

**1 Thess. 4: 1-8**

Today we are beginning the practical portion of this letter! Paul always starts out with the principles of the gospel – doctrine, but then he always gets to the practical part of everyday living! That is where we live daily so in these last two chapters we need to listen up so we can walk out the Christ-life that God intends!

In verse one Paul lays it out as to the whole purpose of the Christ-life – pleasing God or glorifying God! And how do we do that?

Paul is not giving additional commands but reminding these believers of the commands and the example of Christ and Paul who is trying to imitate Jesus!

Paul is encouraging these believers to walk out their faith! If you look up walk in the dictionary you will find that to walk means you are moving forward – making progress toward something or somewhere! As believers we are to be making progress toward Christ likeness!

Christ-likeness is our whole purpose in this life – to become like Jesus! And becoming like Jesus is what is well pleasing to God the Father!

*1. I am to abound more and more in Christ-likeness!*

Paul is sharing the need for every believer to become – walk out – this Christ life and be pleasing to God! That is the practical call of God!

- a. Sanctification! This comes from the word hagiois in the Gk. It means to be holy/ pure by being set apart from and to something. As a believer we are set apart from sin, selfishness, the culture of this world! And we are to be set apart for or to God, His truth, His kingdom and for His glory!
- b. For this is God's will for you! Jesus did not come so you could have a better worldly experience today, but that you would walk out the faith life in Christ so that you know God and are pleasing to Him and thus will experience the amazing grace of life today and every day of eternity!  
This is not optional! This is the Christian life – being sanctified daily so you become like Jesus!

**Romans 8:29 (HCSB)**

- c. God calls us to holiness!  
He does not call us to a life apart from Him but to be called to Him and He is holy, holy, holy!

*2. I am to abstain from immorality!*

Abstain means to stay away from or having no part in something! Here we are to stay away from or have no part in immorality! In Paul's day and in the culture of the Thessalonians there were many pagan rituals that were practiced through sex acts!

Fleshly lusts were a part of everyday life and practice of the culture, but Paul is saying that believers were not to participate in these immoral acts!

Sex is to be the sole experience of marriage. Any thing other than marriage is sin and should be abstained from. It's still true today!

But this abstaining goes deeper than just a fleshly pleasure! The word that immorality comes from also means idolatry! Paul is stressing that any form of idolatry is immoral and a sin against God!

- a. I am to possess my own vessel. Here vessel means body. My own body. I am not to use my vessel for any purpose other than pleasing God! I am to use it for sanctification and honor!
- b. I am not to defraud a brother! I am not to use lust for fleshly greed to entice someone else to do any thing that would lead them away from God!
3. *I am to walk in the Spirit!*

Knowing that what Paul is sharing is true, he also knew that it is impossible a part from the Holy Spirit! If we reject this truth we reject God who has made it possible to walk out this Christ-likeness in our everyday lives!

Our purpose is to look like Jesus – love like Jesus and walk out the Christ-life daily! John says that we are to walk just like He did (1 John 2:6)!

Sanctification is walking away from our old life and self and walking toward Christ-likeness! It is God's will for you!

Practical insight:

- Abounding in Christ-likeness is being conformed to His image!
- Abounding in Christ-likeness is abstaining from anything that leads me or another away from that vital relationship with Jesus!
- Abounding in Christ-likeness is learning what it is to be holy!
- Abounding in Christ-likeness is learning to be led and empowered by the Spirit of God!
- Abounding in Christ-likeness is making progress daily!

Discussion:

1. Do I see my response to God's grace as becoming just like Jesus?
2. Why do we think the process of sanctification is optional?
3. Are you walking (remember the definition) out your call to Christ-likeness and holiness on a daily basis?
4. Why is it so important to be filled with the Spirit daily?
5. What practical step are you going to take today to make you more like Jesus tomorrow?