

Until Jesus Comes

1 Thessalonians 4

INTRODUCTION:

- We only have today and next week and 1 Thessalonians will be in the books!
- You will remember that in our first lesson (the overview) we discussed the theme of this book as being the Second Coming of Christ. In every chapter there is a reference to the return of Jesus.
 - 1:10 – A **Saving** truth: The Second Coming in relationship to salvation.
 - 2:19-20 – A **Stimulating** truth: It should stimulate us to witness.
 - 3:13 – A **Stabilizing** truth: The Second Coming has a stabilizing effect on our hearts.
 - 4:13-18 – A **Strengthening** truth: The Second Coming brings us comfort & provides direction for daily living.
 - 5:23-28 – A **Sanctifying** truth: It has a way of causing us to set apart our life wholly and totally dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- In light of Christ's return, chapter 4 answers the question: How are we to live until Jesus comes again? Paul defines three attitudes we should each strive to possess.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. Christians must live **righteously** (vs. 1-8)
 - a. Vs. 1 – Paul is addressing “how ye ought to walk and to please God.” Paul is getting practical and telling us how we can live out our faith.
 - b. The key word in these verses is “sanctification” (vs. 3).
 - i. Discuss: How would you define this word?
 - ii. Discuss: What is the image that comes to mind when you hear this word?
 - c. A Christian's walk must be holy and righteous. What makes this so important is Paul's clear words “that this is the will of God” for your life (don't need to pray about it).
 - i. The Greek word for sanctification means holy or sacred.
 - ii. The Christian is to be set apart for that which is holy. We are to live righteously.
 - d. Paul specifically mentions moral purity as his example of holiness in vs. 4-8.
 - i. God draws a line of sexual purity in verse 6 that we are not to pass over.
 - ii. The line is simple: No sex outside of a biblical, covenant marriage. To go beyond that line is to defraud somebody.
 - iii. ILL: The words “go beyond” literally means “to step over.” God has written a “no Trespassing” sign over every man or woman who is not your spouse. Even more, the sign reads, “Violators will be prosecuted” – the Lord is the avenger.
 - e. Notice the seriousness of this unrighteous behavior. Sexual sin is so important, Paul calls all three members of the Trinity against it.
 - i. Verses 3-5: Immorality is a sin against God the Father.
 - ii. Verse 6: Immorality is a sin against the Son.
 - iii. Verse 7-8: Immorality is a sin against the Holy Spirit.
 - iv. God draws the line and says, “Don't step over it!”
 - f. The imminent return of Jesus Christ should motivate the believer to live righteously in this unrighteous world.
 - g. DISCUSS: How do we do this in such an immoral culture?
2. Christians must live **affectionally** (vs. 9-12)
 - a. Living righteously is primarily a personal responsibility. Now Paul turns our attention to our attitude toward others.

- b. Vs. 9-10: Love ought to be a mark **within** the Christian community.
 - i. Paul refers to “brotherly love.” This is a love based on kinship, a sibling type of love.
 - ii. Throughout the New Testament, we read “family language.” We are brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - iii. The local church should be a loving testimony to the world of how people from different backgrounds can come together in Christ and love each other.
 - iv. DISCUSS: How do we personally contribute to this idea in our church? Or take away?
 - c. Vs. 11: Our affection for others should not overwhelm our Godly ambition.
 - i. Paul reminds us that we should not be so heavenly minded that we are ultimately no earthly good!
 - ii. Paul exhorts believers “to do your own business, and to work.”
 - iii. There is always work to be done while we wait on the Lord’s return.
 - d. Vs. 12: Love ought to be a mark **outside** the Christian community.
 - i. The way we walk influences those unbelievers within our sphere of influence.
 - ii. Notice we are to walk “honestly” (properly) and “lack nothing.”
 - iii. Christians should not be loafers. The world is watching!
3. Christians must live **expectantly** (vs. 13-18)
- a. This is the most glorious description of Christ’s return – the hope for believers! Paul addresses two groups in these verses: those who are **asleep** and those who are **alive**.
 - b. Those who are asleep: What happens to these when the Lord returns?
 - i. Paul reviews our **feelings** (vs. 13): We don’t mourn the loss of people as if we are hopeless.
 - ii. Paul reviews our **faith** (vs. 14): Do we have faith in what the Bible teaches in this area? There is not a hint of uncertainty in Paul’s writing.
 - iii. Paul reviews our **future** (vs. 15-16): Those who have died in Christ will rise first when that trumpet sounds!
 - c. Those who are alive: What happens to the believers who are alive at Christ’s return?
 - i. Paul points out our promised **rapture** (vs. 17): Those that are alive will be “caught up” to be with Jesus “in the clouds.”
 - ii. Paul points out our present **rest** (vs. 18): We don’t have to worry about the future if we are saved. Instead, we are comforted by this future reality.

CONCLUSION:

- Look back at verse 17. Do you see the pronoun that Paul uses? “We.”
- What a thought! Paul and those early Thessalonian Christians were waiting to be raptured!
- In theological terms, we refer to this as the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. What does that mean? Jesus could return at any moment. Jesus could return today.
- In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul is saying, “In light of the fact that Jesus could come back today, how now shall we live?”