Grace Fellowship Church Fort Worth, TX Rick Griffith

30 Nov 1986 Message 7 of 10

NIV 30 Minutes

**Living to Please God**

***1 Thessalonians 4:1-12***

**Topic:** Obedience

**Subject:** We please God

**Complement:** through sexual purity and brotherly love.

**Purpose:** The listeners will commit to put away anything hindering God's ideal in sexual matters and relationships in the church to prepare for the Lord's Supper.

**Meditation:**

**Reading:**

**Song:**

# Introduction

### Interest: [We please God by grace and not law.]

#### A married man once hired a maid to do the cleaning for himself and his wife once a week. Each week the woman would come to the home and he would have a long list of things to do for her. She'd see that list posted on the wall, specifying all the tasks she was supposed to accomplish—the letter of the law! The maid put in her hours, fulfilled the duties and received her pay.

#### As time passed, the man's wife died, and soon he became attracted to the maid. Eventually they were married, they went on their honeymoon and returned home.

#### After the man carried his new wife over the threshold, she went over to the list on the wall, ripped it down and then threw it in the trash!

#### Do you think she wasn't going to do those things anymore? No, she continued to do her work, but out of a totally different motivation. She probably even did better job, and with more joy. You see, she now worked not out of obligation to please the owner of the house, but she sought to please him out of love (OBEDIENCE from love, not obligation).

### Need:

#### There's a beautiful parallel between this account and our relationship with God. God had requirements of us before we ever came to know Christ. Even unbelievers are not to lie, cheat, and commit adultery. When we were unsaved those commands looked like "the dirty dozen" or "the ten no-no's," but now that we have an intimate relationship with the author of those principles we see them in a totally different light. We seek to please Him by obeying Him simply because we love Him.

#### Whom do you really seek to please? Yourself, or the Lord? If you seek to please Him you will want to find out the specifics of how to do just that.

### Subject: This morning we'll look at some straight talk from the Scriptures—straight talk about two areas of our lives: sexual purity and brotherly love. We'll observe *how we can please God in holy living in the sexual realm as well as in our relationships in the church*.

### Background: Before we get to these subjects which begin at verse 3 let's take a brief look at the first two verses where we see that Paul urged the church to live pleasing to God more and more (1 Thess 4:1-2). [They were already acting in a manner which brought joy to God, but still could improve.]

#### The words, "Finally, brethren," indicate not the end of the letter but a transition from the personal and historical section (chs. 1–3) to the practical section (chs. 4–5). Paul did this same thing in Philippians 3:1. The first thing Paul says is…

#### The goal of Paul's instruction was how to live to please God (4:1a).

##### How do you sum up the goal of the Christian life?

###### Following a list of rules to be obeyed?

###### Adhering to a set of prohibitions to avoid?

###### Living in such a way that you please God? so that God delights in you?

##### The goal of my instruction should be to train you in bringing joy to God.

###### Not giving rules only, except where the Bible says.

###### Not preaching prohibitions, except where Scripture is clear.

###### But as Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:5, "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

##### Will you help me do what I want to do? One of the most difficult things of the pastorate is getting feedback from sermons!

###### Let me know what trains you to be more pleasing to God.

###### Ask questions about what I say that doesn't make sense, that you disagree with, or whatever (Sunday night provides an opportunity here).

###### I really am more approachable than you may think!

#### Paul urged the church to obey the instructions which they already knew (4:1b-2).

### Preview: Now let’s see two areas of our lives: sexual purity and brotherly love. We'll observe *how we can please God in holy living in the sexual realm as well as in our relationships in the church.*

### Text: Paul addresses these two subjects of sexual purity and brotherly love in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-12.

(So what **were** these instructions mentioned in verse 2? He continues explaining some of them in the following verses. In verses 1-2 Paul has encouraged the Thessalonians in their general conduct to please God. In verses 3-12 he lists two specific ways they could please God. The first is…)

# II. Sexual purity pleases God (4:3-8).

**[To really bring joy to God's heart we must avoid sexual sin.]**

Verses 3-8 express four important points in the sexual area to please God:

## God wills that the Christian never be involved in sexual immorality (4:3).

### Notice that holiness, or sanctification, is equated with being pure sexually. How can anyone ever be right with God apart from sexual purity? He can't!

### The word for "sexual immorality" here is *porneia*, the Greek word which gives us our word "pornography." It refers to a broad number of sexual sins:

#### In Matthew 21:31 it refers to prostitution

#### In Acts 15:20 it refers to marrying relatives

#### In Revelation 14:8 it has in mind idolatry (probably with sexual involvement)

#### Oftentimes it refers to premarital sex (fornication)

#### In 1 Corinthians 5:1 it is used of incest

#### In Romans 1:29 it's listed in conjunction with homosexuality

#### Therefore, the word *porneia* has in mind any number of sexual sins.

### In the Greek religion, prostitution was a priestly "privilege" and sex outside of marriage was sometimes an act of worship (*BKC* ). This is the type of environment the Thessalonians lived within, where illicit sex was the common, "normal" experience.

### Today it's easy to get the idea that "free sex" (which really isn't free) is the normal experience for every person since it is so widely accepted.

#### Sex outside of marriage is rampant today—I hardly need to prove this point!

#### "Sex is like fire. In a fireplace it's warm and delightful. Outside of the fireplace it's destructive" (SEX appropriate only in marriage). God's fireplace is marriage.

(The text goes on to say in verses 4-5 that…)

## We should control our body in a holy and honorable way, not in lust (4:4-5).

### Notice that sexual control is possible for the believer since he has self-discipline enabled by God's Spirit (4:4).

#### Several of my brothers in Christ who had very active sexual lives before salvation now have a tremendous ability to withstand this kind of temptation (Paul Turner, Samir Jellad).

#### I know one Christian brother out of fellowship with the Lord who lived with a woman for over a year and then came back to Christ. Then his girlfriend came to know Christ as Savior. They decided at that point to go to church and soon joined the young marrieds class. The only problem with this was they weren't married! When they saw that this was necessary they went to the pastor to ask him to marry them. What would you do if a couple living together came to you to ask to get married? This pastor wisely required them to live apart for eight months before the wedding. What a tough assignment when you've been living by your senses for some time! But God gave them the grace to demonstrate their commitment towards one another for that time because as believers they could control themselves in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### In contrast, many unbelievers can't help but live in passionate lust (4:5).

#### Hugh Hefner is a case in point. I have a clipping here from last year's Dallas Morning News showing large picture of Hefner with the title, "A Moral Playboy?" The article says… (filed under SEX in topical file)

#### How can people rationalize like this? The text gives the answer: they "do not know God."

(In verses 4-5 Paul appeals to sexual purity on the basis of the Christian himself. In the next verse he warns about others that can also get hurt…)

## We should never hurt another person by immoral involvement with his or her spouse (4:6a).

### Here we see the only place in the New Testament where the term for brother applies not to a literal brother or fellow Christian, but to any person, "brother man" or "fellow man."

### One commentary says, "What Paul says obviously applies to adultery; this wrongs others than the two parties. The same applies to premarital promiscuity; the impure person cannot bring to the marriage that virginity that is the other person's due" (Morris).

### One of the best decisions I ever made in my life was to wait until marriage. I have never met anyone who made the same decision and regretted it!

(Notice in the following phrases two reasons why we should be morally pure…)

## [We should avoid sexual sin because of its consequences and our calling (4:6b-7).]

### God punishes sexual sin (4:6b).

#### Punishment might be here on earth (such as AIDS, syphilis, sterility, etc.).

#### Punishment definitely will be at the Day of Judgment.

### God called us to a holy life (4:7).

#### This looks back to the purpose which God called us to be His children.

#### Did you know that the word for "saint" really means "holy one?" How inconsistent to be called a saint and yet live an unholy life!

(Paul concludes this section by saying that this wasn't some teaching that he himself made up…)

## Rejecting instruction in sexual purity is rejecting God's own command (4:8).

### I should note that God only gives us limits to protect us. We see this illustrated in every area of life. Freedom always has its boundaries.

#### Would you enjoy driving on the road if there were no laws?

#### What do you think would happen out on the football field without rules?

#### In the same way God's limitations in the sexual dimension protect us--from disease, from heartache, from regret, from shame, from guilt. Yet too often we still go our own way and neglect His wise counsel.

### Oftentimes we reject this instruction but changing the terminology to something less offensive.

#### Rather than be honest about breaking a marriage vow through the evil called "adultery" we call it an "affair"—as if it's just some nice little fling which won't ever hurt anyone.

#### We call taking away the most precious possession from someone "making love," as if love is made in a bedroom.

#### Sodomites, or homosexuals, live an unhappy lifestyle of perversion. But what do we call sodomites? Gay! As if this term in any way describes the inner turmoil each person caught up in this sin experiences!

### Rejecting this instruction is to reject God.

(So far in the passage Paul has talked about the negative: avoid sexual impurity. Now in verses 9-12 he accentuates the positive: to love other Christians. These two qualities made the first century church distinct in their society: purity and love. Here we see the Apostle passing from one to the other. He's already said that sexual purity pleases God, but now in the remaining verses he expounds on how…)

# III. Brotherly love pleases God (4:9-12).

**[God delights in our demonstration of genuine love for one another.]**

## The church was already excelling in this area (4:9-10).

### The love spoken of here is the word *philadelphias*, meaning brotherly love or the love which binds together the children of one father. The term is used exclusively of the love of believers which binds them close together (Morris).

### The church was doing very well in this area, and so are we! I hear of so many reports how we're reaching out to one another, calling one another, praying for one another, etc.

### My application here is Paul's: "Yet I urge you , brothers, to do so more and more."

(How can we love one another more and more?)

## Paul lists three ways that brotherly love can be demonstrated (4:11).

### Brotherly love is shown in a *restful life* (4:11a).

#### "The word translated 'quiet'…means quiet in the sense of restfulness…rather than quiet as opposed to talkativeness…" (*BKC* )

#### So "quiet" means "undisturbed, settled, not noisy" as opposed to another Greek word which could have been used meaning "silent."

#### Paul is not telling the church to be silent, but at rest with one another--less frantic, but not less exuberant (*BKC* ).

#### The Philips translation captures the idea with the translation, "Make it your ambition to have no ambition!"

#### How's this? "[One] who is constantly on the move is frequently a bother to other people as well as somewhat distracted from his own walk with God" (*BKC* ).

(Brotherly love is not only demonstrated in a restful life, but secondly…)

### Brotherly love is shown *minding one's own business* (4:11b).

#### There's a big difference between genuine concern and being a busybody.

#### Did you ever know someone in the church who thought that everyone's business is his or her business? This person has to know the latest faults of people in order to "know how to pray more specifically!"

#### Proverbs 25:17 says, "Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor's house, lest he become weary of you and hate you" (NASB).

(Paul says if you really demonstrate brotherly love you'll have a restful attitude in the church and you'll mind your own business. But **too** restful of an attitude is going to the **other** extreme, so Paul wrote at the end of verse 11 that…)

### Brotherly love is shown by *supporting oneself* (4:11c).

#### Notice how this verse dignifies manual labor and suggests that probably most in the church were from the working class.

#### Are you involved in manual labor, working with your hands?

##### Don't despise yourself like the Greeks who thought that manual labor was fit only for the slaves. Don't let others look down on you either.

##### Be like the Jews. Every Jewish boy was taught a trade regardless of his family's wealth. (Paul was a tentmaker.)

#### Apparently some of the Thessalonians were living in idleness, depending upon the charity of other people in the church. Perhaps they thought the Rapture was coming so soon there was no need to work.

#### Paul strongly urges them not to leech off other members of the church.

#### One thing that disturbs me is that sometimes we expect financial favors from other Christians simply because they are Christians. Doesn't it cost just as much to perform a service for a Christian as for a non-Christian?

#### Of course, there's balance here too. If the one offering service insists that we not pay then let's not be rude. I had a Christian dentist who gave me a checkup and wouldn't let me pay, but Susan and I insisted that when she went in for her checkup we **would** pay. He appreciated our desire not to expect special treatment just because he went to the same church.

#### Some of us here have skill as electricians, carpenters, typists, realtors, and other professions. We should graciously help one another but not expect special favors.

(What happens when we really love one another like verses 9-11 encourage?)

## The result of loving one another in these three ways is twofold (4:12).

### We'll win the ears of the unbelievers who see us (4:12a).

#### People appreciate those who won't take advantage of them.

#### Imagine how it looks to the unbelieving world to see Christians defrauding one another!

### We'll be independent of one another (4:12b).

#### This is independence in a good sense. Sure, we need one another, but needing one another because of idleness is a totally different story!

#### This is the same concept that Paul noted to the same church in his second letter, "…if anyone will not work, let him not eat" (2 Thess 3:10b).

#### Galatians 6 reaffirms this truth by saying that while we must be willing to help others we also should each carry our own load.

(Transition into the MI here.)

# Conclusion

### This passage has reminded us of two ways to please God: by sexual purity and by brotherly love (MI).. This love is shown in:

#### Leading a restful life

#### Minding our own business

#### Supporting ourselves (so we won't be a burden to others in the church)

### How do you respond to these ultimatums from the Scripture?

#### Like the woman when she was the maid or when she was the wife?

#### Do we desire to please God or ourselves?

#### Do we see these commands as stringent rules to strap us down or guidelines to gladly obey out of love for Him with whom we have an intimate relationship and want to please?

### We'll take some time to evaluate ourselves in these areas before we approach the Lord's table after Glenn leads us in a hymn of response. Verse 1 of the song says…

"Living for Jesus a life that is true,

Striving to please Him in all that I do;

Yielding allegiance, glad hearted and free,

This is the pathway of blessing for me."

### Let's make this our own commitment as we sing Hymn 462, *Living for Jesus.*

**Communion Service for 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**

As we approach the Lord's table I want to remind you that it is the **Lord's** table, not an ordinance of Grace Fellowship Church alone. If you have placed your faith in Christ for salvation you are welcomed at this celebration. If you are unsure whether you have made this commitment I encourage you to simply pass the plate by as it comes by.

In order for us to take this Supper in a worthy manner I'd like to aid you in evaluating yourself according to the mandates of today's passage. Take some time evaluating how you're doing when it comes to pleasing God. Is the Holy Spirit revealing any impure motive that doesn't have pleasing God as its focus?

How are you doing in the area of possible sexual sin, the first area in today's passage? Do you allow yourself in any way to come close to sin by enticement through T.V., magazines, movies or other influences?

(Men serve the bread)

Let's turn our attention towards brotherly love. Are you demonstrating this kind of love towards each member here in the church? Is there anyone with whom you are out of fellowship? Have you taken advantage of anyone by being a busybody rather than living a quiet life and working with your own hands? If you cannot make this right at this time perhaps you should withhold from taking the bread--a symbol of our unity in Christ.

Paul wrote, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, He broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me'" (eat the bread).

Hymn #284: *O Sacred Head* vs. 2

(Men serve the cup)

Now as the men serve the cup, the symbol of Christ's blood for us, let's take some time reflecting upon His sacrifice for us. You might want to turn to 1 John 2:1-2 to center your thoughts on Christ's death for you.

The cup also symbolizes our relationship with God. How is this relationship right now for you? Do you question whether Christ died for you? Do you believe this but lately have neglected your relationship with Him by neglecting reading the Scriptures and prayer?

"In the same way [Jesus took] the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (drink the cup).

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

# Questions

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### Text

# Possible Applications

### Text

**Title**

***Passage***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*:

# I.

# II.

# III.

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest:

### Need:

### Subject:

### Background:

### Preview:

### Text:

(Transition into MPI here.)

# I.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into MPII here.)

# II.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into MPIII here.)

# III.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into the MI here.)

# Conclusion

### (MI).

### Main Points

### Exhortation/Application



**Rick Griffith**

1986

Message of 10

**Title**

***Passage***

# Introduction

Subject with a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ blank answer in hidden text

# I. MP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

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# II. MP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

# Conclusion

### Main Idea has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

### Application question

**Thought Questions**

1. Read the passage aloud. Contrast:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **Contrast** |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
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1. Text-based question

Text

Text

Text

Text

1. Application to your own Christian experience

Text

Text

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