Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning, February 18, 2018

***The Last Days!***  What happens next?

Life Lessons from Four Apostles

Pleasing God

How should we live as we await Christ’s Return?

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

In his book, *What’s Wrong With the World?,”*  G. K. Chesterton wrote, “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting, but found difficult, and left untried.” Those words could have been written yesterday, for they perfectly describe our generation. Paul wants believers not to be ashamed to face the Lord when He returns, and so he reminds them of His teaching on how to please God. The directions are not unclear, often, just untried.

***We please God when we follow His instructions.***  vv. 1, 2

Far from hiding, God openly and wisely has revealed Himself in Creation and His Word. Proverbs 9:1-6. But as fallen creatures, we hold down the truth in unrighteousness. Romans 1:18-20. We turn our backs on God’s Word, His Son, and even our own conscience. But all is not lost! Pleasing God just means turning from all that and taking on the “light yoke” of Jesus, who lived to please His Father. Matthew 7:21; 11:25-30; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29; 14:15, 21, 23

***We please God when we fight for sexual purity.***  vv. 3-8

When we imagine that sex is the greatest possible pleasure and that living for ourselves is the ultimate good, we fall into Satan’s snare and God’s displeasure. We are not beasts ruled by instinct. We are God’s image bearers indwelt by His Spirit whose fruit is self-control. This is a spiritual battle which we can and must win. Ephesians 4:17-23; 5:1-10

***We please God when we grow in love for one another.***  vv. 9, 10

This is the quality that identifies disciples of Jesus: they love as He loved, laying down their lives for others. This love is not self-serving, but giving, and is not static, but increases over time. John 13:34, 45

***We please God when we live a quiet, productive life.*** vv. 11, 12

A simple formula for contentment: live quietly, mind your own business, support yourself. This is the path to becoming a fully functioning, wise neighbor who takes care of himself and can give to others. Scripture correlates work with a healthy independence and the ability to help the legitimate needy and poor. We are to be both productive and generous. Prov. 21:25, 26; Eph. 4:25-28

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***Last Days Life Lesson***

***As we await Christ’s return, we please our Father by***

***following Jesus’ instructions to love one another, guard our sexual purity, and live quiet, productive lives before the world.***

***Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:***

1. Why should the Bible be our authority, and not the *Koran* or *The Little Red Book* of Mao? As strange as the question seems, we need to know why we believe in the Jesus of the Bible. What do you say?

. 2. Many Bible passages encourage and even demand sexual purity. Why is this ideal so difficult to achieve, and a true spiritual struggle? How do Paul’s words lead us to victory in this area?

3. What is new about the “New Commandment” of John 13:34, 35, and just how do we follow Jesus’ example?

4. How do the commands of v. 11 produce the effects of v. 12?