The Life that Pleases God

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Introduction:

Everyone lives to please someone: himself, his spouse, his parents, his child, his God, or someone else.

I. Our Potential – 4:1-2

A. It is Committed to Us – 4:1

1. The Reception – 4:1a

“Finally, brothers, we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.”

“Finally” (Λοιπὸν) was not intended to announce the conclusion of the epistle, See Phil. 3:1. In both cases two more chapters follow.

Here, Paul is indicating that this is the last section of the epistle. These two chapters deal with “what is lacking in your faith.” (3:20) Paul points out that the Christian life is not: A set of rules to be obeyed, or a list of prohibitions to avoid; but the outworking of a loving desire to please God. Paul now “urges” them to keep on doing what they have been doing – more and more.

1. The Repetition – 4:1b ﻿

“just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God;”

This is not the first time they have heard this exhortation from Paul. He had taught them while he was there. Sometimes Christians want to hear new truth when what they need is exhortation to excel still more, to press on to greater experiencing of old truths which they are already practicing to a limited degree.

This Exhortation: A Walk That Pleases God bears repeating many times, needs practicing all the time.

B. What is Commanded of Us – 4:2

“for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.”

He taught them some deep doctrines while he was there a few short months. He did not wait until later to learn the great doctrines of his later epistles; he was taught these things by the Lord, Himself, while he was in the Arabian Desert. (Gal. 1:17) Though it is not mentioned in Acts, the most logical place is between Acts 9:22 and 23.

Paul knew and taught these grace and church truths to all his converts.

* Romans – Salvation Truth
* I Corinthians Sanctifying Truth (Rapture-15)
* Galatians – Grace versus the Law
* Ephesians – Church, of which Christ is head.
* Colossians - The Head, of which church is the body.
* Paul’s emphasis in these two Thessalonian epistles is: The Coming of Christ.

In all of this doctrinal teaching Paul emphasized living the Christian life, which is, after all, based on those doctrines.

II. Our Purity – 4:3-8

A. Immorality is a Sin against God the Father – 4:3-5

1. The Need for Sanctification – 4:3

“this is ﻿﻿the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; “

Your sanctification (separation to God) has three aspects in Scripture:

* Separation from the penalty of sin-at salvation.
* Separation from the presence of sin – at death or Rapture.
* Separation from the power of sin an on-going process in this life.

Part of this process is abstaining from sexual immorality. Paul calls for the believers to avoid all immorality, namely adultery, premarital sex, extramarital intercourse, homosexuality, and all other perversions. The word “porneia”*,* translated “sexual immorality,” is a broad one and includes all these practices.

These Thessalonians had live in a society that not only allowed these practices, but encouraged them, even as part of their religious service. We are getting there in our society. However, being lawful by human law does not make it lawful by God’s law. And no Christian liberty can justify fornication.

2. The Need for Limitation – 4:4 ﻿

“that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,”

There is some question about “his own vessel” One avoids sexual immorality by learning how to control his own body with its passions. Self-control in response to one’s sexual desires can and must be learned. Christians are not to be the victims of circumstances or their fleshly passions. There are many passages that are helpful in this area. One in particular is 1 Cor. 6:13-20.

3. The Need for Separation – 4:5 ﻿﻿

“not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles ﻿﻿who do not know God;”

What Paul is stressing here is: Don’t make pagans your models for your Christian life. They do not know God!

B. Immorality is a Sin against God the Son – 4:6

“that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord ﻿﻿*is* the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.”

“take advantage” ὑπερβαίνειν means “go beyond the boundaries.” Some see it as a fence around other people. “No trespassing in here” I see it as a fence around my marriage. “No trespassing out of here.”

We defraud the brother or sister by bringing them into the sin. And we defraud the brother or sister by taking what is theirs (husband or wife).

The reason for not defrauding the brother is: The Lord (Jesus) is the avenger of all such sins. This apparently includes “all the above” The believer who engages in those things can look for the judgment of God for it will come as surely as day follows night.

C. Immorality is a Sin against God the Holy Spirit – 4:7-8

1. The Rule – 4:7 ﻿﻿

“For God did not call us to uncleanness, ﻿﻿but in holiness.”

God sees us either in Adam or In Christ,

* In Adam we are controlled by the Fall.
* In Christ we are controlled by the Call.

Uncleanness is what we inherit by reason of our natural birth. Holiness is what we inherit by our new birth.

* The natural man delights in Vileness.
* The new man delights in Virtue.

You are called by a holy God, dah! Be holy. He calls us to holy living.

1 Peter 1:15

“As the Lord your God is holy, you be holy!”

2. The Rebellion – 4:8a ﻿ ﻿﻿

“Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God,”

To reject this teaching is to rebel against God.”

3. The Rejection – 4:8b ﻿﻿

“who ﻿﻿has also given us His Holy Spirit.”

The ability to follow this teaching is given to us in His Holy Spirit Who is not only with us (Old Test.) He is in us (N.T). (John 14:17)

Or ﻿﻿do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, ﻿﻿and you are not your own? ﻿20﻿ For ﻿﻿you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body ﻿﻿and in your spirit, which are God’s.

III. Our Progress – 4:9-10

1. Love Explained – 4:9

“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for ﻿﻿you yourselves are taught by God ﻿﻿to love one another;”

The word for love here is φιλαδελφίας - Philadelphia; The city of brotherly {shove} love.

Some things we have to be taught by men using the Word. But love is taught by God. It is innate for believers to love each other. God taught us that we are to do so. How? That does not mean that we always do it; but when we fail, we cannot blame God – he taught us that we are to love each one another.

B. Love Executed – 4:10 ﻿

“and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, ﻿﻿that you increase more and more;”

The Thessalonians did exercise love toward all the brothers in all Macedonia. But the next line tells us that our brotherly love can be improved and expanded. So don’t rest on your laurels there is more to do – “more and more.”

IV. Our Purpose – 4:11-12

1. Toward Personal Things – 4:11a

“that you also aspire to lead a quiet life,”

The quiet life does not mean silent. It may be seen as the opposite of frantic life-style. Paul may have had this in mind when he wrote of “one who beats the air” that could distract himself and others from a worthy walk with God.

B. Toward Temporal Things – 4:11b – 12

1. Our Works – 4:11b ﻿﻿

“to mind your own business, and ﻿﻿to work with your own hands, we commanded you,”

This verse deals with the need for people to be self-sufficient. Paul was a good model for this. He worked at his trade to supply what was needed for him and his team. The teaching may have been prompted by their attitude toward the teaching on the Lord’s return. If Jesus is coming, we will just sit here and wait.

1. Our Walk – 4:12a﻿ ﻿﻿

“that you may walk properly toward those who are outside,”

Such behavior does win the respect of non-Christians and so glorifies the Christian’s God. Love of this kind is appreciated by everyone. Paul placed importance on the testimony of Christians before outsiders, unbelievers. This kind of behavior also wins the respect of Christians. People appreciate those who do not take advantage of them.

1. Our Well-being – 4:12b

“and *that* you may lack nothing.”

This phrase seems to be the result of the life-style Paul was advocating. He is not making a promise; but showing the possible results of the proposed manner of life. If we plan ahead, work hard and live within our means, we will lack nothing.

Like some mottos suggest:

* A penny saved is a penny earned.
* Waste not; want not.

Conclusion: