



1 Thessalonians

(For access to all available commentaries and written sermons of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

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

1 Thessalonians 4:2

As normal, the word "for" is given to either explain or confirm something just stated. The same is true here. He just said, "just as you received from us how you out to walk and to please God." That is the basis for saying "for" now. It is those commandments which Paul and his associates gave to those in Thessalonica "through the Lord Jesus."

Paul's words must be true as he is stating in the letter that they had really been told these things. If no such commandments were given, then he couldn't call them to memory now. Further, he was with them such a short time earlier that they would certainly be able to recollect those things he had said to them.

This is important because the longer someone is gone, the duller the memory gets. Eventually, ten people would have ten different ideas about what was said. Paul is asking them to consider those commandments and apply them to their walk. As they are "through the Lord Jesus," meaning they carry the weight of His instruction to Paul, which he in turn passed on to the Thessalonians, then it is this very set of commandments which which will guide their walk and make them pleasing to God.

The inspiration of Paul's teaching as an apostle is seen in these words, and it carries throughout this letter and all of his letters. It is confirmed by Peter as well. Peter says that Paul's letters are on an equal footing with Scripture in 2 Peter 3:16. It is an important precept to remember. What Paul says is doctrine for the church age.

Life application: There are many things in Scripture which are hard to remember. In fact, if we aren't in the word daily, we will quickly dull in regards to them. Anyone who thinks they can pick up the Bible once, read through it, and assume that they are now fully prepared for living

τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων

out a proper Christian walk is deluded. It must be read continuously, and it must be meditated on always.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 1 Thessalonians 4:3

This is the second “for” in a row from Paul’s hand. He just said, “...for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.” He then immediately explains why they were given and begins explaining the reason for those things, along with the first of a list of some of those commandments.

“For this is the will of God.” The commandments are God’s will for us, and they bear a specific purpose in being given, which is, “your sanctification.” The idea of sanctification is holiness. Believers in Christ are to be set apart and live lives of honor towards God. The Law of Moses contains five books. The first three follow in a particular order to show us what is being relayed here by Paul –

- Genesis – creation; God the Father/Creator.
- Exodus – redemption; God the Son/Redeemer, Savior, and Justifier.
- Leviticus – sanctification; God the Holy Spirit/Sanctifier & Purifier.

The main theme of the entire book of Leviticus is found in Leviticus 11:44 –

“For I *am* the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I *am* holy.”

Notice what it says there, “You therefore shall consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy.” This is something the Jews missed and continue to miss to this day. When they pray their feast blessings, Sabbath blessings, etc., they repeat the words “who has sanctified us with His commandments.” But one of His commandments is that they too are to be sanctified; they are to be holy. A partial, or selective observance of the Law is to make the law void and to nullify the sanctification needed on their part.

The same is true with those in the church now. What was only pictured in the dietary laws of Israel in Leviticus 11 is seen fulfilled in the precepts given to us by the apostles. Things considered unclean in the dietary laws pictured people and acts which are unclean and immoral. Staying away from immorality is then for our “sanctification.” The first thing Paul then notes as being immoral and to stay away from is explained next by him with the words, “...that you should abstain from sexual immorality.”

The Bible set the pattern at the very beginning. Man + woman, in marriage = proper sexual conduct. Anything else is immoral. This is explained and reexplained in the Bible. Anything not within these narrow confines is to be abstained from. The highly perverse sexual conduct of the world today is completely opposed to the sanctification process which is expected of us. There are no exceptions.

Life application: Attempting to justify sexual sin, meaning any sexual intimacy apart from a man and a woman in the bonds of marriage, is an affront to God, and it is opposed to the sanctification process which is outlined in Scripture.

...that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,
1 Thessalonians 4:4

This verse begins to explain the “will of God” Paul mentioned in the previous verse. That will of God for the believers in Thessalonica (and thus us!) is “sanctification.” After noting this, he began the idea of sanctification with abstaining “from sexual immorality.” In order to meet this goal, he now explains it with “that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel.”

Paul likens our body as a vessel. Elsewhere, he calls it “an earthen vessel” (2 Corinthians 4:7). We are a soul which is transported around by an earthly shell, thus it is a vessel. In 2 Corinthians 4:7, the vessel is explained as containing something, meaning the Holy Spirit. In this verse now, it is a vessel for doing something. We are to “possess” it. The wording doesn’t just mean “to grab hold of,” but “to gain hold of.” We can grab something and not have control of it, like a rider in a rodeo who gets bucked off the bronco. Or, we can gain hold of something through continued diligence, thus subduing the horse and making it a useful tool around the ranch. The same is true with our bodies.

When we come to Christ, our soul is reconnected to God; it is our spiritual rebirth. It is contrary to the notion of being reconnected to God to continue to live in a worldly manner. Instead, we are to use our members in a life ever leading towards holiness. Paul gives a description of how to do this in Colossians 3 -

“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.” Colossians 3:5-7

In living this way, and in the other ways that the Bible explains to us concerning a life of holiness, we will each possess our “own vessel in sanctification and honor.” The sanctification is for ourselves in accord with what the Holy Spirit has already done for us, sanctifying us

before God. The honor is as an outward display to glorify God. The word translated as “honor” is one which carries the meaning of a price. Thus it is a perceived value. Of what value is the glory of God to us? This is the idea of what Paul is saying. Christ paid the ultimate price for our sins, and so we should deem His work in this manner as most precious, showing others what we believe the price means to us.

Life application: If we continue in sexual sins after accepting Christ, what type of value are we placing on the work of Christ, and what does the sanctification of the Spirit mean to us? We were called in our sin, but with the idea that we are to come out of our sin. By remaining in, or returning to, whatever sin we saved from, it demonstrates that we hold this way of life in a greater esteem than the new life we have been called to? Is this earth our home? Or are we looking for a return to Paradise which we lost so long ago. Let us ever strive towards holiness, sanctification, and honor.