

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Second Coming Letters of Paul – Part 9

First Thessalonians

I. Exposition of Chapter Four (Continued).

A. **Verses 7-8 – “For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.”**

1. **Verse 7** – We are called to holiness. The word “call” means: **“to urgently invite someone to accept responsibilities for a particular task, implying a new relationship to the one who does the calling.”**¹ Now that we have a new relationship with Jesus Christ, we’re children of God and able, by His divine power, to accept the invitation to walk in holiness and be free from uncleanness.

2. The word “**uncleanness**” means; **“the state of moral impurity, especially in relationship to sexual sin.”**²

This is the same word found in **Romans 6:19** which reads:

“I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness.”

a. This Scripture shows us that unbelievers are “**...slaves of uncleanness,**” but, as believers we are now empowered to be “**...slaves of righteousness for holiness.**” Notice in either one of these, the choice is up to the individual. Each person is said to have presented their members to one or the other. When we receive Christ, we are set free from the enslavement of uncleanness and lawlessness. Sin is no longer our master! We have a new calling to holiness.

3. **“...but in holiness.”** - This verse also clearly teaches that “**uncleanness**” is the opposite of “**holiness.**”

“God calls his people to be pure – spiritually, morally, relationally and in every way (see Ps. 24:34; Isa. 52:11; 1 Tim. 5:2, 22; 2 Tim. 2:22; Titus 2:5; Heb. 7:26; 1 John 3:3). It is those who are pure in heart that will see God (Matt. 5:8). To be pure means being unmixed, undefiled and uncorrupted by evil and worldliness...God’s Word says that without holiness ‘no one will see the Lord’ (Heb. 12:14).”³

4. **Verse 8** – This is a very powerful, and sobering verse! It states very clearly that if we reject the calling to holiness, we’re actually rejecting God!! When referring to the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us, the emphasis is on the fact that He is HOLY! The word “**reject**” means; **“to set aside”; “nullify”; “disregard” and “refuse.”** This describes many professing Christians today. Too many walk and talk the same as unbelievers. Some who claim Christ, do not live lives consistent with Biblical values. Some are bowing to the pressures of this world and compromising truth in order to avoid being persecuted. Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

“Lest anyone feel that God is asking more than is reasonable of weak mortals, Paul concluded this exhortation with a reminder that God has also given believers His indwelling Spirit. This Person of the Trinity is so characterized by holiness that He is called the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit has power enough to enable any Christian to learn how to control his own body, even in a pagan, immoral climate. The exhortation is to avoid sexual immorality; the enablement comes from the Holy Spirit”⁴

B. **Verses 9-10 – “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; 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;”**

1. God teaches us to love one another with “**brotherly love.**” – The Greek word for this is “**philadelphia**” and refers to; **“the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren”**⁵ Another definition is “**affection for fellow believers**”⁶. In the context, we can see a contrast. To have “**brotherly love**” is to be other-centered, but sexual sin is self-centered.

2. Paul said he really didn’t need to tell them to love one another because they “**...were taught by God to love one another.**” – This is a remarkable statement when you consider the Thessalonians are relatively new

¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 423.

²Ibid., 769.

³*Fire Bible: English Standard Version*, Donald C. Stamps, Gen. Ed. (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers Int’l, 2011), 2075.

⁴Thomas 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), 702.

⁵Joseph 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)

⁶Louw and Nida, 292.

believers. This tells us that when we are born again and made new creations in Christ, that transformation on the inside, by way of the Holy Spirit, causes us to know we are to love one another, and empowers us to do so. The Bible says that the **“...love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (Romans 5:5)**. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit would teach us all things (John 14:26) and both Paul and John wrote of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:10-13; I John 2:27).

3. **Verse 10 – “...But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;”** – The word “increase” is the same word translated “abound” in both 3:12 and 4:1. Paul emphasizes over and over again the need for the Thessalonians to continue to grow and excel in love.

C. **Verse 11 – “that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,”**

1. A Three-fold Command:

a. **“...aspire to lead a quiet life...”** – The word “quiet” could be translated as “peacefully” or “restful.”

Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

“First, his readers should lead a restful life. The word translated quiet means quiet in the sense of restfulness..., rather than quiet as opposed to talkativeness...Paul was telling the Thessalonians to be less frantic, not less exuberant...a Christian who strives to be at peace with himself and God will be a source of peace to his brethren. Such quietude constitutes a practical demonstration of love for others.”⁷

b. **“...mind your own business...”** – The Complete Biblical Library makes the following comment:

“Christians must be careful, however, lest love and concern for others turn them into spiritual busybodies, always poking their noses into other people’s business.”⁸

c. **“...work with your own hands...”** – Several scholars suggest that some of the Thessalonian believers were quitting their jobs due to an imbalanced understanding of the coming of the Lord. Dr. Chuck Swindoll writes:

“Whether it was motivated by their end-times fervor or by their single-minded evangelistic zeal, some of Paul’s readers may have concluded, ‘What’s the use in building something today when the world could end tomorrow?’ or ‘Why waste my energy on temporal trivialities when people’s eternal souls are at risk?’ Again, Paul wasn’t facing off against false reasoning, but against incomplete reasoning. This pattern of putting off the practical, everyday activities would get so bad that Paul would have to address it with an even heavier hand in his next letter to the church in Thessalonica...”⁹

(See II Thessalonians 3:22-12).

D. **Verse 12 - “that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.”**

1. **“...walk properly toward those who are outside...”** – The word “properly” means; “pertaining to being a fitting or becoming manner of behavior”¹⁰ The Amplified Bible reads:

“So that you may bear yourselves becomingly and be correct and honorable and command the respect of the outside world, being dependent on nobody [self-supporting] and having need of nothing.” I Thess. 4:12 – Amplified Bible

E. **Verse 13 – “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.”**

1. The phrase **“fallen asleep”** is a metaphor for physical death. For believers, when our bodies die, our inward man (spirit and soul) go immediately to the presence of the Lord (heaven).

a. The Bible says that to be **“absent from the body”**, is **“...to be present with the Lord.” (II Corinthians 5:8.)**

b. Paul refers to physical death as **“to depart and be with Christ which is far better.” (Philippians 1:23).**

c. As believers, we may **“sorrow”**, which means to be sad and grieve, but we don’t grieve like the world does because we have **“hope”**. **“Hope”** means; **“to look forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial”¹¹**

⁷Thomas 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), 703.

⁸*The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, (Empowered Life, Tulsa, OK, 2016.), 851.

⁹Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Living Insights, New Testament Commentary: 1&2 Thessalonians*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2016.)

¹⁰Louw and Nida, 747.

¹¹Ibid, 295.