

DEMONSTRATED IN ACTION

God's Word:
12

1 Thessalonians 4:1-

Key Verse:

"FINALLY THEN, BRETHREN, WE REQUEST AND EXHORT YOU IN THE LORD JESUS, THAT, AS YOU RECEIVED FROM US INSTRUCTION AS TO HOW YOU OUGHT TO WALK AND PLEASE GOD (JUST AS YOU ACTUALLY DO WALK), THAT YOU EXCEL STILL MORE."

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1

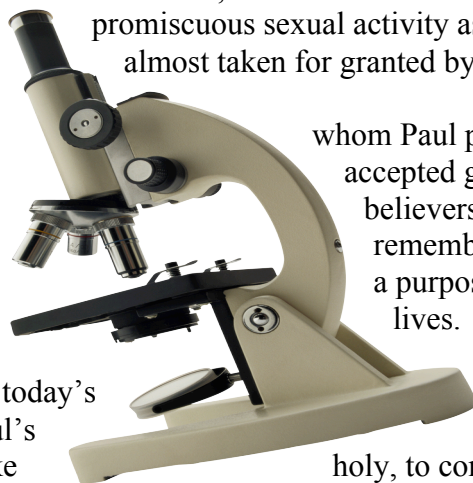


Breaking It Down:

The readers of this letter from Paul lived in an environment in which religion was seldom seen as altering a person's way of life. In Greek religions, the worshipper seldom was expected to obey the god in any way. The Greek gods were not interested in that kind of thing. While many of the pagan religions of that day simply called worshippers to observe certain rituals, others wanted more. Some invited people to engage in promiscuous sexual activity as part of their worship. Such practices were almost taken for granted by many citizens.

The God whom Paul preached was more than a pagan deity who accepted gifts and doled out favors. The Thessalonian believers needed to be conscious of this difference, remembering that God made them a purpose. That purpose extended to every part of their lives.

In verse 3 of today's Scripture, we come upon a key concept of Paul's letters: sanctification. That word means "to make holy, to consecrate or separate from the world." It refers to our identity as God's set-apart people and the process of becoming



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holy. As we study the New Testament texts about sanctification, we see first that Jesus prayed for our sanctification: “Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them, so they can be made holy by your truth” (John 17:17, 19 NLT). The agent of our sanctification is God’s Word. The goal of our sanctification is preparation for us to be sent out to the world to glorify God by doing His work.

The apostle Paul understood the significance of sanctification. In addition to including instructions on this in his correspondence with the Thessalonians, he focused quite a bit on sanctification in his letter to the Romans (Romans 6:1-8:39). In other passages, sanctification is spoken of as being part of the believer’s experience, an essential part of our salvation (Acts 20:32; 26:18; Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11). In the passage in Romans, the Holy Spirit is the agent of our sanctification.

Not only did Jesus pray for our sanctification, but Paul also prayed that we be sanctified “through and through” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Finally, in Hebrews 10:29, the writer states that the blood of Jesus sanctifies.

From these passages, it is clear that God sanctifies believers and that the blood of Christ provides the basis for it. The Holy Spirit effects divine sanctification, and the Word of God is an active agent in it.



Living It:

People commonly distinguish between the sacred and the secular – between things that have to do with God and things that are ordinary. Musicians distinguish between sacred and secular music. In times past, some communities forced businesses to close on days that were deemed sacred. In certain sacred places, special clothing might even be expected.

However, there is a problem with this distinction if we think we can exclude God from everything that is “secular.” When we think we can divide our lives so that God’s part is set off from the rest, we may end up keeping God confined to that part alone. Faith is then just for special days, holy places, and religious observances.



The Bible’s perspective is different. God made all of life, not just a few parts of it. God rules over every aspect of life, not just those we want to allow Him to

touch. In Jesus Christ, God entered the world as a human being, living every part of life, just as you and I, showing us that the whole of life belongs to Him.

When we realize that truth about God, we cannot divide our lives into sacred and secular portions. As believers, there no longer is any part of our lives that is secular. When we become Christians, what part of our lives is left just to us? None!

And that is a good thing for us. By pleasing God, fulfilling His purpose in every area, we discover the purpose for which we were made: to be His completely.



Understanding It:

1. What behaviors or attitudes does Paul instruct the Thessalonians to adopt in order to observe the “will of God?”
2. If the Thessalonians do not follow Paul’s instruction, but find themselves outside the will of God, what will happen to them?
3. Make a list of attitudes or behaviors that are impure. Is there anything on this list, or on the list in question 1, that you need to work on?
4. In your walk with God, what areas of your life fail to please God? Do you want to change these areas? How do you plan to do that?



Doing It!

This week, spend time prioritize your goals, and future. Then list a few things help you and other young dreams. Share your list with Pastor.



in prayer, asking God to help you maybe your dreams, for the you believe the church can do to people achieve their goals and your Sabbath School teacher and