

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
Wednesday, July 29, 2020

Hey Good evening everyone, and welcome to Facebook Live Wednesday night Bible studies. We've been doing this since March or April, and our plan is to continue doing a Wednesday night online Bible study indefinitely. No plans to stop anytime soon.

For the last few weeks, we've been in the book of 1 Thessalonians – verse by verse – looking specifically at how the Gospel both forms and sends the church. All of this under the general heading, or series title of “The Gospel & The Church”.

For a quick refresher – remember Paul had planted this church in Thessalonica, but was then chased out of town, like 6 months after he planted the church. All of this is in Acts 17. If you remember from last week, I referenced a verse in Acts 17 where the Jewish leaders that were jealous of Paul said “These men, who have turned the world upside down, have come here also...”

They chase Paul out of town – but he had this holy affection for the people there. He had a concern for their continued growth in the Gospel – the type of concern that you should expect any and every pastor with a pulse to have over the people God has called him to lead.

Last week, we looked at how Paul sacrificed for the church in sending T-Bone to check on them, and the encouragement he had gotten when T-Bone brought his report back. And he closed CH3 with a pastoral prayer over the people at the church. And the last verse in CH3 is where I want to pickup tonight:

READ 1 Thessalonians 3:13

¹³ May he make your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. Amen.

Paul's prayer for them – was for their personal holiness and for their CORPORATE holiness – as a family of believers. Corporate – not like business, but more like group – he wanted them to live individually and together with personal holiness, with blameless hearts.

So, he prays that God would make their hearts blameless in holiness, then he tells them practically what that looks like. In 1st century Thessalonica, what does this look like? Good questions – Paul's gonna answer them. Turn with me, if you have your Bibles, to 1 Thessalonians 4. We're going to cover 12 verses, but I'm not going to read them all. We'll break them up, because I know it's hard to listen through a computer screen to a long reading of the Bible.

So the first part we'll look at is 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2

Additionally then, brothers and sisters, we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received instruction from us on how you should live and please God—as you are doing¹—do this even more. ²For you know what commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

So, Paul, concerned for their practical holiness tells them first – REMEMBER and DO.

- Remember his instruction.
- But not only that, remember who's instruction is was.
 - On who's authority did Paul preach and teach? In case they forgot, he says the commands they brought were through the Lord Jesus.
 - Not Paul sitting up in an 8th floor office saying “hey this would be a good idea.”
 - Paul's authority was rooted in the calling of God for him to plant and pastor churches. Paul had no authority except that which was given to him by God.
- Remember his instruction, and then DO IT. And keep doing it. Don't ever stop.

But...knowing I'm sure the tendency to forget, and our natural drift away from Godliness and toward the culture and world around us, he points them to how they should live, honoring God in 2 very specific ways. With their bodies and with their love for one another.

READ 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

³For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, ⁴that each of you knows how to control his own body^{1b} in holiness and honor, ⁵not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don't know God. ⁶This means one must not transgress against and take advantage of a brother or sister in this manner, because the Lord is an avenger of all these offenses, as we also previously told and warned you. ⁷For God has not called us to impurity but to live in holiness. ⁸Consequently, anyone who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

V3 – God's Will – Your sanctification – literally means to being set apart. Set apart FOR holiness. For some of the long time RCM'ers, you've heard me say before that we are SAVED from our sin, but also SAVED FOR. Here, Paul hits that same point – they were saved for sanctification. It is God's will that they live holy lives – lives that demand an explanation. Lives that are different than their non-believing friends and family.

And, for you and me in 2020 in Bradenton, FL → God's will remains our sanctification.

The particular application Paul gives tie into sexual purity – how they control their bodies

- This was a very real issue in Thessalonica – it's a very real issue in Bradenton, FL.
- Sexual Immorality – the Greek word “porneia” – from where we get the word pornography.

- The picture – and what Paul calls this church to, and what he’s calling us to today – is honoring God with our bodies – within the parameters that God has set for us
 - That sex is a good gift from a loving God – but the parameters that he’s laid out for us is to enjoy his good gift only in the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman
 - Both in thought and in action
 - This is huge, because there’s a way that seem right to the world – chase after your desires, entertain your desires, fulfill your desires at all cost. Don’t let anyone tell you differently. Whatever you desire, go after it. This was the way the culture of Thessalonica was pushing the church, and it’s the way the culture in Bradenton and Sarasota and wherever you may be watching this is pushing people. A kind of anything that would restrain your desires is wrong type of mentality.
 - But Paul calls us through these verses to AVOID it. All of it.
 - But God calls us to live differently – remember he’s set us apart for holiness. And a huge part of this is the Control of our bodies
 - Honoring God with our bodies → for the benefit of our spouse alone, or our future spouse → as a testimony to the world
 - Self-control as a fruit of the Spirit

God has called us to a holy lifestyle – one that requires us to control our bodies and our desires. But also to one that LOVES on another

READ V9-10

Loving and Working

⁹About brotherly love: You don’t need me to write you because you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. ¹⁰In fact, you are doing this toward all the brothers and sisters in the entire region of Macedonia. But we encourage you, brothers and sisters, to do this even more,

Their love for one another was spreading across the entire region – but do it even more.

Christianity, Biblical Christianity can’t thrive in isolation. We need each other. All over the Scriptures are these “One Another” passages:

- John 13 – love one another as I have loved you
- John 15 – Love one another as I have loved you
- Romans 12
 - Love one another deeply
 - Take the lead in honoring one another
 - Live in harmony with one another
- Romans 13 – don’t owe anyone anything except to love one another
- Romans 14 – No longer judge one another / Build up one another
- Romans 15 – Live in harmony with one another / welcome one another / instruct one another

- Romans 16 – Greet one another with a holy kiss – Obviously not during COVID-19
- 1 Corinthians 6 – Allow yourself to be wronged
- 1 Corinthians 11 – welcome one another
- 1 Corinthians 16 – Greet one another with a holy kiss (again – no COVID-19)
 - What it's like to be in an Italian family
- 2 Corinthians 13 – Holy kiss again
- Galatians 5 – Serve one another through love / Don't be conceited
- Galatians 6 – Carry one another's burdens
- Ephesians 4 – bearing with one another in love...as members of one another / Be kind compassionate and forgiving as God forgave you in Christ
- Colossians 3 – be honest / be patient / be forgiving / teaching
- 1 Thess 4 – Encourage one another (side note – I've never heard of someone ever suffering from too much encouragement...)
- 1 Thess 5 – pursue what is good for one another
- Hebrews 10 – consider one another
- James 4 – don't criticize one another
- James 5 – don't complain about one another / Confess your sins and pray for one another

You get the point – we could keep going. The Christian life isn't intended to be lived in isolation, but in community – as we encourage, love, build up one another.

All while working hard and leading a quiet life.

READ 4:11-12

¹¹to seek to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business,^[g] and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, ¹²so that you may behave properly in the presence of outsiders and not be dependent on anyone.

Work – the assumption is that work is available. There's a willingness to work and support yourself – not to be dependent on anyone, or any institution. Working hard. Leading a quiet life.

How we live matters – not to earn a position for God – but to show others the greatness of God. How we live matters.