

1Thessalonians, Chapter Four, Lesson One

SANCTIFIED BEHAVIOR 1Thessalonians 4:1-8

STIMULATE

** The apostle Paul had a reputation for loving other Christians, especially if he was involved in their salvation. In our study together last week, how did his affection for his beloved Thessalonians show itself?

He was "**Showing Affection**" for them through his night and day, earnest prayers on their behalf.

** Last time we looked at sixteen elements of Biblical love, which compel us to this type of earnest, relentless prayer. They are:

1. Love is patient (with people)
2. Love is kind
3. Love is not jealous
4. Love does not brag
5. Love is not arrogant
6. Love does not act unbecomingly
7. Love does not seek its own
8. Love is not provoked
9. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered
10. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness
11. Love rejoices with the truth
12. Love bears all things
13. Love believes all things
14. Love hopes all things
15. Love endures all things
16. Love never fails

Hopefully we are finding ourselves more devoted to loving one another through our committed prayer life.

MOTIVATE

** As we have spent so much time studying God's word together, we have come to understand that our salvation is a free gift from God. We can look to our past and see our justification which was achieved through the work of Christ on the cross. We can look to our future and know that we will be glorified with Christ when he comes. What is the theological term for the present day state of our salvation?

It is our "sanctification". cf. 1Thessalonians 5:23

** What is our responsibility in this area of sanctification? Paul is going to answer that question over the next three weeks, as he instructs the Thessalonians and us as well.

He is going to address the need for our:

SANCTIFIED BEHAVIOR - 1Thessalonians 4:1-8

PROPER BEHAVIOR - 1Thessalonians 4:9-12

COMFORTING BEHAVIOR - 1Thessalonians 4:13-18

Let's begin for today by reading our passage in 1Thessalonians 4:1-8 to learn about our "**Sanctified Behavior**" and for whom we are to so live.

Read passage (V.1-8)

Opening Prayer

Sanctified Behavior

INVESTIGATE

V. 1 ** What is it about the opening of Paul's thoughts for today that indicates a new direction?

He begins with "Finally then, brethren..." Paul is making a major shift in his thinking. In chapter one he focused on the strong witness of the faith which the Thessalonians held. In chapter two he spoke of the excellence of his ministry to them and their mutual love for one another. In chapter three Paul affirmed that their faith was still standing and expressed his love for them through earnest, unrelenting prayer.

** After sharing all of that with the Thessalonians, what does Paul now do?

He makes a request and exhorts them to follow it!

** Generally speaking, what was the heart of Paul's request here in verse one?

That they would "excel still more" in their efforts to please God in their daily walk with Him.

** Had the Thessalonians already been instructed as to how they could do that?

Sure! "...as you received from us instruction..."

** What was the fruit of Paul's instructions given to the Thessalonians while he was still with them?

They were obeying him! "...just as you actually do walk..."

V. 2 ** Of what does Paul remind his readers in verse two?

"...the commandments we gave you..."

** Was this something like giving them the Ten Commandments again?

No - Paul was simply referring to the word of God he had shared with them. That was always Paul's pattern for teaching. cf. Acts 20:18-20, 26-27 and Matthew 28:20

** How do we know that these instructions were not based upon Paul's opinion or mere human wisdom?

Because he taught them "**by the authority of the Lord Jesus**". He will do it again in our passage for today. cf. V.8

V. 3 ** As Paul gets to the point, what seemingly elusive subject does he introduce?

God's will for our lives! God's will is referred to repeatedly throughout Scripture, but here in our passage is possibly one of the most significant examples of the direct application of God's will.

** So what does Paul say is God's will for us?

Our "sanctification". cf. John 17:15-17, Romans 6:22

This is the present day state of our salvation and it is referring to our "setapartness" unto God.

** Specifically, what does Paul want us to be set apart from as we walk with God?

"...that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality..."

abstain - apecho "to hold back", "to be away or to be distant". We are to keep ourselves back, away or distant from fornication or illicit sexual behavior. cf. 1Peter 2:11

V. 4 ** If we are living out this "**Sanctified Behavior**", what will we know how to do?

We will "...know how to possess [our] own vessel in sanctification and honor..."

** What does Paul mean by "vessel"?

He is metaphorically referring to our human bodies.

cf. 2Corinthians 4:7, 1Peter 3:7, 2Timothy 2:21

** While this seems like a wonderful idea, how do we do it? What plans can we make in advance?

All see: Romans 6:10-13 - "...present yourselves to God and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Romans 13:13-14 - Avoid sin and "make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

** When we fail to do this (and we will), what is the reason?

1. We like sin! (Hebrews 11:24-25)

2. We do not believe it will hurt us. (Galatians 6:7-8)

We need to keep this in mind as we prepare our hearts to "hold back" from temptation.

V. 5 ** Back in 1Thessalonians 4:5, who does Paul use as a contrast to help us not fail?

The Gentiles!

** How do they possess their bodies?

"...in lustful passion..." cf. 2Peter 2:9-12 and Romans 1:24-27. All see - Genesis 19:1-11

** Again, back in 1Thessalonians 4:5, what is it about the Gentiles condition that leaves them wide open to the powers of lustful passion?

"...they do not know God..." That is why they can so readily produce the deeds of the flesh. cf. Galatians 5:19-21

V. 6 ** If a person should decide to not know God and to not possess their body in honor, but rather in lustful passion, is he or she the only victim? After all, it is their body!

It will have a residual effect on "his brother". We can actually transgress and defraud others with our decision to become involved in sinful activity.

Leon Morris - "...promiscuity before marriage represents the robbing of the other of that virginity which ought to be brought to a marriage. The future partner of such a one has been defrauded."

** What reason does Paul give for being sensitive to the impact of our own sin upon the lives of others?

"...because the Lord is the avenger..." cf. 2Thessalonians 1:6-8 and Hebrews 13:4

** Did the Thessalonians know this prior to Paul's writing of this letter?

Yes! "...just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you."

V. 7 ** Before we get into verse seven, why would Paul write this strong warning and instruction to these same believers who "walk and please God"? (V.1)

In the first century, a typical Greek city would be very open to sexual sin. It was considered normal. Again from Leon Morris, "The pressure to conform to the easy standards accepted throughout society must have been strong on the early church".

** What about today?

The same, if not worse!

** What was the purpose behind God calling us into His kingdom according to verse seven?

That we would display "**Sanctified Behavior**". He did not call us for the purpose of impurity!

** If our loving Heavenly Father has called us to be set apart from sin, should we be more diligent in our efforts to keep our bodies away from it?

As far as possible! cf. James 1:13-15

V. 8 ** This is a very high standard. What if someone does not agree with this Biblical calling for "**Sanctified Behavior**"? What if they think, "Hey, this is a new millennium. We should just do our own thing. Don't try to tell me how to live?"

This is not man's opinion! God, who gives His Holy Spirit to us who are redeemed, has also given this very important instruction on personal purity.

** If you reject this instruction, what else might you be rejecting?

Salvation - through the conviction and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. cf. Romans 8:9

EXTRICATE

** As you look back over today's passage, how would you describe the Thessalonian's spiritual condition?

Very good! They actually did walk and please God!

DELINEATE

** Even though they wanted to please God with their daily walk, what could they do to improve their "**Sanctified Behavior**"?

"...abstain from sexual immorality..." by "possessing [their] own vessels in sanctification and honor."

EVALUATE

** What about us? Do we need to be aware of this instruction in the world we live in today?

Absolutely - We too need to possess our bodies in honor, by "holding back" or "keeping away" from the sin of this world so we can enjoy our own "**Sanctified Behavior**".

ACTIVATE

** If we hope to be victorious in this quest, we need to be fully prepared. Please look back with me to Romans 13:14 - Let's attempt to memorize this verse right now.

Having committed it to memory, let's commit our hearts to the application of its truth for the glory of our gracious God.

Closing prayer