

Thessalonians 4:1–18

Living to Please God and Living in the Hope of Christ's Return

I. The Aim of the Christian Life: Pleasing God

First Thessalonians 4:1 (NKJV)

“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.”

As Paul turns to the exhortational portion of the letter, he reminds the Thessalonian believers of something foundational: the Christian life is about pleasing God. Before coming to Christ, we lived primarily to please ourselves. In Christ, our deepest desire becomes honoring Him.

Paul is not satisfied with spiritual stagnation. He urges them to “abound more and more.” Growth is not optional in the Christian life. Salvation is the beginning, not the end.

Jesus Himself said, “*I always do those things that please Him.*” That should be the heartbeat of every believer.

Practical Application

- Ask yourself daily: *Does this please the Lord?*
- Do not settle for past spiritual victories—keep growing.

II. God's Will: Sanctified Living

First Thessalonians 4:2–3 (NKJV)

“For you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality.”

God's will is often treated as a mystery, but here Paul makes it unmistakably clear. God's will for every believer is sanctification—a life set apart for Him.

The pagan culture of Thessalonica was saturated with sexual immorality, much of it tied to religious practices. Paul calls believers to live distinctly different lives. Holiness is not legalism; it is love responding to grace.

Scripture consistently warns that persistent, unrepentant immorality is incompatible with life in God's kingdom. God does not lower His standard to match culture. He transforms His people to reflect His character.

Practical Application

- Take God's call to purity seriously.
- Ask God for strength to live counterculturally.

III. Honoring God with the Body

First Thessalonians 4:4–5 (NKJV)

“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 body is not evil, but it is powerful. Paul reminds believers that the body must be governed, not indulged. Knowing God changes how we treat our bodies. We are stewards, not owners.

God has given us His Holy Spirit to enable holy living. The gospel does not lower the standard; it empowers us to live up to it.

Practical Application

- Treat your body as a vessel for God’s glory.
- Depend on the Holy Spirit, not self-effort.

IV. Integrity in Relationships and Business

First Thessalonians 4:6–8 (NKJV)

“That no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such... For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.”

Paul expands holiness beyond private morality into public integrity. Believers are to be honest, fair, and trustworthy. God sees every transaction and every motive. Ultimately, He is the judge.

Rejecting God’s call to holiness is not merely rejecting human teaching—it is resisting God Himself, who gives His Holy Spirit to empower righteous living.

Practical Application

- Conduct business and relationships with integrity.
- Remember that God sees what others do not.

V. Growing in Love and Living Responsibly

First Thessalonians 4:9–12 (NKJV)

“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you... but we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.”

Love was already evident in the Thessalonian church, yet Paul urges them to grow even further. Love is the unmistakable mark of true discipleship.

Paul also encourages a quiet, responsible life—working diligently, minding one’s own affairs, and maintaining a good testimony before unbelievers. Love does not excuse irresponsibility; it expresses itself through faithfulness.

Practical Application

- Let love be active, not merely verbal.
- Live simply, work faithfully, and represent Christ well.

VI. Hope Concerning Those Who Have Died

First Thessalonians 4:13–14 (NKJV)

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep... For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.”

Paul addresses the believers’ grief. Christians do grieve, but not as those without hope. Death for the believer is not annihilation—it is transition.

Because Jesus died and rose again, those who die in Him are alive with Him. Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross, and His resurrection guarantees eternal life.

Practical Application

- Grieve honestly, but with hope.
- Anchor your comfort in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

VII. The Lord’s Return and the Believer’s Future

First Thessalonians 4:15–17 (NKJV)

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout... And the dead in Christ will rise first. 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.”

This revelation came directly from the Lord. Those who have died in Christ are not disadvantaged—they precede us. When Jesus returns, there will be a glorious reunion, followed by eternal fellowship with Him.

The believer’s hope is not escape from life, but eternal life with Christ. The greatest promise is not the timing of events, but this: “We shall always be with the Lord.”

Practical Application

- Live today in light of eternity.
- Let hope shape your priorities and perseverance.

VIII. Comfort One Another with This Hope

First Thessalonians 4:18 (NKJV)

“Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

The doctrine of Christ’s return is meant to comfort, not confuse. It strengthens faith, steadies hearts, and encourages perseverance.

Final Challenge for Believers

Live to please God. Pursue holiness. Love deeply. Work faithfully. And hold fast to the blessed hope that Jesus Christ is coming again. Let eternity shape how you live today.

Invitation to Non-Believers

Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross for your sins. God raised Him from the dead, declaring Him to be God, Savior, and Lord. Forgiveness, new life, and eternal hope are found in Him alone.

Turn to Him today. Believe in the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Receive salvation and the promise of everlasting life.