I Thessalonians 4 – Sanctification

I Thessalonians 4:1-7

**1 Thessalonians 4:1-7 (NIV)**   
1 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.   
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.

Paul is nearing the end of I Thessalonians. Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living, now we ask you to do this more and more. He does write II Thessalonians – I think it was because certain situations had not been corrected. Paul speaks and writes with authority. His authority came from Jesus.

It is best even today that when we speak with authority, we do so because of Jesus and not ourselves. Then it is that we have authority. Otherwise it is just words – meaningless words – even though our words might sound good. Without Jesus being involved – it is of no value at all.

Paul is saying, however, in other words, you are on the right track – just keep on not only doing what you are doing but step up the pace! He has been after them to follow Christ and now he wants them to go forward all the more!

There is for us a still small voice that tells us to travel so as to please the Lord. This voice is the conscience and it will be used by the Holy Spirit to cause us to feel guilty.

Paul is emphasizing the same in the Ephesians congregation and in the Philippian congregation:

**Ephesians 6:10 (NIV)**   
Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

**Philippians 4:8 (NIV)**   
Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

Peter lines up with Paul

**2 Peter 3:18 (NIV)**   
But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

**1 Thessalonians 4:2 (NIV)**   
For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

**1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NIV)**   
It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;

Paul uses the words to be sanctified – it means to be set apart for the Lord, the word refers to the process by which a born again person is called to lead a holy life.

The order is justification by faith in Jesus and then sanctification.

Justification is like getting married – happens when the Pastor says the words – a couple becomes husband and wife – sanctification is getting acquainted and getting to know each other better.

This is being applied by Paul here. He applied it to the Corinthian congregation and each member and it is applied also to us as a congregation and each one of us in it.

Paul demands such – Paul virtually commands the congregation and all its members to lead a holy life – that is to be sanctified.

Why does he make this command – an obligatory command – a no if ands or buts command – it is because first of all Jesus commands it and secondly Paul was given the authority to command that people lead holy lives!

Two “proof Verses” come to mind:

**John 14:15 (NIV)**   
If you love me, you will obey what I command.

**1 Thessalonians 4:2 (NIV)**   
For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

**1 Peter 2:21 (NIV)**   
To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

**Romans 8:13 (NIV)**   
For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

**1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 (NIV)**   
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;

Paul uses sexual immorality as an example of all areas where the Lord wants holy living, where there is a need for personal control, and this control is needed in every area of our lives. We are to control our lives so we honor the Lord, so we glorify the Lord so we can be a witness to others – and this pleases the Lord.

**Galatians 5:16-17 (NIV)**   
16 so I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.   
17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Knowing the right thing to involve a struggle.

1. Satan tempts – appeals to the old nature -
2. The Holy Spirit says no
3. When we fall – Satan is silent
4. Then the Holy Spirit produces guilt – why did I do that, say that, or feel that way.

**Romans 7:14-25 (NIV)**   
14 we know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.   
15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.   
16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.   
17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.   
18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.   
19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.   
20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.   
21 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.   
**22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law;**   
23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, **waging war against the law of my mind** and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.   
24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?   
25 Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then**, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law,** but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

**1 Thessalonians 4:6-7 (NIV)**   
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.

**1 Thessalonians 4:8 (NIV)**   
Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

If we sin willfully and do not see it as sin, and do not repent, and amend our ways – it shows we lack faith, we lack direction from the Holy Spirit, we cannot say then that grace covers this kind of sinning. We then could very well be just like verse 5 of our text says:

**Thessalonians 4:5 (NIV)**   
not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;

**Romans 8:13 (NIV)**   
 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

Red flags?

We can excuse ourselves and say no one is perfect. Not good. We must aspire to live a holy life, we must plan to live a holy life, we need to make every effort to follow the Lord – and bring sin to the Lord.

We can accept that Jesus forgives all sin – but we must be honest with the Lord and do as Jesus and Paul directs.

The Catechism asks “Upon what does God Look?” The answer is “He looks upon the attitude of our hearts toward Him.”

**1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV)**   
But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him**. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart**."

**Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)**   
**Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.**

**Sanctification means to be “set apart” for the Lord’s use**. We who claim Jesus and what He has done for us – relying upon the Word of God. We have been justified – declared right with the Lord – We want to be led by the Holy Spirit allowing Him to lead us – We have been forgiven and I Thessalonians leads us to the second coming of Christ when we will be totally pure, without sin –

In the meantime, the Lord looks upon us as “forgiven sinners.” He sees our attitude –

Daily renewal is necessary. Daily renewal is needed. Daily renewal must be a part of our lives. The Catechism asks, “How is the daily renewal accomplished?” The answer is: “The old man, or sin, is put away more and more, and the new man, or the new spiritual life, appears more and more in our conduct.”

**Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)**   
22  You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;   
23  to be made new in the **attitude of your minds**;   
24  and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

When our minds think like the Lord, then we please Him. We are not perfect, we are not holy and we will never be perfect or holy until we see Jesus face to face in Heaven. He has declared us holy because of Jesus and His shed blood on the Cross. Now He says through Paul – strive to be holy, gain and keep gaining an attitude which strives to please the Lord.