

April 30, 2017

## “How You Ought to Walk and Please God”

**Focal Passage: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**  
(NASB)

Cross References: Matthew 5:27-28; John 14:34-35; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 1:9-11; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:7

**Lesson Idea:** God’s will is for us to live godly, sanctified lives. We should seek to live in such a way that pleases God.

### BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Apr 23 2 Kings 6-8	Apr 24 2 Kings 9-11
Apr 25 2 Kings 12-14	Apr 26 2 Kings 15-17
Apr 27 2 Kings 18-19	Apr 28 2 Kings 20-22
Apr 29 2 Kings 23-25	Apr 30 1 Chronicles 1-2

**Background:** We are saved by grace and not by works or through the law. However, once we are saved, we owe Jesus our lives and are expected to be obedient to His Lordship. In this passage, Paul **commands** believers to live godly lives. In our world today, just as in Paul’s day, sexual immorality is rampant. God calls us to holy living.

### 1 Thessalonians 3

*1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*

*9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 11 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 commanded you, 12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.*

### DISCUSSION:

- v 1. Why do people need instruction on how to walk and please God? How do we find out how to live in such a way that pleases God? Even though Paul maintained that they were already doing it, why did he urge them to excel at it even more? Why should we continue to grow in our walk with the Lord no matter how long we have walked with Jesus? (see 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Ephesians 4:1-3)

**NOTE:** from David Guzik:

**Abound more and more:** This means that Christian maturity is never finished on this side of eternity. No matter how far a Christian has come in love and holiness, they can still abound more and more.

- v 2. Where did Paul get his authority? What are the implications for us today?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

**For you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus:** These were not suggestions from the pen of Paul. These are commandments from the Lord Jesus, and must be received that way.

Morris on the word translated commandments: “It is more at home in a military environment, being a usual word for the commands given by the officer to his men (cf. its use in Acts 5:28; Acts 16:24). It is thus a word with a ring of authority.”

- v 3. What did Paul say is the will of God for us? What is sanctification? How is abstaining from sexual immorality involved in our sanctification? (see 1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

**For this is the will of God, your sanctification:** Paul gave these commands to a first-century Roman culture that was marked by sexual immorality. At this time in the Roman Empire, chastity and sexual purity were almost unknown virtues. Nevertheless, Christians were to take their

standards of sexual morality from God and not from the culture.

Paul said this was a commandment (1 Thessalonians 4:2). That word was a military term describing an order from an officer to a subordinate, and the order came from Jesus and not from Paul.

**The will of God, your sanctification:** Paul made it very clear what the will of God was for the Christian. The idea behind sanctification is to be set apart, and God wants us set apart from a godless culture and their sexual immorality. If our sexual behavior is no different than the Gentiles who do not know God, then we are not sanctified - set apart - in the way God wants us to be.

Those who do not know God do not have the spiritual resources to walk pure before the Lord; but Christians do. Therefore, Christians should live differently than those who do not know God.

That you should abstain from sexual immorality: We live differently than the world when we abstain from sexual immorality. The ancient Greek word translated sexual immorality (*porneia*) is a broad word, referring to any sexual relationship outside of the marriage covenant.

The broad nature of the word *porneia* shows that it isn't enough to just say that you have not had sexual intercourse with someone who is not your spouse. All sexual behavior outside of the marriage covenant is sin.

- v 4-5. How does someone "possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor?" (see 1 Corinthians 7:2; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:7) What does Paul say about those who live to fulfill their "lustful passions?" (see Romans 1:18-32) How does knowing God change the way you live?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

Some interpret this passage so that the vessel each one should possess is a wife, and that Paul here encouraged Christians to get married and express their sexuality in marriage instead of immorally. Yet it seems that instead, Paul meant to encourage each Christian to possess or hold his own body (vessel) in a way that honored God. Sexual immorality is a sin against one's own body (1 Corinthians 6:18).

**Not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God:** This plainly means that the sexual conduct of the Christian should be different than the prevailing permissiveness of the day.

- v 6. How do people transgress or defraud in these matters? (see Matthew 5:27-28; Hebrews 13:4) What does the Lord do about these transgressions? Why is this a "solemn warning?"

- v 7. What has God called us for?
- v 8. What did Paul say was true about those who rejected his instructions? Why?

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

**Because the Lord is the avenger of all such:** This is the first of four reasons for sexual purity. We can trust that God will punish sexual immorality, and that no one gets away with this sin - even if it is undiscovered.

**For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness:** This is the second reason why Christians should be sexually pure - because of our call. That call is not to uncleanness, but to holiness; therefore, sexual immorality is simply inconsistent with who we are in Jesus Christ.

**Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God:** The third reason for sexual purity is because to reject God's call to sexual purity is not rejecting man, but God Himself. Despite the petty ways many rationalize sexual immorality, we still reject God when we sin in this way.

Paul's strong command here did not seem to come because the Thessalonians were deep in sin. No specific sin is mentioned; it seems that this was meant to prevent sin rather than to rebuke sin, in light of the prevailing low standards in their society and because of the seductive strength of sexual immorality.

**Who has also given us His Holy Spirit:** This is the fourth of four reasons for sexual purity given in this passage. We have been given the Holy Spirit, who empowers the willing, trusting Christian to overcome sexual sin. By His Spirit, God has given us the resources for victory; we are responsible to use those resources.

- v 9. What does he say about loving one another? (see John 13:34-35; Philippians 1:9-11)
- v 10. How did Paul encourage the church concerning love?
- v 11. What did Paul say should be our ambition? What does that look like in your life?
- v 12. What did Paul say was the purpose of attending to your business and working with your hands? Why would God desire this?

**APPLICATION:**

- ✓ Is your life becoming more sanctified every day?
- ✓ Are you excelling in your love for others?