Restoration Fellowship **Sunday, November 8th, 2026**
While We Wait - 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 **Rory Burnett**

Intro & recap:

- Last week Justin discussed enduring tribulation and trials. That this is something as believers we are promised but the encouragement to thrive in the Lord Jesus through these afflictions, that our faith should not be shaken.
- Chapter 4 starts with a final message making it feel like the end of the letter. But we are really in the middle of the letter. There are a couple of theories on why this letter feels this way.
    - Letters in this time period were often dictated and written down by scribes. It could be that Paul, Silas, and Timothy all had ideas that they wanted to convey with urgency. This letter has a feel of that, to remind, exhort, in love but with clear urgency that they desire that this little church endures to the end.
    - Another theory is that these are a few letters that were written in different times as they were brought to mind.
- I am not sure why it reads like it does, but you can feel the raw nature of desiring for a young church to grow and sustain until the very end.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; 2 for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

- Using “commandments” is an interesting word to use to this predominantly gentile audience. Paul clearly didn’t spend much time discussing the Torah with this group like he did with other churches who were more heavily Jewish. Why is that? Because the law is NOT the way into salvation. This walk through salvation is a journey. In 2 Thessalonians the guys warn against idleness. I think if believers stopped at what they are encouraging it would be idle. We are to dig into the word and the heart of God, but it’s not required as a foundation. The foundation is Jesus alone.

1 Timothy 1:5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience , and from sincere faith.

- Paul focusses instead on the indwelling of the Spirit, the fullness of the gospel, and sanctification.
    - Indwelling of the Holy Spirit which comes with the fruit of the spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control. Galatians 5:22-23
    - The fullness of the gospel which is the return of Jesus and His kingdom, that our hope is in His return, but also that His kingdom is here today. Matthew 6:9-13
    - Sanctification which is how to live like a citizen of heaven now. Philippians 3:20

Dallas Willard “The gospel is less about how one gets to heaven after death, but rather by how one lives in heaven before death.”

- The Law is good if one uses it lawfully (through the foundation of Jesus). Otherwise it's for the wicked. 1 Timothy 1:6-10

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

- In our culture today it is normal to walk in sexual immorality. Where it's okay to sleep with someone you are not married to, to look at pornography, to watch shows and videos or to read books that are explicit. We are called to keep ourselves undefiled. But this is only by the grace of Jesus. If we are left to our own devices and our own strength we will not be able to do this.
    - Often in scripture when it says that "they did what was right in their own eyes." it meant that they did horrendous things. We must do what is right in God's eyes.
- In Hebrews 13:4 The author instructs that marriage should be held in high honor by everyone and the marital bed kept undefiled, noting that God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.
- And if this is something you struggle with. We are saying that there is hope in Jesus. It's hard, but possible.

Psalm 119:9–11 NLT "How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. I have tried hard to find you— don't let me wander from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."

Philippians 4:8 NKJV "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."

4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

- In the culture of the Thessalonians it was common practice in the temples to engage in prostitution, to engage in sexual acts as part of worship to other gods, and to generally be on the promiscuous side in Greco-Roman culture. That true freedom was sexual freedom. We are seeing that today. We hear all the time, well if I am going to marry them why not? Love is love. I am not hurting anyone! So when he is addressing the believers it is to teach them to be counter cultural to the day. And this truth is still relevant today. Keep the course through the word and godly community.
- Job 31:1-8. Job makes a covenant with his eyes and before God to submit to Him. That his ways may be kept pure. This is the call of the believer, and it's a hard road!
- Romans 12:14 We will have to give account for our actions on judgement day.

1 Corinthians 9:27 "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. 7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. 8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

- What this means to defraud is to engage in sin with another believer or adultery with another's spouse (or future spouse). So this is a warning to all believers to not live in this way to cause others to falter and sin. Get out of those situations. Go to bed. Live a disciplined life.
- God calls His people into Holiness. Holiness literally means set apart, or cut off from the world. This is Jesus' prayer for those that believe that we should be kept from the evil one because we are not of this world.

"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. John 17:14-16 NKJV

- Verse 8 is such a good reminder that when we choose to live a pure life is to choose life and to reject it is to reject God.

"For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 1:9 NLT

"In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use. If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work. Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts." 2 Timothy 2:20-22 NLT

9 But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;

- This is one of the greatest things about being a christian, is that there is always more we can push into. Paul sees and encourages the Thessalonians in how they interact with one another in brotherly. They are excellent in it, but he encourages them to increase to the next level, which can only be accomplished by the Spirit.

11 that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 12 that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

- This verse sometimes is used to dampen ambition, to be passive, and not to ruffle feathers. But that is not what this is referring to.
    - A quiet life is one that is filled with substance NOT spectacle.
    - Mind your own business. Boom. That's it. Mind ya bidness
    - To work with your hands. This is one I have always had a hard time with because this is in the context of Paul himself saying (as a missionary) that he pays his own way while he was with them. I think it's so important as christians to add to society, that by us being there we are contributing directly to what is happening. Now I understand that there are times and seasons where this is not possible, hence the need for mission support. To do the work we are called into to the best of our ability. Colossians 3:23

Conclusion: We are citizens of heaven. We are called to live like that NOW in this life. But we cannot without the grace of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. We have to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. There is both a need for grace and picking up our cross daily. It cannot be separated. This leads into being good stewards of our lives. In our work, family, and friendships. Be filled with substance, mind your business, work hard, for the sake of people who are out of the body seeing us as walking rightly.

Lifegroup Questions:

1. In what area of your daily routine is the Spirit calling you to live more like a citizen of heaven instead of following the culture?

2. Purity is a counter-cultural battle; how can this group practically support each other without judgment or shame?

3. What does leading a "quiet life" of substance over spectacle look like for you at work or at home this week?