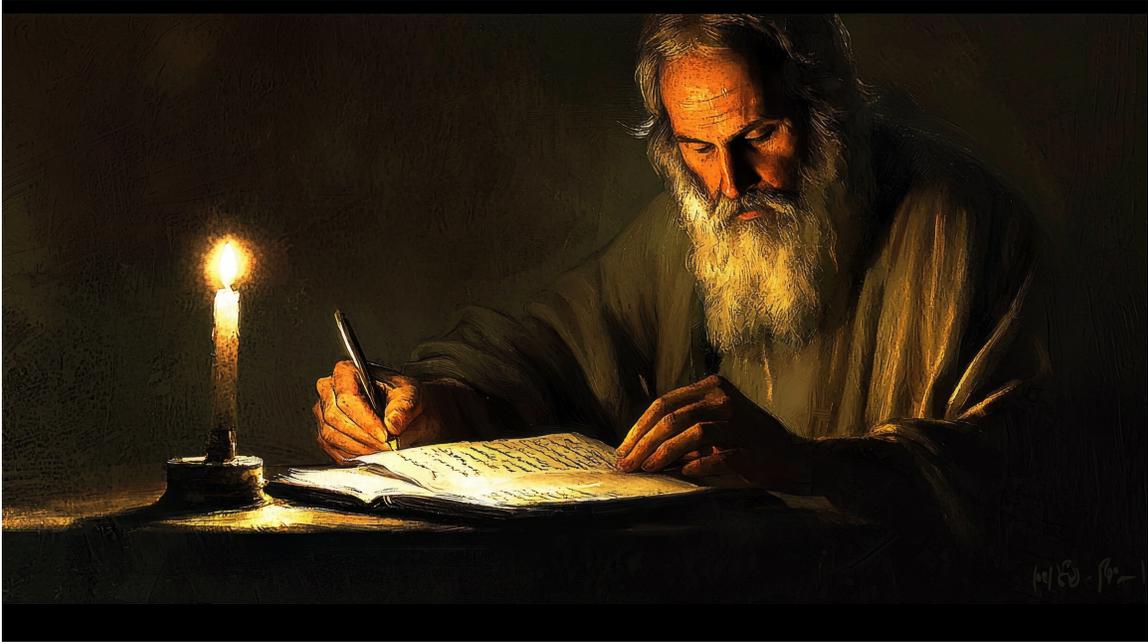


The First Epistle to the Thessalonians - Chapter 4



That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without,
and that ye may have lack of nothing.

— 1 Thessalonians 4:12

Introduction



Chapter 4 turns doctrine into daily practice. Paul urges a life that pleases God more and more: sanctification in sexual purity, brotherly love that keeps increasing, a quiet diligence that earns respect, and a steady hope in Christ's return that comforts the grieving.

This is Christianity with work boots on—holy, simple, useful, and hopeful.

Structure of 1 Thessalonians 3:1–13



Paul and the Brethren — Their Feelings While Absent

Letter	Section	Verses	Description
A	Exhortation	4:1–12	Walk before God and men
A ¹	Walk before God	4:1	Pleasing God
B	Commandments	4:2	Authority of the Lord Jesus
C	God's Will: Sanctification	4:3–6	Purity; self-control; no defrauding
C'	God's Call: Sanctification	4:7–10	Holiness and brotherly love
B'	Commandments	4:11	Quiet diligence; work with your hands
A ¹	Walk before men	4:12	Honest conduct before outsiders
D	Instruction	4:13–18	Comfort concerning those asleep
D ¹	Instruction necessary	4:13	Not sorrowing without hope
D ²	First reason	4:14	God brings the dead with Jesus
D ³	Second reason	4:15	Living do not precede the dead
D ⁴	Third reason	4:16–17	Gathered together to meet the Lord
D ¹	Conclusion / Application	4:18	Comfort one another

- 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 honor;
- 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.

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.

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.

Biblical Observations

Observation 1 - Walking to please God is progressive, not static

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.

- *how you ought to walk...* Paul knows obedience already exists but presses for growth: “abound more and more.” The Christian walk is not about arrival but direction.

Commandments are not suggestions; they are given “by the Lord Jesus,” establishing divine authority over daily conduct. Spiritual maturity shows itself in steady forward movement, not stagnation.

- Personal Application

Identify one area where growth has stalled. Ask God for grace to take one obedient step forward this week.

Biblical Observations

Observation 2 - Sanctification is God's stated will

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 honor;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence,

- ✦ even as the Gentiles which know not God:

- *this is the will of God...* God's will is made explicit: sanctification. This centers on sexual purity and self-control, contrasted with living driven by uncontrolled desire. Knowing God changes how one governs the body. Holiness is not repression; it is mastery under God's order.

- Personal Application

Where does discipline need strengthening? Replace a habit that weakens self-control with one that strengthens it.

Biblical Observations

Observation 3 - Sin is never private when it harms others

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.

- *No man go beyond...* To “go beyond and defraud” a brother warns that immoral behavior damages community, families, and trust. The Lord is described as avenger—not because He is harsh, but because He is just. Holiness protects others, not just oneself.
- Personal Application...

Consider whether any behavior risks harming someone else. Choose repentance early, before damage multiplies.

Biblical Observations

Observation 4 - Faithfulness in Others Brings Life and Strength

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.

- *Unto holiness...* The call is clear: God calls unto holiness, not uncleanness. To disregard this call is not merely disobedience toward people or teaching—it is rejection of God Himself, who gives His Holy Spirit to enable obedience. Holiness is Spirit-empowered, not self-manufactured.
- Personal Application

Pray deliberately for the Spirit's help in one specific area of obedience today.

Biblical Observations

Observation 5 - Brotherly love is learned from God and must increase

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;

- *brotherly love*...Love among believers is described as God-taught. Yet even genuine love must grow. Spiritual health is shown not only by correct belief, but by expanding care for others beyond convenience and comfort.
- Personal Application

Intentionally act in love toward one brother this week—practically, not theoretically.

Biblical Observations

Observation 6 – Quiet diligence is a Christian Witness

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.

- *Study to be quiet...*Believers are exhorted to live quietly, mind their own affairs, and work honestly. This instruction guards against disorder, dependency, and unnecessary offense. A faithful work ethic earns respect from those outside the faith and reflects stability under God's rule.
- Personal Application

Examine your daily rhythms. Where can order, diligence, or restraint better reflect Christ?

Biblical Observations

Observation 7 – Grief is real, but hope redefines it

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.

- *That ye sorrow not...* Paul does not forbid sorrow; he forbids hopeless sorrow. Death is described as “sleep” for those in Christ, grounded in the certainty of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Hope rests not in escape, but in resurrection.
- Personal Application

When facing loss, anchor your comfort in what God has promised, not in what feels immediate.

Biblical Observations

Observation 8 – The gathering occurs at the visible return of Christ

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.

- *For this we say unto you...* Paul speaks “by the word of the Lord,” placing this event at the coming of the Lord, not before tribulation. The Lord descends visibly, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God—language consistently associated elsewhere with the end of the age, after tribulation, not a secret removal.
- *With the trump of God...* The dead in Christ rise first; then the living are gathered together with them. This gathering is corporate, audible, visible, and triumphant. It aligns with Christ’s own words that the elect are gathered after tribulation (see Matthew 24:29–31) and with the resurrection at the last day (see John 6:39–40).
- Personal Application...

Let hope be rooted in Christ’s return and resurrection—not escape from difficulty, but victory through endurance.

Biblical Observations

Observation 9 – The purpose of prophecy here is comfort, not speculation

18 Wherefore comfort one another

‡ with these words.

- *Comfort one another...* Paul’s conclusion is pastoral: “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” The teaching is meant to strengthen faith, steady grief, and unify believers—not to divide or distract. Sound doctrine produces peace and perseverance.
- Personal Application...

Use these truths to comfort someone who is suffering rather than to argue timelines.

Chapter 4 Review

Summary

1 Thessalonians 4 unites holy living with future hope. Believers are called to walk in sanctification, love deeply, live responsibly, and face death with confidence rooted in resurrection. The chapter does not promise escape from tribulation but assurance beyond it. The gathering of believers occurs at Christ's revealed return, after endurance, when death itself is defeated.

Holiness prepares the believer to stand. Hope sustains the believer to the end.

Key Movements in the Text

1. 4:1–2 — Call to progress
Believers are exhorted to walk so as to please God and to abound more and more, grounding daily conduct in obedience to the Lord's commands.
2. 4:3–8 — Sanctification defined
God's will is clearly stated as holiness, particularly in self-control and purity. This call protects both the individual and the community and is empowered by the Holy Spirit.
3. 4:9–10 — Brotherly love encouraged
Love among believers is taught by God Himself and is already present, yet it must continue to grow and expand.
4. 4:11–12 — Quiet diligence instructed
A stable, disciplined life marked by honest work and personal responsibility serves as a witness to those outside the faith.
5. 4:13–14 — Grief reframed by hope
Believers are instructed not to sorrow without hope, because Jesus' resurrection guarantees resurrection for those who sleep in Him.
6. 4:15–17 — Resurrection and gathering explained
At the visible return of Christ—after tribulation—the dead in Christ are raised first, and then the living are gathered together with them to meet the Lord, remaining with Him forever.
7. 4:18 — Comfort emphasized
The purpose of this teaching is not speculation but encouragement: believers are to comfort one another with these words.

Chapter 4 Review

Questions for Reflection

1. Where am I being called to grow “more and more” in holiness rather than remaining spiritually comfortable?
2. How does my daily conduct reflect my hope in the resurrection and Christ’s return?
3. In what ways can I intentionally increase in brotherly love this week?
4. Does my work ethic and daily discipline provide a steady witness to those outside the faith?
5. How does knowing the gathering occurs after endurance shape the way I face hardship now?

One Memory Verse

1 Thessalonians 4:12 —

That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.