



MAKING GOD SMILE

“By Following Instructions” 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

No. 4241

Stuart Briscoe

Pleasing ourselves is instinctual. Pleasing God does not come naturally. Therefore, we need to learn how to do it. In fact, we need to be convinced that we should do it. That is why Paul “instructed” the Thessalonians, carefully using a word with military connotations.

I. Following Instructions About Progress. vv. 1-2

- A. Instructions about how to “live,” “walk,”: Gk. “peripatein.” v. 1
 - 1. “Walk” implies progress.
 - 2. “More and more” a common Pauline expression:
 - a. Romans 15:13
 - b. 1 Corinthians 14:12; 15:58
 - c. 2:12; 3:12; 4:1, 10

II. Following Instructions About Priorities. vv. 3a, 7-8a

- A. Recognition of God’s “will”: “you should be holy.” v. 3a
- B. Response to God’s “call”: “to live a holy life.” v. 7; 2:12; 5:24
- C. Both “will” and “call” relate to the priority of “holiness.”
 - 1. Holiness is a state into which we have been called. 1 Corinthians 1:2
 - 2. Holiness is a process in which we are involved. v. 3
 - 3. Holiness is a destiny at which we will arrive. 3:13
 - 4. Holiness is possible because of His Spirit the Holy One. v. 8

III. Following Instructions About Purity. vv. 3b-6

- A. The sexual morality of those who do not know God are... v. 5
 - 1. ...driven by “passionate lust” and “porneia.” vv. 3, 5
 - 2. Taking advantage of and wronging the “brother.” v. 6
- B. The sexual morality of the one called to holiness...
 - 1. ...avoids “porneia” like the plague. v. 3
 - 2. Controls the body in a way that is “holy and honorable.” v. 4
 - 3. Recognizes the seriousness of sexual propriety. vv. 6-8

IV. Following Instructions About Productivity. vv. 11-12

- A. “Make it your ambition to have no ambition” (Phillips). v. 11
 - 1. Impractical “spirituality” needs dampening down.
 - 2. Practical spirituality needs to be encouraged.
- B. Practical spirituality is not afraid of hard work.
 - 1. It sits well with unbelievers.
 - 2. It avoids freeloading on believers.
 - 3. It makes God smile!!

Point to Ponder: Practical holiness makes God smile.