

# 1 Thessalonians 4

Review Paul and his relationship with church at Corinth: 2 Cor. 10:1, 10-11, 11:20-21, 13:1-3

**1 Thessalonians 4.1-8** – Dangers of fornication (close to Mt. Olympus and the worship of the Greek gods)

- There is a change of tone at this part in the letter
- It becomes more practical, and this is a characteristic of Paul in his letters
- Usually the second half of the letter is very practical
- For example, see *Romans 1-8* and *9-16*

**V1** – **What is the meaning of “finally then”?** He is bringing the letter to its conclusion

- Notice that Paul did not threaten the Thessalonians, as he did with the Corinthians
- Notice “*we request and exhort you...*”
- What was Paul trying to say diplomatically in this verse?** That they could do better, there is no rest for the Christians, we should always be trying to do better and do more
- Which Psalm is about not walking with Satan or sitting with sinners?** *Psalm 1:1*
- Who walked with God?** Enoch – **Read Genesis 5:21-24**
- How does Paul compliment them twice in v 1?** As you do walk, excel still more

**V2** – Paul is always clear on where he got his authority to preach: from the Lord Jesus  
Notice he emphasis again on the Lord

**V3** – **What did Paul comment to them in this verse?** To abstain from fornication (NAS95: sexual immorality)

- Why would this temptation be a problem at Thessalonica?** Because of the pagan temples close to Mt. Olympus
- One of the hardest things for First Century Christians to get straight when they were baptized was the Christian's attitude about being sexually pure
- People were used to fornication in temples, homosexuality, polygamy

**V4** – **What was each person told to do?** Be in control of his or her own body (vessel)

- See *2 Cor. 4.7*, *1 Peter 3.7* – The body is described as a vessel
- If the body is a vessel, what does it hold?** The soul

**V5** – **Paul's answer to “lustful passion”?** Marriage (*1 Cor. 7:9* – better to marry than to burn)

- Did the people in the world understand this?** No, and they still don't today
- Read 1 Peter 4:3-4**

**V6** – **In the sin of adultery, who gets hurt?** Our brother (somebody is a victim) – it is not a victimless sin

- How is a brother hurt?** The sexual relationship is so intense and so intimate that it will have emotional consequences
- Adultery cannot be kept quiet

- For the people are involved with adultery, it will affect everything in their lives
- Ghosts exist when it comes to adultery and fornication and sex outside of marriage
- So many people today consider sex to be nothing more than just using a piece of Kleenex, and they lovers are discarded after a few brief flings
- But the emotional consequences can last a lifetime
- How many people today would drop dead suddenly if God killed all adulterers?** (thought question) - **Read Hebrews 13:4**

**V7** – God does not want us to be involved with impurity

**V8** – **Is adultery just a matter of opinion?** No, it is a rejection of God and the Holy Spirit

- So Paul was exhorting them to be very careful about this particular sin
- This is the reason the marriage laws of the New Testament are so rigid (see *Matt. 19.9*)
- We can think about the death of John the Baptist because he spoke the truth on this subject

**1 Thessalonians 4.9-12** – Having a loving attitude toward non-Christians

**V9** – Has Paul said anything already about the love of the Thessalonians? Yes: 3:6

- So there was no problem of hatred within the congregation

**V10** – **How far did that love of the Thessalonians extend?** Throughout all Macedonia

- Other congregation in Macedonia?** Philippi and Berea (maybe they had monthly get-togethers, as we often do here today)
- But what did Paul want them to do?** Excel still more in love

**V11** – **What three things did Paul want them to do?** Lead a quiet life, attend to their own business, and work with their own hands

- Paul seems to be leading up to the problem at Thessalonica, which is discussed more fully in *2 Thessalonians 3.6-15*

**V12** – **Two additional thoughts?** Behave properly toward outsiders, and do not be in need (work with your own hands to have enough to eat)

- Apparently, there were already signs of the problem of their quitting their jobs at Thessalonica, because they believed in the immediate return of Jesus

**1 Thessalonians 4.13-18** – Their first big misunderstanding

**V13** – **What First Century congregation had a little misunderstanding of the Second Coming of Jesus?** The church at Corinth (*1 Corinthians 15*)

- What were some of the big misunderstandings that the Corinthians had?** No resurrection of the dead and confusion on the nature of the new body
- So the Thessalonians were not nearly so confused as the Corinthian were
- How did Paul describe those who had died?** Asleep (See *2 Corinthians 15:51*)

- Our word "cemetery" comes from the Greek word for "sleep"
- Remember the raising of Jarius' daughter – See *Luke 8:52*
- The raising of Lazarus – See *John 11:11* - Jesus said their brother was asleep
- Is all right for Christians to grieve at a funeral for a fellow Christian?** Yes, but not as the non-believers do
- How do non-believers grieve?** Total despair, wailing, hugging the casket, totally out of control
- Why do non-believers act that way?** Because they have no hope of heaven or even a belief in the resurrection
- Can you imagine saying good-bye to someone who has died and believe that there is no more existence?** -How awful and tragic that would be
- Read *The Sun Also Rises*, by Ernest Hemingway, for a sense of the great tragedy of modern life with Jesus Christ
- See *1 Corinthians 15:50-57* - the sting of death has been removed by Christ Jesus
- In what sense can a Christian grieve over the loss of a fellow Christian?** Sadness at the period of separation

**V 14** – **What is the basis of our hope in the resurrection?** The resurrection of Jesus Christ

- Who will be with Jesus when he returns?** Those who have died in Christ
- Read Revelation 14:13, 19:13-14**
- Notice another reference to death being a sleep

**V 15** – The Thessalonians were apparently worried that they might die and miss the Second Coming and heaven

- Will there be any advantage to being alive at the Second Coming over being dead?** No advantage

**V 16** – **What will be the order of events at the second coming?**

1. The Lord will descend from heaven with a shout
  - The "shout" – the Greek word for the shout of a commander to his troops at the beginning of battle
  - The shout of a ship captain to his oarsmen
  - The shout of the man in a chariot to his horses
  - Point: a very, very loud noise
2. The voice of the archangel will sound
3. The trumpet of God will blow
  - The trumpet signified a very great occasion in the Bible
  - Blown at the giving of the Ten Commandments – *Exodus 19:16, 19, Joel 2:1*
  - To be blown to signify that the day of the Lord is near
  - See *Revelation 1:10* – John heard a sound like a trumpet when Jesus appeared to him in the vision
  - Matthew 24:31, 1 Corinthians 15:52* – the last trumpet
  - For those groups who teach that there will be a secret rapture when the Lord returns, this is one of the noisiest verses in the entire Bible!
4. The dead in Christ will rise first
  - When will the dead out of Christ rise? Read John 5:28-29** – This Scripture

refutes the Rapture and the 1000 year reign

**V17** – 5. Living Christians will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (sky)

6. **Who will be with the Lord forever?** All of God's people

-Notice that there is no mention here of Christ ever setting foot on the earth again (contrary to the false doctrine of premillennialism)

-The reason that so many people want to defend Israel today is the belief that Christ will return and establish his kingdom from Jerusalem

**V18** – **What did Paul want those words to do?** Comfort the Thessalonians

-In other words, Paul was saying not to get upset about the thought of dying

-Before the second coming, the "man of sin" must arise anyway (*2 Thess. 2*)

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