

# 1 Thessalonians

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Preacher: Crowter, Harold (1923-2011)

[ 0 : 00 ]     Amen. My mind is largely concentrated in the third verse.

The third verse of the fourth chapter of the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.

Amen. There is, in the mind of God, a very clear distinction between the church and the world.

When the church is in a healthy spiritual condition, it brings forth those fruits that indicate clearly that there is a distinction being made within the people of God, to which causes them to differ in mind, in outlook, in practice, in so many and various ways.

They're new creatures in Christ Jesus. And it is written concerning their former spirit when they were in the world and of the world.

[ 2 : 16 ]     All things have passed away and all things have become new. We often heard spoken in years gone by of a change of heart.

And my friends, real religion is a change of heart. Our hearts by nature are all fallen.

We are in the world. We are of the world. Our element is in the practices, pursuits and pleasures of the world.

But when God in his mercy separates us and distinguishes us from what we were by nature, and also affecting our relationship with the spirit of the world that prevails all around us, my friends, my friends, there's been a change by nothing less than the almighty power of the Lord himself.

And the Lord says in Ezekiel, take away the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

[ 3 : 45 ]     Now a stony heart doesn't feel much, does it? But a heart of flesh is very receptive to the feelings and influences through which it is caused and called to pass.

Thinking this morning, as we did, most of us together, of the fear of the Lord being, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

A good understanding of all they that do his commandments. It is indicative of God's work by his spirit.

Coming into the heart and life of a person, a man, a woman, a child. And changing them. Changing them.

Changing them. In such a radical way that the attitudes and the interests and the desires that were formerly theirs are not the prevailing concern any longer.

[ 5 : 05 ]     But they are renewed in spirit and become the subjects of that which the text speaks of in our lesson, in our reading this evening.

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.

Now I might link together certain scriptural expressions. Sanctification means being separated for holy uses.

Justification means to be forgiven our sins and our transgressions.

To have our guilt washed away by that one and only power that is sufficient to deal with this soul-destroying remedy, even the remedy of the precious blood of Christ, the only thing that can deal with the malady of sin.

[ 6 : 37 ] And the third thing that I want to speak of in the chain of spiritualism is glorification, sanctification, being set apart by God.

A setting apart by God, not waiting, as it were, till we change places from the world and enter into a never-ending eternity, but a change that takes place in the heart of the Lord's people while they're here in the earth.

The preparation of God, the preparation of God, setting apart a people. This people have I formed for myself. They shall show forth my praise.

And if we are among those who are the favoured subjects of God's great salvation, my friends, there'll be a change.

There'll be a setting apart from the spirit that's in us by nature and the spirit that is in the world round about us, unsanctified, that is, left of God to go its own way, to do its own thing, to seek its own satisfaction and pleasure in those things wherein it finds its freedom and enjoyment.

[ 8 : 15 ] What a mercy. What a mercy. You're not your own. You're bought with a price. Sanctification is a setting apart of a people by God for God.

And the apostle here writing to the Thessalonians, and they were far removed from a perfect people, but nevertheless he testifies of the truth when he says, For ye know, for this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.

And what is fornication? Well, in a very narrow interpretation of the terminology fornication, it's sexual activity outside of marriage, which is a very common evil in this day and generation in which we're living.

And my friends, if the fear of God is in our hearts, we shall consider the will of God in such tender relationships as that to which I've made reference.

And oh, what a mercy it is so to know the restraints of divine grace in our hearts, that the way of the world is not the way that we choose to walk.

[ 10 : 01 ] The way of the world is that which gives license to the desires and lusts of the flesh, that those things that are of sanctification are those things that God implants in the hearts of his people, restraining and giving them a desire to know and to do that which is pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

And that last expression, surely, is the general application of the term sanctification, that people set out.

So did not I, because of the fear of the Lord. And we have illustrations in scripture wherein the restraint of sanctification was present in the lives, in the hearts and lives of the people of God.

I think in reading yesterday of the history of Joseph, and I'm very attached to the Genesis record of God's leadings and dealings with Jacob and with Joseph.

Joseph, by the mysterious dispensations of divine providence, was brought into a situation of prosperity in the household of the Egyptian Potiphar.

[ 11 : 49 ] There came a temptation, a very powerful temptation, into the experience of Joseph, that Potiphar's wife had lustful desires toward Joseph.

And oh, what grace was manifest. How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?

The sanctification. The restraints of grace over nature in a time of real temptation.

And my friends, how often one looks at the history of Joseph with humble realization that in the hand of God, opportunity is not the criteria.

I remember an old deacon years ago at Coventry used to say, if inclination and opportunity meet, it takes more than common nature to resist.

[ 13 : 20 ] My friends, what a wonderful thing. It's sanctification. The grace of God that prevails to the crucifixion of the desires of our fallen nature and enables us to lay hold of that which is right and pleasing in the fear of God.

And surely, if we're enabled so to walk tenderly in an acknowledgement of God's great goodness and mercy to us, then we have a real seal that the Lord is our God and the Lord is our keeper.

We live in the world.

The world has a tremendous influence upon us. I think sometimes we have had to learn the weakness that is ours by some of those things that have cost us the more, the most, in contrition and godly sorrow that we've faltered and we've failed.

And we know the necessity of crying with the publican, God, be merciful to me, the sinner.

[ 15 : 07 ] Now, this is the will of God, even your sanctification. The Lord separates his people.

He weans them. My soul is like a weaned child, is the expression of one who was truly sanctified by the power and grace of the Lord himself.

And it is good when we are examining ourselves to know whether we be in the faith or not, to appreciate.

So did not I, because the fear of the Lord. Why do not I do this? Why do not I go there?

Why do not I participate in this common interest and exercise? Why? Well, my friends, is it because you know in so doing you would displease the Lord.

[ 16 : 19 ] You would be, as it were, testifying that your heart is not right in the sight of God.

The tender, filial fear of the Lord is a token of his sanctifying grace. And we're all, let's face it, we're all the subject of many things that have an attraction to the Spirit, naturally speaking.

we live in a world that, as it were, seems to go out of its way to produce temptations, many and various.

Some things can be a very powerful temptation to some, and seem to have no particular attraction to another. And we talk about besetting sins, don't we?

That is, some inclination that is not common to all in that sense, that it's a particular power that takes hold upon us and would lead us away and lead us astray and bring us, bring unto us the displeasure, the expressed displeasure of the Lord in our lives.

[ 17 : 56 ] This is the will of God, even your sanctification. What a wonderful thing it is to have such a love to the Lord for what the Lord has done for us, that we think upon the cost to Him and desire that the Lord will maintain us and preserve us by His grace from willfully, easily running into those ways and paths that are contrary to His word, contrary to the testimony of grace in the lives of His people as recorded in Holy Scripture.

And when we take the basic commandments of the Lord contained in the word of the living God, we realize that our departures from His ways, His word and His ways, our sins against Him.

I know that we are living in the world and we've got a nature that gives rise to a conflict so that we speak of a warfare.

We fight the good fight of faith, says the Scripture. And my friends, it's not just an easy profession.

I'm a Christian. it's not easy walking through the world with a measure of compromise being well thought of by all and sundry rather than to create some differences and displeasures by the world against the profession of the Lord that we are constrained to make.

[ 20 : 11 ] sanctification. Sanctification. And the people of God who are sanctified bring forth the fruits of the grace of sanctification.

By their fruits ye shall know them. and those that are truly under the restraints and constraints of divine grace have things which are clear indications not only to themselves but also to those round about them that the fear of the Lord has things that clearly identify the church and the church under sanctification as opposed to the world that is left to pursue its own ways its own pleasures and its own prospects.

will this is the will of God now what a tremendous consideration is God's will being exercised in and among his people making them a people formed for his praise.

This people have I formed for myself they shall show forth my praise. I don't doubt them but what in the congregation here this evening there are those who God is teaching leading sanctifying by his spirit and his grace and yet they haven't anything much to say about themselves that is free from a sense of sin and shortcoming and my friends surely one of the evidences of being sanctified by the spirit is a sensitivity to sin and a sensitivity to the will of God a sensitivity to the displeasure of God and the sensitivity which our shortcomings may occasion not only to the world around us but also to the church of which we form a part all the benefit of sanctification among the people of God and all the necessity of continually praying to be kept praying to be maintained praying to be shown the right way the narrow way and seeking the grace that is so necessary from the good hand of God to preserve us from being carried away with the influences of the flesh to the contrary influences that are according to the sanctifying influence of divine grace this is the will of God even your sanctification fruit of the clear and we can see in that great host of witnesses the influence of sanctification after the other look at the beginning

Cain and Abel Cain and Abel the difference the different fruits the fruits of the earth just think of the resemblance as it were to the things of this world and Abel with his faith being exercised relative to spiritual and eternal things we have in the 11th of Hebrews a very clear teaching respecting the difference that existed between those two brothers in the initial stages of the establishment of the human race and my friends that's a distinction that goes on doesn't it perpetuated generation by generation perpetuated among the nations of the earth among the churches of the earth among the people constituted a God-fearing family yes there are distinctions distinctions and those distinctions become apparent by the fruits of the flesh as opposed to the fruits of the spirit and what is the will of God that we should bring forth the fruits of the spirit those things which glorify God those things which have their origin in God and by his good spirit making us new creatures in Christ Jesus for the glory of God and for the good of those that are about us well now this is the will of God even your sanctification the Lord Jesus Christ in his prayer

[ 26 : 41 ] John 17 says sanctify to his father sanctify them through thy word thy word is truth this is the will of God even your sanctification if you are concerned about your sanctification surely the teaching of scripture is very very influential and very very important because God has ways of exercising and showing his displeasure to those that go on serving themselves and those that are possessed of faith and hope and love and seek to serve the living and true God this is the will of God even your sanctification and we realise do we not that even in the great room crowd of witnesses that we have in the holy scripture that good people though showing goodly evidence of the grace of God in sanctification by this way and that way they had their weaknesses they showed that they were possessed of an influence naturally speaking which was contrary to the glory of God and their personal spiritual welfare and my friends oh how good it is to be concerned to know and to do the things that please

God to know and to do those things which are consistent with the example of the Lord himself and of his people as recorded in a right and gracious spirit in his word who have a love to the Lord who have a love to his word a love to his ways and who are concerned by sanctifying grace to know and to do the will and keep the commandments of their God and Saviour this is the will of God even your sanctification if we experience coldness darkness prayerlessness it's a sad thing to come into a wintry experience spiritually considered when everything seems cold and dark and we get so far off from a right spirit oh my friends how sad if we're not deeply concerned about our situation and pray that the

Lord will exercise by his spirit and according to the means which he sovereignly directs and appoints that we should be in the will of God sanctified among the people who truly fear him who truly love him who truly would serve him and follow him not only for his own glory for the peace and prosperity of their souls personally this is the will of God even your sanctification it's a great subject isn't it great subject and it's not just a subject as it were that affects us while we are together in chapel there is the life we live outside of the chapel the life we live when in the world what a mercy if the will of

God toward us is such that we're known and appreciated as possessed of a different spirit and a different outlook and a different reaction from the common attitudes of the world and we are therefore in the spirit of our hearts Christians disciples humble followers of the Lord Jesus Christ himself and now this is a very important subject relative to the peace and prosperity of our souls personally but what about collectively what about collectively he was writing to the church at Thessalonica he was exercising his apostolic authority under the influence of the spirit of God reminding them of a great and necessary word this is the will of God concerning you even your sanctification you should realize that your profession is in character a distinction that you are carrying as it were in the way you live the way you speak the way you walk the attitude you maintain

God is at work in your heart God is separating you for his own praise and for your spiritual and eternal well-being you can't go on as it were in the broad road you have to realize that there is a narrow way that leadeth unto life and your fervent desire is to be found among the few that the Lord so clearly testifies shall find it crucify therefore your flesh in its affections and its lusts be sensitive to the fact that you're possessed of two distinguished different spirits the one from the other in the flesh you are what constitutes the flesh as inherited by natural generation down from your fathers what is of the flesh is flesh but on the other hand by God's grace what is of the spirit is spirit and there's two natures and one is in conflict with the other but what a wonderful thing it is that in the behalf of the safety of the

[ 35 : 07 ] Lord's people that they're not carried away to perdition by the dominion of the lusts of the flesh God in his grace comes into their hearts even into their innermost affections and gives them such a sense of their indebtedness to God for his goodness for the Lord for his mercy that as it were distinguishing distinguishes them from the world that is about them sometimes I don't know whether you have any intonation to do something that is rather general and common in my own experience I take as a daily newspaper the times and they have usually an account which is entitled the register and certain notable characters pass from time into eternity and they give an account of their achievements in the things of this world and when they were born and when and sometimes how that they died and

I usually look down the general account of the experiences that are there oh my friends how thankful I've been many many many times that the Lord has not left me to the spirit that has been evident in the record of their attitudes and activities through life and in many ways to old age when they were about to take their flight to a never ending eternity who has made this as if from another and what hast thou that thou hast not received nature if God had left us to our nature in want of those sanctifying restraints what would have been before us when we stood at the threshold of eternity and what a mercy when we can look as it were at the chain and say well the

Lord gave me desires toward his name God gave me a love toward the truth as it is in Jesus God gave me a sense of reaction in my deepest affection to the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit not forsaking me to the spirit of the world to my eternal destruction but by his sovereign embrace made me to differ and possess my heart of those exercises which are sanctifying setting me apart for divine usage the grace of

God in sanctification is a true forerunner of the grace of God the glorification because whom he wills he justifies whom he wills he sanctifies and whom he will he glorifies he that has begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ my friends our religion is not in our own keeping but what we need to watch and constantly pray against is that the Lord will withhold his spirit from us because what a miserable experience and prospect is that of those that are strangers to sanctification justification and glorification by

God himself now this evening we have before the ordinance table sanctification the will of God this is the will of God concerning you even your sanctification one of the sweet evidences of being sanctified by the spirit is not only in knowing the will of God but seeking to please God in humble obedience to his revealed mind and will in these his ways as set before us clearly in holy scripture what a mercy to be sanctified drawn by the cords of love to seek identity with the sanctified people of

[ 41 : 47 ] God according to their Lord and Master who was perfect in holiness from the cradle to the tomb the sinless saviour of sinners who gave his life a ransom for many money well now to me it's a very very important consideration as we have it here for no sorry for this is the will of God even your sanctification that you should abstain from fornication and every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.

Consider yourselves. It's easy to find fault in others. It's easy to see the shortcomings. It's easy to put your finger upon certain things in another's life that you feel is not quite as it ought to be.

Let a man examine himself. Let's come to this. Am I one of these being sanctified, who by God's grace shall be justified, and ultimately when I leave this world, to be glorified in heaven forevermore.

I hope you've been able to follow these simple course of practical religion that, my friends, it's not just coming to chapel.

It's not just doing things which are generally acceptable and in harmony with the name of Christian. It's in showing forth the praises of him who has called us out of nature's darkness into his marvelous light.

[ 44 : 03 ] subject of the Lord's will.

There will be a prayer meeting on Wednesday evening. The Trinitarian Bible Society meeting will be held on Friday evening. And Mr. Hayes is engaged to preach here next Lord's Day.

Hymn 575, tune 517. Hymn 517.

Hymn 575, tune 517.

Thank you.

[ 45 : 44 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 47 : 42 ] May it rest...

May the Christ... Thank you.