

1Th. 4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

“Furthermore” – In addition to growing and abounding in love toward one another.....

Paul again emphasizes that the Thessalonian believers are being addressed as “brethren,” members of the same spiritual family; it is only natural to be concerned about other members of your family.

I really think the CJB translation of this verse is much clearer:

Therefore, brothers, just as you learned from us how you had to live in order to please God, and just as you are living this way now, we ask you — indeed, united with the Lord Yeshua, we urge you — to keep doing so more and more.

The more natural thing to do is to beg and encourage those whose lives don’t reflect their profession. Paul understands that those who are trying to live their lives in obedience and submission to the Lord need encouragement as well. As humans, we tend to get satisfied once we think we have achieved a certain level of growth or knowledge or reputation or _____. To continue to grow spiritually takes commitment, perseverance, self-discipline, and just plain hard work in the face of the attack of the enemy, current cultural values, the desires of the flesh, and disappointments/tribulations that the Lord may allow to touch our lives.

1Th. 4:2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

Paul knew that they had been taught clearly concerning the commands of the Lord Jesus. He hadn’t tried to be politically correct or concerned about how the truth would be received. His mission was to teach the truth as he had received it from the Lord.

1Th. 4:3 For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

1Th. 4:4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

1Th. 4:5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

I know I often think about our moral culture as being one of the most decadent ever. Historical novels I have read pertaining to the times in which Paul was writing indicate that Roman moral culture was just as bad, if not more so. The pagan gods that were worshipped often included rituals with temple prostitutes. According to Eerdman’s Dictionary, the “mystery cults were thriving at Thessalonica, particularly that of Sarapis and Isis, Dionysos, Asclepius, Demeter, and the Cabiri/Dioscuri.” Sexual immorality was part of the culture.

Paul was reminding the believers in Thessalonica, that their lifestyle was not to be conformed to that of the world. They were to live a sanctified (pure, holy) life in accordance with the commands of God. One of those commands was to “abstain from fornication.” The Greek for the word *fornication* indicates a general

term for sexual activity outside of marriage. Every person should use his/her body for pure and holy activities, actions that God would approve. The Greek for the word *honour* references “value, esteem, dignity, precious.” In other words, we are to consider our bodies as valuable and precious, something worth treating with dignity. The wording of the CJB was quite succinct for verse 5, “without giving in to lustful desires, like the pagans who don’t know God.”

1Th. 4:6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

Paul evidently felt it necessary to make specific warning against taking another man’s wife (as did David when he took Bathsheba). Though he commended these believers for the evidence they gave in their lives of being truly born again, he recognized that the lust of the flesh is one of the hardest to ignore and overcome when you are surrounded by a culture that promotes sexual immorality. The warning—“the Lord is the avenger of all such.” You may think this is a sin that you can hide or can get away with, but God will not allow that. I think about that fact often when I hear the numbers of AIDS sufferers and the high rates of venereal disease, etc. Paul is reminding these believers that they cannot claim ignorance in understanding God’s will in this matter because they had personally taught them otherwise.

1Th. 4:7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

This is another one of those statements that should be totally unnecessary to make to a body of believers, but the Holy Spirit deemed otherwise. Again, as I continue to observe the moral culture, I realize that we in the body of Christ need continual reminder to live holy lives, lives that are set apart from the world. The key point being that God is the source, not the society in which we live, for determining what is holy and what is not, what is clean and what is unclean, what is pure and what is impure, what is acceptable behavior and what is not.

1Th. 4:8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Those who choose to set aside/violate/reject (all from the Greek for *despiseth*) the command of God in this area are doing so in defiance of God—not just any “god,” but the God who has given us the Holy Spirit to teach, strengthen and empower us as His children to be overcomers when facing temptation. Sexual immorality would seem to be an action in which we are “despising” the man because of the direct impact it has on him, but in reality it is an act that “despises” God. It’s the same as saying to Him that you don’t care about glorifying or honoring Him since you are choosing not to obey Him. It’s making *you* the “god” of your life.

1Th. 4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

1Th. 4:10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

It seems that Paul is continuing to exhort these believers from the point of his prayer for them at the end of chapter 3. Even as he says he has no need to write

them concerning the subject of loving one another, he can't seem to restrain himself from giving them more encouragement to grow in the area of brotherly love. I really relate to this from a mom's perspective. My kids really don't like it when I give them reminders of things they already know; it's like they consider it demeaning. I just mean it as an expression of love and concern, a statement of how I treasure my family.

"ye yourselves are taught of God" – This phrase caught my attention in particular. John makes a statement regarding this truth in his first epistle.

1John 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

This is a reference to the indwelling Holy Spirit in each child of God. We are to depend on the teaching of the Holy Spirit over and above any teaching of man. This is a truth about which I continually remind myself when doing these journals. I often reference the works of others to stretch my thinking, but the conclusions I draw are based on what I feel the Holy Spirit is showing me. This is exciting to me, especially when I feel I've received insight that they either missed or didn't address. My guess is that is probably one of the biggest differences between commentary by a scholar and the understanding of the "ordinary" believer. I often see things that are directly impacted by my point of view as a female, or a mom, or a wife or....

One other note—God is defined as love. It stands to reason that if the Holy Spirit emphasizes any truth to the child of God, it will be to love one another.

1John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Jesus declared that it is our love for one another that will identify us as His disciples before the unbelieving world.

John 13:35 By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

1Th. 4:11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

Along with the importance of loving one another and growing in that love, Paul now adds a few other **reminders**.

- Study to be quiet. – The Greek for the word *study* was quite interesting; it stated "to be fond of honor, i.e. emulous." Webster defines *emulous* as "ambitiously desirous to equal or even to excel another." The Greek for quiet states to "keep still (intransitively), i.e. refrain from labor, meddlesomeness or speech." My interpretation: We are to strive to be the best at staying out of other people's business and in controlling our tongue.
- Do your own business. – It is always tempting to interfere in someone else's business, especially if you think you know better or can be helpful—even though you have plenty of your own business to tend to. (I still struggle with this tendency.) Unless you are specifically asked for input, you should refrain.

- Work with your own hands. – Unless we keep our hands busy doing profitable things, we are susceptible to falling into temptation. This reminds me of the old saying, “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.”

I especially liked a statement by David Guzik regarding this verse:

“Manual labor was despised by Greek culture. They thought that the better a man was, the less he should work. In contrast, God gives us a carpenter King and fisherman apostles, and tent making missionaries.”

1Th. 4:12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

This verse states the reason for the reminders in the previous verse.

- To win the respect of unbelievers.
- To have no lack.

When unbelievers look on the body of Christ and see a community that embodies love for one another, depicts peace and harmony in relationship to one another, and possesses what they need (and much of what they want), it is a great motivating factor to want what they have. It definitely projects an image in stark contrast to that of “the world.”

1Th. 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

“ignorant” = not to know (through lack of information or intelligence); not understand

The first part of this verse indicates that Paul is introducing a truth that he wants to be sure the Thessalonian believers know and understand. This information pertains to believers who have already died physically. Their deaths should not cause those to whom Paul was writing to sorrow as though there was no hope. Paul is referencing the type of sorrow that leads one into deep despair with no hope of future fellowship.

1Th. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

“if we believe” – Each person had to examine his own heart for affirmation of his faith.

If it is true that Jesus died and rose again (and it is), then they could confidently expect that God would bring those who preceded us in death as believers in Jesus with Him when He comes for His own.

(4/07) I found this quote by R. A. Coombes (I forgot to note from where) in support of my understanding of this verse:

“The word ‘if’ is what grammarians term a ‘first-class condition,’ meaning a condition that is assumed to be true.”

1Th. 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

This verse clarifies that this truth is directly connected to the truth Paul wrote to the Corinthians. It is truth from the mouth of God.

1Cor. 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

1Cor. 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1Cor. 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

Paul is referencing a coming of Jesus at a time when those members of the body of Christ who are still alive will experience an amazing transformation—from a corruptible/mortal to an incorruptible/immortal body. This will only happen once in the life of every believer. This time of transformation will happen simultaneously with those believers who have died physically before that event occurs.

1Th. 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1Th. 4:17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Paul now gives a chronological flow.

1. The Lord will descend from heaven with:

- A shout – The Greek indicates a “command.”
- The voice of the archangel – Michael is the only archangel identified in scripture. He is designated as the “great prince that stands for the nation of Israel.” (Daniel 12:1)
- The trump of God. – This would seem to reference the voice of God the Father. The voice of the Lord is described as a trumpet in Revelation.

Rev. 1:10-11 I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:

The Greek for the word *trump* references “a reverberation or vibration as well as a trumpet.” In that regard, it makes me think of thunder, and there are other scriptures that equate the voice of God with thunder.

Job 40:9 Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?

Psa. 29:3 The voice of the LORD *is* upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth:

Then again, this could be a special musical trumpet used by God in announcing His purpose. (See the information provided on the use of the trumpet in the topical study on “The Rapture.”)

2. The dead in Christ shall rise first. – The Greek indicates that the word *dead* is referencing “a corpse.” In other words, Paul is making it clear that it is our earthly bodies that will be physically resurrected to immortality. This is just as it was with Jesus. (7/09) “In Christ” would be inclusive of all

- men and women of faith. Those from the Old Testament who were men and women of faith are “in Christ” just as surely as are we of the church. God’s provision of salvation for all men of all time is “in Christ.”
3. We who are alive will be caught up together with them (those who had preceded us in death). – The Greek for “caught up” implies being “seized, taken by force.” This just means that this is according to God’s plan and on His timetable; we have no choice as to the timing or the method.
 4. We will meet the Lord in the air. – Notice that the reference is to meeting the Lord “in the air”—not on the earth.
 5. So shall we ever be with the Lord. – From that point on we will never be separated from the physical presence of the Lord.

1Th. 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The truth of this teaching should bring every believer great comfort. The Greek for the word *comfort* states “to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation):—beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort(-ation), intreat, pray.”

- This truth should be a reason for gathering together in fellowship as we look forward to its fulfillment.
- It should encourage us to implore others to accept the gospel so as to be able to be part of this great ingathering.
- We should desire the coming of that day and encourage one another to live so as to be prepared and not ashamed at His coming.
- It should also be a truth that causes us to approach the Lord in prayer and personal communion regarding how to best serve Him as we look forward to this time of homegoing.
- (11/08) This truth should also provide great comfort to us when faced with the death of others we love in the body of Christ.

It is clear to me that there is an obvious parallel between this scripture, the words in 1Corinthians 15, and the words of John.

John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

John 14:2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

They speak of a time when the Lord will come to “receive” believers into His presence. This is very different from the description of the Lord Jesus returning to earth in all His glory to defeat the armies of Satan and assume His earthly throne.