



Women's R&R Bible Study 2024-2025

"YOUR WORDS WERE FOUND, AND I ATE THEM, AND YOUR WORD WAS TO ME THE JOY AND REJOICING OF MY HEART."

JEREMIAH 15:16

LIVING IN HOPE

LESSON 4

As we have previously mentioned, the Second Coming of Christ is mentioned in every chapter of 1 Thessalonians. In chapter one, Paul commends the Thessalonians for turning from idols to serve the living and true God, while waiting for His Son (1:9-10). They were living in constant expectation of Christ returning for His church. In chapter two, Paul tells us that the Thessalonian believers would be included in Paul's crown of rejoicing when he stands before the judgment seat of Christ. Last week, in chapter three, Paul encourages them to increase and abound in love so that God would "establish their hearts blameless in holiness" when He comes again. Now, in chapter four, Paul will take some time to explain a little more about what will happen to the believers who die before Christ returns.

The last three chapters have been very personal, straight from Paul's heart. Now he begins to advise them in practical, everyday Christian living. He desires them to grow, so he gives them some exhortations and warnings on how that growth can be accomplished in their lives. Let's pray for the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts in the area of Christian practical living.

Memory Verse of the Week: "For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." 1 Thessalonians 4:16

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18. Then go back and read 1-12 again. Paul begins this section with the word "finally," which introduces a transition to other subjects. What does this text say? (1-12) Observe the facts. Ask yourself: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

2. Are there any repeated thoughts, words, or phrases?
3. What would you say is the main thought of verses 1-12? The key verse?
4. Does Paul say that walking in holiness is an option for a Christian?

The Thessalonians were living in a society that was extremely immoral. It is said that fornication was the cardinal sin of the ancient world. Tyndale said, "A marked feature of life in the first-century Roman Empire, and specifically in Greece, was sexual laxity." People did not see fornication as a sin. Ritual fornication played a huge part in the heathen religious worship practices, as well as in every level of society. A Greek writer from long ago named Demosthenes, writes this: "We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for day-to-day needs of the body; we keep wives for the begetting of children and for the faithful guardianship of our homes." At the time of Paul's writing, there was no shame in extramarital relationships. (Yuck!)

Knowing a little bit about their society at the time helps us understand why Paul felt he needed to deal with certain issues, namely sanctification. These new believers had to unlearn everything they had been taught in their culture. Their new "Christian convictions" needed to be defined by the Word of God. As Christians, we can never decide our standards or convictions based upon what is right in our society. It is God who defines truth, not this world.

We all grow up in this world. We all were taught and exposed to different attitudes and practices from the society we live in. We all have the choice to make our standard the Word of God, or what is "acceptable" in the world. How high are your standards? How strong are your convictions?

5. What ideas or practices were difficult for you to change after you accepted Christ? What are some of the attitudes or ideas that you were raised with that you now have found contradictory to God's Word? (Can you share? If not, just think about it ...)

I pray that we will all abound more and more. I want to grow, don't you? I am so thankful for what God has done in my life these past 44 years and how much He has "grown me" up. But, boy, do I still have a long way to go! Take a minute and thank Him for saving your soul and the growth that you have experienced in Him.

6. What does the word "ought" mean in verse 1?

7. How does Paul tell them to walk? And what should always be our motive?

In verse 2, Paul says that he was not there to give them any new commandments. This word "commandment" is a military term that refers to orders handed down from superior officers. Paul says it was God who passed the orders down. He's reminding them what God expects and encourages them to obey those "orders."

8. According to verse 3, what do we **KNOW** God's will is for us?

Sanctification is a very important doctrine in the Bible. The root of the term is a word meaning "holy" which is an attribute of God. How can we, sinful man, be made "holy" or be "sanctified"? Irving Jensen gives a great definition of this term:

- (A) Sanctification is both separation from evil and consecration unto righteousness.
- (B) Sometimes the word sanctification (or holiness) in the Bible is used positionally, that is, God sees the Christian as holy because He sees him in Christ. (1 Cor. 1:30, Hebrews 10:14)
- (C) Sometimes the word is used experientially, when referring to the ever-progressing growth of the Christian in righteousness. (1 Thess. 4:7, Hebrews 12:14)
- (D) Sometimes the doctrine of sanctification appears in the Bible as referring to the ultimate and complete work of God, when He glorifies

the believer in the sinless state at the coming of Christ (1 John 3:2). This is how the word holiness is used in 1 Thessalonians 3:13.

9. How can a Christian “grow in holiness”? Are you? How can you tell?

10. Why is sexual immorality so wrong? What are we supposed to do with our bodies? Read Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, and 2 Corinthians 4:7-10.

11. Besides fornication and sexual immorality, what other things can be considered impure?

Verse 4 uses the word “vessel.” Some scholars believe that this is referring to a man’s wife because she is called a vessel in 1 Peter 3:7, and Paul is commenting on how he should treat her. Most believe that Paul is referring to controlling one’s body because he was addressing all the believers (Romans 6:13, 1 Corinthians 9:27).

Verse 6 tells us that when sexual sin is committed, you have committed a covetous sin against your fellow Christian. Our sin always affects others. It is impossible to sin like this without injuring others by our unholy deeds. And God always knows what’s up. Paul says in Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

12. Read 2 Timothy 2:20-23. What kind of vessel are you? How are you possessing it? Are you fleeing any impurities? Are you pursuing holiness?

Paul reminds us that it is God that makes these rules, not man. And it is the purpose of the Spirit of God to sanctify us and produce holiness. We are given the Holy Spirit for power to live as God has called us to.

- 13.** Go before the Lord and ask Him to reveal any areas in your life that you need to “grow in holiness.” This is between you and the Lord, but you may share if you desire.

We know that God calls us to walk in purity and holiness, but in this next section, he tells us that we are also called to walk in love. Love was, and should be today, the mark of a Christian.

- 14.** Were the Thessalonians a good example of love? (1 Thess. 1:3, 3:6, 3:12)

In verse 9, Paul says that they are “God-taught” people. It seemed almost unnecessary to talk about love to them because God Himself would speak to their hearts, directing them into the love of God. Love is evidence of the new nature we receive when we accept Christ (1 John 2:20, 27 and 2 Thess. 3:5).

- 15.** How does God use circumstances or people to make our love increase?

- 16.** **“The more we live like God, the more we’ll love others.”** What do you think about this quote? What does it mean? (John 15:12-13, 1 John 4:7-8)

- 17.** Is your life characterized by love? Do you love others as Christ loves you? Is there someone in your life who is difficult to love? What should you do?

Loving others is not an option for the Christian (1 John 4:20-21). We not only should love others with God's "agape" love, but with "Philadelphia," or brotherly love. In the Old Testament, this word described the mutual love of children of the same father. In the New Testament, this word describes the love that unites Christians to one another. As Christians, we are all part of a new family, and we love the same Father.

- 18.** How do "holiness" and "love" go together? (Can you be holy without loving others?)

In verses 11-12, Paul seems to be addressing the issue of how to live while waiting for Christ's return. It is thought that many of the Christians were so excited about His coming that they quit their jobs, becoming dependent on others. The issue of making a living had been forgotten.

- 19.** How does Paul answer this question?

The word "study" or "aspire" in verse 11 means to "earnestly endeavor," or to "strive restlessly after."

- 20.** How do we "strive restlessly" after a quiet life? (1 Timothy 2:2) What is Paul talking about?

- 21.** How can idleness cause people to meddle in the business of others? (2 Thess. 3:10-11, 1 Timothy 5:13)

Paul was a good example of working hard. Idleness and neglecting responsibility is not a good thing. William Barclay said this: "The thought that Christ will someday come, that life as we know it will end, is not a reason for stopping work; it is a reason for working harder and more

faithfully. It is not hysterical and useless waiting, but quiet and useful work which will be a man's passport to the Kingdom."

Paul reminds them that their work habits should be a witness to others. "Outsiders" (vs 12) should see our diligence. We don't want to bring dishonor to God by our example. Let me give you one more quote by Barclay: "A tree is known by its fruits, and a religion is known by the kind of men it produces. The only way to demonstrate that Christianity is the best of all faiths is to show that it produces the best of all men. When we Christians show that our Christianity makes us better workmen, truer friends, kinder men and women, then we are really preaching."

22. How is your work ethic? Are you idle? Do you work hard? Does the way you handle your responsibilities bring honor and glory to God?

Now Paul answers their questions concerning those who die before Christ returns. Paul tells them not to be ignorant concerning this issue. He uses this phrasing to suggest the coming topic was extremely important.

23. Why was it so important for them to understand this? (vs 13)

Even though the Thessalonians were looking forward to the coming of Christ, they were concerned about their friends and loved ones that had already died. What would happen to them? Would they see the Lord? Would they be able to share the glory that was coming? As you read this section, remember that Paul's main point in writing these words was to bring them comfort and encouragement, not to confuse them.

This is the first time that specific details of the rapture were given. When we read this section, we find Paul's words raise many other questions in our minds. Let's look at these facts first.

24. Read verse 13. Is Paul saying not to grieve over death at all? (Refer to Jesus' grief over Lazarus in John 11.) How is our grief over a believer different than an unbeliever?

Some say that Paul is saying that Christians sorrow, but to a lesser degree. I don't agree. Leon Morris says, "Paul's contrast is not between one degree of sorrow and another, but between Christian hope and pagan despair." Pagan literature from that time revealed the hopelessness they saw in death. We also see their despair by the inscriptions they put on their tombs. We grieve over the loss of our loved ones, but we have hope that we will be reunited with them.

When Christians die, it is referred to as "falling asleep." Their spirit goes to be with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8) but their bodies are asleep, waiting to be resurrected. It's important to note that the Word says Jesus "died," not fell asleep. Leon Morris says again, "Christ endured the full horror of that death that is the wages of sin and thus transformed death for His followers into sleep." To a believer, death is simply falling asleep in our Father's arms and waking up in a new place. Sleep is refreshing, and restful. Sleep implies 'Awakening and dawn.'" (Erdman)

25. What three sounds will accompany His return? Why is this significant?

26. According to verse 17, is our reunion with the Lord temporary or permanent?

Whether Jesus will speak with an "archangel-type voice," or an archangel is really present is unknown. The only archangel mentioned by name in Scripture is Michael (Jude 9), but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's referring to him. Trumpets were a very common sound at the time. Trumpets were often used as warnings, signs of assembling, or calling armies together.

The word "**caught up**" in verse 17 literally means "seize up suddenly." It comes from the Latin word "rapto" and from it we get our English word "**rapture**." This is the term used to describe the time when Christ "catches up" His people to be with Him. Kenneth Wuest gives several meanings for this word: "to catch away speedily," "to seize by force," "to claim for oneself" (viewing the rapture from Christ's point of view), "to move to a new place" and to "rescue from danger."

We will “**meet**” Him in the air. This phrase is a technical term used for the official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary. We will be definitely meeting the most important dignitary in the world!

27. John Stott sums up this passage with four key words: “The **Return**, the **Resurrection**, the **Rapture**, and the **Reunion**.” How do these four words summarize the Second Coming? Explain them in your own words.

28. Why do you think Paul doesn’t bring up other details concerning judgment -- how we will be translated, or what our bodies will look like -- in this section?

29. How does the rapture event encourage you?

Paul is not teaching that he believes he will be alive when Christ returns. Paul clearly did not know when Jesus was coming back. He was not laying down a timeline or setting dates. He didn’t “teach” that it would be while he was alive, but he “hoped” it would be!

The doctrine of the resurrection seemed foolish to the Greeks. The Greek culture believed that matter was base and the soul was divine. They couldn’t believe that our bodies could be resurrected because they were corrupt and disgusting. They knew that after a while, our dead bodies would just decay and become part of the earth. It seemed that even some of the new believers in Corinth believed in Jesus’ Resurrection, but not that the believers would have a bodily resurrection. Paul wrote to the Corinthians to answer some of these questions in 1 Corinthians 15.

30. Read 1 Corinthians 15 on the topic of the Resurrection. What do you learn in this chapter about:

- a. The fact of the Resurrection (vs 1-11)
- b. The importance of the Resurrection (vs 12-19)
- c. The order of Resurrection (vs 20-28)
- d. The bodies of the resurrected dead (vs 35-50)
- e. The bodies of the translated living (vs 51-58)

When Christ comes back for us at the rapture, this is called the “First Resurrection.” At that time, we will be given our new, glorified bodies. We will also appear before the “Judgment Seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10, 2 Cor. 5:10). This is also called the “Bema Seat” Judgment. This is for believers only, and it is for the judging and rewarding of works (1 Corinthians 3:8-15). This is not the “White Throne Judgment” (Revelation 20:11-15) which is for unbelievers after both the tribulation period and the thousand-year Kingdom. This is where the unbeliever’s judgment is determined.

Will we recognize our friends when we are reunited with them? Most believe that we can. Moses and Elijah were recognized when they appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-5). Won’t it be exciting?

The view of the Second Coming of Christ that has been described in this lesson is called the “**Pre-Tribulation**” view. This view holds that the Church will be raptured before the Tribulation Period described in Revelation 4 through 18. We believe that His Church will be saved from the “wrath to come” as Noah was saved from the flood. This view also holds

that at the time of the rapture, the Lord does not come to the earth, but we meet in the air and return to Heaven immediately.

Those who hold the “Post-Tribulation” view believe that the rapture occurs after the Tribulation and that the believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, but they will immediately accompany Him to the earth. They believe that believers will suffer through the Great Tribulation. (Both views believe in the return of Christ, and one’s view on this should not cause division.) There are also those who believe that the rapture will occur in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation Period. (We encourage you to study this topic more in depth on your own.)

Those of us who are “Pre-Tribbers” as they are often called, believe in the “imminent” return of Christ, which means that He can come at any moment. Nothing else, in the prophetic sense, has to happen before Christ returns. Maranatha ... Lord, come quickly!

31. What difference does it make in your life that Christ is definitely coming back for you?

32. This chapter is considered very “practical.” How did you apply it “practically” this week?