

THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES: DIRECTION FOR THE LAST DAYS

IV. Comprehensive Practical Living For New Converts

(1 Thessalonians 4:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. Paul's epistles to the believers at Thessalonica addressed new converts out of raw paganism who faced persecution and false teaching, a recipe for spiritual defeat if they failed to get adequate spiritual insight.
- B. These needs are like what many believers face in today's godless world, so we view 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 on comprehensive practical living for new converts for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Comprehensive Practical Living For New Converts, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

- A. Since Paul had to flee from persecution at Thessalonica soon after leading his readers to Christ (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 688-689), he was concerned about their **basic** spiritual needs when he wrote this epistle.
- B. Having dealt with "personal commendations and explanations" in 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3:13, Paul turned to "practical instructions and exhortations" in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:24; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 689-690.
- C. Thus, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 that begins this practical section presents a comprehensive overview of practical Christian living for new converts, what also applies to seasoned believers (as follows):
 1. In general, God wants all believers to aim to please God in their lives, and to abound in this more and more as they grow in their spiritual lives, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2.
 2. Specifically, there are three major realms of practical living that God wants us to master, 1 Thess. 4:3-12:
 - a. God wants us to be sanctified in our sexual conduct, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8:
 - i. First, God wants us to avoid sexual immorality, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6a. As explained by the Mosaic Law in Leviticus 18:1-23 and verified by the model God established at creation with Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:20b-25, sexual immorality is any sexual activity that occurs outside the permanent marital union of a male-at-birth adult man and a female-at-birth adult woman.
 - ii. Second, God's **reasons** for avoiding sexual immorality are threefold, 1 Thessalonians 4:6b-8:
 - 1) Immorality is a sin that God will punish, so we should not commit immorality to avoid being punished by God, 1 Thessalonians 4:6b.
 - 2) Immorality violates God's calling that the believer not sin, 1 Thessalonians 4:7.
 - 3) Immorality rejects God's instruction to avoid immorality in contradiction to the Lord's giving the believer the **Holy** or "Sanctified" or "Separate-from-sin" Spirit at salvation, 1 Thess. 4:8.
 - b. God wants us to be sanctified in our Christian brotherly love, 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10:
 - i. Paul clarified that he did not need to write to the Thessalonian believers about loving one another as Christians, for they themselves had been taught by God to love one another, 1 Thess. 4:9.
 - ii. Indeed, their love had been expressed to other believers throughout Macedonia, 1 Thess. 4:10a.
 - iii. Paul stipulated that this Christian love expand more and more toward God's people, 1 Thess. 4:10b.
 - c. God wants us to be sanctified in our conduct in society, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12:
 - i. Paul urged the new Thessalonian believers to make it their ambition to live a quiet life, that is, to function in their lives in ways that would mark them as quiet, law-abiding citizens, 1 Thess. 4:11a.
 - ii. To that end, Paul taught these new converts to perform certain functions, 1 Thessalonian 4:11b-12:
 - 1) They were to mind their own affairs, not to meddle in the affairs of other people in the community as doing so only irritates others and hurt one's testimony, 1 Thess. 4:11b ESV.
 - 2) These new converts were to work with their own hands to earn a living, 1 Thessalonians 4:11c. There were two benefits from this kind of activity (as follows):
 - a) In working with their own hands to earn a living, these believers would win the respect of unbelievers outside the Church as a good testimony for Christ, 1 Thessalonians 4:11d.
 - b) In working with their own hands for a living, they would not depend on the unsaved for their livelihood welfare, what would further protect their testimony before the unsaved world and provide for their own financial security, 1 Thessalonians 4:11e.

Lesson: *Comprehensive practical living for new converts and all Christians involves keeping sexual expression exclusively for Biblical marriage, expanding the expression of our Christian love for other believers and living quiet lives before the world as defined by minding our own affairs and working with our own hands for a living.*

Application: *May all of us believers in Christ heed Paul's instruction on comprehensive practical living.*