

Comments on 1 Thessalonians 4

Verses 1-12 address two points of behavior Paul wants to emphasize for their sanctification. First, he wants them to rid themselves entirely of any sexual immorality (v. 1-8). Second, he wants them to live simple lives of charity (v. 9-12). In both cases, Paul tells them they may excel/abound/overflow (Gr: [perisseuo](#), v. 1, 10) by doing these things.

The second block of text (v. 13-18) would best be taken together with 5:1-11, as both deal with eschatological matters, first the resurrection (v. 13-18) and second the Day of the Lord (5:1-11).

¹ Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. ² For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: ⁴ That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; ⁵ Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: ⁶ That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. ⁷ For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. ⁸ He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy spirit.

v1-8 Paul encourages them to do what they were previously told (v. 1-2) so they might be sanctified. They need to avoid all sexual immorality (v. 3-7). Anyone who rejects this admonition is not rejecting Paul, but is rejecting God, who gives His Holy Spirit to us (v. 8).

v1 "ye would abound more and more", the Greek phrase *perisseuo mallon* is used here and in v. 10 where it is inconsistently translated to "that ye increase more and more", obscuring the connection between these two blocks of text. Most modern translations render them the same, e.g., NAS: "excel still more". These are two things Paul wants them to work on to help them sanctify themselves.

v3 "abstain from fornication", the Greek term [porneia](#) exhaustively includes every kind of sexual immorality, not just illicit sexual intercourse between unmarried individuals.

v6 "defraud his brother", i.e., offend his brother by being sexually immoral, the subject of the preceding verses, with his wife, sister, or daughter.

"the Lord is the avenger of all such", meaning the Lord will take up the cause of these women who have been sexually exploited by punishing the men who exploited them, cp. Hosea 4:11-14, Jacob 2:31, 3 Ne. 9:11.

v8 Paul includes this verse to make it clear it is the Lord's will that they sanctify themselves. The latter phrase about the Holy Spirit is an implication that the ecclesia is to be united with the Father by His Holy Spirit, and practicing sexual immorality violates this. The likely historical context is that of ritual cult prostitution among the Greeks and Romans. If a Gentile member of the ecclesia doesn't abandon this practice, then they are offending God and His Spirit, by consorting idolatrous cult prostitutes.

⁹ But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.
¹⁰ And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; ¹¹ And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; ¹² That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

v9-12 The ecclesia there is a doing a good job of taking care of each other (v. 9), and others in the area. Paul encourages them to reach out with this charity work even more (v. 10). He encourages them to live a deliberate and quiet life, attending to their own business, working with their own hands (v. 11). Paul wants them to treat outsiders honestly, and not be in need of anything (v. 12).

The early Church in Jerusalem and Antioch was generally observing the Law of Consecration (cf. Acts 2:43-47, Acts 4:34-37, Acts 11:27-30) and Paul is encouraging the ecclesia at Thessalonica to do the same. He also wants them to treat outsiders well, and be self-sufficient, presumably to avoid debt and the problems that come with it (v. 12).

v11 Paul seems to be encouraging them to not have slaves or servants, and to avoid any kind of controversial business dealings or engagements. They should live modest lives where

additional wealth is given to the service of others, not to the opulent enrichment of themselves.

v12 "them that are without", this is referring to [outsiders](#), meaning those who are not part of the ecclesia, their non-believing Gentile neighbors. This is not necessarily referring to the poor, or those lacking means or substance.

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ wherefore comfort one another with these words.

v13-18 Regarding those among the ecclesia who have died, do not grieve them as lost (v. 13), as they will be resurrected (v. 14). Those who are alive at the Day of the Lord will not be before the already deceased in the resurrection (v. 15). At the Lord's return, those who are deceased will be resurrected first (v. 16). Then those who are still alive will be resurrected. All of them will be with the Lord in eternity (v. 17). Don't worry, encourage each other with this knowledge (v. 18).

Paul appears to be dealing with questions over when people will be resurrected, and perhaps whether those who die after Jesus died will still get resurrected. At Jesus' resurrection, others were resurrected as well. So, what happens to everyone who dies after this first phase of the First Resurrection? Are they resurrected immediately? Do they wait? Do they not get resurrected at all? Paul doesn't directly answer the specific questions at hand, instead he says that all who are alive in Christ, and who die in Christ will be resurrected and live with Christ in the afterlife. He doesn't want to nitpick the details of exactly when who in particular gets resurrected. So, he says that everyone will be there together at the end, so don't worry about their recently deceased, they will get resurrected.

The core issue seems to be something like the questions addressed in Alma 40-42.

v15-17 The IV/JST differs from the KJV, as follows:

1 Thessalonians 4.3

KJV

For this we say unto you
by the word of the Lord,
that we which are alive
and remain unto
the coming of the Lord
shall not prevent
them

which are asleep.
For the Lord himself
shall descend from heaven
with a shout,
with the voice
of the archangel,
and with the trump of God:
and the dead in Christ
shall rise first:
Then we which are alive
and remain
shall be caught up together
with them in the clouds,
to meet the Lord in the air:
and so shall we
ever be with the Lord.

IV

For this we say unto you
by the word of the Lord,
that they who are alive
at the coming of the Lord,
shall not prevent
them who remain unto
the coming of the Lord,
who are asleep.
For the Lord himself
shall descend from heaven
with a shout,
with the voice
of the archangel,
and with the trump of God;
and the dead in Christ
shall rise first;
Then they who are alive,
shall be caught up together
into the clouds
with them who remain,
to meet the Lord in the air;
and so shall we
be ever with the Lord.

The IV/JST clarifies who "them who remain" are (i.e., those "who are asleep") and pushes "the coming of the Lord" away from Paul's contemporary setting.

The subject spoken of here is that which is called "[The Rapture](#)" by Protestants, particularly Evangelicals. There is considerable disagreement among different groups as to when the Rapture will occur. There are three groups: Pre-tribulation, Mid-tribulation, Post-tribulation. The "tribulation" is the seven years of suffering and woe poured out upon the nations per John's Revelation. Most of Protestant Christendom favors a Pre-tribulation Rapture, and this doctrine suggests the faithful will be spared the tribulations poured out on the world by being taken up into heaven. The Latter-day Saint canon strongly favors a Post-tribulation Rapture, cf. Matt. 24:31, D&C 45:45, D&C 88:96, D&C 101:31, D&C 109:75. The subject is one that is not commonly discussed in the Church, because we assume it is Post-tribulation and see it as an event that is simultaneous

with or closely related to the Second Coming, and so it is not considered a sign that will precede. We also do not forward the more sensational views on the subject, so for us it is non-issue.

v17 Paul is using imagery from Dan. 7:13 and Ezek. 37:9 to draw together and unite these two events, meaning the Second Coming and the First Resurrection. Also compare Matt. 24:30-31, Acts 1:11 for NT passages with similar imagery. Paul's intent is to say all those who will be redeemed by Christ will live together with Him in the afterlife, regardless of when they die, cf. 5:10.

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