

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## The Second Coming Letters of Paul – Part 8

### First Thessalonians

#### I. Exposition of Chapter Four.

A. **Verses 1-2** – “Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.”

1. “Finally then, brethren...” – The word “finally” here indicates a transition. In the first part of this letter, Paul deals mainly with the past and communicates his concern that they had remained steadfast in the faith. Now, he begins to teach doctrine and its application to life.

2. “...we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus...” – These two words, “urge” and “exhort” could have been translated as “ask” and “encourage”. Regarding “...in the Lord Jesus...”, Thomas Constable writes:

**“Paul added even more power to his exhortation by urging them in the Lord Jesus (cf. 2 Thes. 3:12); he wrote in the Spirit and with the authority of Jesus Christ. Paul claimed to speak for Christ in this matter. And he asked them to do so more and more (cf. 1 Thes. 4:10).”<sup>1</sup>**

3. “...that you should abound more and more...” – The word “abound” means “to excel”; “to make abundant or excellent.”<sup>2</sup> This refers back to the previous chapter where Paul, in the form of prayer, prays that they “...increase and abound in love...” (3:12) and that their hearts may be “...blameless in holiness” (3:13).

He’s encouraging them that they continue to move forward and stronger in their faith and in living for Christ. Growing spiritually should be a high priority for every Christian.

4. “...just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.” The word “walk” means; “to regulate one’s life; and “to conduct one’s self.”<sup>3</sup> Warren Wiersbe writes:

**“The Christian life begins with a step of faith. But that step leads to a walk of faith, ‘For we walk by faith, not by sight’ (2 Cor. 5:7). Walking suggests progress, and we must make progress in the Christian life (Phil. 3:13–16; Heb. 6:1). Walking also demands strength, and God has promised, ‘As thy days, so shall thy strength be’ (Deut. 33:25). But we must be sure to ‘walk in the light’ for the enemy has put traps and detours to catch us (1 John 1:5–7).”<sup>4</sup>**

a. “...and to please God...” – The goal of every sincere Christian should be to please God. Not because we’re afraid He’ll punish us, but because we love Him. The Scripture says that those who are “in the flesh” cannot please God (Romans 8:8). Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

**“Someone has said that everyone lives to please someone: himself, his spouse, his parents, his child, his God, or someone else. Paul focused motivation for correct living on love for God. Many people regard the Christian life as a set of rules to be obeyed, or a list of prohibitions to avoid; but Paul regarded it as the outworking of a loving desire to please God who had chosen him (1:4).”<sup>5</sup>**

B. **Verse 3** – “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;” If we honestly want to know the specific will of God for our lives, we begin by following the will of God laid out for us in the Scriptures. **God’s General Will is Revealed in His Word.**

1. His will is for all to be saved. **I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9.**

2. His will is for all believers to receive an Inheritance. **Ephesians 1:1,5,11.**

3. His will is for all believers to be Filled with the Spirit. **Ephesians 5:15-21.**

4. His will is for believers to be rejoicing, praying and giving thanks. **I Thessalonians 5:16-18.**

5. His will, in the passage we’re studying, is our “**sanctification**”, specifically that they would “**abstain from sexual immorality**” **I Thessalonians 4:3-4.**

<sup>1</sup>Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 700.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

<sup>3</sup>ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 175.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 700.

a. The word **“sanctification”** means; **“consecration”** and **“purity”**.<sup>6</sup> This same word is translated **“holiness”** in **verse 7** and in other Scriptures (e.g. **Romans 6:19, 22; Hebrews 12:14**).

1) When we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord, we are made holy inwardly – our spirit is completely pure and consecrated before God. This is called **“positional holiness”** or **“present holiness.”** (See **I Corinthians 1:2, 30; Ephesians 4:24; Hebrews 13:11-12.**)

2) Another aspect of holiness is called **“practical holiness”** or **“vital holiness”** which refers to the process of increasingly living holy in our lives. This is what this passage refers to. (See also **I Peter 1:15-16**).

b. It’s worth pointing out that this congregation has not fallen into sin. We’ve seen in this epistle that Paul was encouraged by Timothy’s report that they had remained steadfast in the faith (**3:6-8**). It seems, however, that just like other former pagans, such as the Corinthians, if they were going to backslide, this is the area that they would most likely fall into.

c. **“sexual immorality”** – This is often translated as **“fornication.”** Dr. Bob Utley writes:

**“Premarital and extramarital sex were distinguished in the OT, but the meaning was broader in scope in the NT. ‘Fornication’ meant all inappropriate sexual activity, including homosexuality and bestiality. Often pagan worship included sexual activity.”<sup>7</sup>**

C. **Verses 4-5 – “That each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;”** – The word **“vessel”** here is referring to one’s body. Concerning the presence of God, Paul writes to the Corinthians and states: **“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels...”** (**II Corinthians 4:7**). The English Standard Version (ESV) renders it:

**“...that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,”** – **I Thessalonians 4:4**

**“One avoids sexual immorality by learning how to control his own body with its passions. Self-control in response to one’s sexual desires, Paul taught, could and must be learned. Christians are not the victims of circumstances or their fleshly passions. Sexual desire can be controlled by the Christian through God’s power”<sup>8</sup>**

D. **Verse 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.”** – It seems that Paul is saying when a believer commits sexual sin, it not only affects his or her relationship with God, but also affects fellow believers. The word **“defraud”** means; **“to take advantage of someone, usually as the result of a motivation of greed”<sup>9</sup>** The New American Standard Version (NASV) renders this verse:

**“and that no one violate the rights and take advantage of his brother or sister in the matter, because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you previously and solemnly warned you.”**

1. Regarding the phrase, **“...the Lord is the avenger in all these things...”** Warren Wiersbe writes:

**“While it is true that the Christian is not under condemnation (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1), it is also true that he is not free from the harvest of sorrow that comes when we sow to the flesh (Gal. 6:7–8). When King David committed adultery, he tried to cover his sin, but God chastened him severely. (Read Pss. 32; 51 to see what he lost during those months.) When David confessed his sins, God forgave him; but God could not change the consequences. David reaped what he sowed, and it was a painful experience for him.”<sup>10</sup>**

2. Overcoming Temptation to Sin.

a. Have Faith that God is for you and working with you. **I Corinthians 10:13; James 4:7; I Peter 5:8-10.**

b. Remember that Jesus was tempted and understands. **Hebrews 4:14-16.**

c. Remember the believer’s relationship to sin.

1) Forgiven. **Ephesians 1:7.**

2) Set free from its' power. **Romans 6.**

<sup>6</sup>Thayer

<sup>7</sup>Robert James Utley, *Paul’s First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians*, vol. Volume 11, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), 106.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 701.

<sup>9</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 757.

<sup>10</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 176.

- d. Hide the Word of God in your heart. **Psalm 119:11, 15, 16; 97-99.** The word “hidden” means; “to hide”; “to treasure”; “store up”; “to hoard”; “to reserve”; “to protect”.
- e. Be Watchful. **Matthew 26:41.** Means; “to arise”; “arouse”; “pay attention”; “to be mindful of threatening dangers.”
- 1) We must stay off the enemy’s territory. **I John 2:15-17.** Don’t compromise with the world. If you play with fire, you will be burned.
  - 2) Watch what you allow into your mind. Television, movies, magazines, the internet and certain kinds of music, can influence our mind and cause us to sin. These things will weaken our resistance.
  - 3) Watch who we hang around with. **I Corinthians 15:33; II Peter 2:4-9.**
  - 4) Stay away from places and situations that could cause you to be tempted.
- f. Have a Consistent Prayer life. **Matthew 26:41.**
- g. Resist Temptation. **James 4:7; I Peter 5:8-9.**
- 1) Speak the Word out of your mouth. **Matthew 4:1-11; Ephesians 6:17.**
  - 2) Worship and Praise the Lord. **James 1:2; Psalm 8:2; (Matthew 21:16).**