

4. God's Will is That We Be Sanctified

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[0 : 00] Well friends, you might like to open up your scriptures again at 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, page 987. And you know that our passage tonight is the first 12 verses of the chapter.

With the title, God's will is that we be sanctified. God's will is that we be sanctified. And that you'll see is just the way that Paul expresses himself in verse 3.

This is the will of God, your sanctification. Sanctification means living an increasingly godly and holy life. And in verses 1 to 12, Paul is going to deal with three particular areas of the life of Christians which need constant attention if we're to live holy and godly lives.

First, sanctification by abstaining from sexual immorality. Second, by showing brotherly love to fellow Christians. And third, by living a quiet and industrious life.

And we'll give more attention to the first of those. I'll be rather briefer on numbers 2 and 3. So friends, if you don't want to submit to the Apostle Paul's teaching in those three areas of life, I guess the time to leave is now.

[1 : 14] Everybody's staying. Good. Well, I take it that you're all keen to learn increasing godliness in these three crucial areas of life.

The truth is that we, all of us, need to keep on learning. And any person who thinks that he is fully sorted out in these areas is not wise.

But we live in a dangerous world. And the biggest dangers are the ones that grow in our own hearts. Now, when we read in verse 3 that the will of God is our sanctification, I wonder if that makes your heart sink a little or whether it encourages your heart and fills it with joy.

My earliest encounters with what I thought was holiness were not very happy ones. My parents used to take me to church and my sister, our local parish church, Anglican church down in Hertfordshire.

We lived in a small town called Radlet. And we used to go along every Sunday morning and we would sit almost in the very front pew of the church. And from where I sat as a little boy, I could look up to some big stained glass windows which were just in front of me.

[2 : 24] I had a good view of them. They were big windows, rather nice Victorian glass. And they showed the Lord Jesus in his splendor and glory in the middle. And then there were four other figures.

I think they were the figures of John the Baptist, the prophet Isaiah, and the apostles Peter and Paul. And what I noticed about these figures was how yellow their faces were above their big bushy beards.

They were desiccated like prunes. They didn't seem to have a red corpuscle in their whole systems. They looked rather like ancient professors who had just crawled out of a library, a musty library.

And there was I, aged about ten, wearing grey flannel shorts. And I thought to myself, is that what holiness does to a person? Do you have to end up with a face like a chamois leather and a beard down to your belly button if you're going to be holy?

Have these men ever laughed? I wondered to myself. Have they ever eaten jam, roly-poly and custard? Now, of course, I was so wrong.

[3 : 31] Through those gloomy thoughts, the devil, our enemy, was training me to think of holiness as something that robs people of life and joy. Now, the truth is that it's sin that robs people of life and joy.

Bible holiness is nothing less than growing to be like God himself. And nobody is more full of life and joy than he. But, of course, growing in holiness, as Paul is about to teach us, involves self-discipline.

To grow in sexual chastity and self-control is lovely and liberating. But it involves saying no again and again to sexual immorality. And that can be very demanding.

And to grow in brotherly love for our fellow Christians. That brings great joy. But it involves saying no to self-centered behavior. And to grow in living quietly and industriously is a great gain.

But it involves saying no to yobbish and slobbish behavior. So growth in holiness will never come without cost. But the consequences are great blessing and joy to the individual concerned.

[4 : 38] But great joy as well to the fellowship. Because this is something that Paul writes to the whole Christian fellowship. And not just to the individual. Now, why should Paul choose to put this section of his letter here at this point?

Did you notice the very first word in verse 1? Finally. Seems a bit strange, doesn't it? He's only about halfway through his letter. And he says, finally. Well, I think the reason is this.

The first three chapters of the letter have a very different feel about them from the last two. In these first three chapters, Paul is dealing with a considerable head of steam which is built up inside himself.

And it was all to do with the fact that he didn't know if the Thessalonian Christians were still believing. You remember his initial church planting mission up in Thessalonica where he went to with Timothy and Silas.

It had been a very brief mission. He'd only spent a few weeks there. Four or five weeks. Something like that. And then he had been torn away from them. As he puts it in chapter 2, verse 17. Now, he would gladly have stayed for several months.

[5 : 43] So as to establish the church properly. And give these young Christians sufficient instruction in the Christian life. So that they would be mature enough for him then to move on and continue working elsewhere.

But he'd been forced to leave the town under duress. And he was in a state of real suspense. He was on tenterhooks until he could send his friend Timothy back to Thessalonica to spend a bit of time there and instruct them.

And then Timothy could come back to him. And eventually Timothy did come back with the good, good news that all was well. That the church had not fallen to pieces in its infancy. Which is what Paul feared might have happened.

So it's only when we get to chapter 3, verses 6 to 10. That Paul's head of steam is finally given relief. Because in those verses he says, Timothy has returned with the great news that the church is going on well.

And has not gone belly up. So in the final part of chapter 3. It's as though the apostle Paul mops his brow with relief and thankfulness to God. And his blood pressure begins to return to normal.

[6 : 47] And you get the feeling that he pauses between the end of chapter 3 and the beginning of chapter 4. Perhaps to brew himself a cup of tea. Certainly the last three verses of chapter 3 are expressed as a prayer.

And then having prayed, he picks up his pen again and continues. In Paul's mind, chapters 1, 2 and 3 are all about the baby Christians and whether they are okay.

And continuing. But once he has satisfied himself that they are, he picks up his pen in a rather calmer and more serene state. And he begins to think, you can almost see him beginning to think, ethical behavior.

That's the next thing we must tackle. So when he says, finally then brothers. What he means really is, my big burden is unloaded. So let me round off my letter with a closing section of varied ethical instruction.

Now before we grapple with sexual self-control and these other specific areas of Christian ethics, let's see how Paul introduces the section. So here is verse 1. Finally then brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

[8 : 07] So let's notice three things about this verse. First, Paul is about to remind them of things that he has already taught them. He's running over things again. This is not new instruction.

It's a repetition and reinforcement of things they've already been taught. Now it's much the same for us, isn't it? Many of us have been taught a great deal about Christian ethical behavior over many years.

But we need to be often reminded. I guess about 95% of Christian preaching is not teaching new things. It's an encouraging reminder of old things.

And that's what we need. Because the fires of our love for the Lord quickly die down and need to be rekindled week after week, even day after day. So that's the first thing.

He's reminding them. Secondly, let's notice Paul's affectionately urgent tone. He's not like a dry old university lecturer who lays out information in front of his students but is not really interested in what use they make of it.

[9 : 08] Here's the information. Do with it as you wish. That's your business, not mine. No, Paul is not like that. He loves his Thessalonians deeply. He urges them to live the wonderful life of godliness.

So he says, we ask and urge you at the beginning of the verse. And at the end of the verse, he says, to do so more and more. Sanctification is a more and more thing.

You'll see that Paul expresses himself in just the same phrases towards the end of verse 10. We urge you, brothers, to do this more and more. He's talking there about brotherly love. So the point is that growing in holiness is an urgent, ongoing business.

It's not something that you just learn like that in three easy lessons or one easy lesson. Some things in life are done that way. I remember learning at about the age of 10 that the square root of nine is three.

I'm no mathematician, but that sunk into my head then and it's stuck there ever since. I'm right, aren't I, that the square root of nine is three? Well, to give you another example of my sure grasp of knowledge, when I was about 11, I learned from my book of British birds that according to the Latin classifications, a sparrow is called a passer and a wren is called troglodytes troglodytes.

[10 : 28] Now, it doesn't take a minute really to learn a lesson of that kind. The information goes in and the job is done. But it's easier to learn that a wren is called troglodytes than it is to abstain lifelong from sexual immorality.

And that's why Paul has to urge the Thessalonians and us to live like this more and more. And then thirdly, let's notice from verse 1 that Christian ethics is not just obedience to some impersonal code of rules or law.

It's a matter of pleasing God. That's the way Paul expresses it. If we live in this fashion of verses 3 to 12, we're learning to please him. And that is the loveliest motive of all.

In the Christian life, we walk hand in hand with our Heavenly Father. And our aim is to please him every step of the way. So let's turn now to this urgent teaching of verses 3 to 12.

God's will is that we be increasingly sanctified, first by abstaining from sexual immorality. Now, Paul's Greek word in verse 3, which is translated immorality or sexual immorality, is the word pornea, from which our word pornography is derived.

[11 : 46] The older versions of the Bible would have translated it as fornication. And it refers to any kind of sexual activity which takes place outside marriage. Therefore, adultery, premarital sexual relationship, homosexual practice, bestiality, pedophilia, the use of pornographic material, and no doubt other things would all be included in that idea.

Now, let me ask first why Paul should put this section of his ethical teaching first. Is sexual immorality worse than robbery, or fraud, or violence?

It often seems to come first, or at least high up, in Paul's lists of sins. There are several lists of sins in his letters. And when the Lord Jesus describes the things that come forth from the heart of man, in Mark chapter 7, he puts it pretty close to the top as well.

Remember how he says, out of the heart of man come forth evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, and so on. So why this prominence given to sexual immorality?

After all, all forms of sin are 100% wrong and are hated by God. Well, one reason may be that the Gentile world of the first century AD was particularly known, infamous, for its sexual immorality, much more so than the Jewish world.

[13 : 10] Remember the Jews had lived with the Old Testament for many years. And therefore Paul is having to help Gentiles who are new Christians to see the importance of the big change of lifestyle in sexual behavior that they need to have if they're to learn how to please God.

But the second reason, and probably the more important, is that Paul knows just how major a part human sexuality plays in human life. And therefore how damaging it is to human beings when our sexuality is misused and misdirected.

Do let's bear in mind when we think of these things that the sexual impulse itself, or sexuality, is a good and lovely thing. After all, it is God himself who has put it into our systems. It's his gift. And everything created by him is intrinsically good. And it doesn't take a lot of thought to realize that if the sexual impulse were not part of our makeup, the human race would not survive for very long.

Another 20 or 30 years and that would be it. I mean, imagine a young couple getting married in the absence of sexual impulse. Think of them on their honeymoon, for example.

[14 : 22] They've had a very nice dinner one evening. They've had steak and vegetables and chocolate profiteroles. And then he looks at his watch and he says, 10 o'clock, darling. Time for bed?

And she says, let's have another game of Scrabble. Good idea, he says. You know, I was hoping you were going to say that. Then tomorrow after dinner, we can look at those lovely catalogues, home and garden.

We can look at kitchen fittings and furnishings for our new flat, can't we? Honeymoons are not like that. Because the Lord God has given to men and women this lovely gift which is intended to be the heartwarming, joy-giving center of marriage.

It's the adhesive, it's the glue that holds a marriage together. And Paul, although a single man himself, writes of the importance of sex within marriage in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, which you might like to read at some other time.

So the sexual impulse, or what you might call the fact of human sexuality, is a good thing in itself. It's a God-given thing. It's the misdirected use of our sexuality which can be so damaging and wrong.

[15 : 32] So let's see what Paul says about this in verses 3 to 8. The fundamental instruction there comes in verse 3 that you abstain from sexual immorality.

In other words, the fundamental instruction is that we have to learn how to say no. Abstaining simply means saying no. Now this is made much harder for us today by the kind of world that we live in.

The modern world, and certainly the modern Western world, has become sexualized or eroticized in a way that it was not two or three generations ago. And even when I was a child, which wasn't so long ago, television advertising was largely without sexual suggestiveness.

If Purcell was being advertised, you'd have a nice smiling young lady showing two shirts that had been straight out of the wash, one of them dazzlingly white in one hand, the other one looking a bit grubby, and she would say to you, you see, Purcell really does wash whiter.

Buy your packet tomorrow, only one shilling and nine pence. And she'd show you all her teeth at that point. Big smile. Now all she was advertising was Purcell. Today it's Purcell and sex, or it's the new Peugeot and sex, or it's the new yogurt that does your insides, all sorts of good things, and sex.

[16 : 54] And underlying the sexualization of society are the fundamental assumptions that sexual activity is everybody's undisputed right and that life without sexual activity is simply not worth living.

So when the secular educationalists get together and discuss the appropriate levels of sex education for school children of various ages, there's only one taboo.

There's only one idea which can, under no circumstances, be countenanced, and that is the possibility that abstinence might be the best thing. Alas, for a society that teaches its children to embrace disorder and unhappiness.

and to turn their backs upon the path to joy. Now it's this atmosphere in the modern world that makes it difficult for the Christian to abstain from sexual immorality.

But Paul's ethical teaching is non-negotiable. How then do we obey it? In the words of verse 4, how does each one learn to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust?

[18 : 11] Well, let's follow Paul through and allow him to teach us. He tells us in verse 5 that unbridled lust is part and parcel of not knowing God. The passion of lust, he says, like the Gentiles who do not know God.

So, with the knowledge of God comes self-control. Do you remember how John chapter 17, where Jesus prays to the Father, the Lord says, this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

The heart of Christianity is to know the Lord. And it's as we come to know the Lord and come to appreciate that our lives are intended to be lived with joyful self-discipline that we begin to make growth.

Knowing God brings order and purpose into our lives. So when a person whose life is deeply disordered becomes a Christian, it's delightful to see how disorder is increasingly replaced by self-control.

It doesn't happen overnight, but it happens. After all, self-control is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. So in verse 5, Paul is teaching us in effect that if we refuse to control ourselves in sexual behavior, we are scorning the loving friendship of God.

[19 : 29] If we engage in sexual activity outside marriage, we're saying to God, I don't want to know you. Your friendship, your love, your approval mean less to me than my sexual self-indulgence.

So I choose sexual immorality and I reject my friendship with you. Now verse 6 gives us two more incentives for saying no.

The first applies particularly to adultery. If a Christian engages in adultery, he wrongs his brother, says the apostle. In other words, if I go off with another man's wife, I wrong that other man.

And if he's a Christian man, I'm wronging a brother. Now we know that when two people commit adultery, they will sometimes say this is a private matter. It doesn't concern anybody else.

But it does. It wrongs, it offends, it profoundly disturbs the man who has been robbed of his wife. And the second reason for abstaining, given in verse 6, is that the Lord is an avenger in all these things.

[20 : 37] Which means that he will not overlook such behavior. He will call it to account. There will be dire consequences. I think it's helpful to think of what happened to King David in the Old Testament at this point.

Remember how David committed adultery with Bathsheba and stole her from her husband. And then he arranged the husband's death so as to cover his tracks. Now when David repented, which he did very soon afterwards, he was immediately and fully forgiven by the Lord.

There is full forgiveness from the Lord for those who repent. But the bitter consequences of his behavior were played out in the life of his family for decades afterwards.

There was the rebellion of his son Absalom involving civil war and a great deal of bloodshed. There was strife within his own family. These were all direct consequences of David's behavior as the account in 2 Samuel explicitly points out.

In other words, Paul is saying to the Thessalonians, this is serious, my brothers and sisters. Don't play with fire. To engage in sexual immorality may be part and parcel of Gentile life, part and parcel of the life of the world.

[21 : 52] It may be treated very lightly by the non-Christian world as it is today. Think of the way in which words are used today. In our society, adultery, which is a strong word, is very often toned down and people speak of having an affair, which is a much gentler way of speaking.

Sexual immorality again gets reduced to having a fling or sowing wild oats or something like that. So these phrases put a layer of whitewash on the horrible reality.

But Paul is very serious, so much so that in verse 8 he says, therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

So if we engage in sexual immorality, we are disregarding God. We're not just breaking some human code of rules. We're turning our backs upon God and treating him with contempt.

And you see how Paul strengthens his point in verse 8 by referring to God's gift of the Spirit to Christians. He's saying to the Thessalonians, don't you realize that you're now part of the new creation?

[23 : 01] You've been born again into a new world, into a new order of existence by the power of the Spirit. So live accordingly. Don't live as if the rags and dirt of the old life were still your natural habitat.

You're in a new order now. So friends, don't we need to live like this today? To live in such a way, I'm thinking here of the church as a congregation, as a corporate body, to live in such a way that there is not so much as a whiff of sexual impropriety in the fellowship.

If the members of a church altogether are committed to saying no to sexual immorality, that church will speak powerfully of the transforming effect of the gospel.

And people from the world whose lives have been damaged and scarred by sexual immorality will be drawn to Christ when they see the quality of the relationships in the Lord's church.

How those relationships become marked by love and trust. People trust each other, don't they, when this is going on, when immorality is shunned. Trust and love and joy.

[24 : 11] So people can see married Christians cherishing their marriages and their marriage partners. They see unmarried people honoring marriage and demonstrating that sexual activity is not necessary for a person to live a fully human existence.

People will see teenagers and young adults who are happy to wait. Sexual purity in a local church speaks powerfully for the gospel.

Now, it's easy to say these things and I know it's hard to do them. That command in verse 3 is just so uncompromising, isn't it? It stands there like the Matterhorn.

Abstain from sexual immorality. And you perhaps want to say, but Paul, brother, it is so difficult, especially in my situation. Do you realize what I have to go through every day?

Now, for what it's worth, let me try and offer a little bit of homely advice. everybody experiences at least to some degree sexual temptation and that includes people who are happily married.

[25 : 19] The temptations will come in different forms for different people. The temptation may be there in the form of an actual person that you see regularly, a person that you know. The temptation may come in the form of pornography in magazines or on the internet or some of those late night television programs.

It may be that you're the sort of person who is able to avoid all that kind of thing, but you still have to fight battles inside your head, in your mind. Sexual immorality can be committed there, inside our heads, by the things that we think about.

But whatever form the temptations take, they come to everybody to some degree. So how can we obey this command in verse 3 to abstain?

I think it's a mistake to think that we can renounce all sexual temptation in one great heroic act of renunciation. As if you might get to the age of, say, 21, and then screw your courage right up and say, right, that's it.

Ditched. Forever. I'm free of it now. It doesn't work like that, does it? It doesn't with any form of temptation, pride or greed or whatever. Why not?

[26 : 34] Because we discover that we're still human beings with sexual impulses even when we reach 22 and 32 and 42.

I used to visit an old man who was aged 90, who was painfully struggling with sexual temptation. You might think to yourself, 90?

Hasn't it gone away by that age? The answer is no. It doesn't go away even at 90. Why not? Because a 90-year-old is still a human being.

And sexuality is a permanent part of human nature. So how do we learn to abstain from sexual immorality? The answer is we have to abstain again and again and again and again.

Some days, some days are particularly hard and we have to turn away from the source of temptation many times in one day. Look again at verse 1.

[27 : 39] The great incentive is pleasing God. So we pray, Lord, give me strength just for today. Give me strength not to turn on that television program because I want to please you.

Give me strength not to go to the computer so as to look at those things because I want to please you. Dear Father, please help me to hate the things that you hate and to love the things that are beautiful and honourable.

And we'll find that the Lord in his grace and goodness will strengthen us and help us to please him. He will never remove us from the danger zone but he will help us to live honourably and to want to please him.

Sometimes we may need to take drastic action. For example, if you work in a, let's say, an open plan office and there's somebody there in that office who is an unbearable source of temptation to you, it's better to walk out of that job and leave that office than to fall into immorality.

Or if the television or the computer becomes an unbearable source of temptation, throw them in the wheelie bin. It is possible to live without them. Well, there it is in verse 3.

[28 : 58] Our sanctification is the will of God. It's what he wants for you and me. And abstaining from sexual immorality is a major factor in God's will for our lives.

Well, friends, after that, you'll be ready for your tea and custard creams, I'm well aware. But let me just briefly touch on Paul's next two instructions which again are part of growing in holy living. The first is the importance of brotherly love which he speaks of in verses 9 and 10. Now, brotherly love means specifically love for other Christians.

Now, Paul is not suggesting that Christians are not to love their neighbor in the sense of their non-Christian neighbor. Of course, we're to do that too. But loving the brothers in New Testament language, that means loving other Christians because to become a Christian is to join the wonderful worldwide brotherhood of the Christian church.

Now, in the case of these Thessalonian Christians, Paul tells them in verse 9 very affectionately that they don't need any instruction from him about brotherly love because they seem to have already been taught by God to love each other.

[30 : 07] Why does Paul say that? Because, verse 10, he has heard, presumably from Timothy, great reports of how the Thessalonian Christians are showing love to the other churches in Macedonia, which is northern Greece.

But he doesn't stop there. He doesn't say, I've heard these great reports about the way you love others so I can award you your golden diploma in brotherly love. You're the top of the class for 50 AD.

Now you can go back to your armchairs and stop doing it. No, he says, don't stop. Second half of verse 10, but we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more.

So it's more and more at the end of verse 9. It's more and more at the end of verse 10.

Sanctification is a more and more business. Now why should Paul need to instruct Christians to love each other more and more?

Well let me put it like this. Let me ask a question. Have you ever met an imperfect Christian?

Somebody with awkward angles about their personality?

[31 : 13] I mean, is there anybody in this church, for example, that you might ever have found irritating or rude or unfeeling? Somebody who might have let you down or spoken nastily to you?

Well it's laughable, isn't it? I can see you all grinning because as soon as you start asking questions like that, we know that that is exactly what we're all like with each other all too often. If we were all perfect sweeties and absolute angels, it would be as easy to love each other as falling off a log.

But much of the time, we're more angles than angels. We are sharp-edged, angular, bristly little hedgehogs. And that's why we need the Apostle Paul to tell us to love each other more and more.

So let me, there could be lots of practical suggestions made, but let me just make two or three.

First, might there be somebody here tonight that you haven't really spoken to for a few months because there's been a sharp little niggles, a little angle there.

Why not speak to him or her after the service? Your relationship has got stuck, hasn't it? Because there's been something in the past. Get it going again. That's a practical way of loving the brothers.

[32 : 28] Second suggestion, is there some elderly person, somebody who can't really get out these days that you haven't been to see for several months? Yes, you've been busy, but really, you could have gone.

Why not go and see that old lady or old gentleman in the course of the next few days? Or a third suggestion, is there a responsibility within the church that needs you to shoulder it?

Might it be a really loving thing to the church if you were to take it on rather than just turning a blind eye to it? Love is always very practical. It's much more about doing than about feeling.

And yet, having said that, feelings are, of course, very much involved as well. It's one of the joys of belonging to the Lord's people, the warmth and the affection and the concern that we're able to show each other.

I've only belonged to this church for just over three years, but you have been very loving to me since I joined this church. And look at the obstacles you've had to get over. I'm English.

[33 : 34] And our rugby team very often beats you, not always, but you see, you've had to forgive me all those things and take me to your hearts. But in the Lord's church, we can have such fun, can't we, together?

Such joy in getting to know each other better and better. As we work shoulder to shoulder in the cause of the gospel, not as though we're looking into each other's eyes and loving each other in that sense, but as we work together in teams, in groups, tackling different projects, doing different things, we get to know the love and the joy of the Christian fellowship.

It is a very precious thing. And Paul says to us at the end of verse 10, more and more. We never get to the end of it. And then third and last, growing in holiness is shown in living a quiet and industrious life.

This is the subject matter of verses 11 and 12. And to aspire to live quietly and to mind your own affairs and to work with your hands as we instructed you so that you may live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

So verse 11 there is a picture of the well-ordered life. It's the opposite of personal chaos and disorder and disintegration. Now my natural tendency, because it's mine, I assume it's yours as well, is to veer always towards disorder.

[34 : 58] So just to give one or two examples, and these will ring bells with you, I've had to learn over the years to get to bed in the evening at the right time so as to be able to get up the following morning at the right time so as to be able to get to work at the right time.

Those three times are all linked together, aren't they? I've had to learn and I'm still learning to keep my desk reasonably free of huge piles of paper. I've had to learn to keep my shoes polished to get my hair cut from time to time.

I've had to learn to fold my trousers over the chair when I go to bed rather than just drop them on the floor in the hope that somebody else will see to them. I think I learned that lesson in the first week of being married.

I've had to learn to mow the lawn in the summer otherwise the lawn would be up to here. I've had to get my car serviced and learn to do that. I've had to learn how to pay my income tax a very painful thing to have to learn.

Now these things have been painful to me because by nature I wish to be a disordered old grizzly bear and I'm assuming that there is something of the disordered old grizzly in you as well.

[36 : 02] But Paul is saying to the Thessalonians and to us don't be like that. Learn to live a well-ordered life quiet rather than full of noise minding your own affairs rather than throwing your weight around in other people's lives and working rather than expecting others to provide your bread for you.

And why does Paul give these instructions in verse 11? He tells us in verse 12 it's so that outsiders people who are not Christians should be able to see the good order and attractiveness of the Christian life and the Christian lifestyle.

In a nutshell Paul is saying be a lovely neighbour. So running our eyes back over this whole section do you see how in verse 1 Paul's concern is that we learn to please God and in verse 12 his concern is that we should help those who are not Christians.

In other words growing in holiness is something which looks both to the Lord to please him but also to the outsider to help him. Bible holiness is to be a reflection of God's own character and a church like St. George's Tron a church whose people live like this will be an incalculable blessing to those around us.

The shining loveliness of lives of sexual purity the joy and delight of love within the fellowship and the attractiveness of lives of personal good order and industry.

[37 : 38] It's a delectable lovely prospect isn't it? But is it possible for sinners like us? By the grace of God it is.

It's something to grow into. It's a more and more business. So friends let's keep helping each other to live this way. Shall we bow our heads and we'll pray together.

we ask and urge you says the apostle in the Lord Jesus that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God just as you are doing that you do so more and more.

Dear God our Father we do beg you to enable us to hate the things that you hate and to love the things that are lovely and honourable and good and true.

We pray that in your mercy you will continue to transform our lives and to help us to set our sights upon living a life that pleases you.

[38 : 45] Give us this great incentive in our minds often dear Father that it's to please you that we do these things. It's because we walk hand in hand with you that we long to do the things that are right in your sight.

And we pray for ourselves not only as individuals but as a church that our witness to the outsider will become increasingly lovely and that more and more people because of us and because of your grace in us will be drawn to the Lord Jesus.

And all these things we ask in Jesus name. Amen.