

Pleasing God (Leviticus 19:1-19a & 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12) 10-Mar-19¹

We're continuing our 9-part series on the Apostle Paul's letter to the church of Thessalonica - and we're looking at Part 6

[PowerPoint 1-Letter]

There are Bibles in front of you and a sermon outline in the bulletin if you want to take notes.

Please have your Bibles turned to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4

Let me pray for God's help before we begin. Let's pray...

Intro

There's a true story of two men who went into a city and started to teach the people about our Lord Jesus

They were arrested and put in jail overnight.

The next day they appeared before the court

The court ruled they could be released but they must not speak about Jesus anymore

But the men replied

[PowerPoint 2a-Intro]

Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19-20)

You might recognize this story

It's from the Bible - Acts chapter 4 - the 2 men were the Apostles - Peter and John

[PowerPoint 2b-Pleasing God]

You see - Peter and John were only interested in pleasing God - by telling people about Jesus [Matt 28] - and not so interested in pleasing human beings
 And they couldn't help but speak about Jesus - because what they'd seen and heard about Jesus was just so amazing - it had to be shared

That's our topic today from 1 Thessalonians chapter 4

The Apostle Paul wants us to understand how our lives should be lived to **please God...**

Generally Pleasing God (1 Thess 4:1-2)

In verses 1 and 2 the Apostle Paul encourages the Thessalonians to live a life that pleases God - something Paul and his missionary mates had instructed them to do - and the Thessalonians are doing it.

[PowerPoint 3a-Generally Pleasing]

So, Paul encourages them to do it more and more. Literally in abundance [John 10:10]

It's like - if we're doing a good job - and someone tells us - how good we're going - it encourages us - to keep going and continue doing a good job - doesn't it?

Paul says - in verse 2 - you know the instructions we gave you by the authority of Jesus

What are these instructions?

Well - they're not instructions from human beings - they're instructions from Jesus, Himself. And remember, Jesus is the Word of God.

Instructions like:

[PowerPoint 3b-instructions]

- The 10 commandments (Exodus 20, Leviticus 19 (OT reading), Deut 5)
- Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) - which gives detailed instructions for living [things like: murder, marriage & adultery, promises, dealing with our own sin, loving our enemies, helping the needy, prayer & fasting, serving God, worrying, judging others, two ways to live, false teaching, and building our lives on the solid foundation of God]
- Jesus' new commandment in John 13:34-35 - ³⁴ "... to: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
- Jesus' summary of the 10 commandments in Mark 12:30-31 - ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ ... 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."
- And the Golden rule in Matthew 7:12 - ¹² ... do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.
- Jesus' Himself said in John 6:38 - For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him [the Father] who sent me.

It begs the question though

Why would we want to follow all these instructions from Jesus?

[PowerPoint 3c-motivation?]

Because we're afraid of being punished by God?

Or is it because we want to do the right thing and we have a desire to love and please God? What's our motivation?

(pause)

Then in verses 3 to 8 - Paul gets a bit more specific

Sexually Pure (1 Thess 4:3-8)

He says pleasing God looks like being *sexually pure*

[PowerPoint 4a-heading]

Now, the context that the Thessalonians lived in was a culture where people saw sex outside of marriage and sex with multiple partners - as a normal part of life. Their culture worshipped several gods - and so they didn't have an allegiance to one god - and in the same way they didn't have allegiance to one sexual partner either.

[PowerPoint 4b-sexual sin]

Our context today is similar - "affairs" are seen as a source of fun and the butt of jokes on TV and radio. Sleeping around and multiple sexual partners is also seen as pretty normal today too.

So, Paul addresses this problem in verse 3.

Paul refers to a higher standard.

It is God's will that you be sanctified:

We'd better define sanctified

It means being made holy - being made perfect like Jesus - through the power of God's Holy Spirit living in us

And Paul's saying - if we're to be holy - then we need to be sexually pure

And we must avoid - as in V3 - ***avoid sexual immorality***

What's wrong with sexually immorality anyway?

Well sex was designed by God to be inside the boundaries of marriage

Marriage was designed by God as the life long relationship and union between a man and a woman. The man and woman's purpose is: to be co-workers in God's Garden [The Earth], to keep good order in the Earth, populate the Earth and produce Godly offspring and at all times to bring glory to God

But instead of that, in our culture, we have:

- One-night stands
- Sleeping around
- Multiple partners
- Sex outside of marriage
- Same sex relationships
- Gender confusion

All these are sexual immorality - and Paul says they are the opposite to being Holy

Paul goes on to say in verse 4 and 5

We also need to have **self-control** of our bodies and **not have a passionate lust** for others - because Paul says that's what is holy and honourable to God

But instead in our culture - we have:

- Pornography
- Rape
- Sexual abuse of children
- Cheating in relationships

Picture the wife sitting alone whilst the husband looks at porn on the computer or whilst he chats to a young woman overseas

Picture the rape victim lying in a hospital bed - their whole world turned upside down

Picture the abuser stalking a young child - and the effect the abuse has on the child and their family

Picture the wife/husband at home alone, whilst their partner is out with someone else?

Paul says that God says this is not holy and God will punish such sin (v6b)

Why does Paul target sexual sin particularly here?

Well - all sin has consequences - [if we steal or murder - we go to jail - that's the law] - but sexual sin can be done in secret, it sometimes goes unchecked for some time - and can even be hidden in some cases - but not hidden from God!

And, the consequences of sexual sin are far reaching:

Here's some of the consequences:

- It destroys God's good order that He intended at Creation
- It causes great lifelong hurt to the one who is cheated on - or abused?
- It betrays trust - and stops people from trusting their partner again - and may even stop them trusting anyone again
- It breaks down relationships - and relationships become superficial and casual instead of meaningful and lasting
- It disintegrates the family unit - we have mum and dad in separate houses - children visiting parents' week about - or not seeing one parent at all. It may cause poverty, anxiety, problems with learning at school or behaviour problems at school, it affects job prospects and so on

- For those cheated on - it affects them having future relationships - in case the same thing happens
- For those who are victims of sexual abuse - it affects them having relationships and a sexual relationship in the future - they might never get married or have children. They may turn to alcohol or drugs or self-harm - to cope with their abuse and so on...

The bottom line is sexual sin...

Is all about self - putting self - before your partner, before your family and before someone else's family...

It's the opposite to what God wants for us

It's the opposite to Jesus' Command - to love God and love others

It's the opposite to the Golden Rule - "do to others what you would have them do to you"

If we wouldn't like someone cheating on us - we don't cheat on others

If we wouldn't like someone abusing us - we don't abuse others

If we wouldn't like someone looking at porn instead of being with us - we don't look at porn - and so on.

As Paul says in v8, when we reject these instructions

We're not rejecting human beings - we're rejecting God who want us and calls us to be Holy because He is Holy (OT reading - Leviticus 19:2)

[PowerPoint 4c-motivation?]

Again, I come back to the same question

What's our motivation for pleasing God - when it comes to sexually purity?

Is it, because we're afraid of being punished by God?

Or is it because we want to do the right thing and we have a desire to love and please God? What's our motivation?

(pause)

Next Paul says pleasing God looks like *brotherly love*

Brotherly Love (1 Thess 4:9-10)

[PowerPoint 5a-Heading]

Paul's saying in verse 9 that the Thessalonians are loving each other just like Jesus taught - in His new commandment.

[PowerPoint 5b-love]

The word for loving each other - here in Greek is - *Philadelphia* [phileo and adlephos] - it means brotherly or sisterly love - one Christian to another

Notice too that the love word here is *phileo* - rather than *agape*

Phileo is a close friendship love - generous and affectionate love for one another - seeking to make the other happy [an example of this type of love in the OT is - David and Jonathan]

So brotherly love is mutual care and admiration for one another - it's a love that binds people together

And Paul says the Thessalonians are already showing this brotherly love to the Macedonians - and he urges them in v10 - to do more of it. It's abounding and abundant love! There can't be too much Christian love.

What might brotherly love (Philadelphia) look like in our church family?

Treating each other as family, genuine pastoral care and support, praying for one another, studying the Bible together, fellowship, encouraging conversations, hospitality, and practical help where possible

What might brotherly love (Philadelphia) look like outside our church family?

A desire for people to know Jesus, supporting the homeless, the poor and the needy, advocating for the vulnerable, inviting people to join us, building friendships, and praying and fellowshiping with other Christian churches
 Showing brotherly love will grow God's kingdom and pleases God.

(pause)

Paul also says, pleasing God, looks like being a good example to others in verses 11 & 12

Being a Good Example to Others (1 Thess 4:11-12)

[PowerPoint 6-Heading]

First Paul says - it pleases God if we live a *quiet life*

[PowerPoint 6b-Good Example]

Quiet has the idea of peace, calm, rest and satisfaction

The quiet life contradicts today's attraction to constant entertainment and excitement. The addiction to constant entertainment and excitement is damaging - both spiritually and culturally. It leads to never being satisfied and wanting more and more, and leads people away from God - into a new religion

Where God is our self

Where worship involves following celebrities or sports stars instead of following Jesus

The Scriptures become the newspapers, magazines, the news, social media, and TV.

The places of worship become: Amusement parks, theatres, concert halls, sports arenas - and every TV and internet connection is a mini chapel

This religion of excitement and entertainment seduces people into living their lives for one thing - the thrill of the moment. But these thrills are quickly over

and forgotten and all that is important is the next fun thing. This religion asks just one question - is it fun? It fails to ask more important questions like: is it true? Is it right? Is it good? Is it godly? Does it please God?

I'm not saying we shouldn't have fun - but that it shouldn't be our number one focus and priority.

Instead, Paul says, we need to live a *quiet life* so we can really take time and give attention to listening to God and getting to know Him better. That will be a good example to others and it will please God!

(pause)

Next, Paul says in v11, we should *mind our own business*

There's a novel thought!

So, as Christians, we have to be careful in our duty to consider others needs - that we don't go to far, and meddle in other people's lives.

We have to be careful, we don't offer people advice that didn't ask for or need?

Caring is not the same as interfering!

[Example of praying rather than giving advice or dramatizing]

Paul's saying we'll be a good example if we're not a busy body and mind our own business.

Last, Paul says in v11, we must *work with our own hands*

Work is God's plan for the progress of society and the church

We fall for Satan's lie, if we expect things to always come easily or if we regard God's blessings as an opportunity for us to be lazy

Manual labour was despised in the Greek Culture. They thought that the better a person was, the less work they did. In contrast, God gave us a Carpenter King, fishermen apostles, and tent-making missionaries.

Paul's saying, we can be a good example by not being lazy and doing our bit so as not to be a heavy burden on others.

(pause)

[PowerPoint 6c-2 reasons]

Paul gives two reasons for being a good example to others

- a. Our daily life will win the respect of people outside our church - and they will be attracted to come and join us and learn about Jesus
- b. And we won't be over dependent on others

To finish up then - 3 challenges

[PowerPoint 7a-heading]

Challenges:

[PowerPoint 7b-Challenge 1]

1. How do we know what's needed to live lives pleasing to God? The Bible of course! But are we spending enough time in God's Word?

[PowerPoint 7c-Challenge 2]

2. What might we have to confess and repent of to make our lives pleasing to God?

[PowerPoint 7d-Challenge 3]

3. What positive action could we take this week to be a good example to others?

Conclusion

I've asked the same question a few times [this morning/evening]

Why should we want to please God?

The answer!

Not out of fear of punishment from God - but out of **thanks** to God!

[PowerPoint 8-Conclusion]

See Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, **in view of God's mercy [Thanks to JESUS grace and mercy on the cross!]**, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Let's pray...