August 3, 2025 (Lesson 10)

COMMIT TO HOLINESS AND INTEGRITY

1. **Live to Please God** (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2; 5:15-22)
2. **Abstain From Sin** (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)
3. **Lovingly Influence Others** (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12)

Central Truth: Holiness is reflected as we live with Christlike integrity.
Focus: Discuss the benefits of living a life of integrity.
Evangelism Emphasis: Saving faith in Jesus Christ should lead to a holy life.
Golden Text: "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

The Scriptures are clear concerning living a life committed to holiness and integrity. Such a manner of living is not optional, and nowhere in the New Testament is this demand as clear as in Paul's letters, especially 1 Thessalonians. It is a call to lead a life characterized by high moral standards and ethical behavior. It demands that we live in a manner worth emulating and befitting our call as followers of Christ.

William Branks wrote, "Many Christians live as if salvation is the only reason Jesus died. Christ died so we would die to sin and live to righteousness (1 Peter 2:24). This is a lifelong discipline that we must exercise every moment. His marvelous grace does not excuse us from His expectations of holy living."

1. LIVE TO PLEASE GOD

A. Know the Lord's Command (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2)

[1] Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. [2] For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

Throughout this letter, Paul's main goal was to encourage the Thessalonians to lead lives that reflected their faith in Christ, focusing on love, holiness, and a diligent, responsible lifestyle. By doing so, they would please God and be a positive example to others around them.

In verse 1, Paul reminded his audience that he had instructed them how to live. Although the Thessalonians were walking in a manner that pleased God, Paul urged them to do more (vv. 1-2). Verse 1 emphasizes how they must "walk." This was not optional but rather required Christian conduct. "Ye know" (v. 2) stresses this was a reminder. They had "received instruction" (v. 1 NET) and had been following orders. *Orders* is the proper term for it because the word translated "instruction" frequently occurs in military contexts and is equivalent to "commands."

Daily Self-Discipline

The real difference in the believer who follows Christ and has mortified his will and died after the old man in Christ, is that he is more clearly aware than other men of the rebelliousness and perennial pride of the flesh, he is conscious of his sloth and self-indulgence and knows his arrogance must be eradicated. Hence, there is a need for daily self-discipline.—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

B. Follow God's Will (1 Thessalonians 5:15-22)

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and
to all men. 16 Rejoice evermore. 17 Pray without ceasing. 18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ
Jesus concerning you. 19 Quench not the Spirit. 20 Despise not prophesyings. 21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is
good. 22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Paul discussed issues that deal with interpersonal relationships in the preceding verses. These final exhortations mostly speak to our personal relationship with God. In verses 16-18, Paul lists God's will in three specific areas which affect our everyday lives. These instructions direct our hearts and lives to live more fully for His glory. First, "Rejoice always" (v. 16 NIV). This is a common theme in the New Testament (see 2 Cor. 6:10; Phil. 4:4), and notably often in the context of hardship and persecution (Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Peter 4:13). Second, we are to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17). It may be impossible to constantly utter words in prayer, but it is possible and necessary that our hearts be always elevated to God, which is the essence of prayer. Even in the most ordinary

duties of life, it is possible and essential that we live in the spirit of prayer. Third, "In every thing give thanks" (v. 18; see Phil. 4:6; Col. 2:7).

George Matheson, the Scottish minister and hymn writer who was practically blind at eighteen, once prayed, "My God, I have never thanked You for my 'thorn.' I have thanked You a thousand times for my roses but never once for my thorn. I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensation for my cross. . . . Teach me the glory of my cross; teach me the value of my thorn. Show me that I have climbed to You by the path of pain. Show me that my tears have made my rainbow."

John Wesley warmly embraced this threefold description of the Christian life. After describing prayer as the "fruit" of rejoicing and thanksgiving as the "fruit" of both rejoicing and prayer, he declared, "This is Christian perfection. Further than this we cannot go, and we need not stop short of it."

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, Paul quickly issued five more commands. The first two are negative, and the verb form probably implies the activities mentioned were taking place among the Thessalonians. "Quench not the Spirit" (v. 19). Paul did not want the Thessalonians to smother or suppress the supernatural workings of God's Spirit in their midst by being insensitive to what God was doing. He was specifically referring to the gift of *prophecy*—the forth-telling or foretelling of God's word—which is a burning flame the church must not extinguish. When prophecy is used properly, it strengthens, encourages, and comforts the church. Prophecies must not be treated with contempt (v. 20); otherwise, the Holy Spirit, who imparts the gift, is dishonored and belittled.

However, we must not go to the opposite extreme and accept everything that is said prophetically. We must "examine everything" (v. 21a NASB) to see if it is in accordance with God's written revelation. We must throw it out if it does not agree with God's Word. If it does agree with

the Scriptures, we must "hold fast that which is good" (v. 21b). This requires openness to new truth and readiness to incorporate it in our thinking and living, appropriating valid insights and living by them. We are not to become professional critics, forever testing, always holding back, and never committing ourselves.

"Abstain from every form of evil" (v. 22 NASB) is a call for discernment. We are to reject all sorts of evil, whether it comes through a spurious revelation designed to trap us or through the wicked example of someone's life that tempts us to do wrong. Whatever the evil, it must be vigorously avoided, which will protect us from being led astray. We are to examine, and then hold fast, and abstain or avoid as appropriate. In his commentary on 1 Thessalonians, Howard Marshall wrote: "The charismatic revival has merely underlined the importance of Paul's advice here. On the one hand, it has stressed the importance of openness to the workings of the Spirit, and the renewed vigor which has come into the church shows that it is unhelpful for the church to quench the Spirit. On the other hand, the need to be discerning with regard to activities attributed to the Spirit is all the greater."

—*How does verse 15 command us to live both inside and outside the church, and how can we do this?*

2. ABSTAIN FROM SIN

A. Practice Sexual Purity (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6)

3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; 5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: 6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

Paul's discussion of ways we can walk pleasing to God leads to a summary statement: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (4:3; see Rom. 6:19, 22; 1 Cor. 7:32–34). Here, the word translated as "sanctification" speaks of the process involved in becoming ethically holy, as opposed

to the final state which will come into being when Jesus returns (see 3:13). Thus, there is a progressive aspect of sanctification.

Furthermore, rather than a general declaration of God's will, Paul provides a precise statement of areas with which God's will is concerned (4:4-8). Paul does not refer to holiness as the total will of God for the believer. Instead, it is part of what God desires in His people. Significantly, Paul does not outline a system of ethics to which Christians adhere for our common good or because of some other humane consideration. We are commanded to adhere to certain ethical practices because they are grounded in the will of God, whom we must obey. (1) God wills for us to abstain from immorality (v. 3b); (2) to "control [our] own body in a way that is holy and honorable" (v. 4 NIV); and (3) not to "wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister" in this matter (v. 6 NIV).

Going back to verse 3, Paul expresses one of his recurring themes: Believers must keep themselves from immorality (see 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 6:13-18). There is a negative side to holiness. The members of the believing community are commanded to "abstain from" immorality, passion, lust, transgression of a brother, and uncleanness.

The appeal to "abstain from fornication" suggests the importance of devotion to God. The term *fornication* includes all sorts of uncleanness, particularly sexual impurities. In the Thessalonian context (as in ours), one of the most challenging hurdles any convert had to clear was sexual sins. Their culture was saturated with polygamy, adultery, homosexuality, and promiscuity. But Paul encouraged the Christian community, "God's plan is to make you holy, and that entails first of all a clean cut with sexual immorality" (v. 3 Phillips).

Verses 4 and 5 can be translated as "that each of you know how to keep his own body in holiness and honor, not in lustful passion—as do the Gentiles who do not know God." If man controls himself as Paul suggests, then whatever relationships he enters—if he marries a woman or

remains single; if he conducts a business or works for another—he will be characterized by holiness and honor. Immorality, lust, greed, and other vices will be excluded because the believer is controlling their holiness and honor (see 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 12:1-2).

Satanic Discipleship

Pornography is satanic discipleship. It trains us to see people and situations in perverted ways and become calloused to the way it grieves God. But by continually beholding Jesus, God transforms us to think and love like Jesus by serving people rather than using them for sinful satisfaction.—Garrett Kell (*Pure in Heart: Sexual Sin and the Promises of God*)

B. Live in Holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8)

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. 8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

There is a direct correlation between the work of sanctification in the believer's life and the Holy Spirit's role in that process. Paul constantly linked the Holy Spirit with the believer's walk in holiness (see Rom. 8:3-7; Gal. 5:16-24). Whoever sets aside the divine call to holiness disregards God in His ministry to us through the presence of His Spirit.

Paul wrote, "For God has not called us to impurity, but to holiness [to be dedicated, and set apart by behavior that pleases Him, whether in public or in private]" (1 Thess. 4:7 Amp.). *Impurity* is more than a failure to keep some humanly imposed rule or adhere to some church or denominational creed. It violates the living, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Paul does not simply express the will of God regarding purity and then assert believers are solely responsible for complying. Obedience is our responsibility, but the possibility of success exists because God has given His Spirit to us as believers (v. 8).

Paul then quoted Ezekiel 37:14: "I will put My Spirit in you" (NKJV), adding "holy" as a modifier of "the Spirit," thereby drawing attention to the Spirit's holy nature. God accomplishes His purpose of sanctification in our lives as we cooperate with Him and respond in obedience. What God calls us to be or do, His Spirit enables. The Holy Spirit is God's empowering presence. When we embrace the ministry of the Holy Spirit, He empowers the holiness of our entire life.

—*What does 1 Peter 1:14-16 say about holy living?*

3. LOVINGLY INFLUENCE OTHERS

A. Love One Another (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10)

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.

Paul continues to be concerned with the quality of life in the new Christian community. He begins by asking the Thessalonians to continue to exhibit mutual love, as they presently do. Paul begins tactfully by saying he does not need to write about this (v. 9). Of course, he does write about it, but he has begun encouragingly. The source of their mutual love is God ("taught by God," NKJV). Its God-given character is demonstrated by this love reaching beyond the more immediate friends and acquaintances to all the believers throughout Macedonia "more and more" (v. 10). Paul's desire was for them to be a positive force in their community, shining the light of Christ and drawing others to the saving grace of Jesus through their words and actions.

Significantly, the word behind "brotherly love" (v. 9) is not the familiar *agape* but rather *philadelphia* (see Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1). In secular usage, it was a term for affection between and among biological brothers and sisters. Among Christians, it was used to express the reality of being members of God's family. Charles Wanamaker said unlike the common Greek word for *brothers*, this "constitutes an example of ancient inclusive language, since it was applied to both brotherly and

sisterly love." This is more than a figure of speech. There are practical implications, and Paul is getting ready to point to the application the Thessalonian Christians needed to make.

—How can we grow "more and more" (v. 10) in our love for fellow believers?

B. Lead Exemplary Lives (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

The commands of verses 11-12 appear to be Paul's first attempt to deal with a problem that would worsen. In both letters to the Thessalonians, Paul urges Christians to work and support themselves and to live a "quiet" life, but it is apparent some were not doing this (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-12). Paul is concerned their behavior will tarnish the church's witness to outsiders. The latter passage clarifies those not working are being fed and supported by other Christians. This explains Paul's reference to his own example of working "in order not to be a burden to anyone" (1 Thess. 2:9 NIV) and why he urges them to "not be dependent on anybody" (4:12 NIV).

Some believers in Thessalonica were neglecting their daily responsibilities and becoming idle while waiting for the second coming of Christ. Paul advised them to focus on leading a quiet and productive life, being diligent in their work and faithful in their responsibilities, which would reflect Christian witness and prevent them from becoming a burden on others. Leading a quiet life involves avoiding unnecessary meddling in other people's affairs or becoming overly preoccupied with external matters that do not concern us. In general, they are to be Christian in their work habits. There are two reasons for these warnings: (1) to create a favorable impression among outsiders; and (2) so they may provide for themselves and thus be independent. With others, they are to live quietly, mind their affairs, and work conscientiously to command the respect of non-Christians and thus strengthen their witness in the community (see Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:32; Col. 4:5).

Working Like We Should

The average human being in any line of work could double his productive capacity overnight if he began right now to do all the things he knows he should do, and to stop doing all the things he knows he should not do.—Elmer Letterman

STAYING TRUE

When we commit to holiness and integrity, we choose to live according to principles that transcend mere personal gain. This commitment involves regularly examining our thoughts, actions, and intentions to ensure they align with the principles of holiness and integrity outlined in the Scriptures. Like the Thessalonians, we must stay true to our moral compass even when faced with challenges to compromise our values.

Daily Devotions

M. A Holy People (Exodus 19:1-6)

T. A Holy Day (Exodus 20:8-11)

W. A Holy House (2 Chronicles 7:11-16)

T. Set Free for Holiness (Romans 6:15-22)

F. Remade in Holiness (Ephesians 4:17-24)

S. Chastened for Holiness (Hebrews 12:5-14)