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 Sunday Morning
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1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

A Life That Pleases God, pt 1

Related Topics: Spiritual Challenges;
 Abounding; The Christian Walk; Pleasing
 God; The Will of God; Sanctification;
 Holiness; Sexual Sin; Sexual Purity; Taught
 by God; Brotherly Love; An Orderly life



1Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. 2For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. 7For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. 8Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. 9Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, 10for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, 11and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 12so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

INTRODUCTION

Life in Christ is FULL of really important questions:

- How do I please God?
- What is God's will for my life?
- How am I to understand moral boundaries in an a world that has ZERO boundaries?
- If Jesus is coming back soon, how should I be living?

Those are HUGE questions with RADICAL implications.

It is so awesome to KNOW that the God of the Bible SPEAKS. He doesn't leave us to SPECULATE on matters of eternal consequence. Instead He REVEALS Himself to us in the pages of Scripture — The Bible is a book ABOUT GOD! (In our Credo series it took us three weeks to get to man!)

In 1 Thessalonians 4 we find the ANSWERS to these question as Paul — by inspiration of the Holy Spirit sets forth

FIRST — The Precepts

SECOND — The Practice for the Christian life

CHAPTER 4

1Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. 2For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. Let's begin with the end of Chapter 3.

At the end of Chapter 3 Paul tells the Thessalonians how he received word from Timothy that they were thriving in their faith— and he thanks the Lord that they were doing great. But then we hear Paul — speaking by the Holy Spirit

“...we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you DO SO MORE AND MORE.”

Paul was the kind of guy who always pushed you on to greatness! This wasn't something to which he challenged others while he was complacent or apathetic.

Philippians 3:12-15 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15Let those of us who are mature think this way,...

I NEED to be around men like that! I WANT to be around men like that! I LOVE my wife because she LIVES like that and challenges ME to live like that!

The reality is, if we are not GROWING in the Lord and in the things of the Lord we are going BACKWARDS!

QUOTE: “Life is marked by growth or Decay!”

I want to challenge YOU individually and METRO corporately, to greatness in the Lord and in the things of the Lord.

“DO SO” comes from the Greek word *Perisseuo* (*per-is-syoo'-o*). It is used with the idea of excelling. For example, in Paul's letter to the Corinthians where he exhorts them,

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.” *1Corinthians 15:58*

Note that Paul wants them to “Abound” — MORE and more. “More” meaning, very, very much. Paul wanted his spiritual children to super-abound very, very much and be pleasing God

THE HOLY SPIRIT uses the words ABOUND and more and more to describe the TRAJECTORY of the Christian life!

Remember the movie “Babe?” The farmer would say, “That'll do pig.” THAT is not what the Holy Spirit says!

Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit says that the life of faith is not to be one of EXISTENCE in Christ; it should be a life of EXCELLENCE in Christ. God does not ask us to PARK ourselves in the Christian life; he challenges us to PREVAIL in it. God wants us to MOVE BEYOND the status quo. The status quo is a great ploy of the devil!

When Valerie started the Women's Ministry at CCGV, one of the ladies who the women at CCGV looked up to before our arrival came to her and said, “The ladies just can't handle the daily homework for the study. You should cut it back and make it easier.”

But she said that she wouldn't lower the bar that the ladies needed to elevate in their love for the Word and their commitment to study the Word. The study went from a handful of struggling ladies to almost 300 hundred and dozens of leaders and assistant leaders.

Status quo in the Christian life always means:

- Stagnation
- Deterioration
- Decay in holiness

That's why we set the bar high at Metro when it concerns the Word and the study of the Word. Doctrine precedes duty and precept precedes practice. If you are going to abound more and more in pleasing God we need to know WHO God is, WHY we ought to want to please Him, and WHAT it is that pleases Him! Here are some broad strokes from Scripture on pleasing God.

The Scriptures tell us that we cannot please God walking in the Flesh!

Romans 8:8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The Scriptures tell us that we cannot please God and be wrapped up in the affairs of this life!

2 Timothy 2:4 NLT Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them.

The Scriptures tell us that we cannot please God apart from faith.

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him,...

NOTICE how Paul PREFACES his challenge to abound more and more in pleasing the Lord: "I we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live..."

"Ask" comes from the Greek word, *erotao* (*er-o-tah'-o*) meaning to entreat, beg, or beseech.

He is pleading with them.

"Urge" comes from the Greek word, *parakaleo*. Always at the root meaning of *parakaleo* is the idea of enabling a person to meet a difficult situation with confidence and with gallantry. We are no stranger to this word since we began our study of this letter.

The word urges someone to do something. The word was used in Greek Military history when speaking to troops in order to give them the courage/heart to march into battle. So in this context, Paul wants to enable these believers to face a DIFFICULTY with confidence and with gallantry. He wants to give them the heart to go into battle.

BECAUSE there IS a DIFFICULTY ahead — There IS a BATTLE to be fought.

We will see it in Verse 3 — holiness / sexual purity:

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;...

"We ask and urge you IN THE LORD JESUS ..." *1 Thessalonians 4:1*

Vine put it this way, "What he laid on the consciences of the saints did not originate with himself but with

the Lord, to whose authority, therefore, he appealed." And F.F. Bruce said, "a sense that Christ is thoroughly involved in the situation or action in question—a consciousness of Christ."

The Holy Spirit wants us to know that this is not just Paul's view on sexual purity — IT IS GOD'S WILL.

1 ...that as you RECEIVED from us how you ought to walk 1 Thessalonians 4:1

"Received" comes from the Greek word, *paralambano* meaning, seizing or taking to one's self or taking something into one's possession. For example, in Galatians 1:12 — In speaking of the Gospel — Paul said, "For I neither received (*paralambano*) it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." *Galatians 1:12*

1 Thessalonians 4:2 2For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

Some of your translations might read Verse 2 as, "...as you received INSTRUCTION from us..." This translation is NOT in the Greek text — it was added by the translators as IMPLIED from Verse 3.

The point here is that he is not asking them to do something NEW. Paul is reminding them of instructions he had given them on his first visit. Paul, Silas and Timothy had not only declared the way of salvation to the Gentiles but they had also disciplined these young converts, instructing them in how to live so as to please God. Note that the Thessalonians had received the word of God, seized it, and made it their possession.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 NIV "...that as you received from us how you OUGHT to live and to please God..."

"OUGHT to" implies this way of living is NOT an OPTION. They OUGHT to live this way BECAUSE of WHO Jesus is and WHAT Jesus has done for them.

Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

HOW OUGHT they to live? They OUGHT to live a life that would PLEASE God. The word "PLEASE" comes from the Greek word, *aresko*. It means to give or be the source of satisfaction, pleasure, contentment to another.

Notice that this is stated in the present tense. This is to be one's continual practice or lifestyle.

Aresko is the root of a Greek verb which is used several times in the Septuagint (LXX) to translate the Hebrew word for "walk." BY THIS we understand that God clearly associates one's walk (the way one lives) with being pleasing to Him.

Paramount is the fact that this verb is associated with one notable Old Testament man!

Genesis 5:22 Then Enoch walked (The Septuagint LXX says, eu-aresteo meaning, it was well-pleasing to God) with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters.

It would appear that Paul, an Old Testament Scholar, was thinking of Enoch when he wrote this chapter. Chapter 4 opens with a plea to walk in holiness and thus to please God. "...how ye ought to walk and to please God..." *1 Thessalonians 4:1 KJV* And it closes with the Rapture of the saints: "The we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall

ever be with the Lord." *1 Thessalonians 4:17 KJV*

Enoch was taken up; he did not die a physical death.

Genesis 5:24 Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him.

Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. Paul is CHALLENGING these first century believers that they ought to be walking with God in a manner that PLEASES God in light of the IMMINENT coming of Christ for His Bride.

As we move through this section please keep this simple truth in mind. We were MADE for God's PLEASURE:

- It PLEASED God to WALK with man in the Garden.
- It PLEASED God to PURSUE man after the Fall
- It PLEASED God to send His Son to die on the cross in order to make it possible for us to once again WALK with God.

We see Him establishing covenants with man pointing to the New Covenant that He would establish in the blood of Christ shed on the cross.

Isaiah 53:10 KJV Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him...

The idea here is that it PLEASES God to walk with man. If it PLEASES God to walk with man THEN we can PLEASE God BY walking with Him. Because by nature walking with God implies that we bring our lives into agreement with God.

Amos 3:3 NLT Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?

THAT is why Enoch PLEASED God. In the midst of a world rushing towards judgment Enoch said – I'm in agreement with God. We PLEASE God BY walking with Him.

Because by nature walking with God implies FAITH, without which it is impossible to please God. Because faith is taking the position that God is right when the rest of the world says He's wrong. Think of Enoch believing that God was right when the rest of the world was taking the exact opposite position. Because faith is taking the position that God is right when every emotion and feeling and desire says He's wrong.

C.S. Lewis said, in *The Quotable Lewis* p. 306 #734, "The place for which He designs them [human beings] in His scheme of things is the place they are made for. When they reach it their nature is fulfilled and their happiness attained: a broken bone in the universe has been set, the anguish is over. When we want to be something other than the thing God wants us to be, we must be wanting what, in fact, will not make us happy. Those Divine demands which sound to our natural ears most like those of a despot and least like those of a lover, in fact marshal us where we should want to go if we knew what we wanted."

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification:

FIRST: Isn't it great that God WANTS us to know His will? He is the God who speaks.

In the opening chapter of the first book of the Bible we find 10 times – "God said..."

SECOND: It is in the context of PLEASING GOD, WALKING with God in a way that pleases Him. Paul moves to the REVEALED will of God for our lives, "For THIS is the will of God, your sanctification:"

HOLINESS and SANCTIFICATION are hugely misunderstood by many professing believers. As we think of WALKING in a way that pleases God we begin to understand that this thing called HOLINESS. Is not a LEGAL thing of do this, don't do that. It is a very DIRECTIONAL thing. It is moving in a direction towards God who is separate from His creation and moving towards God means moving in a direction away from the course of this world!

We see our MOTIVATION to walk in a way that pleases God more and more and the provision for our failure to please Him.

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