



Thoughts from First Thessalonians ...

## The Will of God

Because God is love, one of the major attacks of the prince of darkness is on the meaning and understanding of love. The All Wise, knowing the nature of the individuals with whom He must communicate, has various means by which He does develop an understanding of what true love is. The apostle John, in making his inspired emphasis on love, laid down a very interesting and instructive principle. "The one who does not love his brother whom he has seen," was the premise, "cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). Hence God has given relationships to provide real life teaching on understanding love, such as brother-sister, parent-child, and brethren-in-Christ. But probably the greatest general teaching tool is the marriage relation-

ship, properly defined as husband-wife. The devil, then, majorly attacks the institution of marriage, and works to pervert the husband-wife relationship. An important component of that husband-wife relationship is what the apostle Paul called "the natural function of the woman." Some women, he said, resorting to other women, are described as having "exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural." Men who resort to men are similarly pictured as having "abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another" (Romans 1:26,27). Clearly, the deceiver works to pervert what God intended.

- ▼ **Commandments** — Sometimes brethren do not get the point if their proper course of action is merely hinted at. Thus the Holy Spirit and the apostles will come with stronger language to make certain there is no doubt as to what should be done or what attitudes should be exhibited. The apostle Paul, in introducing the subject of proper intimate behavior, comments, "For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:2). This is not a reversion to the system of thought under the law of Moses, but it shows the severity of the warning if the saint does not take heed. The apostle Peter put it in these terms: "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). Failure to obey the commandment will result in the loss of the soul because that loss means that darkness has overtaken the light that should be shining in the disciple of Christ.

- ▼ **The will of God** — So often, people want to know the will of God in their lives. Therefore on the issue of sexual relations, God is very plain, as in His statement to the brethren in Thessalonica. "For this is the will of God," is the straightforward statement, "your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). As noted, Satan gets human thinking twisted in this area as part of his attack on God and the truthfulness that *God is love*. It is natural for man to desire a woman, and a woman to desire a man; without that, there would be little procreation, there would be no family life, men would not be tethered so strongly to the wife and family, and the plan for the family to be the core of the local congregation would go awry. Part of the personal holiness of the individual saint is dependent upon his keeping these desires within the proper bounds, and these boundaries are clearly "the will of God"!

To be a follower of Christ in the truest sense of the word means to be one who eliminates selfishness. Jesus informed His followers of this precept in these words, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). In order to properly carry that cross, the individual must deny himself. A major source of the loss of self control in matters of sexual purity is self gratification; hence the saint is to crucify self, and focus on loving God and loving his spouse. This sanctification is — again making an important emphasis — the will of God!!

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