



The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians

The Walk of the Thessalonian Church

1 Thessalonians 4:1-18

- I. THEIR SANCTIFICATION (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8)
 - A. The Principles of Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2)
 1. The subjects of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:1)
 - a. You—the Thessalonians
 - b. Brethren; In other words, this is not a command for the unsaved.
 2. The importance of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:1)
 - a. We beseech you.
 - b. We exhort you.
 3. The authority of sanctification—“by the Lord Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:1)
 4. The guide for sanctification—“as ye have received of us” (1 Thessalonians 4:1)
 5. The demonstration of sanctification—“how ye ought to walk” (1 Thessalonians 4:1)
 6. The outcome of sanctification—“please God” (1 Thessalonians 4:1; Colossians 1:10)
 7. The accountability in sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2)
 - a. So ye would abound more and more (1 Thessalonians 4:1; 2 Peter 3:18)
 - b. Ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:2)
 - B. The Plan for Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4)
 1. The will of God (1 Thessalonians 4:3)
 - a. The clarity of the will of God—“this is the will of God”
 - b. The identification of the will of God—“even your sanctification”
 - c. The exercise of the will of God—“that ye should abstain from fornication”
 2. The understanding of man (1 Thessalonians 4:4)
 - a. The broadness of expectation—“every one of you”
 - b. The statement of expectation—“should know how”
 - c. The details of expectation
 - (1) The what—possessing one’s vessel (2 Timothy 2:19-21)
 - (2) The how
 - a) In sanctification
 - b) In honour



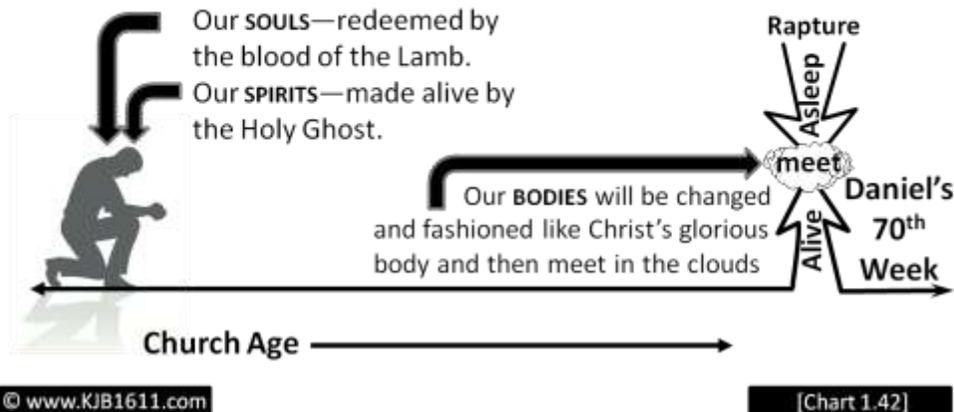
- C. The Prohibition of Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:5-6)
1. The association of the absence of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:5)
 - a. The Gentiles; Note: The Gentiles were known for their blatant wickedness (Matthew 20:25; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 10:20; 1 Corinthians 12:2; Galatians 2:15; Ephesians 4:17; 1 Peter 4:3).
 - b. Which know not God
 2. The heavenward absence of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:5)
 - a. Not in the lust
 - b. Of concupiscence (Romans 7:8; Colossians 3:5)
 3. The personal absence of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:6)
 - a. No man should go beyond and defraud his brother
 - b. In any matter
 4. The reward for absence of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:6)
 - a. The Lord is the avenger of all such
 - b. As the Thessalonians had been warned
- D. The Power of Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8)
1. The call to sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:7)
 - a. The source of the call—God
 - b. The absence in the call—uncleanness
 - c. The desire in the call—holiness
 2. The rejection of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:8)
 - a. The attitude of rejection—despiseth
 - b. The supposed recipient of rejection
 - (1) Man
 - (2) The giver of the message
 - c. The true recipient of the rejection
 - (1) God
 - (2) Through His Holy Spirit
- II. THEIR LOVE (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12)
- A. The Responsibility to the Saved (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10)
1. Their awareness of the responsibility (1 Thessalonians 4:9)
 - a. They needed not that Paul would write unto them.
 - b. They were taught of God to love one another.
 2. Their extension of the responsibility (1 Thessalonians 4:10)
 - a. In quantity
 - (1) They loved one another.
 - (2) Their love reached to all the brethren in Macedonia.
 - b. In quality
 - (1) Still they could increase
 - (2) More and more



- B. The Responsibility Before the World (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)
1. The commandments of the apostles (1 Thessalonians 4:11)
 - a. Study to be quiet.
 - b. Do **your own** business.
 - c. Work with **your own** hands.
 - d. Note: As we will revisit in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, there was apparently a problem with work ethic in Thessalonica. This problem with work ethic created other problems, mainly that people became busybodies in other people's matters.
 2. The resulting benefits (1 Thessalonians 4:12)
 - a. That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without
 - b. That ye may have lack of nothing
- III. THEIR COMFORT (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- A. The Sorrow Experienced (1 Thessalonians 4:13)
1. The concern for ignorance—"I would not have you to be ignorant"
 - a. Paul's epistles typically begin with doctrinal truths followed by a practical application of those truths.
 - (1) This epistle, however, deviates from his normal tendencies.
 - (2) This deviation pertains especially to God's prophetic plan for the church.
 - (3) In fact, Paul's teaching becomes more in-depth and doctrinally applicable as the reader progresses from one chapter to the next.
 - b. Paul began with a practical point of encouragement but soon yielded to a doctrinal dissertation concerning the future of the New Testament church. Though the subject matter may appear to shift abruptly from *1 Thessalonians 4:12* to *1 Thessalonians 4:13*, prophecy was a subject commonly discussed by Paul with these believers (both in written correspondence and in personal conversations).
 - c. Concerning ignorance, misunderstanding the future of these departed saints could have proven extremely detrimental to Paul's ministry during the church's embryonic period.
 2. The subject at hand—"them which are asleep"
 - a. What is death?
 - (1) The soul's departure from the body (Genesis 35:18)
 - (2) The spirit's departure from the body (Genesis 25:8, 17; Acts 5:10)
 - b. What is it to sleep in Jesus?
 - (1) The death of the believer (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15; John 11:11)
 - a) Asleep (John 11:11)
 - b) Dead (John 11:14)
 - c) Not unto death (John 11:4)
 - (2) Refers only to the state of the body

- a) Those asleep in Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13)
- b) Will God bring with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14)
- c. What part of us is with Christ?
 - (1) At death, we are present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).
 - (2) For the saved, his spirit and soul goes to be with the Lord (Ecclesiastes 3:21; Ecclesiastes 12:7; 2 Corinthians 5:8).
- d. Are we the same person?
 - (1) What stays the same?
 - a) Moses and Elijah maintained their identities (Luke 9:28-31).
 - b) Abraham and Lazarus maintained their identities (Luke 16:19-23).
 - c) We will certainly maintain our identities.
 - (2) What changes?
 - a) Our vile bodies will be changed (Philippians 3:21).
 - b) We will be like Christ (1 John 3:1-2).

Body, Soul & Spirit

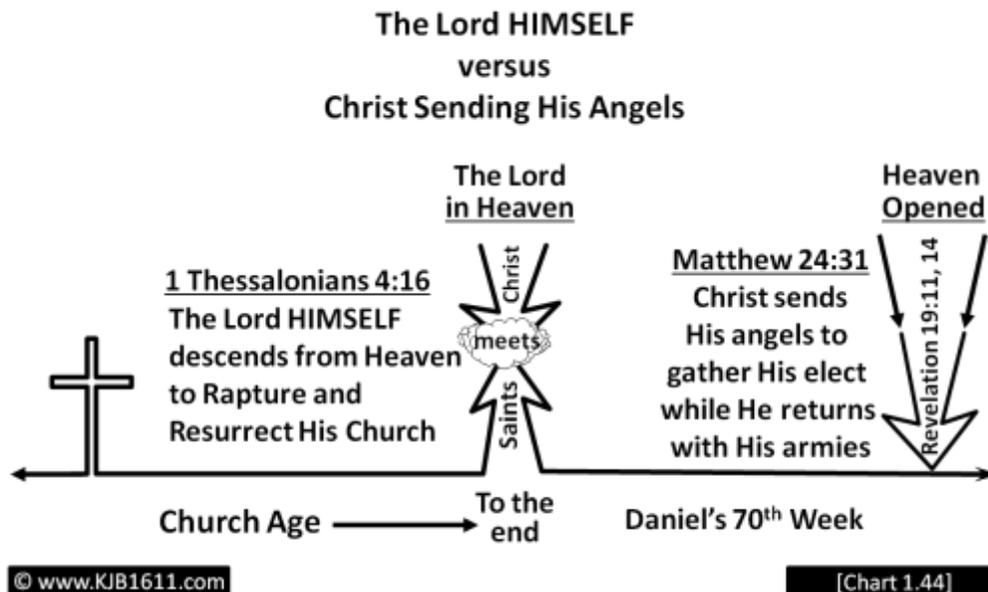


- e. What do we know?
 - (1) We will know each other.
 - a) Consider the comfort of our reunion (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).
 - b) Consider the comfort of David concerning his son (2 Samuel 12:23).
 - (2) We will know perfectly what we know.
 - a) We will continue to learn (Ephesians 2:7).
 - b) But what we know will be perfectly known (1 Corinthians 13:12).
- f. What happens at the resurrection?
 - (1) Our soul returns with Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:14).
 - (2) The soul is met with a resurrected and glorified body (1 Corinthians 15:49-54).

3. The appeal made
 - a. Paul admonished believers to abstain from sorrowing for departed loved ones in the same fashion as the world sorrowed for their deceased loved ones.
 - b. These believers in Thessalonica were most likely troubled after watching family and friends die from the persecutions and afflictions (1 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:2-5).

B. The Hope Known (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17)

1. The return of sleeping loved ones (1 Thessalonians 4:14)
 - a. Them which sleep in Jesus
 - b. Will God bring with Him
2. The overview of order (1 Thessalonians 4:15)
 - a. The order presented
 - (1) Those alive and remain
 - (2) Shall not PREVENT (see Psalm 88:13) them which are asleep
 - b. The imminence presented—“WE which are alive and remain”; This indicates that Paul fully expected to be alive when Christ returned for the church.
3. The resurrection of the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:16)
 - a. The coming One—“the Lord himself shall descend from heaven”
 - (1) With a shout
 - (2) With the voice of the archangel
 - (3) With the trump of God
 - (4) Note: This is to be contrasted with the Lord sending the angels to gather the elect at Daniel’s Seventieth Week (See *Reviving the Blessed Hope of Thessalonians*).





4. The rapture of the living (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
 - a. The catching up
 - (1) Again Paul expressed that he believed in the imminent return of the Lord by using the pronoun “we.” If this is not enough proof, one should also consider the perspective of Paul presented in 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.
 - (2) The sainted dead will be raised first, but then those which are alive and remaining are caught up.
 - (3) The bodies of both will be changed.
 - a) Of the dead—their bodies will be raised incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:52)
 - b) Of the living—our bodies shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:52)
 - i) This change is identified elsewhere as the *adoption* (Romans 8:23) which takes place when the Lord redeems the mortal body and adopts and glorifies it.
 - ii) Those who have trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour are presently “two-thirds redeemed.” On the surface, that concept may seem awkward, but when all things are considered in the light of scripture, the confusion disappears. Man is a three-part being, made up of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
 - (a) Our souls have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.
 - (b) Our spirits have been quickened or made alive by the Holy Ghost.
 - (c) Our bodies, on the other hand, are “vile” (Philippians 3:21), “corruptible” (1 Corinthians 15:53), “mortal” (1 Corinthians 15:54), and remain in need of redemption. The adoption is the redemption and glorification of the body.
 - b. The meetings
 - (1) First, the living saints and dead saints meet to go up together.
 - (2) Second, the living and dead saints meet the Lord in the air.
 - c. The continuation—“so shall we ever be with the Lord”
 - (1) Seemingly *new* doctrines frequently involve the repackaging and repeating of doctrines previously taught and rejected by past generations.
 - a) Solomon stated as much when he concluded that “*there is no new thing under the sun*” (*Ecclesiastes 1:9*).
 - b) Unfortunately, the most egregious teachings become the most entrenched with the idea that their longevity somehow gives them a form of legitimacy.
 - c) There are innumerable instances where a false doctrine taught in the past is picked up and regurgitated by the current generation.



- d) The false doctrine known as *Kingdom Exclusion* is one such doctrine.
 - e) This teaching was refuted by Sir Robert Anderson as early as 1914 and involves the idea that unfaithful Christians will receive their just chastening by missing out on the Lord's earthly millennial kingdom.
 - f) To be perfectly clear, some teach that these believers missing the Kingdom will instead suffer in the lake of fire for 1,000 years.
- (2) The answer to this heresy is so simple that it makes one wonder how anyone could espouse such a doctrine.
- a) According to **1 Thessalonians 4:17**, believers removed from the earth at the Rapture of the Church are said to "*ever be with the Lord.*"
 - b) Since every Christian will be with the Lord, how can a Christian be excluded from the millennial Kingdom or suffer in the Lake of Fire? Will the Lord Himself miss the millennial Kingdom to suffer with unfaithful Christians? And, if Jesus misses the Kingdom, would that not require all Christians to miss the Kingdom in order for all Christians to "*ever be with the Lord*" (**1 Thessalonians 4:17**)?
- (3) In part, the false teaching of Kingdom Exclusion is based on a faulty understanding of 2 Timothy 2:12. Context determines meaning and false doctrines come from ignoring context.
- a) Some have wrongfully assumed that believers denied the opportunity to "*reign*" with Christ must altogether miss the Kingdom. This simply is not the teaching here or elsewhere.
 - b) The passage instead explains the means by which believers can "*reign*" or exercise "*authority*" over cities (**Luke 19:17**) in the millennial Kingdom.
 - c) The error in interpretation comes from two assumptions:
 - i) The word *suffer* means the endurance of trials and persecutions and,
 - ii) The word *deny* means to pretend not to know someone or something.
 - d) The Lord teaches by both comparison and contrast, but it is quite obvious that the Lord's chosen method in this passage was *contrast*.
 - e) The intended interpretation can only be found when the Bible student first acknowledges the *contrasts* found within the context.
 - f) The chart following the subject passage (2 Timothy 2:9-13) delineates the original subject and the contrasting subject in each verse.



Passage	Original Subject	Contrasting Subject
2 Timothy 2:9	Paul: “I suffer trouble... even unto bonds;”	Scripture: “but the word of God is not bound.”
2 Timothy 2:10	Paul: “I endure all things”	The elect: “that they may... obtain the salvation”
2 Timothy 2:11	The Christian’s present: “if we be dead”	The Christian’s future: “we shall also live”
2 Timothy 2:12	The Christian’s obedience: “If we suffer (him)”	The Christian’s disobedience: “if we deny him,”
2 Timothy 2:12	The Christian’s reward: “we shall... reign”	The Christian’s consequences: “he...will deny us:” (Context: a reign)
2 Timothy 2:13	The unfaithful Christian: “If we believe not,”	The faithful Saviour: “he abideth faithful:”

[Chart 1.45]

- g) According to the context, the plain truth is that every Christian chooses to suffer or deny the Saviour.
- i) A careful study of the biblical usage of the word *suffer* shows that the word often means “to allow” (Exodus 12:23; Mark 10:14).
 - ii) In other words, a Christian suffers, at least in this context, when he allows the Saviour the privilege of controlling his life.
 - iii) As to the contrasting word *deny*, the meaning is often associated with withholding something needed, desired, or requested, or refusal to allow something (1 Kings 2:16; Proverbs 30:7).
- h) The conclusive teaching is that faithfulness yields reward while unfaithfulness causes a loss of reward.
- i) Yielded saints will be rewarded with opportunities to reign over varying regions in the kingdom.
 - ii) Saints who refuse to allow the Lord the opportunity to reign in their lives while on earth will be refused the privilege of authority in the earthly kingdom.
 - iii) Regardless of varying levels of authority within the kingdom, all Christians will be present and content when the Lord establishes His kingdom!

C. The Comfort Extended (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

1. The source of the comfort—“with the these words”
2. The recipients of the comfort—“one another”