

1 Thessalonians 4

4:1 Finally therefore [as a result of Timothy's report], **we beseech you and exhort you in the Lord Jesus** [in union] **in order that as you have received from us** [his Bible class in Thessalonica before he left] **how you ought to walk** [how to serve the Lord in your spiritual life] **and to please God just as even you are walking, in order that you would abound** [the overflow of blessing to others] **more and more** [blessing comes to the advancing believer].

Λοιπὸν οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐρωτῶμεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα καθὼς παρελάβετε παρὶ ἡμῶν τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ, καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε, ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον.

At the moment of personal faith in Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit takes every new believer and enters him into union with Christ which union is forever. 1 Corinthians 12:13, "By means of one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks [Gentiles], slaves or free, and we were all made to drink into one Spirit [the work of the Spirit]." Galatians 3:26-27, "You are the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile [no racial distinctions in Christ]; there is neither slave nor free [no social or economic distinctions in Christ]; there is neither male nor female [no gender discrimination], and we are all one in Christ."

The Church Age believer is separated from all believers in history for the special purpose of forming the royal family of God. "Sanctified in Christ Jesus," means that all Church Age believers are by spiritual position in Christ as he is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. So, experiential Sanctification should reflect positional sanctification. In other words, one should take seriously his position in Christ and to understand the implications. After all, in union with Christ, we share his righteousness, his royal priesthood, his heirship etc. So, regarding

experiential righteousness, we should take seriously the Spiritual Life/the 10 Problem Solving Devices.

How does the Christian “abound more and more”? Under Logistical Grace provision, the baby Christian gets life support from the Lord and some blessing. To gain more blessing from the Lord requires more capacity for blessing and this capacity comes from the advance in the spiritual life. Illustrate!

4:2 For you know what commands we gave you by the Lord Jesus [the Lord permitted Paul to go and minister in Thessalonica].

οἶδατε γὰρ τίνας παραγγελίας ἐδώκαμεν ὑμῖν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.

From the Council in Jerusalem after Paul’s 1st missionary journey, James and the pastors in Jerusalem regarding the Law of Expediency required the following from the gentile converts to Christianity: Acts 15:20, 29 “that we write to them that they abstain from things defiled by idols [animal sacrifices] and from fornication [promiscuity in the Greek temples as a function of worship] and from what is strangled [suffocated] and from blood [of an animal]. (29) that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourself free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.” Paul passed this information on during his 2nd and following missionary journeys.

Leviticus 17:13-14, “And if any Israelite or any stranger who resides among them hunts down an animal or a bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. For the life of all flesh – its blood is its life. Therefore, I say to the Israelite people: You shall not partake of the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Anyone who partakes of it shall be cut off [executed]”

Paul had taught them many doctrines when he was in Thessalonica. However, now they need some help regarding application, and the first application will be related to sex, then social and business relationship.

4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification that you should abstain [infinitive of purpose] **from fornication** [an illicit sexual life],

τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας,

Verses 3-5 deal with experiential sanctification related to sex. Experiential sanctification is the will of God. In most of these Greek cities there were heathen temples which sponsored drunkenness and sexual relationships as a means of salvation and spiritual life.

4:4 that [from verse three; this purpose clause is an amplification of the first] **each one of you** [each believer, male and female] **should know how to possess** [middle voice: you are benefited] **his own vessel** [body] **in sanctification** [dative of advantage: experiential sanctification] **and honor** [result of being filled].

εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ,

When you have two purpose clauses in sequence, the second one found in verse 4 is an amplification of the first one found in verse 3. In this context a vessel is one's body, a container (as in 2 Corinthians 4:7, Acts 9:15, 2 Timothy 2: 20, 21. This vessel is a container which houses the soul.

4:5 not in the passion of [sexual] **lust** [mental adultery leading to overt adultery], **even as the gentiles who do not know God,**

μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν,

4:6 that [purpose clause continued from verse 3] **no man go beyond** [to sin against: to give pain or sorrow to others through sinning] **and defraud**

[to cheat, to take advantage of] **his brother in any manner because the Lord is the avenger** [the one who will punish] **concerning all these, as we also have forewarned you and testified.**

τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν τῷ πράγματι τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, διότι ἔκδικος κύριος περὶ πάντων τούτων, καθὼς καὶ προείπαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ διεμαρτυράμεθα.

4:7 For God has not called us to uncleanness [all the lustful functions, sinning and evil which occurs when the believer is out of fellowship], **but in** [experiential] **sanctification,**

οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσία ἀλλί ἐν ἁγιασμῷ.

4:8 Therefore, he who rejects [despises] **does not reject** [despise] **man, but God** [the Father], **who also has given us His Holy Spirit,**

τοιγαροῦν ὁ ἀθετῶν οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἀθετεῖ ἀλλὰ τὸν θεὸν τὸν [καὶ] διδόντα τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμᾶς.

4:9 But regarding brotherly love [unconditional love], **you do not need that I write to you** [because Paul has taught it before], **for you yourselves are taught by God** [God the Father is the perfect example as per John 3:16] **to love one another** [the humanity of Christ is the role model].

Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρειαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτοί ἐστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους·

4:10 And indeed you do it toward all the brothers who are in all Macedonia. But we beseech you, brothers, that you abound more and more [in your love],

καὶ γὰρ ποιεῖτε αὐτὸ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς [τοὺς] ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ. παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν μᾶλλον,

4:11 and that you try earnestly to be quiet [make it a point of honor to mind your own business] **and to do your own business** [referring to industry], **and to work with your own hands** [most worked with their hands in the ancient world], **as we commanded you,**

καὶ φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν καὶ πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς χερσὶν ὑμῶν, καθὼς ὑμῖν παρηγγείλαμεν,

Because many of the Thessalonians thought that the Rapture was about to take place, they quit their jobs and businesses which usually involved working with one's hands.

4:12 so that you may walk honestly [respectably] **toward those outside** [unbelievers], **and so that you may not lack in anything** [regarding material needs].

ἵνα περιπατῆτε εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω καὶ μηδενὸς χρείαν ἔχητε.

4:13. But we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, about those who are asleep [the body sleeps as it were until the believer resurrects, gets up from his sleep], **that you may not grieve as do the rest** [the unbelievers] **who have no confidence.**

Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren.” Ignorance is the greatest problem with Christianity today, and it is not an easy problem to solve especially since most Christian do not think that learning the Word of God is important.

Being asleep is one of the ways of describing Christian death as it relates to the body only. We note that the soul leaves the body in death and the soul of the believer is absent from the body and face to face with the Lord, enjoying an interim body where there is no more pain, no more death etc.

4:14. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and we do. So, in the same manner, the God [the omnipotence of God the Father] will bring with Him those [in interim body] who have fallen asleep [died] by [the will of] Jesus.

εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη, οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ.

4:15. For this we communicate to you by the word of the Lord, that we [Paul identifies himself with the Rapture generation] who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord [at the Rapture], will not precede [in meeting the Lord in the air at the Rapture of the Church age believers] those who have fallen asleep [died].

Τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου, ὅτι ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν τοὺς κοιμηθέντας·

There will be one generation of believers who will be alive when the resurrection takes place; their mortal bodies will become immortal; “shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.”

4:16. Because the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a command [will give a command through Gabriel], with the voice of the archangel [for mortality to receive immortality] and with the trumpet of God [the Father’s trumpet command for corruption to become incorruption], in fact, the dead in Christ will rise first [in their resurrection bodies].

ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπὶ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον,

Notice that at the resurrection there are two commands. The voice command of the archangel is for the resurrection of living believers on the earth, mortal believers becoming immortal. They will be changed in a moment from having a mortal body to having a resurrection body. There is a trumpet command of God the Father. The trumpet command is for the resurrection of the dead believers, corruption of the interim body turned into incorruption of the Resurrection body.

Since both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit provided the power in providing the humanity of Christ with his resurrection body so will they provide the power in creating the resurrection bodies of Church Age believers at the Rapture of the Church. The Father will use his power in providing the resurrection bodies of those who have already died, whereas God the Holy Spirit will provide the resurrection bodies of those who will be alive at the Rapture.

1 Cor 15:53-54, “For this perishable [the interim body of those Christians who died before the Rapture] must put on imperishable [an eternal body], and this mortal [the mortal body of those alive at the Rapture] must put on immortality [eternal body]. (54). But when this perishable [the believer in his interim body] shall have put on the imperishable [resurrection body], and this mortal [the believer alive at the Rapture] shall have put on immortality [resurrection body], then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in [as a result of] victory” (Isaiah 25:8).

4:17. Then, we [Paul identifies himself with those who will be alive at the Rapture] who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἄρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἀέρα· καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἔσόμεθα.

4:18. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

Ὡστε παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις.

These doctrines are a source of comfort when you have lost Christian loved ones for the separation is only temporary. They are in heaven in their interim bodies waiting for the Rapture just as you. These doctrines are a source of blessing as you face the adversities of life and realize that there is something far beyond this life, and that God has given you an eternal state in a permanent body that will never experience pain or deterioration in any possible way.

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Based on the scholarly work of R.B. Thieme Jr.

I recommend downloading 'THIEME'S BIBLE DOCTRINE DICTIONARY' from this website: rbthieme.org