

A Life that Pleases God

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Introduction

Paul's chief concern in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 is to exhort his audience to live **a life that is pleasing to God**. So, what is the life that pleases God?

Text - Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Exposition

I. A Concern for Pleasing God (Vss. 1-2)

From the very beginning of our passage, it is clear that Paul is concerned with **pleasing God**. We have already seen that concern in Paul's own life, but now, he wants the church in Thessalonica to live **a life that is pleasing to God**. (Be sure to note that Paul give his instruction to those who are "in the Lord Jesus." Paul believes that his audience consists of believers. If you are not a believer, you need to repent and believe in Jesus. Not simply change your behavior)

T.S. - For those of us who believe or claim to believe in Jesus, the following verses detail a few important aspects of **a life that is pleasing to God...**

II. A Concern for Pleasing God in Sexual Holiness (Vss. 3-8)

According to verses 3-8, God's will for our life is holiness, which, at least in this context, is concerned with sexual holiness. While some take holiness to be a negative concept because of its connotation with separation, holiness is actually a positive concept rooted in the character of God. Holiness is about "becoming more and more like God." In regard to sexual holiness, Paul explains **negatively** in terms of **context** (Vs. 3b - "Abstain from sexual immorality") and **positively** in terms of **conduct** (Vss. 4-6 - "in holiness and honor," not "like the Gentiles"). Paul reminds the church that sex is a good gift from a gracious God. If we would understand and enjoy sex rightly, we must understand its relationship to God.

In verse 7-8, Paul concludes this section on sexual holiness by warning (Vs. 7) and exhorting (Vs. 8) the church in Thessalonica. They are to fear the vengeance of God against sexual immorality while recognizing that God has called them to something better - namely, holiness.

T.S. - From sexual holiness, Paul moves to a concern for pleasing God in relational holiness...

III. A Concern for Pleasing God in Relational Holiness (Vss. 9-12)

According to verse 9, much like verse 1, Paul acknowledges that the church is doing well and that he simply wants to see them press on in their good behavior toward each other and those outside the church. He wants the church to "abound in brotherly love," which he spells out in verses 11-12. Brotherly love consists of living humble, servant-orient lives toward others. It requires telling the truth, refusing to gossip, and working hard with excellence.

T.S. - By abounding in sexual and relational holiness, the church would not bring reproach to Christ and would strengthen its witness in the community. Paul wanted the church to **the live a life that is pleasing to God** so that when others see it, they will be provoked by it to wonder about the greatness and grace of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

This bring us to the end of the passage and back to our question: What is the life that pleases God? The life that pleases God is a life of holiness. In other words, the life that please God is the life that reflects His holiness back to Him. Like a proud parent looking at their child, God is pleased to see His children reflecting His character.

So, whether Paul was dealing with a sexual ethic rooted in the character of God or brotherly love as taught to the people by God Himself, the Thessalonians were to pursue holiness in every area of their life. God is pleased to see His children becoming like Him!

But how is such a holy life even possible? Verse 8 has already told us – God has given His Holy Spirit to those who have believed in Jesus Christ! You see, the holy life that we are called to by God presupposes our need for the Holy Spirit. The self-control that we need to overcome our lust and the brotherly love that are called to abound in are both “fruits of the Holy Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23).

So, if you are here this morning and you are struggling to live a life that is pleasing to God, I am here to tell you that you must first abandon all your attempts to please God apart from faith, and then run to Christ, asking Him to fill you more and more with His Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). You are called to holiness. And you need the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill this call!

Would you ask the Lord to strengthen your faith and cause the Holy Spirit to control you this morning? You will not pursue holiness, you will not live a life that is pleasing to God apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Would you call upon the Lord today and ask Him to forgive you and cleanse you from your unrighteousness? Even while you may feel exceedingly dirty, God is able to cleanse you. He is ready to forgive you. He delights to show you mercy. He is faithful to answer. Would you pray and ask him to do so this morning?