

Living to please God, 1 Thessalonians. 4:1-10

The Thessalonians were living in troubled and dangerous times. The Romans were openly intent to destroy the Jews as well as the Christians. Besides, the young Christian churches were under attack by false teachers (Colossians). Paul was imprisoned by the Romans and nearing the end of his life.

The times in which we live, are they really so different than those times? I do believe that the dangers are the same, but the scale on which they confront the Christians is much larger than before. It is so subtle and at the other end it is also very blatant. Also, the evil one through mankind, uses its full intellect and capability to deceive Christians. Consider the role of education, science and technology.

During Paul's time these were not so developed yet as these days. Even then the Thessalonians were physically threatened (1 Thes. 1:14-15)!

Paul was very concerned about the steadfastness of their faith. That is the reason he wrote them these letters, although he was never able to visit them.

Living to please God

Read scripture 1 Thes. 4:1-12

1 Thes. 4:1, Finally, brothers, we instructed you how-to live-in **order to please God**, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.

V3. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.....V7, God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

Why did Paul warn the Thessalonians against sexual immorality? In that area the common immorality was homosexuality as a part of Baal worship.

Then, when do we please God? Col. 3:12-17 (Read!)

God's intention

It has always been God's intention that man should manifest His character in this world. Ever since God created man in His likeness, Gen. 1:27. He created man and woman in His likeness.

Unfortunately, man decided to disobey God and followed somebody else. Man decided to behave opposing God's character with which he was created. Instead of

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relying on God's resources and power, he decided to do it all by himself. Sin came into the world!

What is sin?

Moses used the Hebrew term *chata* for sin when he wrote the first five books of the bible. Literally translated this would mean missing the goal /mark or missing the path of right and duty. This meaning is further conveyed in the rest of the OT and NT.

So when Adam and Eve fell in to sin, what happened then?

They missed the mark! It does not matter so much that they just missed or completely missed, by km's or mm's, the mark. By how far they missed is completely irrelevant. If you miss the buss by a minute or five minutes, time is irrelevant. The issue is that you missed the buss and that's it.

So sin is not an absolute thing, although we speak most often in absolute terms about it. It is the mark or target that has been missed. We can only evaluate and recognize sin in the light of the target that we missed.

So what is the target that was missed?

Target

1 John 3:4, *Everyone who sins breaks the law, in fact, sin is lawlessness.*

Than in John's explanation, the target is the law of God. Compare it with Paul's writing in Romans 3:23.

Romans 3:23, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

Paul says, every time we sin, the mark we mis is the glory of God. Then the "law of God" and the "glory of God" , must be equal to each other!

What is then the glory of God?

Glory of God

Essentially the glory of God , is the revelation of the character and presence of God.

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John 1:14, *The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Jesus said; *“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”*, **John 14:9**.

Hebrews 1:3, *The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word.*

In everything that Jesus did He was the radiance of God’s glory. The way he worked with His father in the workshop, the way He behaved towards His mother and siblings, the way he treated women, the way he dealt with poor people, the way he dealt with children, the way he dealt with the sick and the way he dealt with non- Jewish people. The manner He enjoyed, but also the way He carried discomfort, sorrows, grieve and pain.

If this is true for Jesus, then it was not only intended for Him alone, but also intended **in creation** for all of us.

“God is spirit”, John 4:24. Then to be in His likeness means that we are morally in His likeness. In the character and behavior of man is supposed to be seen a portrayal of the character and behavior of God.

If Adam and Eve would have manifested the glory of God, we would have seen the character and behavior of God.

Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit

That is the reason the law was given. To make people understand how much they miss the mark. It teaches them that they need a power from within to be able to live by God’s laws. In other words to be able to manifest the Glory of God a Christian needs to be able to surrender his life fully to Christ. Through His Spirit we will then be able to manifest God’s glory to an increasing extend, from glory to glory. *Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty, Zech 4: 6.*

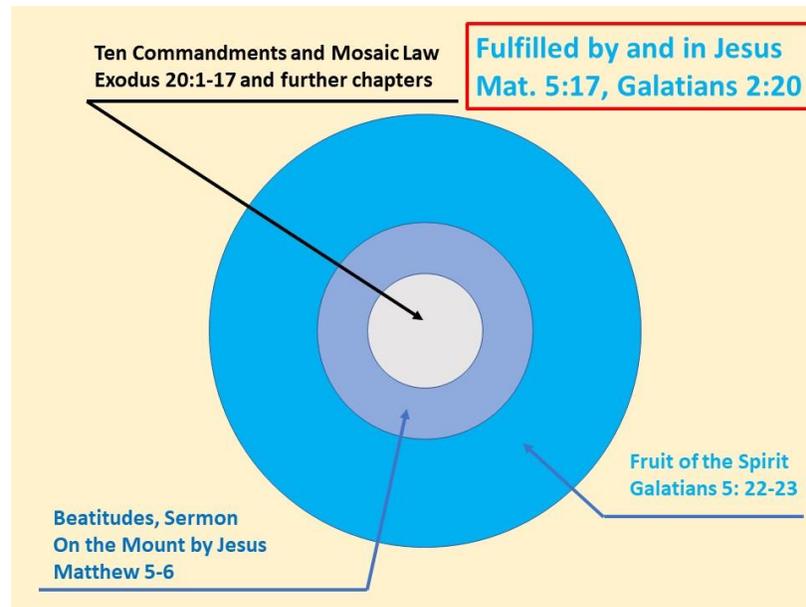
Sermon on the Mount

This is exactly what Jesus tried to explain to the Jews during His sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 5 and 6. He told the Jews things that seem to be different than the 10 commandments. As if He is telling them to do the opposite. Actually, the whole purpose of the sermon is to tell the Jews that they can’t do these things

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on their own. In **Mat. 5: 48**, He said; *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”*.

Jesus is telling the Jews that they have to be as the Father is, manifesting His character and behavior. Besides, He told them also that He came to fulfil the law. The law in itself would not change or disappear, Mat. 5: 17-18. But Jesus would fulfil it and He would be the first one of many.



No one has seen God, but through Jesus, we know exactly how God is and what he likes us to be, John 1:18.

Jesus lives in us and through Him we have power to be perfect as the Father is perfect.

Conclusion

Paul was very concerned that the believers would manifest God’s glory when Christ would come to fetch them. He thoroughly convinced about the responsibility he had as a minister, **2 Cor.3:4-6**, *And we have such trust through Christ toward God.*
⁵ *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but **our sufficiency is from God,*** ⁶ ***who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the ^[a]Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.***

So, should we have trust through Christ toward God.