



What Are We Waiting For? – 1 Thessalonians Walking In The Right Direction

Date: Sunday 25th September

Speaker: Adam Pipe (City Centre Site), Jeff Stamps (South Site)

Key Verses: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Talk Summary:

1. Our Walk

Now Paul is going to call the Thessalonians to holiness in their daily walk. Paul encourages the Thessalonians to *'walk and please God'* - the word walk here refers to how we live. God is deeply concerned with our daily walk, with how we live the Christian life (see 2:12). Paul says "look, you have a map, you have instructions how to live, I want you to walk in that direction." Are we following the map that God has given us through His word and His Spirit? God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). We are called to take the next step in the right direction, then keep moving forwards.

When we walk in the right direction, this, Paul says, pleases God. It is so easy to walk in a way to please ourselves. When we live lives set apart for God under His royal rule it puts a smile upon God's face. When we walk in the opposite direction, rather than please God we are rejecting Him and His Holy Spirit (4:8 & 5:19). Paul is giving us our motivation here: to walk in a way that pleases God.

In verse 1 Paul acknowledges that the Thessalonians are walking in a way that pleases God but he encourages them to keep moving forward and to excel even more. In terms of our Christian walk and our pursuit of becoming like Jesus, have we settled in our comfort zone, the status quo? Paul is saying take your spiritual devotion to another level and do so even more! A decision to follow Jesus does not mark the end of our journey—it is only the beginning. We are called to keep moving forward.

2. Walking towards Jesus

In verse 3 Paul says: *'It is God's will that you should be sanctified'* (or be holy). The word sanctification or holy occurs three times in this passage and it means to be set apart or dedicated to God. Now in the Bible there are three aspects to our sanctification or holiness:

a. Position

When you become a follower of Jesus your position changes. You are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of King Jesus. This is what Paul says in Colossians chapter 1 and through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are now holy in God's sight.

b. Present or Progressive

This is the progressive growth in becoming more like Jesus and bringing more of your life under his rule and reign. To be purified in heart and mind. This is what Paul is talking about here in this passage. It is about our walk, the way we live, becoming more like Jesus every day. The Holy Spirit leads God's people into holiness and transforms them to reflect more and more of God's character in their lives (Gal 5:16). As we take time to engage with the Spirit through times of prayer, solitude, silence, study, worship etc. the Spirit produces in us the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

c. Prospective

The final P is 'prospective' which refers to our future sanctification. When Jesus returns and brings His kingdom in all its fullness, we will be transformed forever and dwell in God's glory (5:23). Until that day we are called to this progressive walk in the direction of holiness – to walk towards Jesus.

3. 'That' Walk

But Paul does not leave this in just general terms. Paul spells it out in three clauses beginning with the word "that" in verses 3b, 4, and 6.

a. That you should avoid sexual immorality

Paul tells the Thessalonians in verse 3 is that they should 'avoid' or 'keep away from' sexual immorality. The word Paul uses means *'to hold back, keep off, be distant.'* The message of 1 Thessalonians 4:3 is to run away from sexual immorality. Too often we have tried to get as close as we can to the line but Paul is telling us to do the opposite and to run away.

b. That you should learn to control your own body

Secondly in verses 4 & 5 Paul tells the Thessalonians to control their bodies in a way which is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust. This verse can also apply to looking after and caring for our bodies. It applies to our eating, to our sleeping, to our exercise – too much or too little.

c. That you should not wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister

Finally, in verse 6 Paul says that we should not wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. We are called to love and honour others rather than take advantage of them and use them. When we wrong or take advantage of others we dishonour their personhood as children of God.

The call to holiness is a call to walk in the direction of Jesus to keep moving forward in the direction of Him, cooperating with the Holy Spirit and seeking to become more like Him in all areas of our lives.

Worship Song: Purify My Heart (Refiner's Fire) <https://youtu.be/SQclw7Ptxwc>

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? *(Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)*

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- Welcome/Icebreaker Question: Have you ever got lost on a walk? Share stories with the group.
- How is walking a visual aid which teaches us how to live?
- What is required of a person who desires to 'walk and please God' (4:1)?
 - How do we walk in step with the Holy Spirit?
- How do we excel even more?
 - Are there areas in our lives where we have settled and need to move forwards?
- What does it mean to be sanctified or made holy?
 - How would you explain it in it if you were teaching the kids?
- Why did Paul begin this series of exhortations with the topic of sexual immorality?
- What does Paul mean by "abstain"?
 - How can you practice this today?
- What does it mean to control our bodies in a way that is holy and honourable?
- Dallas Willard says, *'What brings about our transformation into Christlikeness is our direct, personal interaction with Christ through the Spirit. The Spirit makes Christ present to us and draws us toward his likeness.'*
 - Discuss ways in which we can increase our personal interaction with Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Witness - *How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?*

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?
 - Upcoming Events (*go to bvc.so/whats-on for details*)
 - Prayer Ministry Training – 2nd October, 9am (City Centre & South Site)