

Title: **1 THESSALONIANS**
 “How Ye Ought to Walk and to Please God”
Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:1
Date: Tuesday Evening—May 4, 2004
Tape # Y-19a
Readings: *Larry Brown & Bob Duff*
Introduction:

As believers, our lives are a constant disappointment to us. Aren't they? We want to walk in this world in a way that honors our God. We want to please him in all things. How miserably we fail!

Tonight, I want to give you some plain, clear instruction from 1 Thessalonians about *“how ye ought to walk and to please God.”*

Paul wrote his first letter to the church at Thessalonica specifically to communicate to them his love for them and his desire to return to them, that he might again preach the gospel to them. How he rejoiced when he thought about God's goodness and grace in his people! He told the Thessalonians that he prayed for them night and day, exceedingly desiring to see them, that he *“might perfect that which is lacking in your faith”* (3:10), that is, that he might be an instrument through which the Lord God would graciously cause them, through the preaching of the gospel, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ into the full maturity of faith.

(1 Th 3:11-13) “Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. (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: (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.”

(1 Th 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.”

In this Epistle, the Holy Spirit gives us clear instructions about how we ought to walk and please God in this world.

BACKGROUND

Thessalonica was the capital city of the Roman province of Macedonia. When Paul and Silas came there preaching the gospel of Christ, telling them “*all that Christ must needs have suffered and risen and again from the dead,*” and asserting that Jesus of Nazareth whom we preach is the Christ, after three weeks of gospel preaching a riot broke out, and Paul and Silas were run out of town (Acts 17:1-10). But the Word of God is never preached in vain. Though many opposed Christ and his gospel, and were enraged by it, a great multitude believed (Acts 17:4). In time, a gospel church

was established in Thessalonica. It is to this church that Paul wrote 1st and 2nd Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians was written specifically to teach God's saints, "how ye ought to walk and to please God." Paul's salutation (1:1) is very similar to his salutations in other epistles, with one notable exception. — Here Paul makes no mention of his apostolic office. There was no need for him to do so, because there were none in that church who were even slightly suspicious of him.

ELECTION KNOWN

In chapter 1 Paul tells the saints of God at Thessalonica how very thankful he was to God for them and for the manifest grace of God in them (vv. 2-3).

(1 Th 1:2-3) “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; (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.”

Then, he makes a statement that might appear to many to be a strange statement. He says in verse 4 — “*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*” He tells these saints at Thessalonica that they were numbered among that vast multitude of sinners chosen to salvation in Christ before the world began. How could he have known that? Is it possible to know who the elect are?

Indeed, it is. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, your faith in him is the result of “*your election of God.*”

BLESSED DOCTRINE

Election is a blessed doctrine of Holy Scripture. It is taught in every Book of the Bible, on almost every page of Inspiration. Hundreds of texts could be quoted to show this. Look up the words, “*choose,*” “*chosen,*” “*elect,*” and “*election,*” in a concordance. You will be astounded at the prominence of this doctrine in the Word of God.

- It cannot be denied that election is **a Bible doctrine** (John 15:16; Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9; Psa. 65:4). And it is a blessed doctrine, full of consolation.
- Election was **an act of God's eternal sovereignty** (Rom. 9:11-23), an act **of free, unconditional grace** (Matt. 11:25-26), **unalterable, immutable, and irreversible** (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29), **infallibly effectual, securing the salvation of all whom God has chosen** (Rom. 8:28-30), and **the fountain of all other grace** (Eph. 1:3-4).
- **Our election by God was personal and distinguishing.** It was in Christ. And the only cause for our election was the everlasting love of God for us (Jer. 31:3; Eph. 1:4).

OFTEN MISREPRESENTED

But election is a doctrine that is often misrepresented and, therefore, misunderstood by many. Some people oppose the doctrine of election, simply because they have never heard it taught as the Bible teaches it.

- **Election is not, in anyway, contrary to, or inconsistent with, the promises of God in the gospel** (Matt. 11:28; John 3:36; Rom. 10:9-13; Acts 16:31; Mk. 16:16). We do not limit the invitations of the gospel. We call upon all people everywhere to trust Christ, and assure all who trust Christ of salvation by the grace of God.
- **And election does not diminish man's responsibility before God.** God commands you to repent of your sins and trust his Son. And you are responsible to do so (Isa. 45:22; John 6:29; 1 John 3:23; 5:10-13).

MAY BE KNOWN

And the Holy Spirit here tells us that our election of God is something that may be known (1:3-10). Repentance, faith, conversion, and good works are the fruit and the evidence of election. If you are born of God, if you trust Christ, you are one of God's elect.

No mere man can open and read the Lamb's Book of life. No mortal can ever know who the elect are until they are regenerated and called by God the Holy Spirit. However, each of us can prove our own selves. We can make our calling and election sure.

In 1 Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul, writing by divine inspiration, tells us that he knew these men and women in the Church at Thessalonica were elect, chosen of God, and precious by five distinct marks of grace upon them. If you are one of God's elect, these five marks are upon you. If I am one of the elect, these marks are upon me. Who are God's elect? Look into the Word of God, and you will see. There is no need for guess work about this matter. The Holy Spirit shows us five evidences of God's election in 1 Thessalonians chapter one.

1. **God's elect are people who hear the gospel preached and receive the gospel as it is preached in the power of God the Holy Spirit** (v.5).

(1 Th 1:5) “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”

The elect are those who are called by the effectual, irresistible power and grace of God the Holy Spirit. They are called by the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 1:15-17; 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 1:21-23; 15:1-3; Heb. 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). God does not save sinners by the sound of chirping birds, or by the babbling heresies of Arminian, free-will, works religion. God saves his chosen through the preaching of the gospel of his free and sovereign grace in Christ.

2. **God's elect are those who follow Christ** (vv. 3, 6).

(1 Th 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.”

(1 Th 1:6) “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.”

Chosen sinners, when saved by the grace of God, are made disciples, followers of Christ, voluntary servants of King Jesus. Believers are not perfect, and never pretend to be. They know something of the corruption of their own hearts. Yet, in the tenor of their lives, those who are born of God follow Christ.

3. **God's elect are a people who are committed to Christ and the gospel of his grace** (v.8).

(1 Th 1:8) “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”

As the saints at Thessalonica sounded out the gospel to perishing sinners in their generation, so God's saints today make it their business to make the gospel known for the glory of God.

4. **God's elect experience repentance and conversion by the power of his grace. They turn from their idols to serve the living God** (v.9).

(1 Th 1:9) “For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

Believers forsake their idols and the idolatrous religious practices of their former manner of life. They will not be found worshipping a false god. You will not find a child of God kneeling before a pagan deity, kissing a crucifix, or professing faith in a helpless, frustrated god whose purpose, will, and work are prevented by man's imaginary free-will.

5. **God's elect are waiting for Christ** (v.10).

(1 Th 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.”

Believers live upon the tiptoe of faith, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing his Word, we live in hope and expectation of the resurrection, being confident that he who died for us and rose again has by his blood atonement effectually “*delivered us from the wrath to come.*”

Here the Holy Spirit holds up these saints at Thessalonica as examples to all who believe of what God's electing grace does for sinners (1:7).

AN OVERWHELMING TRUST

In the 2nd chapter Paul tells us that he looked upon the ministry God had given him, the blessed work of preaching the gospel, as great trust committed to him by God. He was simply overwhelmed by the fact that he was "*allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel*" (v. 4).

Paul's attitude toward the work of the ministry stands before us throughout his writings as a constant challenge to all those men in every age to whom the Lord God has granted this great trust (Eph. 3:8). He came to Thessalonica with the deep conviction that the Lord God himself had sent him there to preach the gospel (vv. 2 and 7; Acts 16:6-10). His goal in doing so was the honor of God and the good of their immortal souls (v. 4). Therefore he did not use flattering, deceitful words to please his hearers. He was not motivated by covetousness and self-interests, and did not seek the honor that men might give him (vv. 3-6). As a faithful servant of God, he dealt with their souls in all the tenderness and affection of a nursing mother caring for her children, laboring night and day for them (vv. 7-12).

(1 Th 2:7-12) "But **we were gentle** among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: (8) So being

affectionately desirous of you, we were **willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.** (9) For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. (10) **Ye are witnesses, and God also,** how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: (11) As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children, (12) That ye would **walk worthy of God,** who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”

The saints at Thessalonica received Paul as God’s messenger to their souls and treated him with the love and honor that reflected their gratitude to God for sending his gospel and his servant to them (vv. 13-14; Isa. 52:7).

(1 Th 2:13-14) “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. (14) For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews.”

(Isa 52:7) “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”

It should not be surprising to see Paul saying to them, “*Ye are our glory and joy*” (v. 20). Paul was absent from them physically, but very much present with them in heart and longed to be with them again physically (vv. 17-19).

“THESE AFFLICTIONS”

In the 3rd chapter the apostle gives us very tender and wise instruction concerning the things that all believers suffer in this world for Christ’s sake. He would have come again to them already, had Satan not hindered him (2:18). When he could not come himself, he sent Timothy to establish them and comfort them in the midst of their trials and temptations, and was greatly encouraged by the grace manifest in them in the face of those things (3:1-9).

(1 Th 3:1-9) “Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; (2) And **sent Timotheus**, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, **to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:** (3) **That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.** (4) For verily, when we were with

you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. (5) For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. (6) But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: (7) Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: (8) For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. (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.”

Did you catch Paul’s words in verse 3? — “*That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.*” He told the Thessalonians that these things would come. They should not have been surprised by them. Neither should we. Our Lord said, “*In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*” “*These afflictions*” are things appointed by our God and things to which we are appointed by him.

- They are for an appointed time.
- They are for an appointed purpose.
- They have an appointed end.

HOW WE OUGHT TO WALK

In chapter 4 Paul follows his instruction about our afflictions with a word of instruction about how we ought to walk and to please God in the midst of all “*these afflictions*.” Let it be our goal in all things and at all times to walk in this world in a manner that is pleasing to our great God and Savior, by whom we have been saved.

It must be stated that the only way we can please God is by faith in Christ (Heb. 11:5-6; Col. 2:6).

(Heb 11:5-6) “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (6) But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

(Col 2:6) “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him.”

Yet, we must never imagine that our personal behavior in this world is a matter of indifference. We must never forget who we are and whose we are. Everything we say and do reflects either positively or negatively upon the honor of our God and the gospel we believe. Therefore Paul urges us to live for the glory of God, ruled by the Word of God, possessing our vessels in sanctification and honor (4:1-4).

(1 Th 4:1-4) “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. (2) For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. (3) For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: (4) That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”

He specifically urges us to **abstain from fornication**, sexual perversity (v. 3) and to **live in moral uprightness** (vv. 5-8).

(1 Th 4:5-8) “Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: (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. (7) For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. (8) He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.”

Then he tells us to love one another (vv. 9-10).

(1 Th 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. (10) 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;”

In verses 11 and 12, he tells us to **pursue a quiet, industrious life**, not prying into other people's affairs.

(1 Th 4:11-12) “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; (12) That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.”

“THEM WHICH ARE ASLEEP”

In the last part of chapter 4 (vv. 13-18), turns our minds to eternity, and tells us to live in the sweet comfort of resurrection glory, particularly encouraging us to honor God in times of bereavement. Let us ever remember, the Holy Spirit does not here tell us that we must not sorrow when loved ones are taken from us, but urges us not to sorrow as others, “*who have no hope.*”

(1 Th 4:13-18) “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (15) For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. (16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise

first: (17) Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (18) Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

“THE DAY OF THE LORD”

In the 5th chapter Paul continues with his instructions concerning Christ’s glorious second advent. He urges us to live in the constant, immediate anticipation of Christ’s second coming, with watchfulness and sobriety, as children of God walking in the light, “*putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*” (vv. 8-9).

(1 Th 5:6-11) “Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober. (7) For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. (8) But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. (9) For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, (10) Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. (11) Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

HIGH ESTEEM

The saints at Thessalonica highly esteemed Paul as God's servant and messenger to them. In chapter 5 (vv. 12-13) he urges them and the saints of God in every age to give that same honor to all those men who faithfully preach the gospel, laboring in the Word of God and laboring for their souls.

(1 Th 5:12-13) “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; (13) And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.”

God's saints are to highly esteem and give honor to those men who faithfully labor in the Word and preach the gospel to them (Isa. 52:7; Rom. 10:15; 1 Tim. 5:17). Only those preachers who faithfully preach the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ are worthy of this high esteem. All heretical work-mongers and promoters of will-worship are to be held in utter contempt (Gal. 1:6-8). But God's servants are to be honored. This honor is to be extended, beyond the local church and beyond one's own pastor, to all who faithfully preach the gospel: pastors, elders, missionaries, evangelists, etc. Here the Holy Spirit shows us three things about God's servants and the honor they are to be given.

THE PASTOR'S WORK is set before us as involving three things. Faithful pastors are men who “***labor among you.***” The work of the ministry involves labor. I readily

grant that many self-serving men use the pastoral office only to please themselves; and therefore may lazily go about their pastoral duties, doing only what is required of them. God's servants labor in the Word and in doctrine. They study diligently, pray earnestly, and preach with urgency, using every gift and opportunity God bestows upon them for the furtherance of the gospel, the glory of Christ, and the benefit of his people (1 Tim. 4:12-16).

They are "**over you in the Lord.**" Pastors are not bullish tyrants; but they are the spiritual rulers of God's house, in exactly the same sense that a man is the ruler of his house in the Lord (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7, 17). As such they must take the oversight of the flock, ruling in the name of God, by the Word of God (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

As overseers in the family of God, God's servants faithfully "**admonish you,**" teaching you the Word of God, the will of God, and the ways of God. They teach you what to believe and how to live for the glory of God.

THE BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY to his pastor is also set before us as a threefold thing. "**Know them which labor among you.**" Make yourself acquainted with God's servants. Seek to understand their labors and burdens. Find out what they need. And learn how best to assist them in their work.

“Esteem them very highly.” This high esteem is not esteem given to the man because he is intelligent, an unusually gifted preacher, or a well-liked man, but **for his “work’s sake,”** because he is God’s faithful servant. As such, he is a man worthy of your honor, worthy of your financial support, and worthy of respectful, honorable terms when you talk about him.

This high esteem is to be given **“in love.”** Let every child of God see that he loves and promotes love for his pastor.

THE RESULT OF THIS HIGH ESTEEM AND HONOR of believers for God’s servants is peace. In the churches of Christ, you will **“be at peace among yourselves”** exactly in proportion to your love for and high esteem of God’s servants.

“THAT WHICH IS GOOD”

In verses 14 and 15 Paul urges us to take care to exercise patience toward all men, rendering to none evil for evil. Then, he urges us to follow that which is good, both among ourselves and with regard to all men (vv. 15-22).

(1 Th 5:16-22) “Rejoice evermore. (17) Pray without ceasing. (18) In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (19) Quench not the Spirit. (20) Despise not prophesyings. (21) Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (22) Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

In verse 23 he tells them of his prayer for them. What a prayer this is! — *“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.”*

In verse 24 he gives them and to all believers a great inspired word of assurance regarding our salvation. — *“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”*

Then, he closes this great epistle with these final, tender, affectionate words.

(1 Th 5:25-28) “Brethren, pray for us. (26) Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. (27) I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. (28) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.”