

used for Him (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rom. 12:1, 2).

Conclusion It is good to know the Lord and love Him. To be saved is the greatest blessing possible. But the possession of life in Christ includes demands upon the believer. One of these is a morality which agrees with the very character of the holy God whom we worship. So be it.

## THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

"What About Moral Purity?"

1 Thessalonians 4:1-3

### Introduction

1. God used Paul to bring the Gospel to Thessalonica. Through his fervent ministry there, a church was established (Acts 17:1-5). That local church had a tremendous outreach (1 Thess. 1).

2. Paul's ministry with this church did not cease with the salvation of the first believers. He worked with them night and day to accomplish God's purpose for that local assembly. There were serious problems and persecutions, but God upheld the work (1 Thess. 2).

3. Being concerned about the testimony at Thessalonica, Paul, after he had left the area, sent Timothy to find out how the work prospered. He was anxious in a good sense for their faith (1 Thess. 3). He believed God would bring them through to the end for His glory and this was an object of his prayer (1 Thess. 3:11-13).

4. It would appear that Paul had come to the end of his letter (1 Thess. 4:1). But rather than issuing a conclusion, Paul now takes up some issues of further demand. Here is one of them: moral purity.

1. It is the subject of APPEAL v. 1.

a. By request

The verb "beseech" is the verb often rendered "ask." Paul only uses this verb for the Macedonians (here; 5:22; 2 Thess. 2:1; Phil. 4:3). It has the sense of beg, but it does not coerce. It is a strong appeal.

b. By exhortation

This is the common root from which a name of the Holy Spirit is gained (paraclete). Here is the single occasion in the New Testament when it is used with the previous verb. It is paramount to see this verb as without force, but undergirded with deep feeling.

NOTE: Attention should be given to the fact that the believers are called "brethren" and that the appeal here is

given in the authority of "the Lord Jesus." These two concepts add intensity to the words.

2. It is the subject of DOCTRINE v. 1.

a. Received

The intensive verb for "receive" is used here and earlier (2:13). There was no "independent" study for the Thessalonians--they were told of God's expectations. This is biblical pedagogy (2 Tim. 2:2).

b. Practiced

Nowhere is the relationship between what a man believes and how he behaves brought out more firmly than here. Convictions in a real sense control conduct! So here, notice two items:

1) To walk The verb employed here means the whole gamut of Christian conduct. Mobility physically is totally unrelated here, but spiritual behavior fills the horizon. Christian living must agree with Christian believing. To present a dichotomy of these is spiritual suicide.

2) To please Significantly, consistent living is linked here with "pleasing God." The obvious background here is Enoch, but it is the LXX rendering which holds the day. Rather than "walk," the verb "please" is used (Gen. 5:22; Heb. 11:5). To fill the head with truth but deny that truth with crooked living is entirely erroneous.

3. It is the subject of GROWTH v. 1.

While it is true that positionally a believer is immediately separated unto God when he is saved (2 Cor. 5:17; Heb. 10:14), this does not prohibit growth "in" the Christian life. So Paul removes any doubt and urges continual progress in the expression of the doctrine received. This is done by the verb "abound" and the accompanying comparative pronoun "more." Persistent expansion in practicing the Christian life is what is advanced.

4. It is the subject of COMMAND v. 2.

It is a very unpopular approach to give military commands in relation to the Gospel of God's grace. But that

is what is indicated. The plural word "commands" is clearly a forceful word and was used militarily (cf. its New Testament use: Acts 5:28; 16:23; 1 Tim. 1:5). It is something received from a superior and transmitted to others. Furthermore, Paul links this with the believer's relationship to Christ as "Lord" (cf. v. 1). There is a whole system of biblical interpretation which denies "authority" to grace. This is incredible thinking in the light of this verse. Grace "expects" (demands) response! Anything less is spiritual anarchy and chaos.

5. It is the subject of GOD'S WILL v. 3.

NOTE: The movement of logic for Paul is: ask, exhort, command, and now will. There is an obvious increase and expression of deep significance.

a. Indicated

In a clear and specific testimony, God has revealed His will. It is obviously also an expression of His character. Since He is holy, He has desires for us of the same order (1 Pet. 1:15, 16). God has a purpose and this is given without hesitation.

b. Specified

God's will is, in this context, noted to relate to "sanctification." This is the doctrine of separation to God in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). There are no degrees in this. You either are or you are not sanctified. There is no middle course. It is true there is progress in it, but no half way involvement (Heb. 12:14). Our title to sanctification is the death of Christ (Eph. 5:25, 26; Col. 1:22; Heb. 10:10, 29).

c. Explained

The special area of sanctification which is the concern of Paul is moral cleanliness. It may be that Timothy's report required this additional instruction. Had there been a relapse into pre-salvation activity? The text does not say, but the impact of the subject mentioned shows there may have been some misunderstanding about "fornication." Prostitution is one aspect implied. The abuse of the body is clear. In today's world, the over-emphasis on sex and sexuality has abandoned biblical standards. The "body" is His and must be practically