

I Thessalonians 4: 1-12 – Learning to Walk in Love

John 10:10 “I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.”

- These are words of Jesus to his disciples
- He was explaining to them the REASON for his coming....

That he was:

- 1) The good shepherd (that would lay his life down)
- 2) The good shepherd that was calling them to follow him.....to live an abundant....a full life and meaningful life.

For those of you who are Christians this morning you know that this doesn't necessarily mean that it is going to be an easy life.....

→that the day that you trust in Christ all your cares and worries will be over....

→that everything will be sunshine – and no storm clouds.

But a new life in Christ is a abundant life – a full and blessed life isn't it?

- It is a leaving your old way of living to begin to live for God....
- Learning what God desires you to do in your life – and then putting it into practice.

Here in Chapter 4 in Thessalonians.....Paul was talking to new Christians.....baby Christians....

--this is what he was teaching them.....

--they had made progress (explain)

--he had just prayed for them.....READ 11-13

But now he gets down to practically what this looks like (rubber hits...) → **READ vs 1**

--there were certain things that they needed to STOP doing

--there were certain things that needed to START doing.....

This (Paul says in verse 3) is the will of God for you, your sanctification.

--For a lot of you.....I want to explain this.....

Paul calls for sanctification in two areas – in purity and in

1) The first thing that is mentioned is a CALL FOR PURITY → Read 3-7

NT times were very similar to our own in many ways....

--there were many different views on sexuality.....

-- in both Roman and Greek cultures homosexuality was considered completely normal....centuries....

--temple prostitution was common in both OT and NT times.

Many of these new Christians had no doubt been a part of this.....following what was considered normal and right....

--the idea of a faithfulness in marriage.....

--of one man and one woman living in a monogamous relationship was perhaps a strange thought to them.

--when you don't know anything different – when you are following what seems normal and right?

Yet god's law is clear....

--The 7th commandment..... says what? →You shall not commit adultery.....(must have seemed very strange to them at first)

--Marriage and intimacy are to be between one man and one woman.....the marriage bed is sacred.....

--God's call is to live in faithfulness to one another.

Paul say specifically that the Christian “*must learn how to control his own body in holiness and honor not in passion of lust like the Gentiles*”

--what Paul was calling for was for the Christian to understand that this kind of living was displeasing to God.

--It is outside of his design

When we stop and think about this – this should make sense to us.....

--if God is our creator....

--he know what he is doing....

EG/ if you drive a Toyota.....consult the owners manual.....serious issues - designer

--if you are a Christian.....important to listen to your divine owners manual when it comes to your sexuality

Paul makes an further point in this area when he says.....READ 6.

--sin always has an effect....

-- when we don't follow God's ways.....hurts ourselves & others

--people get hurt when we follow our own ways, but not God's

EG/ Me too movement

We need to be very clear that God is in no way against intimacy and sex.....

--Repeatedly.....commended.....encourage.....

--many sections of the Bible that teach on the joy, beauty, wholesomeness.....

--this is a good gift of God.... BUT in the right context.

Maybe you have heard it said – who are you to judge (explain)? That is a fair question. But Paul answers this in verse 8 → READ

--God is the one who makes the rules.....

--God is the one who knows what is best for his children...

-- WE need to trust that.....we would do well to remember that his ways are good ways.....that there are serious consequences if we do not obey .

Titus 2:11,12 ¹¹For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹²It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

2) The SECOND main area that Paul speaks of with the church is the area of loving your neighbor.....

- This is something that has been talked about from the beginning...
- Commended for....prayed for.... (3:12)
- In regards to sexuality.....

But Paul here urges the church.....again.....WHY???

--as a church we always need to hear this encouragement.....

--our tendency is to get comfortable....put it into neutral.....

EG/ interesting.....for those who are new.....

So Paul says to us this morning – DO THIS MORE AND MORE.....

--be active in loving those around you.....

--instead of growing cold or tiredcontinue faithful.

You've maybe hear the saying..... “Good fences make good neighbors.”

--what it means is that if you are going to be a good neighbor.....respect boundaries....

--very important.....

EG/ MEXICO --proper boundaries are good for us

This is why Paul gives specific advice on how to love....and it begins in your day to day life.

--(you notice that this is all one paragraph...)

--sometimes we separate this....

--if you want to love people....this is how you do it....

He mentions three specific things in verse 11:

- 1) Aspire to live quietly..... (NIV - and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life)
 - This might seem strange.....(explain)
 - (Huge problem in the church – practicing what you preach)
 - In other words →”Begin by living faithfully right where you are...”
 - Be faithful in the small things.....quietly and humbly serve the Lord.
- 2) Mind you own affairs. (NIV -Mind your own business)
 - EG/ kids - ☺ ☺
 - That is to say – focus on your own life....focus on the work that God has given you to do.
 - Not every one else’s.....on your own obedience – on your own purity.....
- 3) Work with you own own hands....
 - Chrisitans are to be known by their work ethic.....they are not takers..... they
 - Paul says this several times – just in Thessalonians.
 1. He didn’t do it....
 2. He didn’t want the church to do it..

This evidently was a problem in the church.....II Thessalonians 3 – *“We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. ¹²Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. ¹³*

Why was this so important? Why does Paul speak so directly?

- **LOOK AT VERSE 12 – READ**
- **Those outside the church are looking at US**

Brothers and sisters.....as we think of our own witness....

- This is what we need to pray for....
 - 1) That we would be found faithful.....living lives of purity.....
 - 2) busy.....busy in the Lord’s work.....
 - 3) Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God. I Peter 2:12

TEACH ME THY WAY O LORD

1. Teach me Thy way, O Lord, teach me Thy way!

Thy guiding grace afford, teach me Thy way!

Help me to walk aright, more by faith, less by sight;

Lead me with heav’nly light, teach me Thy way!

4. Long as my life shall last, teach me Thy way!

Where’er my lot be cast, teach me Thy way!

Until the race is run, until the journey’s done,

Until the crown is won, teach me Thy way!