

# Behavioral Imperatives

Study 5. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

by James T. Bartsch, WordExplain.com

## A. Improve in Your Lifestyle. 4:1-2

1. Paul appealed to the Thessalonian Christians to comply with his following directives. What two words did he use to show his urgency? 4:1
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Whom did he cite as the authority behind his directives? 4:1 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is this the first time he had discussed these matters with them? 4:1 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Paul used two terms to describe Christians' lifestyle. What are they? 4:1
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup>
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did he believe they were already living an appropriate lifestyle? 4:1 \_\_\_\_\_
6. What expectations did he have about their lifestyle? 4:1 They were to \_\_\_\_\_
7. What had Paul previously given them by the authority of the Lord Jesus (literally, "through the Lord")? 4:2 \_\_\_\_\_

---

<sup>1</sup> 4:1 - walk: Paul often used the word "walk" as a metaphor for living. "Walk" here is a present tense infinitive of *peripateō* (4043), and it emphasizes one's habitual lifestyle. As Christians we take many steps in our lives. Each step we take and the over-all emphasis of our daily living should honor God. I have used the term "lifestyle" as a contemporary expression of the Biblical term "walking." Paul used this term 32 times, 3 times in this chapter alone (Rom. 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 14:15; 1 Cor. 3:3; 7:17; 2 Cor. 4:2; 5:7; 10:2, 3; 12:18; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; Php. 3:17, 18; Col. 1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1, 1, 12; 2 Thess. 3:6, 11).

**B. Be Sanctified in Your Moral Behavior. 4:3-8**

1. In general terms what is God's will for all Christians? 4:3 Our \_\_\_\_\_ . What does this word mean? <sup>2</sup>
2. In specific terms in this topic, what is God's will for all Christians? That we should do what? 4:3 \_\_\_\_\_ <sup>3</sup>
3. 1 Thess. 4:4 seems to be directed particularly at men (masculine pronouns are used). Each of them were to know how to do what? <sup>x</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ in sanctification and honor...
  - a. <sup>x</sup>The word in question is the word *skeuos*, 4632. The most frequent translation of this word is "vessel," as here in the NASB. (Here are Paul's uses of *skeuos*: Rom. 9:21, 22, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Thess. 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:20, 21.)
  - b. <sup>x</sup>Let's compare some differing translations of this word:
    - 1) NASB - vessel
    - 2) ESV - \_\_\_\_\_
    - 3) NIV - \_\_\_\_\_
    - 4) KJV, NKJV - \_\_\_\_\_

---

<sup>2</sup> 4:3 - sanctification: The word is *hagiasmos* (38), used in Rom. 6:19, 22; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Thess. 4:3, 4, 7; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:2). The basic idea of sanctification is to be set apart – to God from sin. There are at least two levels of sanctification: (1) God sets us apart to Himself through His Spirit. (2) We are to work at setting ourselves apart from sin to God.

Category (1): God has chosen us for salvation through the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit and our believing the truth (2 Thess. 2:13). We Christians have been "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled by His blood" (1 Pet. 1:1-2). Jesus is the source of our sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30).

Category (2): If we present the members of our body as slaves to righteousness, it results in sanctification (Rom. 6:19, 22). Sanctification demands that we Christians be morally pure (1 Thess. 4:3, 4, 7). Women will be preserved (perhaps "find fulfillment" – see the context) in child-bearing if their children "continue in faith, love, and sanctification along with self-restraint" (1 Tim. 2:15). We are commanded to "pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

<sup>3</sup> 4:3 - abstain from sexual immorality: "The noun rendered 'sexual immorality' (*tēs porneias*) is here used in its comprehensive meaning to denote 'any and every form of sexual practice that lies outside the circle of God's revealed will, namely adultery, premarital and extramarital intercourse, homosexuality, and other perversions'" (D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, p. 179, quoting Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, p. 701).

- c. <sup>x</sup>The more accurate translation is “vessel.” But what does “vessel” mean here? There are two possibilities:
- 1) It refers to a man’s \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup>
  - 2) It refers to a man’s \_\_\_\_\_ (cf. 1 Peter 3:7)
- d. <sup>x</sup>Here is another factor to consider: The word translated “possess” in 1 Th. 4:4 is *ptaomai*, 2932. Notice how it is used: Matt. 10:9; Luke 18:12; 21:19; Acts 1:18; 8:20; 22:28; 1 Th. 4:4. So it could mean “purchase (or acquire) his wife” (see the footnotes in NASB, ESV, NIV).
- e. <sup>x</sup>Regardless if *skeuos* refers to one’s body or one’s wife, how is a Godly Christian man supposed to treat it (or her)?
- 1) In \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) and \_\_\_\_\_
- f. <sup>x</sup>So the results are the same!
4. How is a Christian man *not* supposed to possess his body (or wife)? 4:5  
Not in \_\_\_\_\_
5. What class of people typically do possess their bodies (or wives) in lustful passion? 4:5 \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is generally true about the Gentiles? 4:5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

<sup>4</sup> 4:4 - vessel: On the one hand, it seems more plausible to conclude that by “vessel” Paul was referring to a man’s own body. The body is a vessel or container of all that a person is – his soul, his spirit, his intellect, his person. How can one’s wife be said to be one’s own vessel or container? Her body is her vessel, not her husband’s.

On the other hand, while a man could certainly purchase or acquire a wife, how could he possibly purchase or acquire his own body? Furthermore, Paul wrote that a man does not have (sexual) authority over his own body, but his wife does. Moreover, a woman does not have (sexual) authority over her own body, but her husband does ( 1 Cor. 7:3-5). On balance, I would have to say that at this point, I lean towards the option of identifying a man’s vessel as his wife.

7. If a man does not possess his own *skeuos* (body or wife) in sanctification and honor, what does he do to his brother <sup>5</sup> in the matter? 4:6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Who is the one who exacts vengeance on behalf of the defrauded brother? 4:6 \_\_\_\_\_
9. Is this the first time Paul had talked to them about these things? 4:6 \_\_\_\_\_
10. To what has God *not* called us? 4:7 \_\_\_\_\_
11. In what *has* God called us? 4:7 \_\_\_\_\_
12. If someone rejects Paul's commands about sexual purity, whom is he *not* rejecting? 4:8 \_\_\_\_\_
13. Whom *is* he rejecting? 4:8 \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Increase in Brotherly Love. 4:9-10**

1. About what do the Thessalonians have no need to be instructed? 4:9  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who has already taught them? 4:9 \_\_\_\_\_
3. What has He taught them? 4:9 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Toward whom are the Thessalonian Christians already practicing love? 4:10 \_\_\_\_\_
5. What does Paul urge them to do? 4:10 \_\_\_\_\_

---

<sup>5</sup> 4:6 - brother: Though some take this to mean a brother by virtue of creation, I have difficulty agreeing with that. I think the assumption is that he is a Christian brother.

4:6 - defraud: The one defrauded could be the father of the violated woman. Or he could be the husband or even the future husband. If a young man has sexual relations with an unmarried young woman and she later marries another man, the first has defrauded the second. Inevitably the pre-marital sexual encounter will adversely affect the subsequent marriage. If the promiscuous man ends up marrying the single woman he has violated, he has defrauded her father. And of course, a sexual encounter with a married woman always defrauds her husband. There are always disastrous consequences from sex outside of marriage. God can bring forgiveness when asked, of course (1 John 1:9), but scars of one sort or another often remain (2 Samuel 11-20).

Incidentally, no blame whatever should be placed on a child conceived out of wedlock. He or she had no choice in the matter.

**D. Be Diligent in Work. 4:11-12**

1. Paul urged the Thessalonians to make it their ambition to do three things. He had already commanded them about this before, when he was with them. What are they? 4:11
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Paul gave two reasons why the Thessalonians should be diligent in their work what were they?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup>
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_

**E. Reflecting on what we have studied:**

1. Paul commanded the Thessalonian believers, and us, to continue to excel in a Godly lifestyle (4:1-2). What are some practical suggestions you might offer as to how Christians can continually improve at Godly living?
  
2. Unfortunately, it seems to me, the moral behavior (4:3-8) of people who call themselves Christians in this country has deteriorated in the last 60-100 years.
  - a. Do you agree?
  - b. What are the causes of the decline?
  - c. What suggestions do you have for combating it in your own life and in the lives of your family members?
  
3. What are some specific ways we can excel at brotherly love (4:9-10)?

---

<sup>6</sup> 4:12 - so that you will behave properly toward outsiders: Literally, "in order that you might continually walk becomingly to those on the outside." "Those on the outside," of course, refers to those on the outside of the Christian faith, i.e. unbelievers. Unfortunately, some in the Thessalonian church did not take Paul's instructions to heart. They refused to be busy at work but became, instead, busy-bodies (see 2 Thess. 3:6-12).

4. In the area of work and personal diligence (4:11-12), do you think the work ethic in our country has declined in the last sixty years?
  - a. Do you think Christians have been affected by this decline?
  - b. Can you give some specific examples of how a Christian's work ethic is either a good testimony or a poor testimony to unbelievers?

## **Study 5. Behavioral Imperatives**

### **1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**

Prepared by James T. Bartsch

Published Online June, 2012 by WordExplain.com

Email Contact: [jbartsch@wordexplain.com](mailto:jbartsch@wordexplain.com)

Bible quotations and Bible Study questions are based upon the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org))