

## I Thessalonians 3:9–4:6

*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;*

**J**oy, spiritual joy—and there is no other kind—is directly linked to the heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Properly referred to as a fruit of the Spirit,<sup>1</sup> its source is God and the higher spiritual realm. With respect to the Father, Scripture states, *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* (Rom. 15:13). In respect to the Son, Christ said, *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full* (John 15:11). Union with both the Father and Son is what allows a believer access to the spiritual joy of which Jesus spoke. This union, from which joy springs, comes when the believer abides both in Christ’s Spirit and Christ’s commandments.<sup>2</sup>

The specific *joy* spoken of here is not merely that which is experienced by possessing fellowship with God and with His Son but also the spiritual joy felt and enjoyed when other believers have turned to and now walk in fellowship with the Father as well. This joy is directly related to the happiness and contentment spiritu-

ally experienced when others remain and stand fast in their faith in God. Thus, the joy spoken of is not simply the joy men feel when they walk with the Father and Son but also the joy experienced when other believers do the same. Jesus spoke of this same joy in heaven when even one sinner repents. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance* (Luke 15:7).

(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.<sup>3</sup> Heavenly beings are thus represented as rejoicing over those who repent on earth. They see the guilt and danger

1 Gal. 5:22–23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*<sup>23</sup> *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

2 John 15:9–11 *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*<sup>10</sup> *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.*<sup>11</sup> *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

3 Luke 15:10 *Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*

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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' spiritual faithfulness, the apostle now prays to God that he could see them face to face. His purpose for personal contact was so that he could contribute even more fully to

what they might be lacking in their faith. As with the Romans, Paul felt he could impart some spiritual gift<sup>4</sup> that would strengthen and confirm the Thessalonians' spiritual walk. 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.<sup>5</sup> In regard to the Thessalonians, as he did with the Corinthians, Paul prayed that he might add and contribute to their most holy possession—their faith and their response to God's call given to them through Christ.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note as well that all believers, regardless of their spiritual genuineness, have areas of spiritual lack. For this deficiency Christ's ministers, led by the Holy Spirit, are required to both perfect and

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Eph. 1:15–18 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

<sup>16</sup>Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; <sup>17</sup>That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

<sup>18</sup>The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

Eph. 3:14–19 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup>Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, <sup>16</sup>That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; <sup>17</sup>That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup>May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; <sup>19</sup>And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Phil. 1:3–6 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup>Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, <sup>5</sup>For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; <sup>6</sup>Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Phil. 1:9–11 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

<sup>10</sup>That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

<sup>11</sup>Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Col. 1:9–12 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; <sup>10</sup>That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup>Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; <sup>12</sup>Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

II Thess. 1:11–12 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: <sup>12</sup>That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Phlm. 4–6 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, <sup>5</sup>Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; <sup>6</sup>That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

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

restore what is lacking in believers' faith.<sup>7</sup> A reoccurring theme in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is that though they possessed many divine qualities, the apostle nevertheless encouraged them that more spiritual growth could be gained. This was true of their love,<sup>8</sup> their pleasing God,<sup>9</sup> their holiness of life,<sup>10</sup> and their walking worthy of the Lord.<sup>11</sup> Paul's message to the Thessalonians also included an exhortation for them to pursue greater watchfulness in respect to Christ's return.<sup>12</sup> What this teaches us is that when it comes to walking more righteously before God, there is always room for advanced spiritual growth in areas such as faith, love, and hope. The sincerity of a man's faith in Christ and his love for Him therefore is not spiritually sufficient if there remains a need to be more fully transformed into Christ's image.<sup>13</sup> The degree of spiritual transformation needed may differ from individual to individual and from church to church, but there is still

always room for putting on more of the mind of Christ<sup>14</sup> and the divine creation that after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.<sup>15</sup>

Once a man is born again of incorruptible seed<sup>16</sup> and has received God's spiritual nature as a gift from Him, the next step is to put on and walk in this nature.<sup>17</sup> It is the Spirit of God that enables a man to be transformed to then possess a completely new and holy heart. It is for this purpose that the Spirit is sent, that believers, once filled with God's Spirit, would gain the ability to keep God's commandments.<sup>18</sup> Scripture speaks of this transformation as putting on the *new man*, that spiritual nature, in the form of the Holy Spirit, which is given to the believer by Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup> *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness* (Eph. 4:24). The *new man* spoken of here is the Holy Spirit, Whom God imparts to all<sup>20</sup> who have made Je-

7 Eph. 4:11–12 *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; <sup>12</sup>For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

8 I Thess. 4:9–10 *But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. <sup>10</sup>And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;*

9 I Thess. 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.*

10 I Thess. 4:7 *For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*

11 I Thess. 2:12 *That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.*

12 I Thess. 5:6 *Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*

13 Rom. 8:29 *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

14 Phil. 2:5 *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

I John 2:6 *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

15 Eph. 4:24 *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

16 I Pet. 1:23 *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lieth and abideth for ever.*

17 Col. 3:10 *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*

Gal. 5:25 *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

18 Ezek. 11:19–20 *And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: <sup>20</sup>That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.*

Ezek. 36:26–27 *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

19 John 16:7 *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

20 Gal. 4:6 *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

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sus Christ Lord of their lives.<sup>21</sup> This holy nature is not only of God but is also *like* God. It contains the same righteousness and holiness as that of its sender. It is the possession of this spiritual, righteous, and holy nature that provides hope of future glorification.<sup>22</sup>

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Eph. 4:24) *After God*—κατὰ Θεὸν *kata Theon*. In respect to God. The idea is, evidently, that man is so renewed as to become "like" God, or the divine image is restored to the soul. In the parallel passage in Colossians Col 3:9,<sup>23</sup> the idea is expressed more fully, "renewed in knowledge after 'the image' of him that created him." Man, by regeneration, is restored to the lost image of God; compare Genesis 1:26.<sup>24</sup>

*Is created*—A word that is often used to denote the new birth, from its strong resemblance to the first act of creation; see it explained in the notes on 2 Corinthians 5:17.<sup>25</sup>

*In righteousness*—That is, the renewed man is made to resemble God in righteousness. This proves that man, when he was made, was righteous; or that righteousness constituted a part of the image of God in which he was created. The object of the work of redemption is to restore to man the lost image of God, or to bring him back to the condition in which he was before he fell.

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

In Christian ministry, as in all other areas of one's life, whatsoever is not of faith is sin.<sup>26</sup> Hence, before anything is begun in God's name, God must first command that it be done. This is why the apostle prays for the Lord's direction as he fully knows that without divine guidance being given, nothing done by human will or fleshly desire could produce profitable spiritual results. Thus, for the true minister of Christ, before his feet can walk, he must first have been given revelation on where to walk.

For those who truly seek to be led by the Spirit of God, it cannot be either human emotion or reason that is leaned upon. To trust in either of these is to trust in self instead of God. *He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered* (Prov. 28:26).

(*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 whose walketh wisely*—Distrusting his own judgment, and seeking the advice of others, and especially of God, as all truly wise men do; *he shall be delivered* ...

21 Rom. 10:9–10 *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*<sup>10</sup> *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

22 Col. 1:27 *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

23 Col. 3:9[–10] *Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;*<sup>10</sup> *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*

24 Gen. 1:26 *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

25 II Cor. 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

26 Rom. 14:23 *And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

To actually walk and be led by the Spirit of God, it is essential that human understanding is not leaned upon. Trusting in self is far different than trusting in God. *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding* (Prov. 3:5). Because men have not the natural ability to know the proper path to walk, then divine revelation is necessary, to stay in God's will for their life. *O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps* (Jer. 10:23). The ways and proper paths to take in this life are not in man. It is not within himself to know what direction to go or even why he should go there. This is the reason the unredeemed are spoken of as lost.<sup>27</sup> They do not know their true spiritual condition or how to properly navigate toward God's will for their lives.

In contrast to those who need God's direction on where to move are false prophets, who prophesy and move according to their own minds.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately he who trusts in self actually reveals that he has no real and sincere faith in Christ. For no one can truly trust in himself and his own human thinking and understanding and at the same time possess any real confidence or trust in the Lord—sim-

ply because trusting in self and trusting in God are two contrary actions of the human heart.

***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 divine and godly love in His people. It was also this spiritual love that the apostle initially praised the Thessalonians for possessing in chapter one. *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* (I Thess. 1:3). In true Christianity, faith and love are the two great evidences of religious piety. Knowledge of God by itself accounts for nothing if love and faith are not at the center of the believer's heart. It is also not merely religious tradition<sup>29</sup> or church attendance that proves that God is sincerely leading a man. Hence, if a man does not have faith and love on the inside of his heart, then it makes little difference what religious activity is practiced on the outside. It is also revealed in Scripture that the end of God's commandment, or the end of God's will for one's life, is possessing *charity out*

<sup>27</sup> Matt. 18:11–14 *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.* <sup>12</sup>*How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?* <sup>13</sup>*And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.* <sup>14</sup>*Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*

<sup>28</sup> Luke 15:4–7 *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?* <sup>5</sup>*And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.* <sup>6</sup>*And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.* <sup>7</sup>*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

<sup>28</sup> Jer. 14:14 *Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.*

<sup>29</sup> Jer. 23:16 *Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.*

<sup>29</sup> Matt. 15:1–3 *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, <sup>2</sup>Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.* <sup>3</sup>*But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*



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of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and a faith unfeigned, as stated in I Tim. 1:5: *Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.* In short, if a man manifests charity out of a pure heart, maintains a good conscience in his Christian walk, and possess sincere faith in Jesus Christ, then he has practically fulfilled God's will for his life.

Love is singled out in the Scriptures as the greatest and most enduring attribute, even above faith and hope. *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity* (I Cor. 13:13). Love is deemed by the Lord as the greatest, simply because it is divine love that makes up God's own holy nature and character.<sup>30</sup> Because God is love and God is eternal, love will never vanish away.<sup>31</sup>

(*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.

30 I John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

I John 4:16 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.

31 I Cor. 13:8 Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

32 I John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

33 John 2:25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

If men do not possess divine love, then we know that they have not yet been saved and still abide in death.<sup>32</sup> Thus, though sinners may deceive other men about whether they sincerely love the Lord and fellow believers, they cannot deceive the Son of God, Who knows all that is within man,<sup>33</sup> including whether true love lives in the heart. *But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you* (John 5:42).

(*Matthew Poole's Commentary*, John 5:42) You pretend a great deal of religion, and 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.

If a man lacks true love or charity in his heart, no matter what else he possesses, God views his entire religion as vain and ultimately profitless. It was this great truth and reality that the apostle sought to impart upon the Corinthians when it was merely knowledge that they valued over love. *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* (I Cor. 13:2).

(*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 perceiving divine mysteries or the accumulation of biblical knowledge that produces true piety. This is accomplished solely by possessing the divine *love* that is representative and characteristic of God's own holy nature. Consequently, the lack of a man's love proves that he has no true relationship with God or the higher heavenly spiritual realm—that he is not a son of God and God is not his Father. Practically, love is the distinguishing mark of Jesus' true disciples,<sup>34</sup> teaching us that he who does not love cannot actually be of Christ.

***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.***

Love covers a multitude of sins,<sup>35</sup> and love for God and the children of God will give a man boldness when Jesus returns to initiate the Lord's day of judgment.<sup>36</sup> For this reason the apostle encourages the Thessalonians to increase and abound in divine

love, simply because this would establish their hearts unblameable at Christ's coming. By pursuing God's love and genuinely seeking to walk in it, God's law would be fulfilled, and any fear of coming under the judgment of Him could be removed.

*(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I 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,<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> The meaning is, so that there could be no “charge” or “accusation” against them.*

Practically nothing will prepare a Christian's heart more for the arrival of the Son of God than when it is God's love that has been pursued in the life. Consequently, it is the pursuit of love that will allow a man to possess both boldness and confidence at the day of the Lord. *Herein 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* (1 John 4:17).

34 John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

35 1 Pet. 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

36 1 John 4:17 Herein 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.

37 1 Thess. 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:

38 1 Thess. 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Phil. 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

Phil. 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Heb. 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

Luke 1:6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

1 Thess. 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I 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, I John 4:18.<sup>39</sup> 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.

When believers are truly walking in God's love and have chosen to be led by it in their lives, all fear and trepidation of having to undergo heavenly judgment for remaining in sin will be removed. Perfect love casts out fear,<sup>40</sup> and perfect love for God and His people casts out all fear of being judged by God. Knowing they have kept Jesus' commandment to love<sup>41</sup> provides believers great confidence that they will stand the test of His inspection of their lives. Fear also—and we speak not of godly fear<sup>42</sup> but only that frightening fear in which sinners are afraid of God's judgment—reveals the fact that divine love is still lacking in the heart. Ultimately, where God's love abides, fear cannot, simply because love contains sufficient

spiritual power to cast out all tormenting fear in the human heart. But it is worthy of note as well that he who retains fear of being judged by God proves that love remains an unfinished work in himself—simply because where pure and sincere love for God and His people resides, fear cannot. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love* (I John 4:18).

(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

39 I John 4:18 *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

40 I John 4:18 *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

41 Mark 12:30–31 *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.* <sup>31</sup>*And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

John 13:34 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

I John 3:23 *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

I John 4:21 *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

I John 5:2–3 *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*

<sup>3</sup>*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

42 Prov. 9:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.* Prov. 19:23 *The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.*



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 not only hear God's Word but also seek to walk obediently in it. *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves* (Jas. 1:22). It is the walk of the Christian, and not simply what he hears of the truth, that produces a life pleasing to the Lord. Hearing by itself profits absolutely nothing if what is heard is not believed and then obeyed and walked in. Consequently, it is not simply a man's professed faith that saves him but also his walk of obedience that proves his faith as actually genuine. *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone* (Jas. 2:17). It is obedience to the truth that is the actual proof that a man walks with God and has believed His Word. It is not a mere profession of faith that disregards the need for spiritual obedience. This faith the scripture accounts as dead, meaning that God has no respect for it at all. Like

anything dead, it does not have the power to save, nor is it pleasing to the Lord.

***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 Christ. It is He Who had commissioned Paul for Christian service,<sup>43</sup> and it was He Who continued to give the apostle direction as to how those called to Himself should walk, after through Himself they were made the children of God.

*(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 authority was established, to other churches. 1Co 7:10; 11:17; and 1Ti 1:5 (1Th 4:18,<sup>44</sup> where the subject accounts for the strong expression) are the exceptions. "The Lord" marks His paramount authority, requiring implicit obedience.

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

If any desire a true place in heaven, they must pursue spiritual holiness and sanctification while on this earth. The Greek word for *sanctification* is #38 *hagias-mós*. HELPS *Word-study* defines it as "(a

43 Acts 9:15 *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:*

44 I Cor. 7:10 *And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:*

I Cor. 11:17 *Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.*

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

I Thess. 4:18 *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

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).” It is God’s will that the believer, in order that he may progress in sanctification, abstain from fornication. Also, no true Christian should deceive himself to believe that he can continue in fornication and at the same time maintain true holiness of life. What this also reveals is that how men live, either spiritually or carnally, greatly affects their holiness and ultimately whether heaven will be theirs or not. *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God* (I Cor. 6:9–10).

(*Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary*, I Cor. 6:9–11) Men are very much inclined to flatter themselves that they may live in sin, yet die in Christ, and go to heaven. But we cannot hope to sow to the flesh, and reap everlasting life.

Fornication is listed by the apostle as that specific sin that is against the body. *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body* (I Cor. 6:18).

(*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*, I Cor. 6:18) *Flee fornication.*—These last three verses of the chapter<sup>45</sup> contain a sol-

emn 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 1 Corinthians 6:19<sup>46</sup> 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;***

Whatever nature rules men, either the flesh or the Spirit,<sup>47</sup> reveals the nature they are actually of. If it is the flesh that leads, and especially sexually, then it is also the flesh that controls. *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?* (Rom. 6:16). Understandably, the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Thus it was never purposed by God that the body should live to satisfy itself.

(*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, I Cor. 6:13) *Now the body is not for fornication*] St Paul is led, by the importance he attaches to this point, to treat it first. The abominable licentiousness of heathen cities in general, and of Corinth in particular (see Dean Stanley’s note on 1 Corinthians 6:12)<sup>48</sup> had led to a general conviction that the body was for fornication. St Paul contradicts this, and most emphatically proclaims

<sup>45</sup> I Cor. 6:18–20 *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.* <sup>19</sup>What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? <sup>20</sup>For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.

<sup>46</sup> I Cor. 6:19 *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

<sup>47</sup> Rom. 8:14 *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

<sup>48</sup> I Cor. 6:12 *All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*

that what was always permitted among heathens, and even in some cases enjoined as a religious rite, was distinctly in itself *an unlawful act*, not excusable on the plea of necessity, which he had admitted in the case of meats, nor, like them, a question of “nicely calculated less or more,” but contrary to the laws laid down by God for man, and calculated to deprive men of the blessings of the Resurrection.

*but for the Lord*] i.e. Jesus Christ. The body is not formed to serve a purely material end, but is the instrument of the spirit, and its end the glory of God, through Christ.<sup>49</sup>

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

The Greek word for *concupiscence* is #3806 *pathos*. *HELPS Word-studies* defines it as “‘having strong feelings’—properly, raw, strong feelings (emotions) which are not guided by God (like consuming lust).” Those who are actually guided by the Lord will not be guided by the strong emotions and desires of the flesh—simply because anyone guided by their natural, carnal, and fleshly instincts proves that they have not yet been filled with God’s Holy Spirit. For it is only those who *do not know God* and who have not been given the Spirit of God, who continually are led by the sensual nature of the flesh.<sup>50</sup> *These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit* (Jude 1:19). The Greek work for *sensual* is #5591 *psychikos*. *HELPS Word-studies* defines the word as

properly, *soulish*, i.e. what is natural, as it relates to physical (*tangible*) life alone (i.e. apart from God’s inworking of faith).

5591 /*psychikós* (“natural”) typically describes the *natural* (“lower”) aspect of humanity, i.e. behavior that is “more of earth (carnality) than heaven.” 5591 (*psychikós*) then sometimes stands in contrast to 4152 /*pneumatikós* (“spiritual”)—the higher, spiritual aspect of humanity that develops through faith (4102 /*pístis*).

**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 compared to defrauding another. To cheat, take advantage of, and commit fornication is not only to sin against oneself<sup>51</sup> but also 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.<sup>52</sup> 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 punish-

49 I Cor. 6:13 *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.*

50 Gal. 5:19–21 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

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

52 Eph. 5:3 *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;*

Col. 3:5 *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*

## *The Dead Shall Rise*

ment is brought against any who sin in it.<sup>53</sup> That the Lord is an *avenger* means that He will both respond to and deal with sins like fornication when they are committed in Christ's 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."<sup>54</sup> Fornication is such a notable sin in Christ's church that it will entreat God to deal with it directly. Because God is just,<sup>55</sup> He cannot turn a blind eye to sin. This undoubtedly includes

even sins committed by the saved, who are themselves members of Christ's body. It was this great truth, that the Lord is an avenger of sin, that the apostle forewarned and testified to the Thessalonians, that if sin was committed in Christ's church, and especially so in regard to fornication, then God would deal with it directly. No doubt, the same revelation is true today, though many infer that sexual immorality is not sin, and that God does not even count it as such. To believe this nonsense is to endanger being saved at all.

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53 1 Pet. 4:17 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

54 HELPS Word-studies, 1 Thess. 4:6

55 Deut. 32:4 *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

Job 37:23 *Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict.*

Ps. 89:14 *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

Ps. 98:9 *Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.*

Job 34:12 *Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.*