

Being the People of God: Pleasing God

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

I. Being the people of God means obedience; 4:1-2.

¹ Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Paul challenges these believers to continue growing spiritually as they had already been living out the implications of the gospel. Continuing to live in a way that pleased God did not require the return of Paul or the revelation of new traditions. It required obedience to the commands already received and already known.

Being the people of God means obedience. We already know how to live a godly life as the people of God. We have God's Word, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. Don't settle, thinking you've arrived at a comfortable level of obedience and spiritual maturity. We are required to continually grow in love and the likeness of Jesus. These instructions come from God himself and therefore are not optional. These commands come directly from God, the Creator.

II. Being the people of God means purity; 4:3-8.

³ It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸ Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

God's will is not hidden nor difficult to discern. God's will begins with doing what He has already revealed and called us to do daily. What does it mean to live a sanctified life? It is living in a manner consistent with the character and commands of God - being holy. Three aspects of sanctification are emphasized: one who is sanctified should avoid sexual immorality, should know how to control their own body, and should not wrong another or take advantage of them.

Immorality refers to all premarital or extramarital sexual behavior of any type. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and is not meant for any type of sexual immorality. The use of the body created by God for immoral purposes degrades the person and dishonors the Creator, who made our bodies for holy and honorable living before Him. The opposite of holy, honorable living is the practice of passionate lust. The third appeal prohibits sins against one's fellow-believer. Adultery was considered a defrauding of the person's spouse.

The warnings are directed to members of the church who choose to live in a manner that denies the God they claim to serve. Sinful behavior will be punished by the Lord. Such sins are inconsistent with the sanctified life that should characterize Christians. Being the people of God means purity. Salvation does not grant believers the right to sin without suffering consequences.

God did not call us to be impure, but to live holy lives. God gives His Holy Spirit, and to live an immoral lifestyle is to reject God's gift. We are to be sanctified, holy, and like God. We do this by avoiding all sexual immorality. That would be any sexual activity outside of marriage of one man and one woman.

Living sanctified, holy, like God also involves learning to control your own body in holy and honorable ways toward God. It is no one else's responsibility. Misuse of our body dishonors God. Living sanctified, holy, like God means not to act and think in passionate lusts like our culture endorses. True love does not act in this way. Culture does not know or value God, but you do. Living sanctified, holy, like God is not to wrong another or to take advantage of them, especially in regard to sexual sins. There are no exceptions.

God will himself punish all such sin, even of believers. As the people of God, we're called to be sanctified, holy, like God - not impure. If you reject this then you reject God.

III. Being the people of God means loving each other; 4:9-12.

⁹ Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. ¹⁰ And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more. ¹¹ Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business

and to work with your hands, just as we told you,¹² so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Paul affirmed the believer's displays of love for each other and encouraged them to grow in love even more. Paul gives four instructions to the church. We urge you: (a) to abound more in love, (b) to aspire to live a quiet life, (c) to attend to your own business, and (d) to work with your own hands. They were to live this way in order to gain the respect of outsiders and not be dependent on anybody.

Being the people of God means loving each other. God has taught us to love each other as family. We are to continue throughout our lifetime to strive to grow more and more in our expressions of brotherly love. Therefore, make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and mind your own business. Work with your hands or keep busy, not depending on anyone. This is so that you may win the respect of outsiders for the sake of the gospel.