

## *Study Notes For I Thessalonians* **(Chapter Four)**

**I Thessalonians 4:1-2** - The previous chapter concluded with Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus wanting to come help the saints in Thessalonica perfect what was lacking in their faith (I Thessalonians 3:9-13). Until that happens, this letter will have to suffice. Thus, they wrote this: *“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus”* (I Thessalonians 4:1-2).

The word translated “furthermore” [λοιπόν] carries the idea of “for the future” or “henceforth” (Thayer; Strong’s # 3063). By using the word translated “beseech” [ἐρωτάω] these brethren were essentially expressing their desire (Strong’s # 2065) for the brethren there. The word translated “exhort” [παρακαλέω] is rather broad in meaning (Strong’s # 3870). It can mean anything from “comforted” as it is translated in Matthew 5:4 to “desired” as it is translated in II Corinthians 8:6. That Greek word is also translated as “beseech” in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:1, Philippians 4:2, etc.). By the combination of both words we can see that these brethren had a strong desire for the saints in Thessalonica to do something.

What they wanted them to do was to focus on what they had already received in teaching from these brethren. For a moment, take a thought back in time with me. The Apostles, which Paul was, were tasked with preaching the Gospel to the lost all over the world (Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-20, and Luke 24:45-49). Think about the vast work of making the Gospel known to all nations (Romans 16:25-26). Now, in addition to that, Paul had to worry about all the churches too (II Corinthians 11:28). Think about what that included, in addition to preaching to the lost. Notice: *“Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do... Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem”* (Acts 15:35-36 and Acts 16:1-4).

With all of the work that Paul and the evangelists working with him had to do, sometimes brethren would just have to focus on what they already had been taught. The saints in Thessalonica already had been taught how to walk and please God. Walking and pleasing God comes down to faithful, obedient action (Colossians 1:10 and I John 2:3-6). So, they needed to be doers of what they already knew (James 1:21-27).

Of course, there was more to learn and this is obvious by the writing of this epistle and a second one that will come later. However, the Thessalonians at this time needed to focus on things they had already been taught. There are times wherein Christians need to grow in things they don't know (Hebrews 5:12-6:3). Then there are times wherein Christians have to grow in the truths that they have already been taught (II Peter 1:3-13; 3:1-2; 3:14-18). This brings us to the phrase "abound more and more."

By abounding they would be in excess or in abundance (Strong's # 4052). By "more and more" you could also say "in a greater degree" (Strong's # 3123). Think of how the path of the just shines more and more (Proverbs 4:18). In the previous chapter they were told to "*abound in love...*" (I Thessalonians 3:12). Paul told the saints in Philippi that he prayed that their love may abound yet more and more (Philippians 1:9). Jesus taught that His followers would bring forth fruit, be pruned, and bring forth more fruit (John 15:1-7). As disciples of Christ, Christians need to bear much fruit (John 15:8). So, a Christian does not always need to be taught something new to be able to grow.

Knowing that what Paul and those working with him taught were from Jesus Christ is significant. We have seen already in this letter that they did not receive the teachings of Paul as though they were words of men (I Thessalonians 2:13). They made the right conclusion. What Paul was teaching them, as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, were the words of Christ (John 16:1-13, I Corinthians 2:1-16, and I Corinthians 14:37). This establishes the authority of what the saints in Thessalonica are being told. Additionally, it is a good reminder for them and us that when we read the words from Paul, Peter, etc.; we ought to obey them as the words of Christ. All Christians should know that Jesus sees our love for Him when we obey His commandments (John 14:15 and I John 5:2-3).

This is a great study for all of us in Christ to consider. Faithful Christians love to learn. Sometimes studying the Scriptures and meditating upon them can cause us to lose time and sleep (Psalms 119:148). We find peace in God's word (Psalms 119:165). It is fun to learn and discover treasures in the word of God. Here is a question for us all: what have you done with the truths that you already know (Romans 2:13)? Unlike the Thessalonians, we have all the revelation of God. We have a lot to learn. However, it is not a sprint to some knowledge finish line. We see that Jesus taught as people were "*able to hear*" (Mark 4:33). So, perfect what you know before you seek greater

knowledge. The end goal is to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Colossians 4:12).

**I Thessalonians 4:3-5** - Knowing the commandments of the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:1-2), the Thessalonians were instructed the following: *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God”* (I Thessalonians 4:3-5).

The sanctification of the saints is the will of God. The word that is translated “sanctification” [ἁγιασμός] means: “properly purification, that is, (the state) purity; concretely (by Hebraism) a purifier: - holiness, sanctification” (Strong’s # 38). This is up to the Christian to do. That is made clear in verse four and in other Scriptures as well. Notice: *“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness... Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”* (Romans 6:19 and Hebrews 12:14). In each of the two Scriptures I quoted above, the same Greek word translated “sanctification” is translated “holiness” which is why I underlined those words.

In connection to living a life of holiness, all Christians need to abstain from fornication (I Corinthians 6:9-11, Galatians 5:19-21, and Ephesians 5:1-3). Fornication [πορνεία] broadly covers various sexual and even spiritual sins. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon defines the term like this: “illicit sexual intercourse; 1a) adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc.; 1b) sexual intercourse with close relatives;) sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman) metaphorically the worship of idols; 2a) of the defilement of idolatry, as incurred by eating the sacrifices offered to idols” (Strong’s # 4202).

As Christians, we should flee from fornication (I Corinthians 6:18). A lawful marriage is the relationship whereby we should find the fulfillment of our sexual desires (I Corinthians 7:1-5 and Hebrews 13:4). Of course, fornication has long been a problem within the body of Christ. Such occurred in the congregation that assembled in Corinth as well as the congregation that assembled in Thyatira (I Corinthians 5:1-13 and Revelation 2:18-29). When a person decides to give his or her body over to such sinful actions, that person has chosen a path to eternal destruction (Revelation 21:8). A moment or even many moments of carnal pleasure is not worth the cost of one’s soul (cf. Matthew 16:24-27).

We read that the Thessalonians should have known how to possess their vessel in sanctification and honor. The word translated “vessel” [σκεῦος] is really broad. Even in the short definition found in Strong’s Greek dictionary we find this to be true. Notice:

“Of uncertain affinity; a vessel, implement, equipment or apparatus (literally or figuratively [specifically a wife as contributing to the usefulness of the husband]): - goods, sail, stuff, vessel” (Strong’s # 2932). With the context and definitions in mind, I think of what was written to the Corinthians: *“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (I Corinthians 6:12-20).

If the “vessel” is taken to mean a man’s wife, that fits the Scriptures too. A man ought to treat his wife properly, as a vessel (I Peter 3:7). He should not commit fornication against her. He should be pleased with her body instead of pursuing the body of another (Proverbs 5:15-23).

When we look at the phrasing of “the lust of concupiscence” we have multiple Greek words to consider. The meanings of which are, in part, “a passion, inordinate affection” and “a longing (especially for what is forbidden): - concupiscence, desire, lust (after)” (Strong’s #s 3806 and 1939). These things are supposed to be put to death when you become a Christian (Colossians 3:5 and Galatians 5:24). If left alone to fester, unlawful desires cause an internal war (Galatians 5:16-17 and I Peter 2:11). These lusts lead to sin (James 1:13-16). Therefore, Christians ought to cease making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof (Romans 13:13-14). The context we are studying is about sexual lusts. However, the Greek word that is translated “concupiscence” is not limited to sexual lusts. That same term appears in a context dealing with the sinful desire of material wealth (I Timothy 6:9).

By referring to the actions of the Gentiles “which know not God” (cf. Ephesians 2:11-12), the point was that they acted without being taught the ways of God. Gentile nations were known for walking in lustful ways (I Peter 4:3). For those that knew God, they knew that God could not be pleased while acting upon acts of fornication or the lusts leading one to fornication (Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 18:1-30, Leviticus 20:10-21, etc.). Such lusts are of the world, not of God (I John 2:15-17). So, Christians should know better than to do such things.

**I Thessalonians 4:6** - *“That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified”* (I Thessalonians 4:6). We are going to start our study by looking at the word translated “defraud” [πλεονεκτέω]. Strong’s dictionary defines this word like this: “To be covetous, that is, (by implication) to over reach: - get an advantage, defraud, make a gain” (Strong’s # 4122). Another Lexicon says: “1) to have more, or a greater part or share; 1a) to be superior, excel, surpass, have an advantage over; 2) to gain or take advantage of another, to overreach” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon). This Greek word appears in four other verses in the New Testament. Notice how this Greek word is translated in those other Scriptures in the King James Version: “advantage” (II Corinthians 2:11), “defrauded” (II Corinthians 7:2), and “make a gain” (II Corinthians 12:17-18).

So, what are some ways in which one Christian could take advantage of another Christian? For one you can look back in the first century and see that there were erring wealthy “Christians” who took advantage of their position over the poor (James 2:1-13 and James 5:1-7). Another example can be found in how those entrusted with the teaching of the Gospel abused their role and treated people like merchandise (II Peter 2:1-22). Another example can be found in Corinth where brothers were taking each other to the courts of law to settle differences (I Corinthians 6:1-8). While slavery can exist without abuse (Colossians 3:22-4:1, I Timothy 6:1-2, and Philemon 1:1-19), think about all of the potential abuses that could exist and why teaching had to happen on the subject (Leviticus 25:39-43 and Deuteronomy 15:12-15). Another application can be in business transactions. Think about how one Christian could take advantage of another’s trust and make gain unrighteously (Leviticus 19:11; 19:13, Deuteronomy 25:13-16, and Amos 8:5-6).

We could spend time on this being an instruction that applies only between Christians. I could make the case that such is taught because of the term “brother.” That conclusion would not be concrete. The Greek term translated “brother” is broad (Strong’s # 80). It can mean those spiritually related in Christ (II Corinthians 1:1), a physical brother (Luke 8:20), or even kinsmen (Romans 9:3).

So, let’s approach this from the standpoint that we as Christians are seeing here that we should not take advantage of anyone. That conclusion is certainly a safe one. One thing is for sure, we are to treat all people right (Luke 10:25-37 and Romans 13:8-10).

When we look at the Scriptures there were sickening times wherein those professing to be God’s people took advantage of defenseless people. For example: *“Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right*

*from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless... Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations. Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD, The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed. Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood. In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow” (Isaiah 10:1-2 and Ezekiel 22:1-7).*

Those things did not just occur during what is known as “Old Testament times.” During the days that Jesus walked this earth, note what He said: *“And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation”* (Mark 12:38-40). So, we can see that the Jews had a long practice of defrauding their brethren. It was such a problem that it had to be dealt with among Jewish Christians too. When James wrote to early first century Jewish Christians that were scattered (James 1:1), he wrote this: *“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:26-27).

The brethren in Thessalonica are being warned. It is not that they needed to be taught to love one another (I Thessalonians 4:9). It is that they needed to be warned not to take advantage of others. Sometimes people miss the specifics. Well, the warning is clear. If they take advantage of others, God is going to take vengeance on them. That truth has been the case with God since long ago: *“I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor... Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them”* (Psalms 140:12 and Proverbs 22:22-23). “In any matter,” a Christian must not seek to take advantage of someone else for gain. If you want to make a profit in this world the lawful way, do the work to earn that profit (Proverbs 13:11). Provide things honest in the sight of all men (Romans 12:17). Don't be a crook (Ephesians 4:28).

**I Thessalonians 4:7** - There have been a lot of great things taught in this letter thus far. Some things obviously have no direct application to us today (i.e. I Thessalonians 3:1-5), what we will address in this article applies to all Christians. Note: *“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness”* (I Thessalonians 4:7).

We are going to start our study with considering who is under consideration when we read the word “God” in this Scripture. There are three persons in the New Testament that are called “God.” The Father is called “God” (Romans 1:7). Jesus is called “God” (Romans 9:1-5). The Holy Ghost is called “God” (Acts 5:1-11). If you were to think that using your Greek Lexicon will give you clarification to single out the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost in this passage; you’ll see that will not be the case. The Greek term “θεός” (Strong’s # 2316), is used towards all three as the references I provided above prove. I am going to submit a thought for you which will be the reasonable conclusion when we consider our next point. The thought is this; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all three involved in our being called. When we think about how, the point should become clearer.

In the second letter to the saints in Thessalonica, Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus delivered this related point: *“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work”* (II Thessalonians 2:13-17). When you read the above you see all three persons called “θεός” [God] at work toward the Thessalonians. You see that the calling was through the Gospel.

For further thought, through whom do we have the Gospel? Is it just Jesus? Is it the Gospel of the Father? Is the Gospel through the Spirit? The fact is, we have the Gospel from all three. Jesus said His teaching was not His own (John 7:16-18, John 8:28-29, John 12:49-50, John 14:10, John 14:24, and John 17:14). Then, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, who did not teach His own doctrine through the Apostles (John 16:1-13). Then to take this one step further, when inspired men taught they did not teach their own words. They spake as the Spirit of God gave them what to say (II Samuel 23:2, Job 32:8, Jeremiah 1:9, Matthew 10:16-20, I Corinthians 2:1-13, I Corinthians 14:37, Galatians 1:10-12, II Timothy 3:15-17, and II Peter 1:20-21). When we put all of that together, the calling through the Gospel is through God. That is, through all three persons. It is all the will of our Father.

The calling through the Gospel is not unto uncleanness. The Greek word “ἀκαθαρσία” that is translated “uncleanness” is defined by Thayer’s Greek Lexicon as: “1) uncleanness; 1a) physical; 1b) in a moral sense: the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living; of impure motives” (Strong’s # 167). The translation of that Greek term is consistent in the King James Version. It is always translated “uncleanness” as it is in the verse we are studying in this article (Matthew 23:27, Romans 1:24, Romans 6:19, II Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 4:19, Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:5, and I Thessalonians 2:3).

Before we get to talking about the calling unto holiness, let’s consider for a moment the Greek word “ἐν” that is translated “unto” here in I Thessalonians 4:7. It is not the same preposition translated “unto” in regard to uncleanness. That Greek preposition is “ἐπί.” When talking about “unto” [ἐν] holiness the definition given by Thayer is: “in, by, with etc.” (Strong’s # 1722). That preposition is said to appear 2,720 times in the Greek New Testament. The idea is the same as being called “*into the grace of Christ*” (Galatians 1:6). The same is true of saints that should “*walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:4).

The Greek term that is translated “holiness” [ἁγιασμός] is defined by Thayer’s Greek Lexicon as: “1) consecration, purification; 2) the effect of consecration; 2a) sanctification of heart and life” (Strong’s # 38). This Greek word is translated “holiness” (Romans 6:19, Romans 6:22, I Timothy 2:15, and Hebrews 12:14) and also as “sanctification” (I Corinthians 1:30, I Thessalonians 4:3-4, II Thessalonians 2:13, and I Peter 1:2). So, saints are called “into” or “in” consecration or sanctification.

Now, to the application of this verse we have been breaking down. In many words that could be said and verses that we could study, the following makes the point with the utmost clarity. Consider what the inspired Apostle Peter wrote: “*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*” (I Peter 1:13-16 and I Peter 2:9-11).



**I Thessalonians 4:8** - *“He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit”* (I Thessalonians 4:8). As we dig into this verse, we are going to start off with looking at the word translated “despiseth” twice in this verse. This English word is translated from the Greek word “ἀθετέω” which is defined as: “1) to do away with, to set aside, disregard; 2) to thwart the efficacy of anything, nullify, make void, frustrate; 3) to reject, to refuse, to slight” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon; Strong’s # 114).

Just by looking at other contexts wherein this Greek word appears gives us clarity. For example, this Greek word is translated “reject” in Mark 7:9. Notice the context that serves well as a commentary on the first part of I Thessalonians 4:8: *“Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye **reject** the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye”* (Mark 7:1-13).

Those that reject the word of God are opposing themselves (Luke 7:30). Those that refuse to hear true messengers of our Lord are despising the Lord Himself (Luke 10:16). Whether the word of our Lord is accepted or not, that is the standard of judgment in the end (John 12:48). The book of Hebrews states: *“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living*

God” (Hebrews 10:28-31). Despising the truth of our Lord, regardless of the man delivering it, is despising Christ. The consequences are clear. With all of that being said, let’s turn our attention to looking at God giving the Holy Spirit to His people.

John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11). A clear example of what that meant can be seen when you read about the conversions of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:1-11:18). Jesus told His Apostles that the Holy Spirit would come to them after His death (John 14:16-17, John 14:25-26, and John 16:1-13). We should note that they had received, at least in part, the Spirit working through them prior to Jesus’ death (Matthew 10:1-20). This was true of prophets going back long before Jesus even came to earth (II Samuel 23:1-2, Mark 12:36, and II Peter 1:20-21). Having said that, what the Apostles were able to do after Acts 2:1-4 is clearly different than what anyone did previously. We will get to that in a moment. Back to the point. The Holy Spirit was promised to the Apostles, but not just to them. Jesus promised that those that believed on Him should receive the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). The Apostles said the same when they preached after Jesus left this earth (Acts 2:38 and Acts 5:32).

As you study through the New Testament you see Christians were given the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit gave them spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:3-11). How all of that worked is pretty clear. The Apostles received the Holy Spirit in full in Acts 2:1-4. Aside from Cornelius and his household (referenced above), no one else after the second chapter of the book of Acts received the Holy Spirit like the Apostles did. When we come to the fourth chapter of Ephesians, there is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:1-6). That baptism is clearly baptism in water (Acts 8:26-39 and I Peter 3:20-21). The other way in which Jesus’ promise of the Spirit was fulfilled was through the laying on of Apostle’s hands (Acts 8:5-24 and Acts 19:1-7). When you read those Scriptures you see it was miraculous for the purpose of granting spiritual gifts (cf. Mark 16:15-20, Galatians 3:1-5, and Hebrews 2:1-4). That was temporary until the revelation of God was fully revealed (I Corinthians 12:1-13:13 and Ephesians 4:7-16).

The saints in Thessalonica were being instructed not to reject the word of God. The Spirit of God was working through them at this time. The Spirit served as evidence for them (Ephesians 1:13-14). That same Spirit was working through Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus equipping them to teach (I Corinthians 2:1-16). It was not as though Paul could quote multiple New Testament Scriptures in this letter, for they were not all written nor widely available. Having said that, the Spirit of God through prophets could confirm that the message was from the Lord (I Corinthians 14:37). If rejected, they’d then be rejecting God!

**I Thessalonians 4:9-10** - *“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more”* (I Thessalonians 4:9-10). The Greek word “φιλadelphia” (Strong’s # 5360) that is translated “brotherly love” appears in four other passages in the New Testament (Romans 12:10, Hebrews 13:1, I Peter 1:22, and II Peter 1:7). It is not that these saints needed to be taught this afresh. They were a loving group of saints (I Thessalonians 3:6). Rather, it is as this chapter began, that they needed to abound more and more in what they already had been taught.

When first century Christians were taught about brotherly love it was often a lesson they had already been taught. For example, consider this: *“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes”* (I John 2:7-11).

Think about where New Testament teaching of brotherly love started: *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another... This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends... These things I command you, that ye love one another”* (John 13:34-35; 15:12-13; 15:17).

The lesson here had not only been obviously taught to the saints in Thessalonica before this epistle was written, but also earlier in this epistle. Notice: *“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you”* (I Thessalonians 3:12). When we come to the second letter to the saints in Thessalonica this was written: *“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth”* (II Thessalonians 1:3). So, their love towards each other did grow as instructed.

When we think about brotherly love we cannot just think about such as it relates to our local brethren (I Peter 2:17). If any person is obedient to our Lord and thus is our brother or sister in Christ (Mark 3:31-35), we are taught of God to love he or she. Think about what happened in the following text: *“And in these days came prophets from*

*Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:27-30).* Then tie to those Scriptures how we see brotherly love through deeds towards one another: *“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (I John 3:11-18).*

So, the way these brethren are going to abound in love is not through some sort of emotional, internal thought process. Growth in brotherly love is about abounding in something that can be seen. That goes back to what Jesus taught and what was taught shown in the previous paragraph. It is the appeal that Paul used when he asked Philemon to accept his runaway slave Onesimus back into his household as a then converted brother in Christ (Philemon 1:1-22).

Love is the motivator in our service to one another. Paul wrote this to the churches of Galatia: *“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Galatians 5:13-14).*

So, how significant is the subject matter of brotherly love? Here it is in a nutshell: *“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God... If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments” (I John 4:7; 4:20-5:2).*

**I Thessalonians 4:11-12** - You have heard the phrases, “mind your own business” and “get a job.” Well, we are about to read inspired instructions that teach these points very clearly. Here is what we will be studying in this article: *“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing”* (I Thessalonians 4:11-12).

Before we get into our study, we should define a few words we are going to be looking at. The Greek word that is translated “study” [φιλοτιμέομαι] means: “to be fond of honor, that is, emulous (eager or earnest to do something.): - labour, strive, study” (Strong’s # 5389). The Greek word that is translated “quiet” [ἡσυχάζω] means: “to keep still (intransitively), that is, refrain from labor, meddlesomeness or speech: - cease, hold peace, be quiet, rest” (Strong’s # 2270). The Greek word that is translated “business” [ἴδιος] means: “pertaining to self, that is, one's own; by implication private or separate: - X his acquaintance, when they were alone, apart, aside, due, his (own, proper, several), home, (her, our, thine, your) own (business), private (-ly), proper, severally, their (own)” (Strong’s # 2398).

Now that we have those definitions down, let’s think about the lessons in this text. First, the teaching that Christians must strive to live quietly. Consider some things Solomon wrote: *“Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife... Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit”* (Proverbs 17:1 and Ecclesiastes 4:6). As Christians, we should want to live quiet and peaceable lives (I Timothy 2:2). We shouldn’t want chaos in our lives.

One of the ways we avoid chaos in our lives is to stay busy handling our own business. For men, one of the great responsibilities we have in life is to provide for our families (I Timothy 5:8). One of the ways a Christian man provides physically for his family is by securing gainful employment. Work has long been a taught principle among God’s people (Proverbs 13:11, Proverbs 14:23, and Ephesians 4:28).

While there may be married women who help their husbands in the form of labor outside of the home (Proverbs 31:10-31), one of the great responsibilities married women have is to be keepers at home (Titus 2:3-5). A married woman should be so busy caring for her family that she does not have time or room in her life for chaos or being a busybody. In fact, there is something to learn from what was written about young widows. Notice: *“But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they*

*ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (I Timothy 5:11-14).*

The saints in Thessalonica had been taught to work and mind their own business in person. Then, they were taught this in writing. However, we later find that the message was not received by all. In the second letter, this was written: *“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (II Thessalonians 3:6-14).*

Working and minding your own business also helps in our relationships outside of the body of Christ. We are supposed to strive to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:17-18). By taking care of ourselves, we are able to walk honestly in this world (Romans 13:13-14). Think about how Christians need to be good examples in this world with this point (Philippians 2:14-16 and Titus 2:7-8). It is really hard to let your light shine to the glorification of our Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:14-16) if we are involved in things we have no business in. Also, if you are a good for nothing bum; who would hear you concerning the Gospel?

By providing for ourselves we are not going to be leeches on society. Think about what Paul said to the Ephesians: *“I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:33-35).* When I think of all of these points together it brings to my mind a phrase that I heard in the past. That phrase is: *“An honest days work.”* Well, that is certainly what is taught in this text we are studying. Get busy in your business. Provide for your own. Mind your own business. This aids greatly in keeping our lives peaceable.

**I Thessalonians 4:13-18** - *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words”* (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

What we are going to look at in this study was written to help the saints in Thessalonica understand what happens to those which were asleep. The Greek word translated “asleep” is “κοιμῶ” and that term is defined in this manner: “To put to sleep, that is, (passively or reflexively) to slumber; figuratively to decease: - (be a-, fall a-, fall on) sleep, be dead” (Strong’s # 2837). As we look at these verses the context is clearly talking about those that had died. This is great information for us to be reminded of.

In the first century there was a Jewish sect called the Sadducees. They said there was no resurrection or spirit (Matthew 22:23 and Acts 23:8). There were also false teachers such as Hymenaeus and Philetus. They erringly taught that the resurrection had past already. That teaching overthrew the faith of some (II Timothy 2:17-18). Teachings such as those left questions that needed addressed. To think that life is over at the point of physical death leaves no hope. Christians are not hopeless like those outside of Christ.

The hope of all Christians past and present is in the promise of a future bodily resurrection (I Corinthians 15:1-58 and I Peter 1:3-9). Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). Jesus promised this: *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:28-29).

When a person dies in the flesh, he or she is then in hades (Luke 16:19-31). Jesus serves as evidence for us that the soul of a person is not stuck in hades (Acts 2:31). Jesus is the “firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:12-18). When the Apostle Paul was giving an answer before Agrippa, he said: *“That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles”* (Acts 26:23). Jesus therefore serves as the example that death will not hold anyone.

When you read about the “Judgment Day” there will be those alive on earth when Jesus comes again (Matthew 24:35-25:46). That will not prevent the dead from being risen. When Paul wrote of death to the Corinthians he implied this very truth (II Corinthians 4:12-14). What we learn from the context we are studying is that the dead in Christ will rise first and then the living will ascend afterward to meet the Lord. The clarity of what was taught needs no further explanation. It is simple and direct.

What we all have to look forward to is that Christ is coming back (I Thessalonians 1:8-10). Jesus made this promise to His disciples (John 14:1-3). When Jesus was taken up into Heaven notice what was said: *“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:9-11).

Hope is the message. To the saints in Rome Paul wrote: *“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it”* (Romans 8:23-25). Looking for Jesus is referred to as, *“looking for that blessed hope”* (Titus 2:13). The conversation [citizenship] of faithful Christians is in Heaven. The place where we look for our Lord to return from. The time in which our bodies will be changed to be made like His (Philippians 3:20-21 and I John 3:1-3). This is our hope. We [faithful saints] get to look forward to being joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

The saints in Thessalonica were told to comfort one another with the words about what will happen during the future bodily resurrection. Christians are supposed to comfort and edify one another as these saints were told shortly in the next chapter (I Thessalonians 5:11). When times get tough, the faithful can be comforted by focusing on what is to come in eternity for us (II Corinthians 4:8-5:10). For those who do not obey the Gospel and those who do not continue in faithfulness to the Lord, there is no comfort or hope to come. All they have to look forward to is indignation and wrath from God (Romans 2:8-9 and II Thessalonians 1:7-9). If you are a faithful disciple of the Lord take comfort in what is to come. If you are not, change that before it is too late.