

## Living to Please God

1 Thess 4:1-12



**Background:** Being a Christian is not just about believing the right things about Jesus. It is about embarking on a lifelong journey of learning how to live a life that is pleasing to God, a life in which we are transformed into Christ-likeness through the Spirit whom God has put within us. We resume our earlier series in 1 Thessalonians. In the final two chapters Paul gives remedial instruction about several matters on which the young church is confused. In this Sunday's text (4:1-12) he addresses sexuality and life together. A Christian sexual ethic presupposes spiritual formation. Life together as Christian community presupposes *philadelphia*, brotherly and sisterly love for one another. These are both hot-button topics today. Sadly the church often seems more conformed to the pattern of this world, rather than transformed by the renewing power of God in Christ through his Spirit.

### **Sermon Text: 1 Thess 4:1-12 (NIV)**

*As for other matters, brothers and sisters, 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. <sup>2</sup> For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.*

*<sup>3</sup> It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup> that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, <sup>5</sup> not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; <sup>6</sup> and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. <sup>7</sup> For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.*

*<sup>9</sup> Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. <sup>10</sup> And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, <sup>11</sup> and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, <sup>12</sup> so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*

## Discussion Questions

### 1. Preparation

- a. As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
- b. What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- c. What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?

### 2. Sermon questions (pick 3)

- a. Bernard shared that the Evangelical church in the US typically “holds believing over doing,” even pitting faith against works in certain contexts. How do you hold these two important facets together? And, how does this impact your view of race relations? Discuss with your group.
- b. “It’s God’s will that you should be sanctified.” Sanctification can be seen as the growth into Christ-likeness. As you look back over your life, how do you see sanctification happening in your life? How does that foster sanctification moving forward?
- c. *Philadelphia* in Greek is the love between siblings. Paul uses this word for the love in the church, since we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. In the Roman culture, family love was highly valued. Therefore, Paul says that our communal love in the church should be highly valued.
  - Do you value it highly?
  - Do you view our church as a family? Why or why not? If not, what would help you view our church as family?
- d. Paul urged the Thessalonian church to “have ambition that leads to a quiet life” (11). Bernard said this was all about our internal state, that we were not agitated or anxious, but that we were still and knew that God was God (Ps 46). How is your internal state right now? Is it “quiet”? Why or why not?
- e. Paul also urged the Thessalonian church to “work with their hands” (11). Working with our hands is the external work, which allows us to love and serve others in practical ways. This is how we are faithful in the little things. As Mother Theresa said, “Not all of us can do great things. But, we can all do small things with great love.” How are you being faithful with the “little things” in your life, especially during this pandemic?