

Walking To Please The Father

1 Thessalonians 4:1–12

“Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; ²for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.³For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that 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. ⁷For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who^a has also given us His Holy Spirit. ⁹But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; ¹¹that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, ¹²that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.”

Along with jogging, walking has become a popular exercise and outdoor sport. As one drives through the neighborhoods, you can individuals and entire families enjoying a walk together.

The Christian life can be compared to a walk. In fact, this is one of Paul's favorite pictures. In Ephesians 4:1 he says, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” In Ephesians 4:17 he says, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk...” In Ephesians 5:2 he says, “...walk in love.” In Ephesians 5:8 he says, “...walk as children of light.”

The Christian life begins with a *step* of faith. But that *step* leads to a *walk* of faith. 2 Corinthians 5:7 tells us, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." **Walking suggests *progress*, and we must make *progress* in the Christian life.** Walking also demands strength, and God has promised us in Deuteronomy 33:25, "As your days, so shall your strength be."

We need to "walk in the light" because the enemy has put traps and detours in our Christian pathway, and many times Satan disguises those traps as other people and/or circumstances. And, then, at the end of life's walk, we will step into the very presence of the Lord.

In this chapter, Paul described a threefold walk for the child of God to follow.

First of all, we are to walk in holiness. Look again at verses 1–8, "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 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. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit."

The moral climate in the Roman Empire was not healthy. Immorality was a way of life; and, thanks to slavery, people had the leisure time to indulge in the latest pleasures. The Christian message of holy living was new to that culture, and it was not easy for these young believers to fight the temptations around them. Paul gave some

reasons why we should live a holy life and abstain from sensual lusts.

To please God. He says in verse 1, "...you ought to walk and to please God." Everybody lives to please somebody. And there are many people who live to please themselves. When we live only to please ourselves, we have no sense of the needs of others.

And, then, there are those folks who are so busy seeking to please every one else, that they have lost sight of themselves. In other words, they really try to be "all things to all people," and it simply doesn't work that way.

Pleasing God ought to be the major motive of the Christian life, as seen in the example of Jesus in John 8:29, where He said, "I do always those things that please (the Father)."

To obey God. He says in verses 2-3, "For you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality." **Paul reminds these new believers that sexual immorality did not please God.** God created sex therefore; He has the authority to establish its boundaries. From the beginning He established marriage between one man and one woman. And in Hebrews 13:4 we are once again reminded that "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure."

To glorify God. He says this in verses 4-5, "That each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God." **This is the positive side of God's commandments.** Christians are supposed to be different from the unsaved.

The words "possess his vessel" means to "control one's body." **You see, we have two choices, we can allow our "flesh" to control**

our lives, or we can allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives. One leads to painful failure, and the other leads to glorious victory!

To escape the judgment of God. He continues in verses 6-8, "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. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit." **While it is true that the Christian is not under condemnation (John 5:24 & Romans 8:1), it is also true that we are not free from the harvest of sorrow that comes when we sow to the flesh (Galatians 6:78).** There are many of God's dear children today that are living in misery and pain because of their disobedience to God's Word and will for their lives.

Second, we are to walk in harmony. Look at verses 9-10, "But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more."

The transition from "holiness" to "love" is not a difficult one. Paul made this transition in his prayer in 3:11-13, "Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." **Just as God's love is a holy love, so our love for God and for one another ought to motivate us to holy living.** The more we live like God, the more we will love one another. **Child of God, it is impossible to be right with God and wrong with men.**

Did you know the Bible says that walking in love is good for your health? Listen to what we have been told in Proverbs 4:10-27, "My child, listen to me and do as I say, and you will have a long, good

life. I will teach you wisdom's ways and lead you in straight paths. When you walk, you won't be held back; when you run, you won't stumble. Take hold of my instructions; don't let them go. Guard them, for they are the key to life. Don't do as the wicked do, and don't follow the path of evildoers. Don't even think about it; don't go that way. Turn away and keep moving. For evil people can't sleep until they've done their evil deed for the day. They can't rest until they've caused someone to stumble. They eat the food of wickedness and drink the wine of violence! The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like total darkness. They have no idea what they are stumbling over. My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body. Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech. Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil."

It's true! Medical science has proven it. Researchers have discovered that hostility produces stress that causes ulcers, tension headaches, and a host of other ills.

Now when you think of hostility, you may think of the type of anger you feel when something serious happens. But according to the experts, that kind of thing isn't what causes the worst problems. It's the little things: when the dry cleaners ruin your favorite dress or pants, for example. **Or when the cafeteria lady puts gravy on your mashed potatoes after you've specifically told her not to.** Sound familiar?

Just think how much stress you could avoid by being quick to forgive and not counting up the evils done to you. Imagine the physical and emotional benefits of living like that!

If you have allowed yourself to be habitually bound by hostility, that may sound like an impossible dream, but it's not! Because as a born-again believer, you have the love of God inside of you.

If you will yield to that love, it will set you free. Remember when Jesus called Lazarus forth from the grave? He was alive but still bound in the grave clothes. Jesus commanded the bindings to be loosed so that Lazarus could be free to walk.

Jesus wants that same kind of freedom for you. So I challenge you to get into agreement with Him. Remember: It doesn't take a medical miracle to turn your life around. All it takes is a decision to yield to the force of love.

Last of all, we are to walk in honesty. Look at verses 11-12, "That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing."

Like the church in Corinth, it seems that Paul is now dealing with this issue of strife, boarding on division, in the church here in Thessalonica. It seems as if envying, strife and divisions had reduced these two early churches to a state of carnality and had stunted their spiritual growth.

The years have passed but Satan has not changed his strategies. He knows that a house divided against itself will fall. He also knows that Ephesians 4:13 says if we all come together in the unity of our faith, we will arrive at the full stature of Christ Jesus. **So he has assigned a spirit of division to operate in our personal lives, our church lives, our social lives and our family lives.** His goal is the same as it was in Corinth and Thessalonica, "to bring envying, strife, division" and to stunt our spiritual growth.

But we don't have to yield to that spirit. We can live in harmony, as we live the Christian life in walk in honesty before God and men. **How?** By allowing Christ to live His life through us.

Let me close by remind you that the Christian walk is accomplished by holy living, harmonious living, and honest living. And when Christians as well as unsaved people watch your life, God will be glorified.