**Sanctification and Honor**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**1 Thessalonians 4:1-10**

**Wednesday Evening**

**October 27, 2021**

**1 Thessalonians 4:1-10**

1 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; 2 for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

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

9 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; 10 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 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; 2 for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.**

Saints, the word finally signals a change in subject, as Paul moved on to practical application of faith. Apparently, Timothy’s report had brought Paul great joy regarding the believers’ faith but also included a few noteworthy concerns, for Paul gave instructions for right living in some very specific situations.

The believers had been taught from Paul and his companions to live in a way that pleases God. The apostles had set an example for them of how Christlike living looks. Evidently, they had learned, for Paul said that they were doing just that; but he wanted them to do so more and more. Living to please God is every Christian’s priority.

Knowing Jesus as Savior brings salvation and should prompt every believer to please God. Through obedient believers, God works in the world. Obedience pleases God. Believers cannot claim to know and love God if they do not seek to please him.

**3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;**

Saints, the phrase, God wants you to be holy, refers to a process called “sanctification.” This process continues throughout every believer’s lifetime on earth. God takes the old patterns and behaviors and transforms them to his standards and will.

Those who are being sanctified have accepted Christ as Savior and are allowing the Holy Spirit to work in their lives, making them more and more like Christ. Because God wants his people to become holy, believers need to uphold certain standards here on earth.

Christianity is not a list of dos and don’ts but a relationship in which the believers desire to please their heavenly Father. To please him requires obedience to his standards. Apparently, the area of sexual sin was plaguing the church in Thessalonica, as it was plaguing the Roman Empire as a whole.

The many idols worshiped in the regions across the empire often had an emphasis on sex—some temples even employed prostitutes for the pleasure of “worshipers.” In general, people regarded any kind of sexual activity as acceptable. It was quite common for a man not to limit his sexual relationship to his wife. Homosexuality was common. Incest was overlooked. Slaves were kept and used for sex.

God’s standards are the opposite. Paul taught abstinence from sexual immorality. This included any kind of illegitimate sexual intercourse or relationship outside of marriage. We live in a society similar to the one in which Paul lived and taught. Every kind of sexual activity, including violence and abuse of children, has become commonplace. Unbridled expression of all desires has become the norm.

Saints, as Christians, we must uphold the sanctity of sexual expression within the loving commitment of the marriage relationship. These believers were not being exhorted to keep clear of all sex but of all sexual sin.

God created sex to be a beautiful and essential ingredient of marriage, but sex outside the marriage relationship is sin. These believers had to “keep clear” of all forms of sexual sin—stay away or even run away if need be.

**1 Corinthians 6:13-20**

13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Therefore, Paul taught that believers must control their bodies and live in holiness and honor—not in lustful passion as the pagans do, in their ignorance of God and his ways. Sex should be kept in the context of marriage between a man and woman; honorable conduct is contrasted with an evil, lustful attitude that can contaminate even a marriage.

**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.**

Saints, Paul focused here on the men among the believers. Not only does sexual sin ruin the holy and honorable living to which the Christian men should aspire, but it also is a sin against one’s fellow men—whether they be Christian or not.

To have a sexual affair with another man’s wife or member of his household wrongs that other man. It takes advantage of a trusting relationship. God does not overlook these sins; instead, he avenges all such sins.

So important was this that Paul and Silas had already solemnly warned the new Christians in Thessalonica. While Paul was focusing on the men because of the society he lived in, it is important to note that these principles are just as true for women.

**Exodus 20:14**

“You shall not commit adultery

**Exodus 20:17**

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

**Leviticus 25:17**

"Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God"

**Romans 12:16-19**

16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

**7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.**

Saints, the Greek word translated called means “to call forth” or “to summon.” Paul always made it clear that salvation was God’s initiative and that people are “called” to be his. “Calling” includes a commitment on the part of believers to be holy, not to live impure lives.

**Leviticus 11:44-45**

44 For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. 45 For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

**1 Peter 1:13-16**

13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

**Hebrews 12:12-15**

12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. 14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

Saints, God is clear that once we are called to His ministry we are to live our lives consecrated unto Him. There is true freedom and great joy when we have a made up mind to obey the Lord!

**8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.**

Saints, God laid down these rules—basically, one rule—sex is for married people (a man and a woman) only. Anyone who refuses to live by this simple rule, who treats sexual sin lightly, is not disobeying human rules because human rules change (witness the change in “sexual rules” in the American culture over the last 50 years). To go with the flow of the surrounding culture and to disregard God’s rules about sexuality are tantamount to rejecting God.

**Romans 3:10-18**

10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." 13 "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips";

14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways; 17 And the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

**Mark 7:5-9**

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" 6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' 8 "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men--the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." 9 And He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

**2 Corinthians 4:6-7**

6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

Saints, Paul would later write to the believers in Corinth (another sexually immoral city, and incidentally, the city where Paul was at the time he wrote the letter to the Thessalonians): “Run away from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body."

Sexual sin is a violation of one’s own body. Paul described it as a sin that affects the body like no other, a sin that is against one’s own body, affecting not just the flesh (promiscuous sex can lead to disease), but to the whole being and personality. Sexual sin has disastrous effects. What an enticement it can be for all people, and believers are not exempt.

Clearly Saints, other sins also affect the body, such as gluttony or drunkenness, but no other sin has the same effect on the memory, personality, or soul of a person as sexual sin.

**2 Corinthians 6:14-18**

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

**9 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;**

Saints, Paul switched gears here: from exhorting the Thessalonian believers about sexual purity to exhorting those who needed to work and not depend on others.

In between, he commended them that he did not need to exhort them about Christian love, for it seemed that they had learned that lesson from God himself through the Holy Spirit. The Greek word used here for love, philadelphia, is the kind of love that binds people together.

**John 13:34-35**

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

**John 6:44-47**

44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. 46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. 47 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.

**10 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;**

Saints, the Thessalonian believers did not need instruction about showing God’s love, but Paul urged them forward. Although their love was already strong, not only among themselves but also toward all the Christians in all of Macedonia, Paul begged the believers to love them more and more.

There is always more to learn about love, always more depth to be plumbed, always more ways to show it. Paul wanted them to understand that love was not an end in itself, but a continual process.

**1 Peter 4:7-10**

7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. 8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." 9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

**John 13:33-35**

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

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. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**