

9. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18

In the fourth chapter, Paul turns from his personal concerns and prayers to issues of godly living and preparation for the Lord to return. The chapter starts with Paul emphasizing that what he is teaching is by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Paul Declared His Teachings Given by the Authority of Jesus

1 Thess 4:1-2

4 *Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.*

Paul states that his instructions were by the authority of Jesus echoing the Lord's own instruction to the apostles in Matt 28:18-20:

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Paul had already praised them for receiving the word as the very word of God in 1 Thess 2:13:

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Avoid Sexual Immorality Love, All the Brother, and Lead a Quiet Life

1 Thess 4:3-8

3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

On the moral side, Christians are to avoid sexual immorality: permissive sex, homosexual sex, sexual infidelity and adultery, etc. Moderns would have us think that God is somehow responsible for their sexual drives; and therefore, they are excused. A "God made me this way" excuse for promiscuity excuses no one. In reality, all Christians must control their passions and lusts. Whether man's inclinations are toward adultery or homosexuality, he must "control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable. Man must control his passionate lust in order to be saved. All those of the 21st century, who rationalize their sins and who cave into lusts will receive punishment from the Lord.

It is not enough to maintain a morally pure life, but eternal life depends a not wronging another person by taking advantage of them. Paul states the certainty of punishment by God for all **such sins**. The word **such sins** show that we are to broadly apply these commands and warnings, and not narrowly apply them to see, perhaps, just how much we can get away with. Paul used a similar expression, **the like**, in Gal 5:19-21:

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish

ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and **the like**. I warn you, as I did before, that those who **live like** this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Thess 4:9-12

9 Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Paul commends the church for their love of the brethren even throughout Macedonia. Paul's teaching on personal living concludes with the admonition to lead a quiet life, mind our own business, and work with our hands. The very prayers of the Christians for political leaders is so that they may lead tranquil lives according to 1 Tim 2:1-3:

2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Peter teaches in 1 Peter 3:3-4 that the adornment of the Christian woman is to be that of gentle and quiet spirit:

3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

The Coming of the Lord

1 Thess 4:13-15

13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

What will happen to the living and the dead when Jesus comes? The teaching of the Lord is certain: the dead in the Lord will come with him and the living will be changed. This passage and 1 Cor 15:50-53 concur what will happen to the followers of Christ at his coming:

50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

1 Thess 4:16-18

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.

There will be no kingdom on earth for "then the end will come." 1 Cor 15:20-25 explains:

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

There will be no kingdom on earth, for no earth or material heavens will remain, according to 2 Peter 3:11-13:

You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

According to 1 Cor 15:54, there will be no kingdom on earth, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God:

50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

We must be ready for the trumpet call of God in 1 Cor 15:51-

51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

The coming will be as a thief in the night, according to the Lord in Matt 24:44; 24:42

44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

All mankind will be aware of his coming in Matt 24:30-31:

30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Anyone who says otherwise contradicts the truth of God's word, according to Matt 24:26-28:

26 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

No where does the Bible teach that Christ will ever set foot on the earth again. 1 Thess 4:17 teaches that we will be caught up to meet him in the air and be there with him forever:

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Are you ready for the trumpet call of God? 2 Thess 1:7-10 teaches:

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power. . . .