

1 Thessalonians 4.1-12

Pleasing to Jesus

1st Letter Establishes PATTERN – ½ DOCTRINE – ½ DUTY

½ PROCLAMATION – What GOD Did for US

½ APPLICATION – What WE do FOR GOD

Chs 1-3 God done MUCH > Immoral Idolators > Holy Children of Living God

1. Leading for God

a. Reminders

v. 1 we instructed you how to live in order to please God

v. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you > lit. MILITARY Commands

BASIC TEACHINGS of Faith > Keep MAIN Thing the MAIN THING

Christian FAITH: DEEP, PROFOUND but NOT MYSTERIOUS, OUT of Reach
SIMPLE can KNOW Jesus as FULLY as the SCHOLAR – Maybe BETTER!

v. 6 as we have already told you and warned you

v. 11 just as we told you

WORD ‘REMINDER’ – Vivid in MEMORY since Mr. Woodenham in 4th Grade
MOMENT of Impact of PADDLE – just need a REMINDER!

Later – “Mark, you don’t need a REMINDER do you?”

Tried to FOLLOW Jesus for 30+ yrs > BASICS of DISCIPLESHIP still BASICS
LOVE God - Love MAN/ WORD & WORSHIP/ Walk my Talk/ Talk my Walk

b. Responsibility > God working IN US - BOTH His Power & Our Participation

v. 6 The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.

For the appeal we make

1 Thessalonians 2.3

Paul...reasoned with them from the Scriptures

Acts 17.2

BALL in OUR Court > Message of GOD DEMANDS RESPONSE

God treats as ADULT: MAKE DECISIONS > Decision with CONSEQUENCES

c. Relationship

1) Leader

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because *you had become so dear to us.*

1 Thessalonians 2.8

we were gentle among you, *like a mother* caring for her little children

1 Thessalonians 2.7

we dealt with each of you *as a father* deals with his own children

1 Thessalonians 2.11

v. 1 Finally, brothers... > Paul often uses word BROTHERS

v. 1 NIV “Finally” does NOT Help Paul here > SWITCH-OFF Word in Sermons

Finally > Yeah! Finally! – Get OUT! Get Home! Get Lunch! Get the Kids!

LIT > AND NOW! or perhaps THEREFORE – on to SPECIFIC Issues

2) Lord

Paul UNIQUE Human Leader – UNLIKE any Pastor or Teacher Today

Paul SPOKE the VERY WORDS of LIVING JESUS > APOSTLE

you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God 1 Thessalonians 2.13

As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you 1 Thessalonians 2.6

Apostle – NOT EMPHASIZED – Gentle Message – but DARE NOT IGNORE NOT ARROGANT – as if Authority was Personal – NOT INTIMIDATED

v. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus

MORE than just GOOD ADVICE or FRIENDLY SUGGESTIONS

We have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2.16

vs. 8,9 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit...for you yourselves have been taught by God

Anyone who carries on an act of impurity is...sinning against the God who is present at that moment, against the One who continually gives the Spirit. The impure act is an act of despite against God's good gift at the very moment it is being proffered.

Leon Morris

a) Pleasing to God

v. 1 live in order to please God... do this more and more.

LIVE > lit. WALK --- Vivid PICTURE of Deliberate, Determined, Daily Life

Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40.31

HIGHEST Point NOT Soaring > That's WIND! but WALKING that's YOU!

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS > Overflowing, Abundant, More and More

NOT CONTENT with SAME O / SAME O or MUNDANE, TEPID Faith
 Not SPECIFIC in vs. 1 > PLEASE God in Everything, Everywhere, Always!

How can we claim to know and love God if we do not seek to please Him?...our incentive is not so much to obey the law as to please the Law-giver, and this becomes increasingly a matter of Christian instinct as the Holy Spirit trains Christ's sheep to discern their Shepherd's voice. John Stott

DOING GREAT! Do MORE and MORE!

v. 10 we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more

ABUNDANT Life seen in ABUNDANT LOVE for God and Man

Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit... John 7.37-39

FILLED with SPIRIT > FLOWS out from Us > Touching Heaven & Earth

b) Set Apart

v. 3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified > SET APART = HOLY

v. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

To be sanctified is to be set apart from sin for God. Yours Truly

NEGATIVELY > DISTANCED from Sin / POSITIVE > DEVOTED to God

Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. Leviticus 19.2

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.
1 Thessalonians 5.23

God takes AWAY our TRASH / Replaces with HIS ETERNAL TREASURES

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12.14

2. Loving like God

SPECIFIC Concerns > TIMOTHY had SEEN or SHARED with LEADERS BECAUSE he LOVES them He wants them to be MORE PLEASING to Jesus

Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. 1 Thessalonians 3.6

v. 9 “Now about...” BEGINS to REPLY to their Questions and Concerns // Similar PATTERN in 1 Corinthians

Now, brothers, about times and dates.... 1 Thessalonians 5.1

Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you 1 Thessalonians 5.12

BEFORE he Gets to THEIR Issues > Paul has ISSUE with Them > SEX

a. Bedroom

1) Prude? > Stuffy OLD Paul trying to SPOIL Everyone’s FUN

NOT Against SEX > Against WRONG Sex – PASTORAL Concern for Them

Writing AGAINST False TEACHING/TEACHERS: ...deceiving spirits and things taught by demons...They forbid people to marry... For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. 1 Timothy 4.1-5

IGNORE Words of APOSTLE > IGNORE One who Sent the Apostle
 NOT a PRUDE but a PARENT – LOVES Them – Wants God's BEST for Them

2) Permissiveness

Reason Paul wrote SO MUCH about Sex to Churches in Roman World

Roman World was DRUNK with SEX

It was difficult to feel a sense of guilt in the presence of the gods of Greece and Rome.
 H. Rolston

SHOCKING Idea > RESTRICT Sexual FREEDOM and ENJOYMENT?!

Activities APPROVED by ALL RELIGIONS and CIVIC LEADERS

GOD sees EVEN into BEDROOM

We say its PERSONAL God calls PUNISHABLE

Let not pleasures always be forbidden...let desire and pleasure triumph
 sometimes over reason.
 Cicero

Secular Philosopher who was in Thessalonica in 1st Century

TYRA – OPRAH – Howard Stern – CONAN – DAVE – All SUPPORT SEX!

Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be the faithful guardians of our households.
 Demosthenes

NORM of GREEK and ROMAN Society > MANY of our Countries TODAY

Perhaps NOT Formally APPROVED but certainly WIDELY ACCEPTED

v. 5 passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God

IDOLATRY leads to IMMORALITY > IGNORANT of God and His BEST

Pretty Girl in Wudauko T-Shirt: *How am I Supposed to Know what is Right?*

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Romans 1.25,26

FAITH must be linked to FAITHFULNESS > to God and His COMMANDS
 People in Thess. Church FRESH OUT of this IMMORAL LIFESTYLE
 NO Agreed or COMMON Moral Standard – Each of OWN IDEAS of Sex

3) Power

DESIRE to EAT and for SEX > Strongest Human IMPULSES > God-Given
 RESPONSIBLE to CONTROL Impulses > DIRECT for our Good, God's Glory

vs. 3,4 you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable

v. 6 in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him.

SOCIETY flaunted FREE Sex but NOT ADULTERY > NOT Accepted in Thess.
 PRACTICED in Church of Thess > WRONG in Eyes of GOD and MAN there
 REPUTATION of Church would SUFFER Much with this BAD PRACTICE

In the intimate meetings held in the tight confines of the homes of fellow believers, Christians of both sexes were thrown together into a close, interpersonal setting that could easily have given rise to relationships that were outside the lines of morality... Their relationship with God and the community could be prejudiced. Gene L. Green

FACT that Paul kept REMINDING them TEACHING and WRITING
 POWER of Sin HARD to OVERCOME: Constant Reminder, On-going Struggle

Where things are evil the Christian attitude is necessarily one of abstention and not of moderation. I. Howard Marshall

4) Purpose

v. 4 THREE Possible Translations

“learn to control his own body”

“learn to live with his own wife”

“learn to acquire a wife”

Which ONE? Most Scholars say UNCLEAR – Not CONVINCED Just ONE Paul’s INTENTION? EACH of You > TEACHING Directed to ENTIRE Church HONOR God with your BODIES and your BEDROOM Activities

HETEROSexual MONOGAMOUS – Marriage is Only Right Place for Sex One Man and One Woman for One Life Together are to ENJOY One Another

Since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 1 Corinthians 7.2,3

The God-empowered person rules his body and is not caught in the grip of uncontrollable sexual desires. Leon Morris

Marriage NOT License to LUST – IGNORE, ABUSE, or even RAPE Spouse Much CRUELTY done in Name of MARRIAGE – Equally Wrong before God Honor God and Serve our Spouse – Love, Respect, and Honesty SEXUAL Behavior has SPIRITUAL and SOCIAL Consequences

5) Positive

Bible > NOTHING POSITIVE about SAME-SEX, GROUP Sex, or Any Other ONLY Sex can honor GOD > Husband & Wife, Mutual Good, Glory of God

v. 4 control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Genesis 1.31

For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 1 Corinthians 7.14

PERVASIVE Influence of ONE Righteous SPOUSE

HOLY > SET APART – UNIQUE Opportunity and Exposure to GOSPEL

BELIEVER in Unbelieving Family > Words and Actions POINT to God

Not Guarantee of SALVATION but OPPORTUNITY of Salvation

v. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

GOD Called – when we were DEAD in SIN – All Kinds of SIN

CALLED to NEW LIFE – Forgiveness, Hope, Transformation Process in Christ

CALL of God is CONFIDENCE – AUTHOR & FINISHER of our FAITH

All of us our SEXUAL > Even if we are SINGLE – God-given STRENGTH

Paul was SINGLE – wrote with WISDOM of Holy Spirit – Jesus also SINGLE

What about those of us who are single and lack the God-given context for sexual love? We too must accept this apostolic teaching, however hard it may seem, as God's good purpose both for us and for society. We shall not become a bundle of frustrations and inhibitions if we embrace God's standard, but only if we rebel against it. Christ's yoke is easy, provided we submit to it. It is possible for sexual energy to be redirected both into affectionate relationships with friends of both

sexes and into the loving service of others. Multitudes of Christian singles, both men and women, can testify to this. Alongside the natural loneliness, accompanied sometimes by acute pain, we can find joyful self-fulfillment in the self-giving service of God and other people. John Stott

POSITIVE Motive for SEXUAL PURITY > Living a HOLY Life

God PLEASING – God FILLED – JOYFUL in the LORD

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 2 Timothy 2.22

b. Brothers (*and Sisters too!*)

1) Going Well

v. 9 Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

We continually remember before our God and Father your...labor prompted by love 1 Thessalonians 1.3

Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. 1 Thessalonians 3.6

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 1 Thessalonians 3.12

NO HUGE DIVISIONS in Thess. Church – unlike CORINTH – Normal Pains

Behold how these Christians love one another. Tertullian

HOW Often do we HEAR the WORLD say that about CHURCH TODAY?

2) Keep Going

v. 10 And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

EVER INCREASING Love for ONE ANOTHER

Needs to EVER Increase > LAYERS of Offense, Misunderstandings, Hurts
LOVE Each other ENOUGH to FORGIVE because you CANNOT FORGET!

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4.8

LOVE esp NEEDED when CUT OFF from FAMILY and SOCIETY for FAITH

The church assumed the function of a family...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...the free and the slave were welcome...men and women had equal status...Greeks, Romans, Macedonians, Jews, and barbarians gathered together to share in the same cup in the worship of their one Lord.

Gene L. Green

All your sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be your children's peace.

Isaiah 54.13

FRATERNAL Love in Christ extends BEYOND walls of OUR CHURCH

Powerful CITY, COMMERCIAL Center Like Thessalonica EXPLOITED

Surrounding Towns and Villages – took Resources and their Residents

CHURCH of Thessalonica > BLESSED their Neighbors, Gave Sacrificially

Jesus: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13.34,35

c. Beijing

1) Situation

System of CLIENT – PATRON > Economic and Social DEPENDENCE

Clients gave FLATTERY – Improved SOCIAL STATUS of PATRONS

Patrons gave FOOD - Insured the SURVIVAL of POOR

You know how to present a shivering client with a threadbare cloak, and then you say, ‘I love the Truth; tell me the truth about myself!’ Perseus

QUIET Life > Get OUT of SYSTEM of Empty Praise – Flattery – Dependency

The worthless man whose life is one long restlessness haunts market-places, theaters, law-courts, council-halls, assemblies, and every group and gathering of men; his tongue he lets loose for unmeasured, endless, indiscriminate talk, bringing chaos and confusion into everything, mixing truth with false, fit with unfit, public with private, holy with profane, sensible with absurd, because he has not been trained to that silence which in season is most excellent. Philo

v. 11a Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business

We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

2 Thessalonians 3.11-13

GOSPEL of Jesus & Kingdom > DIRECT Challenge to CUSTOMS & Culture
NECESSARY for Jesus to CHANGE US and our CITIES for His GLORY

2) Solution

v. 11b work with your hands, just as we told you

WORK?! I just came to BICF is SIT HERE! I wanted the FREE T-Shirt
 WORK is one of NASTIEST FOUR-LETTER Words in English Language
 Even MORE NASTY in Greek > Work is for SLAVES, Classless, Barbarians

The typical Greek attitude was that slaves did this sort of work, but that freemen would not stoop to it. It was degrading. Here, as in so many other ways, the Christians refused to take their standards from the community where they lived.

Leon Morris

Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

1 Thessalonians 2.9

3) Conclusion

a) Provide for Yourself

v. 12b so that you will not be dependent on anybody

NON-Workers depend on WORKERS for their NEEDS > Dependence, Laziness
 IF you CAN – DO what you CAN – to Help Yourself and those who CANNOT
 NOT Criticizing UNEMPLOYED but the IDLE, Not those Looking but the Lazy

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."
 2 Thessalonians 3.7-10

b) Point Others to Him

v. 12a so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders

The apostle warns against becoming dependent as well as disruptive members of a society so your reputation in no way enhances the gospel. Gene L. Green

WORLD sees MERE TALKERS – Not WORKING – DOING NOTHING!

Opps! Wait a MINUTE – Just Described MYSELF the PREACHER!!

World is WATCHING – Looking for REALITY – Truth – Life-Changing Power

If Christians would really live according to the teachings of Christ, as found in the Bible, all of India would be Christian today. Gandhi

Only JESUS can CHANGE CITY – ONLY Jesus can CHANGE US!

But HE MUST Change Us – We MUST be STRIVING for This

NO WAY Anyone in THIS CITY Will give Serious Consideration to Gospel

Prayer for Nation > Most Christian in Region / Most Corrupt in World

Could have been MY COUNTRY – Other Nations

May it NOT be ME – YOU – THIS CHURCH > We must PLEASE JESUS!

Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5.16

1 Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. 9 Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more. 11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.