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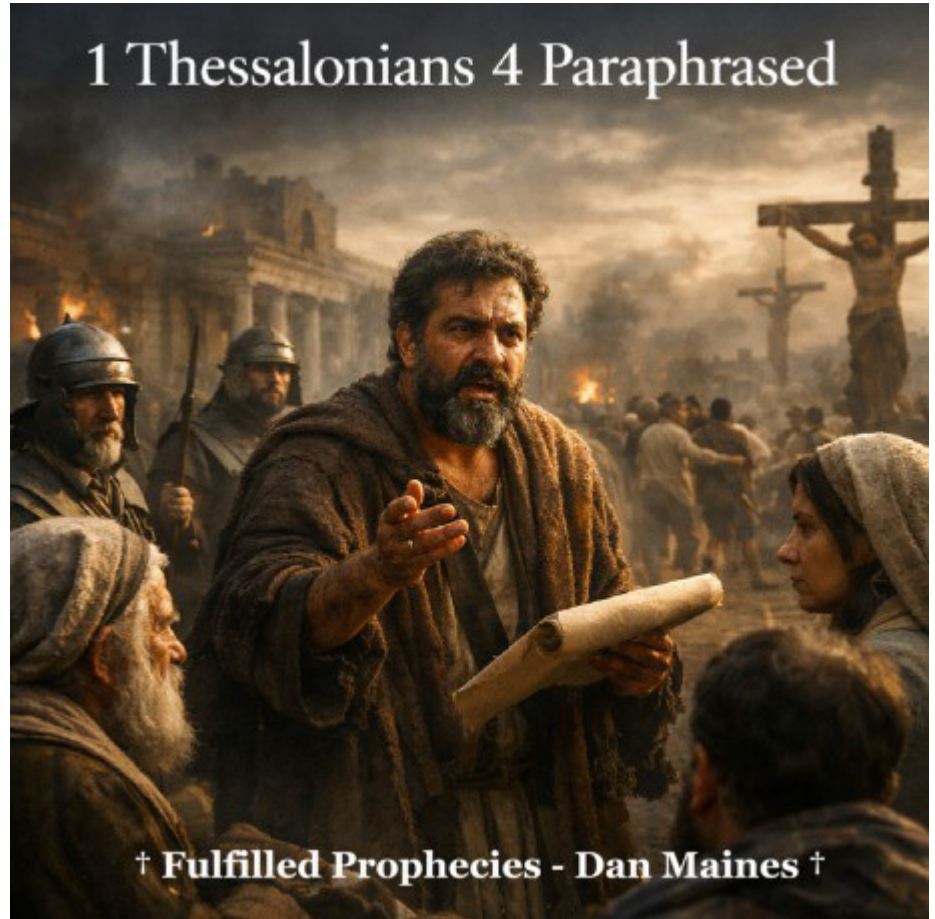
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1 Thessalonians 4 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

1 Thessalonians 4 Paraphrased

Introduction

† Paul continues instructing the believers in Thessalonica about how to live faithfully while they were waiting for Christ's promised coming in their generation. He wasn't giving abstract theology, he was guiding real people who were facing persecution, moral pressure, and confusion about those who had already died.

† This chapter deals with holy living, brotherly love, and the

hope concerning those who had died before the coming of the Lord. Paul wanted them to understand that death wouldn't cause any believer to miss the fulfillment that Christ promised.

† The concern about those who had died was real in the first century because Jesus had promised His coming within that generation (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34). Some believers were worried that those who died before that event would somehow be left out.

1 Thessalonians 4:1

Finally then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that just as you learned from us how you should live and please God, you should continue walking this way more and more.

† Paul reminds them that the Christian life is a continual walk. It's not a one-time moment but a life shaped by obedience and growth (Colossians 2:6).

† The phrase more and more shows that believers were expected to mature in their conduct and devotion (Philippians 1:9).

1 Thessalonians 4:2

You know the instructions we gave you through the authority of the Lord Jesus.

† Paul's teaching wasn't based on personal opinion. He was delivering commands that came through the authority of Christ Himself (1 Corinthians 14:37).

† The apostles were recognized as authoritative teachers in the early church, entrusted with delivering Christ's commandments (Acts 2:42).

1 Thessalonians 4:3

This is God's will for you, that you live in holiness and stay away from sexual immorality.

† Holiness was a defining mark of the early believers because they had been called out of pagan cultures filled with immoral practices (1 Peter 1:15-16).

† The Greek world around them normalized sexual immorality,

so Paul's command was a direct challenge to the culture they lived in (Romans 12:2).

1 Thessalonians 4:4

Each of you must learn to control your own body in holiness and honor.

† Believers weren't called to follow their desires blindly, they were called to live with discipline and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

† Honoring God with one's body reflected the truth that believers belong to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

1 Thessalonians 4:5

Not in the passion of lust like the nations who do not know God.

† Paul contrasts believers with the Gentile world that didn't know the true God. Their behavior was shaped by ignorance of God (Ephesians 4:17-19).

† The gospel was calling people out of that darkness into a new way of living (1 Peter 2:9).

1 Thessalonians 4:6

No one should exploit or take advantage of a brother in this matter, because the Lord will judge all these things, just as we warned you before.

† Sexual sin isn't just personal, it harms others and violates the community of believers (Hebrews 13:4).

† Paul reminds them that God's judgment against such actions was already declared and well understood (Romans 1:18).

1 Thessalonians 4:7

God didn't call us to impurity, but to live in holiness.

† The calling of the believer is a calling into a new life separated from the corruption of the world (2 Timothy 1:9).

† Holiness wasn't optional, it was the purpose of God's calling (Ephesians 1:4).

1 Thessalonians 4:8

So the one who rejects this instruction isn't rejecting man, but rejecting God who gives you His Holy Spirit.

† Rejecting apostolic teaching meant rejecting God's authority because the Spirit was guiding the apostles in their instruction (John 16:13).

† The presence of the Holy Spirit confirmed that believers were under God's covenant relationship (Ephesians 1:13).

1 Thessalonians 4:9

Now concerning brotherly love, you don't need anyone to write to you because you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.

† Love among believers was one of the clearest marks of the early church (John 13:34-35).

† Paul recognizes that the Thessalonians were already demonstrating genuine love in their community.

1 Thessalonians 4:10

You are practicing this love toward all the brothers throughout Macedonia, but we urge you to grow even more.

† Their love had already spread beyond their local congregation, showing the unity of the early churches (Romans 12:10).

† Yet Paul still encourages growth, because love should continually increase among believers.

1 Thessalonians 4:11

Make it your goal to live quietly, mind your own responsibilities, and work with your hands just as we instructed you.

† Some believers were becoming distracted by speculation about the Lord's coming and neglecting daily responsibilities (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).

† Paul encourages a steady, disciplined life that reflects good character before others.

1 Thessalonians 4:12

Then you will live properly in the sight of outsiders and won't depend on anyone.

† The conduct of believers affected how the gospel was viewed by the surrounding society (1 Peter 2:12).

† Living responsibly helped remove unnecessary criticism against the Christian community.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

We don't want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who have died, so that you won't grieve like others who have no hope.

† The Thessalonians were grieving because some believers had died before Christ's coming, and they feared those believers might miss the promise.

† Paul corrects their understanding by explaining that death wouldn't prevent anyone from sharing in Christ's victory (John 11:25-26).

1 Thessalonians 4:14

Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way God will bring with Him those who have died in Jesus.

† Christ's resurrection guaranteed that those who belonged to Him would also share in that victory (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

† The phrase bring with Him refers to believers who had already died being gathered together with the living at Christ's coming.

1 Thessalonians 4:15

We tell you this by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not go ahead of those who have died.

† Paul clearly includes himself among those who might still be alive at the Lord's coming, showing that the event was expected within their lifetime (Philippians 4:5).

† This statement confirms the nearness of the fulfillment that Jesus had already promised to that generation (Matthew 24:34).

1 Thessalonians 4:16

The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

† This language reflects prophetic imagery used throughout the Old Testament to describe God's acts of judgment and deliverance (Isaiah 27:13).

† The rising of the dead refers to the resurrection hope promised to believers who had died before the fulfillment (Daniel 12:2).

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and in this way we will always be with the Lord.

† The phrase meet the Lord describes the ancient custom of going out to greet a king and escort him back to the city (Matthew 25:6).

† This imagery reflects the vindication and gathering of Christ's people when His kingdom was fully revealed.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

So encourage one another with these words.

† The purpose of Paul's explanation wasn't speculation or fear but encouragement for believers facing grief and persecution.

† The fulfillment of Christ's promise meant hope and assurance for the early church.

Historical References

† Irenaeus wrote that the apostles instructed believers to live holy lives while waiting for the Lord's promised appearing in their own time (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*).

† Clement of Alexandria described the early Christian life as one of discipline, purity, and love among the brethren (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*).

† Eusebius recorded that the early church endured persecution

but remained steadfast in hope because they believed Christ's promises would soon be fulfilled (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History).

How it applies to us today

† The call to holiness remains the same for believers today. We are still called to live lives that reflect God's character.

† Brotherly love remains the defining mark of Christ's followers. Our love for one another shows the world who we belong to.

† The hope that Paul gave the Thessalonians reminds us that Christ keeps His promises. Everything Jesus said about that generation was fulfilled exactly as He declared.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Why were the Thessalonians worried about those who had died?

A: They believed Christ's coming was near and feared those who died first might miss it. Paul reassured them they would rise first (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Q: Did Paul expect the coming of the Lord in his lifetime?

A: Yes. He included himself among those who might still be alive when the Lord came (Philippians 4:5).

Q: What does being caught up to meet the Lord mean?

A: It reflects the ancient custom of greeting a king and escorting him in triumph (Matthew 25:6).

Q: Why does Paul emphasize holiness in this chapter?

A: Because God's calling for believers has always been a life separated from sin and devoted to Him (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Q: What is the purpose of this teaching?

A: Paul said it clearly, to encourage believers with the hope of

Christ's promise (John 11:25-26).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† 1 Thessalonians 4

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

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