



PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE  
THESSALONIANS

Lesson 5 • 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

October 3, 2021



# LESSON PLAN



Lesson	Date	Passage
1	9/5/2021	Introduction
2	9/12/2021	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
3	9/19/2021	1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
4	9/26/2021	1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13
5	10/3/2021	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
6	10/10/2021	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
7	10/17/2021	1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
8	10/24/2021	2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
9	10/31/2021	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
10	11/7/2021	2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5
11	11/14/2021	2 Thessalonians 3:6-18
12	11/21/2021	Review
13	11/28/2021	Reading and Reflection

## Passage Outline

- A Call to a Walk That Pleases God (4:1-2)
- A Walk of Moral Purity (4:3-8)
- A Walk of Love Toward Others (4:9-12)



5 minutes – 11:10 to 11:15

- **Review** – In the last section of the letter, Paul spoke to the nature of their fellowship. He noted their deep love and desire to be with the Thessalonian believers. He explained how he came to the decision to send Timothy and summarized his report. And he ended with a sincere prayer for them.
- Read the passage 1 Thes. 4:1-12
- In Chapter 4, Paul starts what is the second half of the body of his letter. The first half was aimed at strengthening and encouraging the believers in Thessalonica by reminding them of Paul's ministry and love for them. The second half is oriented mainly toward giving instructions to the church. Remember Paul's time to teach the church had been shortened and abruptly interrupted. So, Paul now exhorts the believers to stay the course of what they had been taught and to remind them to put it into practice.
- Review outline

## A Call to a Walk That Pleases God (v. 4:1-2)

- Two-part appeal to walk (v. 1a)
- Two important instructions for their walk (v. 1b)
- Two perspectives of their walk (v. 1c)
- A call to remember (v. 2)



10 minutes – 11:15 to 11:25

- The first two verses of Chapter 4 are somewhat of an introduction to the instruction that is to follow. Paul signals the change to the letter with the word “Finally”. Again, this word is marker in the letter that when it was read would not have had the Chapters, verses, and headings we have in our Bibles today.
- Paul begins by making an appeal. Paul’s wording here seems a bit complicated. So let’s break verses 1 and 2 down.
- **Who does Paul address?**
  - The church, those who are brothers in Christ.
- **What is the nature or strength of his two-part appeal?**
  - He makes a strong request; this is conveyed in two verbs, the first to “plead” and the second to “strongly urge”. This not just friendly advice.
- **What two main areas of instruction had they received or learned from Paul in the middle of verse 1?**
  - Idea here is to follow what they had learned from Paul and his companions
  - How to walk as they ought; to walk in right conduct or practice
  - How to please God; to and for God’s glory

- **What two perspectives of their walk does Paul encourage them towards at the end of verse 1?**
  - Present; as they are doing
  - Future; to grow and increase
- **What idea does Paul repeat in verse 2?**
  - To remember the instructions they had been taught when Paul and his companions were with them
  - Through the Lord Jesus; the source and authority. **What is this important?**

## A Walk of Moral Purity (v. 4:3-8)

- The reason for moral purity (v. 3a)
- Three instructions on moral purity (v. 3b-6)
- The motivation for moral purity (v. 7-8)



10 minutes – 11:25 to 11:45

- In this next part of Paul's letter, he addresses the need for moral purity in the church. Given the pagan worship and cultural immorality that was accepted at that time, this was likely a difficult area that Paul thought important to address. It seems likely that Timothy had reported to Paul and Silas that there were still people in the Thessalonian church who still were involved in pagan living in a way that was characteristic of those "who do not know God" (4:5). Paul seems to be very specific in what he says. And it is possible that Paul is addressing specific issues that were lingering within the church. Since they had not separated themselves from "sexual immorality" (4:3), Paul calls them once again to sanctification, underlining repeatedly that this is the very will of God. The holiness or "set-apartness" of God's people is a theme throughout the redemptive story of the bible. The Israelites were called to be set apart from the countries around them and commanded not to participate in the sexual immorality and practice of the people around them. In the same way, the church is to live set apart from the practices of the world. Just as God is holy

and pure, his people are to strive for moral purity and practice as a reflection of the character of Christ.

- Paul starts by reminding them of the reason for moral purity. **What is the basis for believer's striving for purity?**
  - It is God's will that we are sanctified. God has saved us from sin. Our lives are to reflect the separation and victory over sin we have in Christ. We are sanctified in this sense. We have been made holy by the righteousness of Christ; and we are being made holy by the power of the Spirit in us. We are all growing in grace and maturity as a part of walking through this life.
- Having established our sanctification as our overarching goal, Paul then provides three reasons moral purity is a part of God's will for us. Each of these begins with the word "that" starting in the first half of verse 3 and through verse 6. **What are these three instructions Paul provides?**
  - Avoid sexual immorality. This encompasses every sort of sexual practice that is not aligned with the will of God. It includes our thought life, sexuality outside of marriage, and perverse practices that are too vile to discuss. This not only was God's will for them and what distinguished them from the people around them, but also is the perfect wisdom for living giving by God. As with all sin, sexual immorality will destroy and corrupt as it leads down a road toward darkness.
  - Know how to control one's body for holiness, what is honorable; the idea here is of possessing and having authority over such as owning land, a tool, or a horse and cart. The idea is clarified in the contrast seen in verse 5. **What does control not look like?** Following after one's passions as one who is enslaved to the body's desires. Paul alludes to the unbeliever's around them who were ruled by their desires and lust. This is the opposite of what it looks like to live according to God's will.
  - Specifically, not to wrong another in the church. In the context of the Greek and Roman culture, this would have been to keep from adultery and prostitutes. Any sexual relationship or improper behavior toward another was not to be found in the church. In wronging a brother, the implication is that sexual immorality damages relationships and is harmful to those we are to love. **What is the warning Paul gives?** That God is the ultimate judge. The sense here is that God is the one who decides and gives out the judgement upon the sinner. There is to be a sober sense of the potential of God's chastisement to bring about repentance and change.
- Paul ends his thoughts by affirming the motivation for our moral purity in verses

7 and 8. **What is our motivation to walk in purity?**

- God has called us to purity. We are chosen by God to live for Him and His glory. We are given a mission to proclaim the Gospel to all. Our lives are to reflect the changing power of Christ at work in us. We are now a part of the Kingdom of light, not of darkness.
- If we reject this, we dismiss both the authority wisdom of God.
- God has given us his Spirit so that we may walk with Him. The Spirit is the presence of our Holy God within us. Moral impurity is not consistent with a life in the Spirit. Light cannot abide the darkness.
- **Should we dismiss this passage because it is not culturally relevant to the modern church?** No.
- **What would be the equivalent of temple prostitutes today?** Sexual freedom. Internet pornography.
- **How does Paul's instructions here contrast with the sexual messages of today?** Safe sex. No sexual morals or boundaries.



## A Walk of Brotherly Love (v. 4:9-12)

- A life of love toward others (v. 9-10)
- A life of peace with others (v. 11)
- A life of honor and self-sufficiency (v. 12)



10 minutes – 11:55 to 11:55

- In this part of our passage, Paul continues describing a god-honoring walk of faith with respect to others.
- Paul reminds them in verse 9 that concerning brotherly love, there was really no need to add further instruction. It was something they were already doing. And Paul notes that they had been taught by God love one another. Perhaps the persecution and isolation they had received from the fellow countrymen had caused them to draw closer together as believers. The opposition they faced had the affect of bring them closer to God and to one another. It is interesting how suffering and hardship bring together rich and poor, various ethnic backgrounds, and across social circles. In the mist of suffering, our differences don't seem to matter as much.
- Paul also notes in verse 10, the extent of their love toward others. We see that they not only loved those in their own church, **but their love extended where?** To all the churches in their area. There is a great example here of how churches today are to reach out with love to fellow believers whether they be in our community or across the world.
- **Even with this praise, what does Paul urge them to do at the end of verse 10?** To

grow in actions of love even more. They are to abound or overflow to an even greater degree in their caring and sharing with others. They are to excel at brotherly love.

- Paul continues to speak to brotherly love connecting verse 11 to the previous verses with the word “and”. Here Paul notes three aspects to their lives they should be know for. **What are these three characteristics?**
  - Aspire to live quietly; **what does this mean?** Does not cause trouble or join with the rabble. Respectable. Does not stir others up.
  - Minds their own affairs; Is not nose-y or a gossip. Of good reputation with others.
  - Works with their hands; To provide a living for oneself and family. Not idle or living off others.
- In verse 12, Paul gives us the reason for these instructions. Note the “so that” at the beginning of this verse.
- **What are the two reasons they are live this way?**
  - To have the respect of those outside the church . To be a testimony within their communities.
  - To be self-sufficient. Connected to working with their hands. The idea here is that our work and stewardship supports our families so that we have the respect of those around us. It’s not just about provision, but living within our means so that we are not dependent on others.



5 minutes – 11:55 to 12:00

- What other areas of our lives affect our testimony before others? Parenting, marriage, involvement with the church, etc.