

The Word of the Lord

An Exposition of I & II Thessalonians

I Thessalonians 3:9-4:6

Scriptures

<i>I Thessalonians 3:9</i>	<i>Jeremiah 10:23</i>	<i>I Thessalonians 4:1</i>
<i>Romans 15:13</i>	<i>I Thessalonians 3:12</i>	<i>James 1:22</i>
<i>John 15:11</i>	<i>I Thessalonians 1:3</i>	<i>I Thessalonians 4:2</i>
<i>Luke 15:7</i>	<i>I Timothy 1:5</i>	<i>I Thessalonians 4:3</i>
<i>I Thessalonians 3:10</i>	<i>I Corinthians 13:13</i>	<i>I Corinthians 6:18</i>
<i>I Corinthians 1:9</i>	<i>John 5:42</i>	<i>I Thessalonians 4:4</i>
<i>Galations 4:19</i>	<i>I Corinthians 13:2</i>	<i>Romans 6:16</i>
<i>I Thessalonians 3:11</i>	<i>I Thessalonians 3:13</i>	<i>I Thessalonians 4:5</i>
<i>Romans 10:17</i>	<i>Romans 13:10</i>	<i>Jude 1:19</i>
<i>Proverbs 28:26</i>	<i>I John 4:16-18</i>	<i>I Thessalonians 4:6</i>

I Thessalonians 3:9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

Joy, spiritual joy, of which there is no other kind, is directly linked to the heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is properly referred to as a fruit of the Spirit, which means it has its source in God and the higher spiritual realm.

With respect to the Father, the scriptures state:

Romans 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

In respect to the Son of God, the scriptures state:

John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

What allows a believer access to the spiritual joy that Christ speaks of is union with both the Father and Son. This union from which joy springs is by the believer abiding in Christ commandments.

Hence, as men keep Christ's commandments, which is proof of their love for the savior, His own spiritual joy will fill them.

Rejoicing also, as seen here with Paul in regard to the Thessalonians, will be experienced when those called by Christ respond to His call and then become spiritually joined to the heavenly Father through the Son.

Not only on earth but also in heaven there is great rejoicing when sinners repent of sin and turn to God.

Luke 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that re-

penteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Luke 15:7

Likewise joy ... - It is a principle of human nature that the "recovery" of an object in danger of being lost, affords much more intense joy than the quiet "possession" of many that are safe. This our Saviour illustrated by the case of the lost sheep and of the piece of silver. It might also be illustrated by many other things. Thus we rejoice most in our health when we recover from a dangerous disease; we rejoice over a child rescued from danger or disease more than over those who are in health or safety. We rejoice that property is saved from conflagration or the tempest more than over much more that has not been in danger. This feeling our Lord represents as existing in heaven. "Likewise," in like manner, or on the same principle, there is joy.

In heaven - Among the angels of God. Compare Luke 15:10. Heavenly beings are thus represented as rejoicing over those who repent on earth. They see the guilt and danger of people; they know what God has done for the race, and they rejoice at the recovery of any from the guilt and ruins of sin.

One sinner - One rebel against God, however great may be his sins or however small. If a sinner, he must perish unless he repents; and they rejoice at his repentance because it recovers him back to the love of God, and because it will save him from eternal death.

I Thessalonians 3:10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Having been blessed by what he had heard concerning the Thessalonians' adherence to the gospel, the apostle now prays to God that he could again see them face to face. His purpose for personal contact was so that he might contribute even more fully to what may be lacking in their faith.

As with Romans, Paul felt he could impart some spiritual gift that would strengthen and confirm the Thessalonians' spiritual walk (Romans 1:11).

A study of Paul's prayers also reveals that he did not pray for so many things as believers do today. He did not pray for his own wealth, abundance, success, or well-being; rather, his prayers centered on the greater realities of the Christian life.

What Paul prayed for in regard to the Thessalonians, as with the Corinthians, was that he might add and contribute to their most holy of possessions, their response to God's call to them through Christ.

I Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through faith they had been reconciled to God and by faith they had become God's sons.

It is also only as men advance in those things lacking in their faith that they can become more spiritually whole and a blessing to others. All believers, regardless of their years in ministry, have areas of spiritual lack. For this deficiency it takes Christ's ministers, and the Spirit of God they are led by, through more specific spiritual instruction to establish saints in Christ.

A reoccurring theme also seen in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is that though they possessed many divine qualities, still the apostle encouraged them that more spiritual growth was necessary.

This was true of love, their pleasing God, holiness of life, and their walking worthy of God, as well as an exhortation for them to possess greater watchfulness regarding Christ's return.

This teaches us that as far as putting on the new man, that spiritual man produced when God imparts His own spiritual nature in men, there is always room for growth.

No matter then the sincerity of our love and/or faith—still there is opportunity to be transformed more into the image of God's Son.

Galations 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Gal. 4:19

Until Christ be formed in you.—Just as the formless embryo by degrees takes the shape of man, so the unformed Christian by degrees takes the likeness of Christ. As he grows in grace that likeness becomes more and more defined, till at last the Christian reaches the "stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Once a man is born again of incorruptible seed and has received as a gift from God, God's own nature, then the next step is to put on and walk in this nature.

Thus, by men receiving the Spirit of God into their hearts, sinners can be transformed into the image of God's Son. This new spiritual man contains a totally new heart, one devoted to God and to His kingdom.

I Thessalonians 3:11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

True ministers can do nothing more or less than the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ permit. Hence, without both God's direction and a spiritual door opened by God, those called to serve the Lord's people cannot move unless directed by the Holy Spirit to do so.

Before the feet can walk the heart must be spoken to.

Consider as well that either entertaining a double mind or a doubting mind is sin. This is also why not until there is revelation from the Lord can true faith in God begin to sprout. Simply because to truly navigate by faith, it is essential that God first speaks.

Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Apart from hearing from God and receiving direct revelation from Him, all that men can do on their own is move and make decisions according to their own human minds. Which is understandably the complete opposite of what true faith really is.

Proverbs 28:26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Benson Commentary, Prov. 28:26

He that trusteth in his own heart — In his own wisdom and counsels, his own strength and sufficiency, his own merit and righteousness, or the good opinion he hath of his own abilities, natural or acquired, neglecting or slighting the advice of others, or the counsel of God; *is a fool* — And shall receive the reward of his folly, namely, destruction. *But whoso walketh wisely* — Distrusting his own judgment, and seeking the advice of others,

The Word of the Lord

and especially of God, as all truly wise men do; *he shall be delivered*

To walk by faith therefore demands that a man can do nothing, especially in regard to ministerial service, unless it is God Who directs his steps.

Jeremiah 10:23 O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

Benson Commentary, Jer. 10:23

That the way of man is not in himself— The prophet must here be considered as acknowledging the superintendence and dominion of the divine providence; that by it, and not by their own will and wisdom, the affairs both of nations and particular persons are directed and governed. His words in this verse, taken in connection with the following, may be thus paraphrased: Thy providence, O Lord, superintends all events; all that happens comes to pass through thy permission or appointment. It is not in man to hinder that which has been once resolved on in thy decrees.

I Thessalonians 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

It is the Lord who produces the increase of love in His people.

Love is also one of the two divine qualities that the apostle initially praised the Thessalonians for possessing in chapter one.

I Thessalonians 1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.

This teaches us that in true Christianity, a man's faith and his love are two great evidences of religious piety. This is because it is not merely biblical knowledge that proves a man a true Christian, nor his religious tradition, but only sincere faith and love, produced also through the influence of the Holy Spirit.

By these fruits of the spirit, we can know that people possess genuine fellowship with both the Father and the Son.

It is also faith, love, and a good conscience that are the purposed end to God's commandments.

I Timothy 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.

Ultimately, faith, love, and hope form the core of all true Christianity, of which love is singled out in the Scriptures as the greatest and most enduring of the three.

I Corinthians 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Love is the greatest, simply because love will never vanish away (I Corinthians 13:8).

Love is eternal, even as love is what God is.

Thus, since love is that which forms God's holy character, it cannot pass away as faith and hope must practically do.

Benson Commentary, I Cor. 13:13

The greatest of these, therefore, is love — The greatest, because the most durable, and also for divers other reasons: as, 1st, *Faith* and *hope* are graces chiefly suited to our fallen state, and intended to raise us from our fall: love was in man in his state of innocence and perfection, and was then his chief excellence, as it now is, and ever has been, the chief excellence of angels. 2d, *Faith* and *hope* are only means of salvation: love is the end to which these means are intended to bring us. 3d, Faith and hope may be termed selfish graces; particularly the latter is such, having our own interest in view: love is generous, disinterested, noble, and carries us out beyond ourselves. 4th, Faith and hope are human: love is divine; it exists, always has existed, and ever will exist, in God himself, in whom the former graces can have no place, and is in him his highest glory.

If men do not possess God's love, then we know that they are not yet Christian and still abide in death.

The Son of God also, because He both sees and searches the hearts of men, knows where genuine love exists and where it does not. Thus, though men may deceive other men in regard to whether they sincerely love or not, they cannot deceive Christ.

John 5:42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

Matthew Poole's Commentary, John 5:42

You pretend a great deal of religion, and to do many things out of love to God, and a zeal for the glory of God; but though you can cheat others, yet you cannot deceive me: I, that search the heart, and try the reins, and am a witness to your actions, know that, whatsoever you pretend, the true love of God dwelleth not in you; and that is the reason why you do not receive me.

Consider as well that if a man lacks love and/or charity in his heart and life, his entire religion (and even himself, though perhaps viewed as acceptable in the world) is accounted by God to be nothing.

I Corinthians 13:2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Cor. 13:2

I am nothing - All would be of no value. It would not save me. I should still be an unredeemed, unpardoned sinner. I should do good to no one; I should answer none of the great purposes which God has designed; I should not by all this secure my salvation. All would be in vain in regard to the great purpose of my existence. None of these things could be placed before God as a ground of acceptance in the Day of Judgment. Unless I should have love, I should still be lost.

It is not possessing the gift of prophecy, or grasping divine mysteries, or the accumulation of all knowledge, or even faith that produces true piety. This is accomplished only by *love*, that heavenly *love* that is representative of God's own nature.

I Thessalonians 3:13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

It is love that covers a multitude of sins and love that will give a man boldness when Christ returns in the glory of the Father.

It is for this reason the apostle encourages the Thessalonians to increase and abound in love, simply because it would establish their hearts unblamable at Christ's return.

If they pursued love and genuinely sought to walk in it, then they would have fulfilled all of God's will for their lives and would sense no reason to be either ashamed or afraid at Christ's coming.

Romans 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Rom. 13:10

Fulfilling of the law.—The form of the Greek word implies not only that love helps a man to fulfil the law, but that in the fact of the presence of love in his heart the law is actually fulfilled.

Ultimately, love is that divine fruit that fulfills God's law for man and prepares him to stand before Christ blameless.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, 1 Thess. 3:13

To the end he may stablish your hearts - That is, "may the Lord cause you to increase in love 1 Thessalonians 3:12 in order that you may be established, and be without blame in the day of judgment." The idea is, that if charity were diffused through their hearts, they would abound in every virtue, and would be at length found blameless.

Unblameable - See the 1 Thessalonians 1:10 note; Philippians 2:15; Philippians 3:6 notes; Hebrews 8:7 note; compare Luke 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23. The meaning is, so that there could be no "charge" or "accusation" against them.

It is love that tends toward holiness, and holiness that shall prevent a man from trembling when exposed to God's wrath at the day of judgment.

1 John 4:16-18 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. ¹⁷Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Any then who love both God and those born of God have no reason to fear in the day of Christ's judgment.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, 1 John 4:17

That we may have boldness in the day of judgment - By the influence of love in delivering us from the fear of the wrath to come, 1 John 4:18. The idea is, that he who has true love to God will have nothing to fear in the day of judgment, and may even approach the awful tribunal where he is to receive the sentence which shall determine his everlasting destiny without alarm.

Because as he is, so are we in this world - That is, we have the same traits of character which the Saviour had, and, resembling him, we need not be alarmed at the prospect of meeting him.

It is when believers are truly walking in God's love that all fear of God is removed.

Knowing they have kept God's commandment to love gives men great confidence that they will be joyfully received by the Lord.

Fear also—and we speak not of godly fear but only that frightening fear in which sinners are afraid of God’s judgment—is that which reveals the fact that love is still lacking in the human heart.

Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, I John 4:18

There is no fear in love - Love is not an affection which produces fear. In the love which we have for a parent, a child, a friend, there is no fear. If a man had perfect love to God, he would have no fear of anything - for what would he have to dread? He would have no fear of death, for he would have nothing to dread beyond the grave. It is guilt that makes people fear what is to come; but he whose sins are pardoned, and whose heart is filled with the love of God, has nothing to dread in this world or the world to come. The angels in heaven, who have always loved God and one another, have no fear, for they have nothing to dread in the future; the redeemed in heaven, rescued from all danger, and filled with the love of God, have nothing to dread; and as far as that same love operates on earth, it delivers the soul now from all apprehension of what is to come.

But perfect love casteth out fear - That is, love that is complete, or that is allowed to exert its proper influence on the soul. As far as it exists, its tendency is to deliver the mind from alarms. If it should exist in any soul in an absolutely perfect state, that soul would be entirely free from all dread in regard to the future. ...

He that feareth, is not made perfect in love - He about whose mind there lingers the apprehension of future wrath, shows that love in his soul has not accomplished its full work.

I Thessalonians 4:1 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.

True piety demands that men do more than simply hear God’s Word but also walk obediently in it.

James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

It is the walk of the Christian and not simply what he has heard that produces a life pleasing to the Lord.

Hearing by itself means nothing if the truth heard is not obeyed.

Hence, it is not simply a man’s faith that pleases God but also his walk, through which the sincerity of his faith is proven.

I Thessalonians 4:2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

The commandments that Paul had previously delivered to the Thessalonians came by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

It was Christ who first commissioned Paul for service to Himself and Christ who continued to give Paul direction as to how those called to Himself were to conduct their lives.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, I Thess. 4:2

by the Lord Jesus—by His authority and direction, not by our own. He uses the strong term, “commandments,” in writing to this Church not long founded, knowing that they would take it in a right spirit, and feeling it desirable that they should understand he spake with divine authority. He seldom uses the term in writing subsequently, when his au-

thority was established, to other churches. 1Co 7:10; 11:17; and 1Ti 1:5 (1Th 4:18, where the subject accounts for the strong expression) are the exceptions. “The Lord” marks His paramount authority, requiring implicit obedience.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

If a man desires a true place in heaven, he must pursue holiness and sanctification while on this earth. What a man does in his body also directly affects his sanctification.

The Greek word for *sanctification* is “*hagiasmós* (a masculine noun derived from 40 /*hágios*, ‘holy’) – sanctification (the process of advancing in holiness); used of the believer being progressively transformed by the Lord into His likeness (similarity of nature).”
HELPS Word-studies, #38

It is God’s will that the believer, in order that he may progress in sanctification, abstain from fornication. No true Christian also should be so foolish to infer that he can commit fornication and at the same time pursue holiness of life. Simply because how men live, either carnally or spiritually, greatly affects their holiness.

When men commit fornication, as the scripture clearly reveals, they sin against themselves.

1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers, 1 Cor. 6:18

Flee fornication.—These last three verses of the chapter contain a solemn exhortation to purity, arising out of the previous argument.

Without the body.—The word “body” is still to be understood as used of the whole “human nature,” which is spoken of in 1Corinthians 6:19 as the temple of the Holy Ghost. Other sins may profane only outer courts of the temple; this sin penetrates with its deadly foulness into the very holy of holies—

“It hardens a’ within, and petrifies the feelings.”

1 Thessalonians 4:4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

There is a way in which a man controls his body that tends towards sanctification and honor. This is when it is not carnal lusts that govern the soul but the Holy Spirit.

Whatever nature also rules men, whether it be their flesh or their spirit, reveals the nature they are subject to.

Suffice to say that if it is the flesh that leads sinners, and especially so sexually, then it is the flesh also that controls them.

Romans 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Practically speaking, if the body has no constraints and is allowed to satisfy itself as it fully desires, then it is impossible for any true divinity or holiness to be walked in.

It goes without saying that those who live in sin and practice it regularly are not saved by God.

I Thessalonians 4:5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

It is those who *know not God*, even if they profess to be of God, who allow the flesh to govern them.

Jude 1:19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Jude 19

Sensual men separate from Christ, and his church, and join themselves to the devil, the world, and the flesh, by ungodly and sinful practices.

When men *know not God*, they pursue things only of the flesh.

If they continue in these sins, they will assure themselves that they will never see God or gain entrance into heaven.

Without Christ cleansing the sinner, the door to heaven would remain locked to all men.

Sin is against God's nature; thus, none should willfully commit it and think that an eternal place with God will be found.

I Thessalonians 4:6 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.

The matter referred to, committing fornication, is likened to defrauding another. To then cheat, take advantage of, and commit fornication is not only to sin against oneself but also, as the scriptures reveal here, is to commit sin against another.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, I Thess. 4:6

Defraud his brother.—The original word implies a rapacious dishonesty, of which any person is guilty who gives the rein to his lusts, especially the adulterer. The substantive formed from it is usually translated covetousness, and is generally thought to be used in this special sense in Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5. When all men are brethren the sin becomes worse.

Because that the Lord is the avenger of all such. The Lord rules His church, and this is never more evident than when punishment is brought against those who sin in it.

That the Lord is an avenger means that He will both respond to and deal with sins like fornication when they are committed in His body.

The Greek word for *avenger* is #1558 “*ékdikos* – someone executing a just judgment, carrying out what is right which can include administering punishment for the wicked.” *HELPS Word-studies, I Thess. 4:6.*

Fornication is therefore such a sin, that it will entreat God to deal with it directly. Such disdain does the Lord have for sins like this in His church, that heavenly judgement is promised for any and all who commit it.