

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 Part 4

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1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

A Life That Pleases God pt.4 – Sanctification and Abounding Love

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; Godly Ambition; Hard work; An Orderly life;

This fourth chapter is all about A LIFE THAT PLEASES GOD; how to walk in agreement with God, how to walk in faith, and to be ABOUNDING more and more in it. The Holy Spirit doesn't leave the 1st Century Christians, or us, with any question as to what that looks like.



[1 Thes 4:3](#) - *THIS is the will of God*

The Holy Spirit DEFINES for us the DESIRES and DIRECTION of God for our lives so clearly that the ONLY thing that we are left with is a choice, will it be His will or my will? Do I desire THY will be done or MY will be done?

[1 Thes 4:3](#) *3For this is the will (desire and direction) of God, your sanctification*

SANCTIFICATION = set apart

There is Positional and Practical Sanctification. PRACTICAL sanctification (true holiness) is a very directional thing. Practical sanctification is the outcome of moving in a direction towards God and walking with God. As I walk with God I am inescapably moving in a direction away from the course of this world. I am in a practical sense becoming MORE SEPARATE from the world. All it desires and it's directions.

THAT = SANCTIFICATION.

The Holy Spirit then DEFINES the first PRACTICAL step towards God and away from the world. VERSE 3 in the PHILLIPS TRANSLATION says "God's plan is to make you holy, and that entails first of all a clean break with sexual immorality." It is the DESIRE of God for our life and the DIRECTION of God for our life to be SANCTIFIED – SET APART FROM – the direction and desires of a lost world concerning sex. We are SANCTIFIED, SET APART, OTHER THAN the world WHEN we abstain from sexual immorality.

Sexual immorality = Porneia

Denotes any and every form of sexual activity outside of the confines of a lifelong – monogamous heterosexual union, including adultery (sex outside of marriage), premarital sex (sex before marriage), homosexuality (any sex with someone of the same gender).

CRUCIAL WORD:

ABSTAIN — Hold one's self off. It's an action that we choose to take.

The Psalmist writes in [Psalm 101:3](#) I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.

QUOTE: Spurgeon — “for what fascinates the eye is very apt to gain admission into the heart — please the sight and then prevail over mind and hand.”

In addressing the same subject to the Corinthians, Paul used the word FLEE.

AGAIN, fleeing sexual sin is DIRECTIONAL. It means that in the face of sexual temptation I WALK TOWARDS Jesus. COMMITTING sexual sin is the result of choosing to NOT walk with Jesus, choosing to NOT walk in His direction, and instead CHOOSING to satisfy MY desire rather than HIS.

WE NOTED THAT sexual purity in the life of the individual believer and within the local church, brings the world face to face with the holiness of God. WE CLOSED BY SAYING THAT PORNEIA BEGINS IN THE HEART.

In [Matt 15:18-19](#), Jesus said that out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications (porneia)

In [Proverbs 4:23](#), Watch (preserve, guard with fidelity, keep blockaded) over your heart (the seat of our intellect, will, emotions - moral actions and attitudes of life are determined by the condition of one's heart) with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

1 Thes 4:7-8 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.

OBSERVATION:

If you reject these instructions concerning sexual purity, you are not rejecting Paul, you are rejecting God Himself, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

CRUCIAL POINT:

To rationalize sexual immorality, to trivialize sexual immorality, you are DISREGARDING and REJECTING God.

1 Thes 4:9 9Now

“Now” is one of those small, but important words in Scripture. Here it marks a transition. Paul is going to continue to DEFINE for the Thessalonians the LIFE THAT PLEASES GOD. The word NOW marks the transition from the subject of sanctification and sexual purity to the topic of sanctification and love.

**1 Thes 4:9 9Now, concerning brotherly love*

- Brotherly love = philadelphia
- Philos = dear or beloved
- Adelphos = from the same womb

In secular Greek, Philadelphia referred to the love members of a family held for each other. It would not normally be used to describe the love between members of different families, but in the NT, philadelphia is used to describe the love that believers possess for one to another. BECAUSE regardless of family relation or ethnicity or language, Christians are in a very real a spiritual sense from the same womb; begotten by God, begotten by the will of God, begotten by the Word of God.

WE DON'T WANT TO MISS the radical nature of these redeemed relationships. The reality of being IN CHRIST forged a radical new relationship between circumcised Jews and uncircumcised gentiles! Jews and people groups referred to as barbarians, slaves and freemen, men and women. Such a diverse cultural

community, living in loving relationship, radically images God to a lost world.

REMEMBER - The will of God is wrapped up in the DESIRES of God, that which PLEASES His heart. It pleases God when we walk in love, when we love the brethren. God calls it GOOD and PLEASANT.

[Psalm 133:1](#) Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

LOVE IS one of the birthmarks of the believer.

[1 John 3:14](#) We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

[1 Peter 1:22-23](#) ²²Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

[1 John 4:9-11](#) ⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

There is a famous quote by Tertullian (ca AD 192) who says the pagans remark in amazement... *“Behold how these Christians love one another.”*

EXAMPLE:

My first night at a St. Norbert’s Prayer meeting, so much love for me, for each other.

EXAMPLE:

My first Saturday night concert at Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, the love of God was so thick it was almost palpable (you could almost touch it)

*[1 Thes 4:9](#) 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,*

TAUGHT BY GOD = Divinely instructed

FIRST: Divinely instructed by virtue of the New Birth.

A Christian is a partaker in the very life and nature of God.

[1 John 3:9](#)God’s seed abides in him..... he has been born of God.

In the biological world a seed = a packet of genetic information. In the context of being begotten by God, seed would be spiritual DNA, if you would, the nature of God.

Watch this, John would write

[1 John 4:7](#) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Then He tells us about the NATURE of God

[1 John 4:8](#) God is love.

THAT is the spiritual DNA the child of God has imparted to him or her. On the human level, think of how DNA INSTRUCTS us. Children that have their dad's unique gate or their mom's unique smile, genetic instructions. Paul would write to the Ephesians:

[Eph. 5:1-2](#) 1Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2And walk in love,

SECOND: Divinely instructed by virtue of the indwelling person and power of the Holy Spirit.

[Romans 5:5](#)because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

[2 Cor. 3:18 KJV](#) But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

[1 John 2:27 NLT](#) For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie. So just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.

THIRD: Divinely instructed by virtue of the Word of God.

REMEMBER, He does not leave us to speculation but has graced us with REVELATION.

[Lev. 19:18](#) but you shall love your neighbor as yourself... I am the Lord. (SPECIFICALLY, by the COMMAND and EXAMPLE of Jesus)

[John 13:34-35](#) A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another

[John 15:12-13](#) This is my commandment, that you love one another

CRUCIAL INSIGHT:

This love to which they were commanded in John 13 and John 15 was a love that Jesus MODELED for them

[John 13:34-35](#)just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

[John 15:12-13](#) you love one another as I have loved you. 13Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.

[Eph. 5:2](#) And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us

CRUCIAL INSIGHT:

This love that PLEASES God, God TEACHES us to walk in, COMMANDS us walk in, and was MODELED for us in Jesus is SEPARATE FROM, OTHER THAN, UNLIKE any love that the world has to offer.

QUOTE: MacArthur on this Greek word, agapao, ...expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship.

QUOTE: VINE — (PLEASE ENGAGE YOUR MINDS HERE and FOLLOW this)

1. Love can be known only from the actions it prompts.
God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, [John 3:16](#) and [1 John 4:9-10](#).
2. This is a love that was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects [Rom 5:7-8](#) *7For one will scarcely die for a righteous person though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die 8but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
3. It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself [Deut 7:7-8](#) *7It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

[1 Thes 4:10](#) *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,*

CRUCIAL:

Paul is saying that Christian love is not primarily a NOUN. He says that love is something they DO.

AGAIN Notice, Paul challenges them to rise above the status quo. You ARE loving towards ALL the brothers throughout Macedonia, but love MORE and MORE. INTERESTING, Paul prayed this same thing for the Philippians.

[Phil 1:9](#) *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,*

NOTICE the elements that are involved in the abounding of their love *“that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,”*

CRUCIAL:

Love is served by an intimate understanding of God's Word.

It is the Word of God that defines love in reference to the author of genuine love by the nature of God and the nature of God's love.

CRUCIAL:

Love is regulated by an intimate understanding of God's Word
Love does this, love doesn't do that.

CRUCIAL:

REAL love is enhanced by and anchored in convictions based on the revealed truths of Scripture.

CRUCIAL:

This love is to abound in “all discernment,” which speaks of moral perception, insight, and the practical application of knowledge.

HERE'S THE PICTURE: Paul did not want their love to be like a river that barely flows in summer and then overflows in winter storms or spring floods. When it's levels are low it can not produce benefits or supply needs. When it overflows it's banks. It is destructive, counterproductive. It's potential for generating power is dissipated. INSTEAD, He prayed that their love would continuously abound and abound like a river swollen right to it's banks, not overflowing and making a mess, not overflowing and dissipating it's power, but as mighty river of love can provide irrigation to sustain life. So too our abounding LOVE can quench the thirst of

a word dying for love. And as a mighty river rushing with maximum force towards the hydroelectric plan, turning the turbines and powering an entire region. So too, our abounding love can help light up a dark world, a life trapped in darkness. This ABOUNDING LOVE is channeled. It is channeled within the limits of a full experiential knowledge of the truth and a sensitive moral and ethical tact.

CLOSING:

God's will for us (desire and direction) is our SANCTIFICATION. Living lives that are SEPARATE from the unbelieving world in regards to sexual behavior. Bringing the world face to face with the holiness of God by the way we conduct our sexual behavior. ALSO BY living lives that are SEPARATE from the unbelieving world in regards to LOVE, bringing the world face to face with the holiness of God's love, the otherness of God's love.

IN OUR NEXT STUDY we are going to examine carefully just what this LOVE LOOKS LIKE. When we get our head and hearts around what this love looks like we are going to be considerably undone.

Maybe you are already undone! I do not have love abounding more and more in knowledge and judgment. In fact, I don't even LIKE some people, let alone LOVE them. REMEMBER, true holiness, true sanctification, is DIRECTIONAL and RELATIONAL.

Our Sanctification POSITIONALLY and PRACTICALLY is all about Jesus! We will leave off with Paul's words to the believers in Corinth:

[2 Cor. 9:8](#) *God is able* (of the power) (dunato - present tense = is continually fully capable and powerful enough) *to make all grace abound* (present tense = continually abound) *to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;*

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