

TITLE: A PROMISE WITH CONDITIONS

TEXT: 1 THESS 4

INTRO: Now Paul addresses some issues that are a little more detailed. The Thessalonians may have been dealing with these personally, or Paul may have just wanted to touch on these issues individually, given the universal nature of their negative effects. Either way, taking care of these problems is prerequisite to receiving God's promise of Heaven.

I. INTERNAL PURITY (v. 1-8):

- A. (v. 1-2) General exhortation: We beseech (desire, ask) and exhort that, just as you have received of us how it is necessary to walk (live) and how it is necessary to strive to please God... - you know these things from us. So we exhort you to abound in them! (v. 2) You *know* the commandment!
- B. (v. 3) Specific exhortation: Abstain from fornication. This is the will of God – your sanctification (purity, holiness).
- C. (v. 4) What TO do – that each of you know to possess his own vessel (your own body) in sanctification (set apart) & honor. Like Paul, we don't need to define this in any more detail. We all know that we should control our own bodies
- D. (v. 5-7) What NOT to do
 - 1. (v. 5) Don't use your body in lust (passion, strong emotion/desire) of concupiscence (lust, inordinate desires). In other words, **control yourself**; don't give in to these passions like the Gentiles do (known for using sex in worship).
 - 2. (v. 6) Don't go beyond [transgress] (overstep proper limits) and defraud (make a gain, get an advantage, be covetous) his brother in the matter. Paul is using delicate language to discuss (and forbid) sexual involvement with a brother's wife.
 - 3. (v. 7) Why? God hasn't called us to uncleanness (impurity), but holiness (set apart).
*Like it is today, sexual sin was definitely a problem in Paul's day; it wasn't even considered a sin (just like today), which is why it is addressed so often in the NT). So it's possible that this was a specific problem with the Thessalonians. Otherwise, Paul is just addressing it with them as a general rule.
- E. (v. 8) He that despises (cast off, reject) this command, isn't rejecting Paul (or any other man), but rejects God! It's clear that many did reject God's law on fornication, just as they do today (even in the church). Paul makes it clear that this *is from God!*

II. EXTERNAL PURITY (v. 9-12):

- A. (v. 9-10) Love others! After praying for them to increase in love (3:12), here Paul brings it up again. He says they have no need for him to write to them about love, since they are taught of God. This is the gospel! This is what a disciple is (**John 13:34-35** – “*by this shall all men know you are my disciples*”)! The Thessalonian brethren were excelling at it (v.10-showing love toward all the brethren in Macedonia)! But yet all Christians need to continue working at this. It's very natural for us to seek *our own* interest. But Christianity requires putting others ahead of yourself. This will *always* require effort!
- B. (v. 11) Mind your own business! Study (strive, desire earnestly) to be quiet (still, peaceful, not meddlesome), to do your own business, to work with your own hands (some among them were “busybodies” – **2 Thess 3:11**).
 - 1. This is not saying that we ignore sin in others (specifically our brethren – this still needs to be handled biblically).
 - 2. This *is* saying that each one of us has more than enough to do each day just taking care of ourselves, than to be “*busybodies in other men's matters*” (**1 Pet 4:15**)!
- C. (v. 12) Be a good example! Walk honestly (decently, appropriately, properly) among those without (i.e., non-Christians).

III. ETERNAL PURITY (v. 13-18):

- A. (v. 13-14) An answer for their concern
 - 1. (v. 13) Regarding their brethren who had died, Paul didn't want them not knowing and, therefore, being sad, but rather to have hope. Christianity is about hope! Sadness about death should *never* be a part of Christianity!
 - a. What was their concern? In **2:19** and **3:13**, Paul has talked about being faithful until Christ comes. Does this mean that *only* those faithful brethren who are still alive when Christ returns will be taken to Heaven? This may seem like a silly question to us, considering how many sound brethren have lived and died over the many generations since this letter was written. But the Thessalonians didn't know these things yet (Paul hadn't written about it yet)!
 - b. The culture surrounding them would greatly mourn their dead because they didn't believe in the resurrection.
 - 2. (v. 14) For (explanation coming) if (since) we believe that Jesus died and rose again... - if this is true (which we know that it is), then God will bring with him those which have fallen asleep (died) in Christ (i.e., **there IS a resurrection**)! This is what Paul talks about in **1 Cor 15:16-20**. Christ is the firstfruits of them that slept (i.e., others will be raised likewise)!
- B. (v. 15-17) A description of this event
 - 1. (v. 15) What *won't* happen – when Christ comes, we (those Christians still alive) *will not* precede (not ‘prevent’ as in KJV) those Christians who have already died. Notice that Paul says “we” – he doesn't know when Christ will come, but to intimate that he and those to whom he's writing will still be alive is to show the proper attitude of “looking for and hasting unto” that day (**2 Pet 3:12**). We also ought to live our Christian lives as if Christ is coming soon (watching & working)!
 - 2. (v. 16-17) What *will* happen – the Lord shall descend with a shout, a voice of the archangel, and the trump of God (LOUD!)
 - a. (v. 16) The dead in Christ shall rise **first**.
 - b. (v. 17) Then those that are alive will be “caught up” (implies force – used in **Ac 8:39** - Philip was “caught away”) to meet them in the clouds, then meet the Lord in the air! Our bodies will be changed, the kingdom will be delivered to Heaven (**1 Cor 15**), and so shall we be with the Lord forever (in Heaven, not earth).
- C. (v. 18) Final encouragement regarding their concern – comfort one another with these words (this is the purpose of these words)!

CONCLUSION: Paul doesn't give any more detail about Christ's coming. He only gave what was needed to answer their concerns and to encourage them. We need to keep this in mind when speculating about this event. Let's remember that the most important thing is to be ready!