

GOD'S WILL IN FIVE WORDS

The Gospel Difference, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

May 7, 2023

*It is God's will that you should be sanctified;
that you should avoid sexual immorality;
that each of you should learn to control his own body . . .
and in this matter no one should wrong his brother . . .*

1 Thessalonians 4:3-6



Doug's summary

⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction . . . ⁸ The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, ⁹ for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Doug's summary: Paul joy and confidence in the gospel are confirmed by the faith, love and hope of the Thessalonian believers which have survived trial and separation. Paul prepares these believers to live lives worthy by sharing the word of God and his life.

Now, for the leftovers

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-2 (note the similarities to Ephesians 4:17-5:21)

1. Sanctification begins with something to push away and something to hold close

³ It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸ Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (see Ephesians 4:17-24)

2. The first lesson to learn

⁹ Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. ¹⁰ And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 (Ephesians 4:29-32)

3. Not dependent

¹¹ Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹² so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 (see Ephesians 4:28)

The “more and more” (and why even the leftovers carry Jesus’ authority)

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-2

1. Yes, our sexuality matters

²⁷ *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Genesis 1

¹⁸ *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

1 Corinthians 6

¹³ *Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

1 Peter 1:14, quoting Leviticus 19:2 (see 1 Corinthians 5-6 for a look into Greek/Roman culture)

2. Three examples of the “good”

⁹ *Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. ¹⁰ And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.*

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

Resources for reading 1 Thessalonians

The poster for 1 Thessalonians can be found at bibleproject.com

Doug's favorite 1 Thessalonians commentaries include

Charles Wannamaker's NIGTC volume (Eerdmans, 1990)

Hendricksen's *Expository Commentary* (Baker, 1955)

Robert Thomas' volume in *Expositors' Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1981)

John MacArthur has a very interesting sermon, "The Ideal Church" at <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1317A>

Spurgeon has an important sermon on this text at <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols31-33/chs1979.pdf>

Thomas Schreiner has a wonderful essay on the optimism in 1 Thessalonians at

http://www.sbts.edu/documents/tschreiner/3.3_editorial.pdf

John Piper has several very good sermons on 1 Thessalonians 4 at <https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/1-thessalonians?page=3>

Jim Weidenaar has a short article on why "immorality is such a big deal" at <https://harvestusa.org/why-is-sexual-immorality-such-a-big-deal/#.ZFQIVc7ML7e>

Some of the voices that have helped Doug think about how the church should respond:

Rosario Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (Crown and Covenant, 2014)

Christopher Yuan, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel* (Multnomah, 2018)

Laurie Krieg's recent article at <https://www.abideproject.org/articles/pastors-will-you-please-preach>

Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting* (Zondervan, 2010)

the [Abide Project's resources](#), especially [the four most recent videos](#) and [Andy Sytsma's article](#)