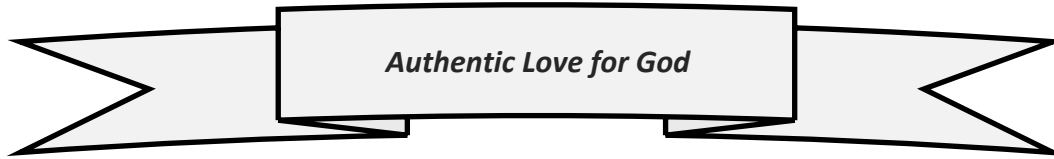


AUTHENTIC: REAL FAITH IN REAL LIFE

1 Thessalonians – Lesson 5



In the first half 1 Thessalonians, Paul has expressed his overwhelming delight after hearing Timothy's report of the Thessalonians' steadfast faith. Paul has affirmed his own love for this church, and his strong desire to return and see them again. It has been a personal and affectionate letter.

Now, beginning in chapter 4, Paul turns his focus to present to the church practical instruction about how they are to live out their authentic faith in the context of a godless culture. Paul speaks emphatically, urging the people of faith to live their lives in a manner that is worthy of the glorious God who has saved them and embraced them into His Kingdom.

Examine the text:

Authentic faith fosters purity of life

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8
 - a. *Looking back to chapter 3:10-13.* As Paul has developed the argument of this letter to the Thessalonians, he has expressed his fatherly love and concern for these new believers.
 - i. According to 1 Thess. 3:10, what did Paul hope to be able to do to benefit the church at Thessalonica?
 - ii. In 1 Thess. 3:13, Paul prays that God will strengthen and purify the hearts of these faithful men and women. What is the end result that Paul has in view for them? (3:13)

b. American culture is focused on the grand goal of enjoying life and pleasing oneself. Paul's challenge is dramatically different. What does the Bible present as the ultimate purpose of our lives? (4:1)

c. Paul commends these Christians for the fact that they have obeyed his teaching and have begun to live in order to please God. What does he ask them to do as they continue in the Christian life? (4:1b)

d. In one word, what is the will of God for our lives? (4:3a)

e. How must our sanctification be lived out in our sexual practices? (4:3-6)

The word "sanctification" signifies the state of being set apart and separated from sinfulness so that we may serve God. It refers to the lifelong process of growing in purity, holiness, and in dedication to God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

f. What is God's desire and purpose for our lives? (4:7)

g. What is the authority for this command? (4:8)

h. What has God provided to enable us to live in harmony with God's will for us? (4:8b)

Explore the concepts:

2. Our culture urges us to “pursue the American Dream.” We often see advertisements that offer some product that will enable us to “live a better life.” An often-heard eulogy at funerals is that the departed individual “lived life to the fullest.” In our 21st-century culture that usually means that he laughed a lot, traveled a lot, and enjoyed a variety of earthly pleasures.

How is this American cultural perspective of “the good life” in stark contrast to Paul’s exhortation in 1 Thess. 4:1-3a?

3. *For deeper thought:* A gospel-shaped lifestyle is counterintuitive. From what you know about the wisdom and the goodness of God our Creator, how would you argue that the Bible presents a path of life that is more fulfilling and more satisfying than the life that is lived to please “self”?
4. The notion of purity is not new to us. We embrace the goal of “clean eating” and we find it easy to reject impurity in our food. We are careful about our diets and we choose foods that are healthy, and we decline to eat foods that are unhealthy. Yet we may resist examining our lives to identify activities that introduce *spiritual* impurities in our lives. Take a moment to ponder the “ingredients” of your life. Think about how you spend your time. Are there changes you would like to make?

Exalt the Savior

When God delivers a command to live in a certain way, that command is based on God's authority as our Creator and Sustainer. For those of us who have received His amazing grace in Christ, we have come to know not only His authority, but also His goodness and His sacrificial, steadfast love.

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, he urges believers to live in a way that pleases God—to live a life worthy of God. (1 Thess. 2:11-12) For the people of faith, our chief goal in life is to please God.

It is our love for God that motivates us to live in a way that pleases God. What is it that has instilled in us an authentic love for God? It is our faith in what Jesus has done on our behalf.

- Jesus came to a world darkened by sorrow so that we may possess an eternity of joy.
- Jesus paid the just penalty for our sin so that we may receive the boundless mercy of God's forgiveness.
- Jesus set aside the glory of heaven so that in His death and resurrection, eternal glory may be lavished on us.
- Jesus suffered the agony of rejection and betrayal so that we may enjoy the perfect love and Presence of God.

Take a moment to contemplate the great sacrifice that has enabled you to be welcomed into God's eternal kingdom.

Perhaps you will want to pray this prayer: *Father, help me turn away from worthless pursuits and empty frivolity. Help me to reset my priorities that I may live a life worthy of You.*

The Gospel brings the power of God for authentic life change