives. The world, the flesh, and the devil claim that God's holy ways cannot compete with the pleasure which this world promises, and so they seek to distort the beauty of holiness into something rigid, impractical and joyless. For mankind, holiness means an other-worldly impracticality or even a Scrooge-like spoiling of their fun on earth. This kind of self-willed wisdom seeks to exalt itself *above* God, rather than to submit to God's holy will!

False wisdom makes good earthly sense, meaning that it is pragmatic but unprincipled. It is suited only to cater to our sensual and immediate gratification, urging us to gain the world while losing our souls as we give no thought to heaven or heaven's God. Such wisdom is natural, meaning emotional, but not spiritual. It emphasizes good feelings while disregarding the revealed truth of God that alone saves and sets us free. Rev. Bill Harrell, *Bible Notes*, James 3:15-17

Meditate and Pray: May God save us from Satan's lie that God's holy will is somehow intolerantly harsh. In God's holy will we find much encouragement for living wholesome lives down here which will prepare us for living holy lives in the new heaven and earth! Study and mediate further on the 8 fruits of God's heavenly wisdom and will as they are described for you in James 3:17.

Sat/Sun: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 and Romans 8:11**The Spirit's Indwelling**

Our study of 1 Thessalonians 4 hasn't really addressed Paul's urgent plea to the Thessalonians to abstain from every form of sexual sin in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, “It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen.”

There is more we could say about sexual sin in every age of the church, as well as its only antidote in the kind of Christian love commanded in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10. For now, let us simply state that, for the Christian, the most effective way to maintain sexual purity is to be reminded of the reality of the indwelling Spirit, who has been given to us, as 1 Thessalonians 4:8 says, “Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who **gives you** his Holy Spirit.” In other words, those who successfully resist impurity and sexual sin do so *not primarily from a sense of shame or embarrassment – and certainly not from the external coercion of the Law of God* – but from the daily realization that they carry the Spirit of God and of Christ in their bodies wherever they go. Ask the Lord to re-kindle that sense of intimate communion with the Holy Spirit in you, using the words of hymn # 338 as your prayer:

*Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art;
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.*

*Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear.
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh,
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.*