

God's Will: Your Sanctification  
1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

**Overview**

This morning we come to a new section within Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians in which he begins making practical exhortations to them. He has been praising them as a model church to this point, though he had also expressed his great desire to come to them again that he and his companions might be able to "*complete what is lacking in your faith*" since they had been forced to leave abruptly against their will. In chapters 4 & 5 we find out the specific areas of behavior and doctrine that were of a concern to Paul. In 4:1-12, Paul exhorts them about Christian conduct specifically in the areas of sanctification and loving one another. In 4:13-18 he addresses the question about what would happen to those who died before the return of Jesus which he then follows up in 5:1-11 by encouraging them in being prepared for the coming Day of the Lord. Paul addresses various issues concerning holy living in 5:12-22 before concluding the letter with a request to them for prayer and a final salutation.

I want to begin our study this morning by reading the entire passage and then go back and examine it in detail. Please follow along as I read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

*<sup>1</sup> Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. <sup>2</sup> For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup> that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, <sup>5</sup> not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; <sup>6</sup> and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. <sup>7</sup> For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. <sup>8</sup> So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. <sup>9</sup> Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; <sup>10</sup> for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, <sup>11</sup> and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, <sup>12</sup> so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.*

Most translations begin this passage with "finally," but that is not in the sense of this being his concluding thoughts. The word here actually means "*for the rest*" and is the transition to the additional issues Paul wants to address after dealing with the personal issues in chapters 2 & 3. These 12 verses make up one section that breaks down fairly simply.

Paul introduces his main point in verses 1-2 that though they were walking and pleasing God, he wants them to excel still more in that walk according to what the missionaries had already taught them. He then addresses two particular areas. The first area is fulfilling the will of God by living in sanctification particularly in avoiding the sexual immorality that was common to the way the Gentiles lived (vs. 3-8). The second issue was excelling still more in their love for one another including minding their own affairs (vs. 9-12).

**A Request and Exhortation - 1 Thessalonians 4:1a**

Young's Literal Translation expresses well Paul's transition to a new subject writing, "*As to the rest, then, brethren.*" This is the seventh time Paul has addresses the Thessalonians as "brethren," and he will