

**“What Do We Do? Living as a Christian in 2021”**  
**(part 2)**

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

(preached 1/17/21; Sun PM Pine Grove BC)

**Introduction**

Another week has passed in our country and very little has changed.

People in leadership in our country still screaming at each other.

People following those leaders screaming at each other.

Nonsense on both sides and little progress either way.

This coming Wednesday, Joe Biden will be sworn in as the next president of the United States, and there will be lots more screaming from everyone that day.

Yet, believers are commended to honor the king.

I want to show you a few passages of Scripture to keep in mind on Wednesday.

May be wise to post these on your social media because there are going to be all kinds of unbiblical stuff posted that day.

*1 Peter 2:13-17..*

*13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent [p]by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For [q]such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 Act as free men, and [r]do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the [s]king.*

*1 Timothy 2:1-2*

*First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in [a]authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and [b]dignity.*

*Romans 13:1*

*Every [a]person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except [b]from God, and those which exist are established by God.*

Now let me say this clearly to each of you.

Those are the foundational verses of a believer's relationship to government, and they are not hard to understand.

Submission, honor, and prayer are the commands of God to his people when it comes to government, and that applies to all government at any time in world history.

So be aware of anyone who claims to know Christ but doesn't obey these verses in word and deed.

Now with that said, let me add this.

No government is sinless, but some are worse than others.

We have been under an increasingly evil government in this country for some time now.

There have been ebbs and flows over the past 50 years, but the general direction of government has been toward more sin and evil.

Hear me clearly.

I expect the new president and his government to do evil things.

In fact, the first 100 days of his term will include a number of executive orders.

Every president does it, and he will be no different.

And I think it is likely that some of his executive order may affect us directly as the church.

I can envision executive orders relating to coronavirus that could limit the number of people in a building.

I can envision executive orders relating to coronavirus that mandate face coverings.

I can envision executive order relating to hate speech that address homosexuality being spoken about in the pulpit.

I truly can envision all sorts of evil coming from government.

I literally everything is on the table in terms of sin and evil.

But guess what?

I am not planning to storm Washington on Wednesday.

My plan is to obey Scripture and submit and honor and pray for those that God has appointed over me in government.

Doesn't matter how evil they are.

Doesn't matter how sinful they are.

I am going to obey Scripture.

Now, let me answer a question that some people are asking lately, and it is this..

Must we obey every order that comes down to us from government?

And the answer is yes as long as it doesn't require us to sin or prevent us from obeying.

Scripture is equally clear that we must obey God over government.

Normally, this has not been an issue, but things are changing rapidly.

And though we don't know what is coming our way, it will be important for the church to be very discerning.

Specifically, it will be very important for church leadership to be discerning.

The deacons and I bear a great responsibility to the flock that the Lord has entrusted to us.

If orders come down from the national, state or even local level that pertain to us meeting, we will evaluate those things according to Scripture and inform you.

Our priorities are to honor the Lord, care for the flock, and preach the gospel to the world, and anything that prevents that will require our disobedience.

If that happens, you will know about it and it will be communicated to you directly.

We pray those decisions don't have to be made, but if they do, our goal is to obey the Lord and honor the government as best we can.

That is the Christian worldview.

Sadly, that is not the Christian worldview for many who claim to know Christ.

I am sickened to hear talk of violent rebellion.

I am bothered by talk of revolution.

But that is what happens when people love this world and nation more than they love Christ.

That is what happens when a way of life is more important than a life of obedience.

Don't join in that chorus of supposed Christians saying such things.

They either don't know Christ or they don't know their Bibles.

And speaking of the Bible, let's see how the Bible would tell us to live under an evil government.

And surprisingly, there is not a single verse that calls us to pick up arms.

Instead, we find verses that command us to seek peace, which bring us back to 1 Thessalonians 4.

We looked at the first 8 verses of this passage last week in order to find out how to live in an ungodly culture.

And the Thessalonian church was clearly a church in ungodly culture.

Now only was the Roman emperor a murderer of Christian, their own city was filled with immorality.

Yet, God didn't tell them to get out.

He didn't tell them to overthrow Nero.

What he told them was simple.

Work on yourself and your own holiness.

Look back at verse 3 of 1 Thessalonians 4..

### ***3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification***

You see, the command of God in your life as a Christian is the same regardless of whether you live under the government of Hitler or Ronald Reagan.

God is not interested in how well you can shape the world into your image.

He is interested in how well you are shaping yourself in His image.

And so last week, we looked at verses 1-8 of 1 Thessalonians 4 in terms of helping us focus on what to do as believers in 2021.

This year is not a call to arms in terms of government.

God is in control of that.

This year is a call to arms in terms of our sin.

And last week, we saw the command to walk Peter this year.

Verse 1 of 1 Thessalonians 4..

***I 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 [a]walk and please God (just as you actually do [b]walk), that you excel still more.***

In terms of our culture, the call for the Christian is to get the log of sin out of your own eye before you try to get the speck of sin out of someone else's.

So many people are quick to note and complain about the sins of others but never note and attack their own sins.

Let's walk better in 2021, Pine Grove.

The second command from last week is to live purer.

Sexual sin is the great temptation in any age among either gender.

When you combine that with a sinful culture, it is a recipe for disaster.

So Paul takes some time to call believers to avoid sexual sins in immoral cultures.

That is a call to us today.

As I said last week, how dare a Christian committing any kind of sexual sin complain about the state of our country.

They are responsible for what they see in it.

Now that brings us to verses 9-12 tonight, and we are going to add to more “things to do” in 2021.

The first one of these things to do is found in verse 9 and 10.

We will call this.

### **III. Love Stronger (9-10)**

On the heels of an extended section on the need for sexual purity, Paul now calls the Thessalonians to a persistent love for others..

Let's read verses 9 and 10..

***9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more***

As we have already learned, the Thessalonian church was an excellent church..

Chapter 1 gave us an inside look at this congregation, and we saw that they were workers...

They were also sharers of the gospel in their area.

They were also a faithful church despite the persecution that came to them..

But we also know that they were a loving church..

In fact, Paul commends their love right here in verse 9 and 10..

According to verse 10, they practiced love toward all the brethren in Macedonia..

Now if go back to our map of this area, Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia due to its central location..

And people from all over Macedonia would travel there for various reasons.

Which all mean that believers from other parts of Macedonia would often visit the Thessalonian church..

And it is clear from what Paul writes there that the the Thessalonians were very loving to those other brethren..

As travelers, they would need food and lodging and all sorts of other things, so the love of the Thessalonians was constantly put to the test..

Yet the church there always responded in love to other believers, which is why Paul writes..

You have no need for anyone to wrote you about love for the brethren since you already practice it..

But where did this love come from?

End of verse 9..

The Thessalonians were taught by God to love one another..

In other words, the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer cause them to love other believers..

This is a foundational truth of what it means to be a Christian.

Salvation fills your life with the Spirit of God, who in turn fills your heart with a love for others..

The Thessalonians didn't need to be taught by Paul to love other Christians..

God began to teach them that when they were first saved.

This is why it impossible to be truly saved yet not love other Christians..

A mark of true Christianity is love for other believers.

To truly know Christ is to truly love your brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Even the Thessalonians knew and practiced that, yet so many churches seem to split because believers simply can't get along.

Love is not always easy to practice, but love for other believers is commanded and expected by the Lord.

So the question becomes..

Well, why did Paul mention this in a section on sanctification?

The end of verse 10 provides an answer..

***But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more***

In other words, continually grow in your love for others in the church.

This often happens naturally as we get to know people better, we tend to love them more..

But this also applies to people that we are prone to have differences with..

WE need to grow in our love of them.

WE need to excel still the more.

To love people is always a challenge in our life as believers, yet it is also always the command of God.

God's will is our sanctification, and a necessary part of that sanctification is to grow in our love of those in the church.

The Thessalonians were great examples of that, but they were called to love the brethren even more..

So verses 9 and 10 are a call to persistence in love for the brethren..

This leads us to verses 11 and 12 which we will call..

#### **IV. Work Harder (11-12)**

Verse 11..

***But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,  
11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life  
and attend to your own business and work with  
your hands, just as we commanded you, 12 so that  
you will [i]behave properly toward outsiders and  
[j]not be in any need.***

In verses 11 and 12, Paul continues to offer insights into how the gospel changes your life..

Not only are you called to sexual purity and love for other believers, the gospel also changes other areas of your everyday life..

And that becomes very clear here in verses 11 and 12 where the Thessalonians are reminded of the call to lead a peaceable life as believers in the world..

It amazes me to see believers who are known as troublemakers and busybodies...

Somehow along the way, the church has truly forgotten these verses of Scripture where the Lord uses Paul to call believers to a peaceful life.

Somehow and somewhere it has become fashionable for believers to be loudmouths and outspoken critics of everything..

Social media has often become a vehicle for Christians to sound off any complaint about anyone at anytime..

I see Christians post insults of other people.

I see Christians post about boycotts and protests..

I see Christians post slander and gossip about others.

It is all truly shocking, and my question is often...

Has anyone read 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12?

God's crystal clear instruction is to lead a peaceful and quiet life..

What part of "peaceful and quiet life" do believers not understand?

Yet many don't, so let's look at these verses and make it our aim as believers to not understand the command of God here but also to obey it..

The first thing to note here is that this kind of life should be the ambition of the believer..

In other words, a peaceable life is our goal..

It is what we strive for.

It is what we work toward..

And how do we attain the peaceful life?

#1 - Lead a quiet life.

Now it isn't clear what the Thessalonians were doing, but it is clear that Paul is calling them to quietness..

Maybe they were boisterous and outspoken in their sins of their city..

And look, we can all understand that.

A church called to holiness is often very sensitive to the sins of others, but we cannot lose our composure as believers..

We too were sinners before Christ called us to salvation..

And though we are zealous for the gospel and zealous for righteous living, we lose our ability to influence the culture when we become loud mouths to our neighbors..

So the call here is not to lose our passion for the gospel, but to be restrained in how we preach it to the world..

Jesus calls us to shrewd as serpents but harmless as doves as we live in the world...

And I can tell you church, we need more doves these days as we seek to win the lost to Christ..

But not only are we called to a quiet life, we are also called to..

#2 - Mind our own business.

Again, we cannot be sure of what the Thessalonians were doing that required Paul to call them back to attending to their own business...

Maybe they were being rebellious to their own city government..

Maybe they were trying to force their gospel onto their neighbors..

We don't know what was going on, but we do know this..

God commands us to keep our nose in our own affairs..

The only thing worse than a busybody in the church is a church full of busybodies..

The gospel doesn't call us to straighten out everyone's life.

It calls us to straighten out our own life..

This is what to attend to your own business.

Worry about the log in your own eye before you try to pull the speck out of everyone else's eye.

Christians are not to be known for their nosiness, their intrusion, or their direction of everyone else's affairs.

Christians are to be known for their attention to their own life.

So the peaceful life is known for its quietness..

Its resistance to nosiness...

And third, it's work ethic..

Paul says at the end of verse 11 that the believer is to work with his own hands..

#3 - Work with his hands.

In case you ever wondered why people are loud and nosy, it is often related to having too much time on their hands..

You see, the benefit of work is way more than just provision for your family..

Work also keeps you too tired to get your nose in everyone's business, while also preventing you from having the time to become a loudmouth..

You see, work is good because it contributes to the peaceful life.

The first church that we ever attended hired a youth pastor not long after we joined there..

IT was long after he was hired that someone complained that his truck was never parked outside his church office.

In their minds, if it wasn't there, he wasn't working.

Turns out, he wasn't there because he was at the schools doing ministry there every day..

And I will never forget what one of the deacons asked the person who came to complain..

“Bill, why do you have the time to ride by and check the church parking lot every day, don’t you work?”

Needless to say, it was a short conversation..

You see busybodies go hand in hadn’t with lazybodies.

This is why work is so good for the believer..

Not only do it give a chance to share the gospel with our co-workers..

Not only does it provides money to meet the needs of our family.

It also keeps us out of trouble by keeping our hands busy so that our bodies won’t be busy getting ourselves into other’s affairs..

So Paul says to the Thessalonians and us..

Lead a quiet life.

Attend your own business.

Work with your hands.

And the end result will be a peaceful life.

Now the honest question is this..

Why would we want peaceful.

Shouldn't we be loudly proclaiming the gospel and trying to change the culture?

And the answer to that is really found in verse 12..

***so that you will [i]behave properly toward outsiders and [j]not be in any need.***

In case you didn't know, one of the most effective tools of evangelism is living a quiet and peaceful life.

You see, the unbeliever is often anything but quiet.

He is loud.

He complains.

He often complains about work.

He is nosy.

He is always attending to other's affairs..

So when a believer comes along and finds joy in work.

When a believer comes along and never slanders or has any interesting in putting his nose where it doesn't belong.

When a believer comes along and seeks to live a quiet life..

All of that makes such an impact on the unbeliever..

This is why I tell people that the best evangelism is not often what you say but what you don't say..

And what I mean by that is this..

The unbelieving world wants you to join in with them in their sin.

They want you to join in their slander, their gossip, their insults..

But when the believer refuses to wag their tongue like the world, it makes an incredible impact..

Now to be very clear, I am not saying that we shouldn't share the gospel.

Clearly, we need people to see their sin and to see the Savior from that sin.

And we need to tell them that salvation is a matter of repentance and faith in Christ alone..

But once we share the gospel, let us be committed to living it in front of them.

The worst thing to do is say that you love Jesus but then slander and gossip out of the same mouth.

Look, share the gospel with your friends and family then live quietly, mind your own business, work with your hands, and watch what God does..

As this verse makes clear, the proper behavior of a peaceful life is a fantastic gospel witness..

But Paul also adds this..

“you also want be in any need.”

We will see this in Paul’s second letter to the Thesalonians that a lot of believers weren’t working..

We will talk about why in the coming weeks..

But God is going to inspire Paul to write..

“If you don’t work, you don’t eat.”

And this is clearly what Paul had in mind.

A peaceful, attending-to-your-own-business, working with your hands life is honored by the Lord.

And the greatest way it is honored is by the Lord's provision for your needs.

If you work, you and your family will eat and God will your needs..

WE will talk more about that in the coming weeks..

## **Conclusion**

So tonight, couple things I want to leave you with..

### ***#1 - Love for other believers is a way of life for the Christian.***

I am truly embarrassed when I see folks who claim to know Christ fight like cats and dogs.

When tempers flare between believers, no one wins.

Look, there are going to be differences within the body of Christ.

Yet, love must win the day.

The Bible is clear.

Love covers a multitude of sins..

And Jesus said that the world will know us by our love for one another.

Sadly, both verses are consistently violated today in so many churches.

The Thessalonians knew far less about what it means to be a Christian than any of us.

They didn't have a NT.

But I will tell you one thing.

They had the Holy Spirit, and if you have the Spirit, you will love your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Love is taught by God, and if you aren't loving those in your church, you better make sure that you are truly part of that church..

***#2 - Peace is a way of life for the Christian.***

As much I am embarrassed by a lack of love in the body of Christ, I am equally embraced by believers who live anything but a peaceful life.

Look, let me be completely honest with you.

I would love to shout from the rooftops about the sin of the world..

I would love to engage in philosophical and theological battles with unbelievers..

I would love to stick my nose where it doesn't belong and try to make others live like I think they should live.

At times, I want to protest and march and rebel against the evils of the world..

But ultimately, what prevents me from doing that are the commands that we saw tonight to live quiet, tend to my own business and work with my hands..

But where else do we see this pattern of living?

Well, we see it in Jesus' life as well..

Jesus never attended on political rally.

Never held one protest sign.

Never marched on Rome.

He simply lived a quiet and peaceful life and worked with his own hands..

In fact, his life was so quiet, we have no record of it except his birth, an episode at the temple when he was 12, and then his 3 years of ministry..

And even during that ministry, he obeyed everything that we saw tonight in verses 11 and 12..

Look, the call on your life is not to change the world or even the hearts of people.

Only God can do that.

You simply speak the gospel, live quietly, work hard, and trust God to use that to save many..

It is only when Christians try to act like God that they get into trouble.

When they get loud, when they attend to the business of others, when they don't work, God is not pleased..

So make it your ambition to do exactly what Paul writes here.

And God will be honored and your needs will be met.

Let us pray.