

Why we obey

We now come to a new section of Paul's letter. He's no longer detailing his stay in Thessalonica, or explaining his feelings since he left.

Now he seems to be replying to questions Timothy had brought him from the church.

But first, Paul gives, in two short verses, the whole basis and motivation for living a godly life as a Christian.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4 v 1-2

- ❓ *What had Paul told the Thessalonians they could do in the way they chose to live (v 1)?*
- ❓ *How well have they been doing this? Could they do any better (v 1)?*

The NIV translation is unhelpful here. The word order in the ESV is better: “We ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.” Why does it matter? Because being “in the Lord Jesus” comes first, and is the entrance to and the basis of a life that pleases God. In other words, it is possible to be very moral, but very displeasing to God—because we are rejecting his Son. But once we are united to Christ by faith, all that is his is ours—including his status as a child of God, and the approval of his Father. Now we are able to please our Father by living in ways that he has instructed us will bring him pleasure.

Don't miss how amazing this is. You and I can live in a way, today, that causes the Creator of everything, the Sustainer of the cosmos, to say: *Look at that—I'm really pleased. Oh, the way he has just obeyed me...*

the way she has just resisted that sin—gives me such pleasure. What a wonderful thought! What a supreme motivation to obey God! We do not obey to merit God's love or earn his approval or become his children—he already loves and approves of us as his children, in Christ. We obey to bring pleasure to our heavenly Father.

- ❓ *How do the Thessalonians know how to live in a way that pleases God (v 2)?*
- ❓ *Why does it matter that Paul's teaching comes “by the authority of the Lord Jesus” (v 2)?*

This is exciting—it means we can be clear on how to please our Father. It is also challenging—when we would dismiss or disobey Paul or any other apostle's teaching, we are actually rebelling against our Lord's rightful authority.

Apply

Think about an area where you are struggling to obey God. Identify a temptation you often give in to.

- ❓ *What will it look like to please God in those areas? How will you use knowing you can please him to motivate yourself towards obedience?*

Remember, verse 1 reminds us that however well we're doing, there are always more ways to live for the pleasure of our Father God!