

## SO WE WILL BE WITH THE LORD FOREVER

1Thessalonians 4:1-18

Key Verse: 4:17, 18

*After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

### 1. What instructions did Paul give to the Christians in Thessalonians (1, 2)?

“As for other matters, brothers and sisters, 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. <sup>2</sup>For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.”

They were previously instructed how to live in order to please God. Paul is continuing to urge them to live this way amongst the physical temptations in Thessalonica.

#### Why should Christians be sanctified (3a) (Lev. 19:2)?

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified:”

“<sup>2</sup>“Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.’”

Christians are called to be sanctified in their living—continually becoming like Christ—which is the ultimate hope and goal of all believers in Christ. Living a holy life is a testimony amongst unbelievers—in some cases better than a sermon or bible study lesson. Therefore it is God’s will that Christians live a holy life.

#### What does it mean “being sanctified?”

Sanctification is the process of becoming holy—which is one of God’s defining characteristics. It makes sense that Apostle Paul would be calling people to holiness in Christ.

#### Why did Paul say to avoid sexual immorality to be sanctified (3b)?

“that you should avoid sexual immorality;”

The people of Pagan Thessalonica engaged in sexual immorality in their life styles and even in their worship of idols. It was easy for the Christians, who were coming out of this lifestyle, to be tempted back in or to compromise.

In a modern sense this means that Christians too need to be careful where they put their eyes and what they see. Even in glances or on TV, internet, or movies. A comment on what is considered normal for society regarding sexual immorality in movies today, even PG-13, has

become something Christians need to have discernment in order to avoid temptation of sexual immorality.

We have to pray, we have to think about Jesus, and offer ourselves to God in order to avoid temptation.

## **2. How should Christians control their own body (4)?**

“<sup>4</sup>that each of you should learn to control your own body<sup>[a]</sup> in a way that is holy and honorable,”

The footnote seems to imply that Paul was encouraging the Thessalonians that the only God pleasing and ordained form of sexual relationship was between husband and wife. He was encouraging them to engage in faithful monogamy.

## **Why do unbelievers, who do not know God, live in passionate lust (5) (Romans 1:21-25)?**

“ not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God;”

“<sup>21</sup>For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup>and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

<sup>24</sup>Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. <sup>25</sup>They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.”

Those who don't know God don't have a holy sense of purpose for their sexuality in this world. It was given from God for a specific God-honoring purpose not for selfish pursuit. In rebellion to God—they live as they please, thinking they are doing something good, when in reality they have been turned over dark desires.

This was demonstrated when during Noah's time men and woman had abandoned God's purpose for marriage and took husband and wives as they pleased.

## **What will happen to the one who takes advantage of and defrauds his brothers and sisters in sexual immorality (6-8)?**

“<sup>6</sup>and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister.<sup>[b]</sup> The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. <sup>7</sup>For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. <sup>8</sup>Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.”

Therefore those who pursue sexual immorality and lustful desires in action or in their thought world, are the ones who reject God and extinguish the power of the Holy Spirit working. God does not take these actions lightly.

### **3. How much well did the Christians in Thessalonians do in loving each other (9, 10a)?**

“Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. <sup>10</sup> And in fact, you do love all of God’s family throughout Macedonia.”

There Christian fellowship was strong and evident so much in that Apostle Paul did not need to instruct or write them anything in this arena. In fact they were well known for their love for each other in Christ that it was known all over Macedonia. They loved the church, the church community and even other churches across Macedonia.

#### **Why did Paul say to do so more and more (10b)?**

“Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more,”

The believers were urged to continue in this fashion: Paul was stressing there is no minimum level of love required. He was encouraging them to continue to grow by loving other members of their church, Jews and Gentiles, and even other churches. Love of others is directly related to God’s holiness. Christ loved others and became a servant, even to death on a cross. We have to extend Christ’s love to our neighbor, society, and all who need our help.

#### **Think about how much the love of brothers and sisters build the body of Church.**

Without brothers and sisters in Christ, there is not much of a church and not much of a display of the love of Christ either. This fellowship based on grace builds up a community that others desire to be part of because they see the body of Christ and the real love functioning in this fallen and sinful world.

### **4. Why do Christians live a quiet life, mind their own business and work with their hands (11, 12)?**

“<sup>11</sup> and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, <sup>12</sup> so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”

Christians are called to live a quiet life, meaning not outrageous or as trouble makers. Minding our own business means to stay away from gossip and personal politics meant to destroy others and gain power for yourself. Finally, we are to work honestly and hard trusting in the Lord to provide all things as God is in control of all financial resources, jobs, and every economy. If

you work hard, by virtue of that you will lead a quiet life and end up minding the business of your family.

## **5. Who are those who sleep in death?**

Paul here is referring to most likely those who had been martyred or had died faithfully serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Why does Paul want to inform about the future of those who sleep in death (13, 14)?**

“<sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”

We know all people die, but is death the end? Those who struggle to serve the Lord their entire life, is death the bitter end? Paul does not think so. In fact his hope is in the resurrection of Jesus Christ so he refers to death as “sleep.” They are not lost only sleeping, and waiting for the Lord to return and take them to heaven.

### **What was the Greek way of thinking about death at that time (1Co 15:12, 35)?**

“<sup>12</sup> But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”

“<sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?””

They clearly did not believe in the resurrection and judgment. They even scoffed at the idea of it. Their life was their only hope.

### **What will happen to those who died in Christ (14, 15)?**

“<sup>14</sup> For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. <sup>15</sup> According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep”

When Christians die, their souls go to heaven to be with the Lord in the Kingdom of God immediately.

## **6. How glorious will Jesus’ second coming be (16a)? (Mark 13:24-27)**

“<sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God,”

<sup>24</sup>“But in those days, following that distress ““the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; <sup>25</sup> the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’<sup>[a]</sup>  
<sup>26</sup>“At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.  
<sup>27</sup> And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ, will come in the clouds with power and glory. What magnificent and glorious things will happen. Everyone on the earth will see this and it will not be hidden or secret from anyone. There will not be a person on earth unaware of Jesus’ return.

### **What will happen to those who died in Christ and to those who are alive when Jesus comes again (16b, 17a)? (1Co 15:42-44)**

“and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”

<sup>42</sup>So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; <sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; <sup>44</sup> it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”

All faithful Christians alive at that time will be caught up in the clouds to meet Jesus in the air. At that time we will be made completely righteous by our faith in Jesus. We will see Abraham and King David. We will see all the saints who died in Jesus.

### **What is the life for those who are caught up to in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (17b)?**

“And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

We will live with Jesus and God will be our God. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will have passed away.

### **What should we do with this glorious hope (18)?**

<sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

We who are believers are saved by Jesus grace, but we are living in a paradise lost. So we are often discouraged and tempted to give up our hope in Jesus and our pursuit of righteous living. But when we have the living hope of Jesus’ second coming, our own resurrections, and eternal life in God’s kingdom, we can love suffering to live by faith and follow Jesus. We can love our brothers and sisters, denying ourselves. We can throw away our sinful life.