

I Thessalonians

Chapter 4:1-18

¹ **Finally** then, brothers and sisters, we **request** and **urge** you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received **instruction** from us as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you **excel** even more. ² For you know what **instructions** we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Finally > (Strong's) the rest, the remaining

(Utley) This is literally "for the rest."

(Robertson) It does not mean actual conclusion, but merely a colloquial expression pointing towards the end (Milligan)

(Linski) "... there is evidence that the word ["finally"] (Gk. loipon) was used in Hellenistic Greek simply as a transitional particle with the meaning 'therefore', to introduce practical instruction ..."

Request > (Precept Austin) means to ask for, usually w implication of an underlying question. (The Greek word) provides the most delicate and tender expression for prayer or request with the one asking and the one being asked being on an equal level, such as the Lord Jesus asking of the Father (it is never used of men asking God for we are not on the same level as the Son is to the Father).

Urge > (Strong's) our familiar *parakaleo*

(Wuest) *I request you and I beg of you, please,*

Romans 12:1 > *Therefore I urge (parakaleo) you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

Ephesians 4:1 > *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge (parakaleo) you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*

Excel > (Strong's) to be over and above, to abound

(Wuest) *that you superabound yet more and more*

Instructions > (Precept Austin) literally describes the handing on of an announcement from one person to the side of another or the passing along of a message from one to another such as to what must be done. It represents a directive from an authoritative source and was used of commands received from a superior and transmitted to others.

(Wuest) *For you know with a positive assurance what charges we gave you through the Lord Jesus*

Acts 16:24 > ⁴ *and he, having received such a **command**, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

Acts 5:28 > ²⁸ *saying, "We gave you **strict orders** not to continue teaching in this name,*

³ *For this is the will of God, your **sanctification**; that is, **that you abstain from sexual immorality**; ⁴ that each of you know how to **possess** his own **vessel** in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;*

Sanctification > (HELPS) a masculine noun derived from *hágios*, "holy" – *sanctification* (the process of advancing in *holiness*); use of the believer being progressively transformed by the Lord into His likeness (similarity of nature).

(Barnes) The word here rendered "sanctification" - ἁγιασμός *hagiasmos* - is not used in the Greek classics, but is several times found in the New Testament. It is rendered:

- *Holiness* > Romans 6:19, Romans 6:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Timothy 2:15; and Hebrews 12:14
- *Sanctification* > 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, and 1 Peter 1:2

That you abstain from sexual immorality > (Vincent) In Thessalonica, besides the ordinary licentious customs of the Gentiles, immorality was fostered by the Cabeiric worship. About the time of Paul, a political sanction was given to this worship by deifying the Emperor as Cabeirus.

(Barclay) (I will only give you two of Barclay's comments about the society at that time)

So long as a man supported his wife and family there was no shame whatsoever in extra-marital relationships.

It was to men and women who had come out of a society like that that Paul wrote this paragraph. What may seem to many the merest commonplace of Christian living was to them startlingly new. One thing Christianity did was to lay down a completely new code in regard to the relationship of men and women; it is the champion of purity and the guardian of the home. This cannot be affirmed too plainly in our own day which again has seen a pronounced shift in standards of sexual behavior.

Possess> (Strong's) to acquire. Usage > (a) I acquire, win, get, purchase, buy, (b) I possess, win mastery over.

Vessel > (Strong's) *skeuos* > usage > a vessel to contain liquid; a vessel of mercy or wrath; any instrument by which anything is done; a household utensil; of ships: tackle.

(Martin) The use of *skeuos*, "vessel," to describe one's body is more common in Greek writings, and its use to describe a woman or wife is more common in Jewish writings. Elsewhere Paul never used *skeuos* to describe a wife but *gune*, "woman."

(Alexander Whyte) He used *skeuos* of one's own body elsewhere (**Rom. 9:22-23; 2 Cor. 4:7**; cf. 1 Sam. 21:5).

Rom. 9:22-23 > ²² *What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with great patience objects (skeuos) of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon objects (skeuos) of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,*

2 Cor. 4:7 > ⁷ *But we have this treasure in earthen containers (skeuos), so that the extraordinary greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;*

⁶ *and that no one violate the rights and take advantage of his brother or sister in the matter, because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you previously and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in sanctification.*

Violate the rights > (Strong's) to step over, overreach. Usage > I transgress; I go beyond, overreach, defraud.

(Vincent) It is the overstepping of the line between mine and thine.

(Precept Austin) The idea is to step over a boundary, to break over a barrier, to go beyond prescribed limits, to exceed the proper limits, go over the line, go beyond the bounds, go pass the law.

Take advantage of > (Precept Austin) (*pleonekteo* from *pleíon* = more + *écho* = have <> *pleonektes* is one who wants more, person covetous of something that others have, a defrauder for gain)

God has not called us for impurity, but in sanctification > (Robertson) Sharp contrast made still sharper by the two prepositions *ἐπ* (on the basis of) and *ἐν* (in the sphere of).

⁸ *Therefore, the one who rejects this is not rejecting man, but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*

Rejects ... rejecting > (Strong's) to do away with what has been laid down, set aside. Usage > I annul, make of no effect, set aside, ignore, slight; I break faith with.

(Utley) This is literally "treat as of little value."

This is a critical verse! Understand what the "this" is referring to and the admonition given.

(Constable) The serious and even threatening tone of vv. 6-8 suggests very strongly that Paul was dealing with a problem that had actually emerged in the community at Thessalonica and that he viewed with considerable concern

⁹ ***Now as to the love of the brothers and sisters, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;***

Now as > (Precept Austin) *peri de* > This is an interesting way to begin this section and raises the possibility that Paul may be addressing some specific questions from the Thessalonians that were relayed to him by Timothy upon his return (see similar intro in 1Cor 7:1 where Paul begins to respond to a series of questions). Notice that Paul begins 1Thessalonians 5 with these same words ("now as to") again suggesting he is addressing their specific concerns about the Day of the Lord.

You yourselves ... taught by God > (MacArthur) Paul's use of the emphatic expression you yourselves indicates that, apart from him or any other teacher, the believers were taught by God (*theodidaktos*, literally "God taught," and used only here in the New Testament) to love one another.

(Precept Austin) *theodidaktos* > from *Theós* = God + *didasko* = to teach) (only Scriptural use of this Greek word) means divinely instructed or taught of God

(Utley) This is present tense ... the teaching continues as the indwelling Spirit continues (cf. 1 Thess. 5:1; John 14:26; 16:13; 2 Cor. 9:1; 1 John 2:20,27), which is a sign of the New Covenant (cf. **Jer. 31:33-34**).

Jer. 31:33-34 > ³³ "For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD: "I will put My law within them and write it on their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ They will not teach again, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their wrongdoing, and their sin I will no longer remember."

To love one another > (Tertullian ... ca AD 192) who says the pagans remark in amazement > "Behold how these Christians love one another."

¹⁰ *for indeed you practice it toward all the brothers and sisters who are in all Macedonia. But **we urge you**, brothers and sisters, to excel even more,*

We urge you > (Constable) The Greek text has only one command, "we urge," an object, "you," followed by four infinitives (vv. 10b, 11), and a final clause that gives the intended outcome (v. 12).

1. To excel even more
2. To lead a quiet life
3. To attend to your own business
4. To work with your own hands
5. So that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need

¹¹ *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 instructed you, ¹² so that you will **behave** properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.*

Make it your ambition > (MacArthur) In that phrase Paul used the two verb forms in almost a contradictory fashion. Make it your ambition (from *philotimeomai*) means to be zealous and strive eagerly, even to consider it an honor (as in Rom. 15:20; 2 Cor. 5:9), whereas lead a quiet life (from *hēsuzhazō*) means to be silent (as in Luke 14:4; Acts 21:14), not speaking out inappropriately (see 1 Tim. 2:11–12), remaining at rest and tranquil (as in Luke 23:56).

Philotimeomai > (Precept Austin) from *philos* = friend, loved + *time* = honor

To live a quiet life > (Walvoord) To "live quietly" could be translated "seek restlessly to be still" or "seek earnestly to be still."

Attend to your own business > (MacArthur) Paul issued them a follow-up exhortation in **2 Thessalonians 3:11–12**: ¹¹ *For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.* ¹² *Now we command and exhort such persons in the Lord Jesus Christ to work peacefully and eat their own bread.*

(Precept Austin) *attend (prasso)* means to be occupied with, to accomplish or to practice.

Behave > (Precept Austin) *peripateo* > from *peri* = about, around + *pateo* = walk, tread) means literally to walk around, to go here and there in walking, to tread all around.

¹³ *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are **asleep**, so that you will not grieve as indeed the rest of mankind do, who have no hope.*

(MacArthur) They feared that they had missed the Rapture, since the persecution they were suffering (3:3–4) caused some to fear they were in the Day of the Lord, which they obviously had not expected to experience.

Asleep > (T.E. Wilson) *Death* has been changed to *sleep* by the work of Christ. It is an apt metaphor in which the whole concept of death is transformed. ‘Christ made it the name for death in the dialect of the church (Acts 7:60)

J. B. Smith > **John 14:1-3** > *Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father’s house are many rooms; if that were not so, I would have told you, because I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be.*

JOHN 14:1-3

trouble	v. 1
believe	v. 1
God, Me	v. 1
told you	v. 2
come again	v. 3
receive you	v. 3
to myself	v. 3
be where I am	v. 3

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sorrow	v. 13
believe	v. 14
Jesus, God	v. 14
say to you	v. 15
coming of the Lord	v. 15
caught up	v. 17
to meet the Lord	v. 17
ever be with the Lord	v. 17

¹⁴ **For if we believe** that Jesus died and rose from the dead, **so also** God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.

The whole chapter of I Corinthians 15 could be studied as a companion to these verses.

¹⁵ *For we say this to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

¹⁶ *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*

The dead in Christ will rise first > (Wiersbe) This does not mean that He will put the elements of the body together again, for resurrection is not “reconstruction.” Paul argued for the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:35ff. He pointed out that the resurrection of the human body is like the growing of a plant from a seed. The flower is not the identical seed that was planted, yet there is continuity from seed to plant. Christians shall receive glorified bodies, like the glorified body of Christ (Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Cor. 15:47–58).

(Wiersbe) The Old Testament Scriptures taught this doctrine (resurrection) (Job 14:13–15; 19:23–27; Ps. 16:9–11; Dan. 12:2). The fact that Jesus arose from the dead proves that there is a resurrection.

Job 19:26-27 > *Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I will see God, ²⁷ Whom I, on my part, shall behold for myself, and whom my eyes will see, and not another.*

Psalm 16:9-10 > *Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. ¹⁰ For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.*

Daniel 12:2 > ² *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.*

¹⁷ *Then we who are alive, who remain, **will be caught up together with them** in the clouds **to meet the Lord in the air**, and so we will always be with the Lord.*

Will be caught up together with them > **I Corinthians 15:52** > ⁵² *in a **moment**, in the **twinkling of an eye**, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed*

Moment > (HELPS) *átomos* (from A "not" and *tomóteros*, "to cut") – properly, *not* able to cut (divide) because *too small* to be measured, like a "split second"; an "*instant*"; an *indivisible* moment of time, too short to measure" (Souter).

Twinkling of an eye > (Strong's) any rapid movement, spec. a twinkling (of lights or the eye)

To meet the Lord in the air > (Walvoord) If we want to discover where believers will go after meeting Christ in the air, we can look to the parallel passage in **John 14:1-3** ... This is further supported in the last part of the preceding chapter where Paul spoke of our being *so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the ^lcoming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. (3:13).*

John 14:1-3 > *Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many rooms; if that were not so, I would have told you, because I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be.*

¹⁸ *Therefore, comfort one another with these words.*