



1 Thessalonians

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...not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 1 Thessalonians 4:5

Paul's previous words showed that each person should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor. Now, in contrast to that, he says, "...not in passion of lust." The word translated as passion, *pathos*, indicates strong feelings which are not guided by God. Rather, they are those sensual feelings which draw one away from Him. He then combines in a word translated as "lust" which is not limited to sexual desires, but includes all sorts of desires. They can be positive or negative, but in the context of the verse, they are negative. One of the main uses of the word is that of covetousness.

What Paul is describing is completely contrary to "sanctification and honor." To sanctify oneself is to be separated from the surrounding, worldly things we face. If one is consumed with the passion of lust, they are going full steam ahead into those worldly things, not away from them. Likewise, there is nothing honoring of God in such lusts, but rather choosing the path of the devil is what is seen. To confirm this, he then says, "...like the Gentiles who do not know God."

Here he is writing to Gentile believers, but he contrasts them to Gentiles who do not know what they, as believers, know. The difference has set them on a completely different path. They have come to Christ, and have been instructed in what is pleasing to Him. The path they have chosen is one which follows the sanctification and honor that he spoke of. The only way the other Gentiles are going to know how to conduct themselves before God is by their example. Otherwise, how could they ever come to know the truth?

Life application: Our conduct in the presence of others should be as Paul describes. Reading his epistles is the way to come to a right understanding of proper church-age doctrine. Let us read, meditate on, and apply these words to our daily lives – to the honor of God and for the sanctification of ourselves.

τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων

...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. 1 Thessalonians 4:6

In verse 4:3, Paul wrote, “for this is the will of God, your sanctification.” After that, he noted sexual immorality as being opposed to sanctification. Now he goes on to a conclusion of this thought, and notes that which would hinder sanctification. It is if one would “take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter.”

The word translated as “take advantage” is one which is found only here in the Bible. It means, “to go beyond.” In the previous verse, Paul had spoken of the “passion of lust.” As noted, that phrase is not limited to sexual desires, but includes all sorts of desires. They can be positive or negative, but in the context of the verse, they are negative. One of the main uses of the word is that of covetousness.

What he is now saying is that we are not to allow our hearts be filled with covetousness in this way. In allowing this, we would then be impelled to “take advantage and defraud” one another in this matter. As he says elsewhere –

“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

-1 Timothy 6:6-10

Rather than have hearts filled with covetousness, we are to be content with what we possess, and not look to those things which we have not rightly earned on our own. For those who would act in a manner contrary to this, he then provides a warning by saying, “because the Lord is the avenger of all such.”

One must remember that Paul is writing to believers, but the principles which he writes also pertain to non-believers. Any such negative actions will be judged by the Lord. For those who are saved, they will be judged at the bema seat judgment of rewards and losses (Romans 14:1 & 2 Corinthians 5:10). For those who are not in Christ, they will be judged and then cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15). No matter what, all transgressions will be judged.

To finish the thought, he then adds in, “as we also forewarned you and testified.” It is obvious that Paul preached the grace of Christ throughout his ministry, and it is confirmed throughout his epistles. However, he also preached that sin will be judged. He never teaches that grace

grants a license to sin. Instead, he speaks clearly and carefully about the need for believers to be molded into the image of Christ, and to stay away from sin. His words here show that he taught it to young believers right along with their salvation message, and he continued to warn them as a part of their regular instruction.

Life application: The Bible asks God's people to be holy because He is holy. Let us endeavor to live in this manner at all times, ever striving to be the best examples of righteousness and holiness that we can be – to the glory of God!

For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. 1 Thessalonians 4:7

The word “For” is given to confirm what has been stated in verses 3-6. We are to abstain from sexual immorality as described, and we are not to take advantage of and defraud our brother as noted. The reason is “For God did not call us to uncleanness.” The things he stated in the previous verses would do just that; they would render us unclean. Further, what is more appropriate is that the words “to uncleanness” should be stated as “for uncleanness.” The preposition denotes God's intention for us, not the state that we may or may not be in at any given time. He has called not called us “for uncleanness” even if we act in that way after being called.

In contrast to this, he says instead that we have been called “in holiness.” The Greek preposition is different than the previous one – *epi* or “for” and then *en* or “in.” We have been called by God, who is holy. Therefore, we have been called in holiness, and so we are to act in that same manner. Holiness and sanctification should be the characteristic elements of our Christian lives. This is perfectly stated by the Lord to Israel in Leviticus 11 –

“For I *am* the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I *am* holy.” Leviticus 11:44

What Israel missed, and what we continue to miss in the church, is that we have been sanctified so that we may then sanctify ourselves. To not follow through with what the Lord has done is contrary to what is expected of us. We are to be holy because the Lord who called us is holy.

Life application: How sad it will be when we stand before the Lord and see how truly unholy we were at times when we should have acted in holiness. If we can just remember this now, it will help keep us on the right track. Keep the holiness of God in the forefront of your mind, and then endeavor to emulate that holiness at all times.

Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 4:8

The word translated as “Therefore” is rare, being used only here and in Hebrews 12:1. It is a combination of three separate words which come together to form an emphatic “what must follow.” It extends the same thought which precedes it. It covers everything from verse 1 which said, “exhort in the Lord Jesus.” After that, Paul mentioned the commandments that were given “through the Lord Jesus,” and then he mentioned “the will of God.” Each of these was explained, but now he emphatically states, “Therefore,” and then he says, “...he who rejects this does not reject man.”

The word “this” is inserted by translators, but it was purposefully left out by Paul to add emphasis to the second clause. It actually then reads, “Therefore he who rejects does not reject man.” It causes the mind to reach forward in anticipation of what it then must reject. He then immediately explains it by saying, “but God.” The highlighting of Jesus and “the will of God” in the previous verses was given to lead us to this.

Those who conduct themselves in the ways he has presented in verses 3 through 7 are not rejecting Paul, as if he alone made up the commands. Rather, they are rejecting God Himself by rejecting His commands. The word translated as “reject” signifies “to break faith with.” In conducting our lives in a manner contrary to the words given, we demonstrate a lack of faith in God’s word, and we cancel His authority over us. We become rogue agents with a perverse agenda.

Paul then notes as a confirmation of this that God “has also given us His Holy Spirit.” Those who came to Thessalonica and instructed the new believers were filled with the Spirit’s gift of inspiration. It logically follows through then that Paul’s words continue to be inspired. He is writing on behalf of the Lord. And what then follows is that all of Paul’s letters that are included in Scripture are, in fact, the word of God. He was selected by Christ Jesus (Acts 9), he evangelized and ministered to the Gentiles, and he wrote letters of instruction as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Those letters have been saved in the pages of the Bible, and they are doctrine for the Gentile-led church age.

Life application: Ignore Paul’s writings, and you have no sound doctrine at all for the conduct of your life in Christ during this dispensation. Don’t ignore Paul’s writings.