

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020

1 Thessalonians 4: 1-12 (How to live)

Talk by Ian Baldwin, Prayers by Kemi Ogundipe

Hello, and welcome to our service. My name is Ian and today we will be thinking about how Paul taught the Thessalonians how to live for God. Our bible reading is from 1 Thessalonians ch4 v1-12.

Let me pray as we start.

Lord thank you that we can meet as your people and to take this time to focus on you. Help us to set aside all the business and worries of the week so we might listen to you and learn more about your love for us. Amen.

Now Kemi will lead us in our intercessions then I will read from the bible.

### **Prayers**

Holy God , you have called us here today, we gather to offer you our prayers, which is from our hearts, of love for you, and our love and concern for those we love and for the people of the world. We live in a sinful world and we have fallen short in one way or the other, despite our sinfulness, you forgive and forget. Thank you for offering yourself to us as a tender and compassionate father. Though we cannot hold on to you physically, but we can receive your love in our hearts by the holy Spirit.

When the church joins, we can show people a much fuller of Jesus and his kingdom, thank you for the good news and new thing you are about to do in the lives, Holy Trinity and St John's merging as one body in Christ to serve you, our community and surrounding area, we hope and trust that all goes well, help us to adapt to this new way and guide the minds of those who will choose a minister for both churches, that they may receive a faithful minister who will care for us and equip us for our ministries.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We pray as we unlock our parish by weekly private prayer, monthly reflective and said services, we ask you to encourage members and community to attend so we can start to look forward to our main Sunday worship.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We pray for churches in our local community and ask that there will be growing desire to get together and get out.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We remember the queen and her government, all members of parliament, that the guidance of your Spirit, help them never to lead the country wrongly through love and power, desire to please

but laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of mankind.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We pray for your blessings over medical researchers who are searching for vaccine for coronavirus, give them your wisdom and insight, speed their work and make it effective in protecting lives.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We pray for our mission the Day family in Thailand, we ask you for your blessings and protection over them.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Everlasting father, as the Baldwin family are preparing and looking forward to Lucy and Tom getting married next week Saturday, we pray for no changes and adjustment for the day in regards to social gathering, coronavirus precautions and so shall it be in Jesus's name, we ask you to take total control of the day, bless their marriage and help them to make the best of whatever comes their way.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We bring to you those who are ill, sick, suffering and need healing remembering anyone you know and name quietly in your hearts - Antony, Lorraine, Alison sister, her sister in-law and the Vance family, give them healing and restore them in body, mind and spirit, for those recovering Val and Audrey and anyone you know and name quietly in your hearts, give them full wholeness recovery.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Father, be close to those who are recently bereaved, strengthen them with the knowledge that you are always there to lean on and to be carried through difficult times.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

We thank you for those who come up with fresh ways of making your name known, to surrounding community and for those who work so hard to make worship, possible through online and zoom.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

Faithful God, at the start of this new week, help us to be example to others and show us the practical steps we need to take to develop consistency and integrity in all that we do in our lives.

Lord in your mercy - **Hear our prayer**

### **The Collect**

Remembering our loved ones, as today is All Saints day, Eternal God, our maker and redeemer, grant us, with all the faithful departed, the sure benefits of your son's saving passion and glorious resurrection that, in the last day, when you gather up all things in Christ, we may with them enjoy the fullness of your promises, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **The Lord's prayer**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and glory are yours

Now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

1 Thessalonians ch4 v1-12

4 As for other matters, brothers and sisters, 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 your own body in a way that is holy and honourable, 5 not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

9 Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

This is the Word of God.

### **Talk**

In our studies of 1 Thessalonians we have seen that in chapters 1-3 Paul refers back to his visit and what followed. In chapters 4 and 5 Paul addresses the present and the future life of the Thessalonians together. He does this by exhorting and instructing them in how to live.

It is not enough to preach the gospel, but we have to live it out and how it effects our decisions and morals is called ethics. How do we conduct ourselves in business? How are we involved in the

community on issues like poverty, education, homelessness, human trafficking? Are we promoting family life, sexual fidelity? Are we promoting a simpler and more content lifestyle?

If we are to teach these things and seek to live them out, then we have to walk and act as God commands. Paul's letter explains first the gospel and then what difference it makes to how the Thessalonians live. It becomes clear that although we are saved by grace, we are not free to ignore God's laws and commandments.

As Christians we live in the power of the Holy Spirit and a function of the spirit is to write God's laws in our hearts and minds. Jer31v33 "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people"

The gospel affects every aspect of our lives and Paul therefore exhorts us to holiness, warns of the suffering and promises heaven and blessings. Basically, we hear the good news, we respond to Jesus, lead a changed life and do good works all of which is pleasing to God.

We need to keep the gospel simple and encourage each other to live it out. We do this by following God's laws and the 10 commandments as they are taught so that the gospel and law are both learnt and applied.

A mistake often made is that we are so worried that we will offend people that we dilute the law until anybody can follow it because it makes no difference to our life. A Christian life should be different. A Christian life should be a holy one, worshipping God and following his commands.

In v1-2 Paul speaks with the authority which is from Jesus. The teaching is not his own personal choices. The words are stronger than asking or urging they are more like an order to a soldier. This is about a life which is pleasing to God and Jesus said in Jn8v29 "I always do what pleases the Father" so if Jesus did it we should do likewise.

This is life changing because it is no longer about pleasing ourselves but pleasing God and about making choices in our lives from a godly perspective. We can do this by knowing gods' word the bible but also expressing our love of God by wanting to serve him and in this task we are helped by the Holy Spirit. This is a lifelong task which we do learn about more and more.

Paul then moves on to how our lives should change when we become Christians. Firstly, we are sanctified which is the word for being made holy. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as he renews our soul and it is an ongoing process as we allow the Holy Spirit more influence in our lives we become more holy more sanctified.

Then Paul addresses the matter of sex probably because the mix of Roman and Greek cultures gave rise to sexual promiscuity. Thessalonica was associated with the worship of deities called Cabiri whose rites saw gross immorality. Other cities had different gods but the level of immorality was similar.

The world often paints Christians as prudish and having a poor view of sex. However, the bible teaches that sex is a God given gift to be enjoyed within a loving relationship of marriage. It also teaches that uncontrolled sexual gratification can be very destructive. That is why Paul uses the word avoid, but maybe abstain would be a better explanation of his meaning.

In V4-5 Paul outlines a relationship in which each person is self-controlled and acts in a holy and honourable manner. This means there is no room for aggression, violence and cruelty either physically or mentally in all behaviour not just sexual behaviour. Here the phrase 'control his own body' is often written "to live with" or "to acquire your own wife" and they are laying the foundations of a monogamous marriage intended for companionship and procreation.

It is a call to avoid selfish desires to possess people but instead to foster an unselfish desire to love, cherish and respect. These characteristics are something that will mark out all Christians irrespective of your marital status.

In v6 there is a warning about taking advantage or abusing others and that God knows our actions and calls us to be different from the world. We know things go wrong and relationships break down and we must call on God's mercy. By his grace there may be repentance and forgiveness. There may be healing and sometimes reconciliation but often this is not humanly possible. God has called us to love those hurt in this way.

Now thinking back to the idea of new Christians and the ethics. This teaching on sexual morality is very different to the one championed by the world. Paul is contrasting several times how we who love God should act as opposed to the actions of those who don't know God. And why do we act differently? Because God is Holy and he is our God and we are his people and want to please him. This is Paul's view as a God centred man.

So again, how do we please God? By living under God's law and by calling on his grace and mercy to help us. We do this by allowing the Holy Spirit God has given to guide us and gift us so that we become holy. So, without holiness it is impossible to live a life pleasing to God.

In the last three verses of our reading Paul explains that it is God who has taught Christians to love each other enabled by the Holy Spirit changing their hearts and this is evidenced in their changed lives. The connection you feel to a group is often due to the relationships. Paul acknowledges this and calls us to do more and more to see the good in others and praise them and encourage them. It is this bond between believers that enables us to meet and worship with Christians around the world or across the railway line.

Lastly Paul leaves them with three areas to work on:

Firstly, lead a quiet life. This does not mean we all retire to the country and grow wildflowers. Rather it is about being enthusiastic about our faith without being a nuisance, cultivating a calm temper and peaceful demeanour in order to win the respect of the community.

Secondly, mind your own business. It means do not be a busy body listening to tittle-tattle and gossip or interfering in matters that do not concern you. It does mean always help where you can but not to meddle for the sake of personal kudos or excitement.

Thirdly, work with your own hands. If possible, work so that you have independence and personal freedom. Above all don't be idle. Manual labour was looked down upon in Greek and Roman culture as something only done by slaves. Remember Paul worked as a tent maker to pay his way so there is no shame in working with your hands. It seems that some Thessalonians may have been living off the generosity of others and Paul gives a warning about idleness.

Paul gave this instruction so that the Thessalonian church would be a good witness in the community. The theme of sex and work that he addresses are everyday human experiences instituted by God in the book of Genesis. Christian morality is about our relationships and especially our relationship with God. Think of it this way. Children know how to please their parents and know what displeases them and act accordingly, or a wife and husband know what to do and what to avoid if their relationship is to grow. Therefore, it makes sense that we have to develop a spiritual sensitivity towards God which we do by knowing his word, the bible, and by being guided by his Spirit into a deeper relationship.

The call Paul makes is to be unselfish. Loving others helps us to serve God and follow his command "do to others as you would have them do to you" Matt ch7v12 and this verse is a good starting place. Following God's eternal laws leads to freedom from selfishness because as we live to please God, we are therefore free from societies fads and trends and often self-centred individualistic opinions.

We are called by God to continue growing and as Paul puts it to keep on keeping on because complacency and apathy are bad news for Christians. It is true that we are justified by the grace of God in sending Jesus Christ, but we are sanctified more and more by the work of the Holy Spirit. For we know that people watch us and judge the church on the way we live and act towards each other and towards them.

So, let us try to live lives that bring honour and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ and then we will be pleasing God not man.

Amen.

A closing prayer from 1 Thessalonians ch5 v23-24

*May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.*

Amen.

Thank you for listening and may God bless you this coming week.