

# Living Unashamed

## I Thessalonians 3:13

The afternoon sun glinted off the polished steel of their 45's as six State Troopers emerged from their cruisers. I knew this was going to be an interesting evening service. Baptisms and testimonies usually didn't warrant such a display of civil authority. This evening Frank was among the candidates publicly confessing his faith and allegiance to Christ. And gays don't leave the community without a stir.

Little did we know the long road that lay before that man. His faint voice so deeply punctuated with pain. Frank\* [not his real name] first arrived on our hearts and in our ministry over the phone late one winter evening. He cursed. He threatened. He cried.

As the months passed, the dark path he had trodden slowly emerged. After over six hundred different partners in sex, he tested positive. On his way to end it all, he stopped at our inner-city church-sponsored clinic. There he met the only friend he could trust forever.

Despair and hatred, bitterness and fear leave deep wounds on hearts and lives. Frank was a walking minefield of unexploded pain. He would slip into each service 15 minutes late. He fled at any sign of a conclusion. He often sat in the shadow of his hand seeking to hide his face and especially his eyes from view.

Our six and a half years on the edge of one of the largest and most vocal GAY communities in America yielded a harvest of unforgettable experiences. And some of the most amazing friends an evangelical pastor might ever have. Homosexual men and women, unique and among the least understood creatures on the planet, remain despised and vilified remnants of the image of God.

We must minister to men and women like Frank in our world. They live around us, work next to us, attend our churches -- and die alone. Modern day lost ones the Son of Man came to seek and to save.

Church historian Kenneth Scott LaTourette notes that when Paul came to the Roman world of twenty centuries back, he faced the gay community of each city. The Emperor himself, Nero, boasted a castrated male slave as his spouse. Florus had been shared by past Imperial occupants of the Forum's Grand Palace, the epicenter of the world in Paul's day.

How did Paul minister to them? He gave them the same plan he gave any other sinner. God's recovery program is sanctification! When Paul proclaimed Christ to those deep in the dungeon of sin, he offered a recovery program. The vice grip of sin could be destroyed and the sin appetite abated.

Did Paul see lasting change? Resoundingly the Scriptures say YES! The vivid reality of washed saints, cleansed from the filth of sin's prison, is the grandest picture the first-century church passed on to us.

Excavating the secret of this recovery program takes us to one of the ancient provinces of Rome and the city of Thessalonica

**I. The CITY**

Early this century a group of French archaeologists began to excavate the ancient ruins of a city along the coast of the Aegean Sea. As the work progressed they came to the NECROPOLIS or "City of the Dead". Apart from the Necropolis was a separate area - a CEMETERY "sleeping place" KOIMEO. To the amazement of the archeologists was the presence of a unique word seldom if ever used in the ancient world: AMEMPTOS. Across each white marble slab deeply cut was a message that crossed the dust of centuries.

**II. The CALLING**

Across each white marble slab deeply cut was a message that crossed the dust of centuries. Open your Bibles to I Th. 3:13 - unblameable in holiness. Also 2:10 and 5:23

**III. The CONDUCT**

The apostle distilled the Christian life down to some bite sized pieces. These saints had no tapes. There were no bookstores to catch the latest titles. They had no Christian radio. There was no study bible to use and carry around. In reality it was only what they heard and could remember! So Paul reduced the entire life down to some neat little mottos to hold onto easily! We can call these: EXHORTATIONS for Unashamed Living:

First Thessalonians 1:10	1. A NEW GOAL: Wait for Son
First Thessalonians 2:12	2. A NEW PLAN: Walk worthy of God
First Thessalonians 2:13	3. A NEW AUTHORITY: Take God at His Word
First Thessalonians 2:14-20	4. A NEW STANDARD: Measure all by Christ's coming
First Thessalonians 3:3,4	5. A NEW PERSPECTIVE: Accept suffering from God
First Thessalonians 3:12	6. A NEW RESOURCE: Abound in love
First Thessalonians 4:3	7. A NEW APPETITE: Stay pure

First Thessalonians 4:11	8. A NEW LIFESTYLE: Be quiet, Mind own business, Work
First Thessalonians 4:18	9. A NEW MINISTRY: Comfort one another
First Thessalonians 5:11	10.A NEW FOCUS: Edify one another
First Thessalonians 5:16	11.A NEW HABIT: Rejoice always
First Thessalonians 5:17	12.A NEW CONTACT: Pray always
First Thessalonians 5:18	13.A NEW AWARENESS: Be thankful