

1Thessalonians 12-04-06a

This is Friday, the 6th of April, 2012. We're beginning the fourth chapter of the First Thessalonian Letter this evening. We'll take a moment at the outset to go to the Lord in prayer and we'll then begin our study.

Shall we pray? Father, we are so grateful for the wonderful things that You have provided for us in Your Word. We are the heirs of so many wonderful promises, so many blessings, so many sustaining graces. In our physical lives and we come to the oasis of Your Word and find our souls refreshed and restored and strengthened and given illumination to see realities and see the things that we should prioritize and set for our goals.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will bless us as we study this portion of Your Word together this evening. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen. Remember that last week we came to this rather fascinating concluding statement in Chapter 3 and of course the original letter had no chapters or verses.

In fact, it doesn't even have line and word breaks. If you've ever seen a Greek manuscript, it's just a string of letters. It's not a jack-o'-lantern, it's a string of letters.

And they just go. The great Anciel manuscripts are all capital letters and they just go. And you've got to figure out how to divide the words.

And then later on they had the minuscules where you use the small Greek letters such as you find in a Greek text today. But there were no divisions. The things started, rambled, and finished.

So these are helpful artificial formatting conventions that we have and have had for a long time. But it is convenient and this is kind of a good place for a break because as we come to the prayer that prayer offers, sort of the benedictory thought that he gives that we studied in verses 11 through 13 last time, as he anticipates God letting him go back to Thessalonica after all of the defugalties and all of the resistance and all of the controversy and the riots and the helter-skelter there. He's hoping that the dust will settle and he says, I've tried to go back several times but Satan hindered us.

But we pray, so to speak, that our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus Christ may direct our way to you. Then this wonderful little coda here. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all just as we do to you so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming, the parousia, of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his sanctified ones.

We really spend a little time on that parousia. What exactly is that? And it is the coming into the presence of God the Father that I believe is actually in view here. This is not the, people try to make parousia into a technical term for the rapture and or the second coming.

But this is actually, and by the way, this sort of solves a little bit of an issue when you look at scriptures related to those two events, either the rapture or the second coming. In this case, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. If this was the rapture, how could he be coming with all of his saints when we who are alive and remain, we are caught up together, dead in Christ who rose first.

I just had a little interesting flap over the definition of the rapture this past week in one of my other incarnations, one of my other lives, my other context of theological existence. And it was quite interesting because the argument was being made and this was about to be codified into official language and something to which people would subscribe their names and so on, that the dead in Christ rise before the rapture. Think about that.

What would your level of agreement and comportation be? It's not a word. What would your level of comfort be with the dead in Christ rise before the rapture? Well, just think about that for a minute. First of all, we need to know when the rapture starts.

That would give us a clue as to if something is before it or not. But if you simply say with all other considerations aside, the dead in Christ are raised before the rapture. Well, how long before? Noah's before the rapture.

Adam and Eve are before the rapture. The dinosaurs are before the rapture. The formation of the universe.

There's no link. There's no tie. Before the rapture, well, they could rise right now.

This is before the rapture. So language associated with the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether it is his first advent, his coming for his church and his bride at the rapture, or his second coming, it's important to look at the specific, carefully chosen language. What does this say? The coming, the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

With all his saints. Now, if he is coming somewhere with all his saints, can this be the rapture? The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. Right? Then what happens? And the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain, caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, so shall we ever be with the Lord. You know that passage well. Well, so if the dead in Christ rise before the rapture, and the dead in Christ don't rise until there is the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, then the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God are not a part of the rapture either.

Because they precede the dead in Christ rising, right? I mean, this gets into all kinds of noodle-dom, all kinds of tangled webs we weave when first we try to monkey with the language. Just let it say what it says. Why don't we just say, at the rapture, the dead in Christ will rise first, then we

who are alive and remain will join him in the air, meet the Lord, be with him, thus, evermore.

We don't have to try to rephrase it. We don't have to create a creed or a restatement. Let's just use the biblical language.

But here, it says, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. And it says, your heart may be established blameless in holiness at this time. Well, hmm.

Are our hearts established blameless in holiness when the Lord himself is descending from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel, the trump of God, and the dead in Christ are rising, and we who are alive and remain are being caught up? Is there anything to do with judgment of the heart at that particular point? Does your heart need judging before you can get any kind of elevation, before you can make any headway surfacing from the grave? There's no judgment associated with the moment of the rapture, is there? So why would your heart need to be established blameless? If it isn't blameless, do you not go? Do you? And if all of his saints are with him, how can this be the rapture? Because when the Lord Jesus comes, dead in Christ, those who are alive and remain, meet him in the air, well, he's not coming with the saints. He's coming to get the saints, right? When does he come with the saints with reference to the earth? Second coming. Behold, he cometh with clouds, right? Ten thousand times ten thousand, the white horses, and all the rest of that.

Well, this is not that either. So what is it? Well, this is why our parousia study last week, parousia, if you want to be technical Greek, I just like to say parousia. It sounds more Texan.

Parousia. He's coming at the parousia. And he is coming before God the Father.

This is the presentation after the rapture, after he has gathered saints, and by the way, after the great bema, after the judgment seat of Christ, which will determine who is going to accompany the Lord Jesus into the throne room. This is why he says, may the Lord make you increase and abound in love, so that he may establish, this is terizo, remember, S-T-E-R-I-Z-O, which means to support, to hold up. It was used of keeping a tent up with a stake and a piece of line to hold up, to sustain, to preserve, to keep in place, so that you can be held up.

The Lord Jesus is essentially going to present to his Father these believers, that you may be held up, and these are your hearts. And then it says blameless. And I asked the question last week, and I never really answered it.

It was kind of a mean thing to do. I said, what does it mean to be blameless? Well, you know, amemptos, without blame. But the verb from which amemptos comes is a word that means, without the alpha privative, and there's a noun form, sort of like memphosis, and so on.

This has the idea of bringing a charge, to accuse, to lodge a complaint, to find fault with something and say so. So, hence the translation, blame. But think about this now.

This is not a quality of the heart. This is a status of chargeability. It doesn't mean that you're without fault, without sin, without guilt necessarily.

What it means is, you cannot be accused. You are not being charged. There's no basis or grounds for bringing a negative rebuke or laying blame at your door.

It doesn't mean you might not have done something that could have, at some point, be blameworthy, or that you were sinless. What it means is that your status is such that when God sees you, he doesn't say, bring me the books. I believe we've got some entries for this one.

Those entries are wiped clean. There's no basis for bringing a charge. Another way of putting it is that censure, censurable.

You are not censurable. But it's not so much a quality as a type of whether or not you are susceptible to judgment. So you're not judgeable.

That would be another way of putting it. So, there is a very interesting statement here in verse 13. So that he may support, hold up, present your hearts, not chargeable, not censurable, not with any grounds for accusation, in Hagiosune, in holiness.

This is a fairly rare word. Hagios is everywhere in the Septuagint and in the New Testament. But Hagiosune is only used three or four places in the New Testament.

And they are all by Paul. It's used just a couple of places in the Septuagint. When you see Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

Take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Spirit of holiness is how it's translated in the Greek. And they use Hagiosune.

But that's only two or three places in the Psalms. And it's used a few places. It's only either in Psalms or in Job.

It's all over the place in Job. Because the whole issue is, are you blameless? Are you righteous? Are you holy or not? But in the New Testament, it is used for holiness. And it is used exclusively by the Apostle Paul.

What I want to point out about this is, if I can get there, that Paul uses it a couple of other places that shine light on this. How can your heart be non-accusable before God the Father, specifically with respect to Hagiosune? It doesn't mean you're not accusable with respect to maybe other things. But blameless before him, non-accusable before him in Hagiosune.

Well, what is being said here? Ask yourself the question. What is Paul saying? May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that the Lord Jesus can present your hearts. In other words, there is a link here.

This Hagiosune is based on, how do you treat people? Are you with me? This isn't forensic application of the blood of Christ to the cross, or how many times did you claim 1 John 1.9. This is, may God cause your hearts to increase and abound in love toward one another and toward all, so that you will be blameless in the area of holiness when the Lord Jesus holds you up before God the Father. That's what's going on. He's only going to bring in these people.

He's not bringing everybody in. I've been having discussions and so on about this. My erstwhile roommate's been reminding me of the wise and foolish virgins and many other analogous situations elsewhere in Scripture.

Many will come to me on that day and say, Lord, Lord, in your name, did we not do things? They're not in the lake of fire. They're not in the darkness, which is outside necessarily cut into and portioned their lot with the hypocrites. Where are they? They're outside the door.

Initially, Jesus says in Revelation 3.20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me. Well, once he comes in and starts supping, that door gets closed and there's other people that want to come in.

And the Lord says, Sorry, I never knew you. Now, they wouldn't be there to knock and they wouldn't be there to ask the question if they weren't saved. But there is a separation.

There is a distinction. The Israelites in the Millennial Kingdom, some will be in and some will be out. I will cause you to pass under the rod.

Some will be qualified to go in. Some will not. And I can't find any basis for a get-out-of-discipline free card for the church that, well, you're a bride of Christ and the bride can't be separate.

If one's holy, the whole lump is holy. I mean, you try to make that argument, but every time God judges people, there is a separation. There is a distinction.

Those who are last shall be first. Those who are first shall be last. And so this is kind of an important thing.

This isn't really, in my mind, casual. This isn't a nice-to-have. This is a need-to-have.

This is a must-have, a must-know. This is important information for us. Do we or do we not want our hearts to be stereozed, to be supported and held up and proffered by the Lord Jesus Christ before His Father in that day when He comes before His Father with His Bride and we are not accusable when it comes to hagiosune, when it comes to this holiness? And how did we get there? Not by confession.

Not by the cross in its widest application, its positional sanctification. This is based on what did you do in terms of love. Do you see this? This is what Paul is saying.

May the Lord make you... And these two words, by the way, are real interesting. You see those words increase and abound? There are two words here. One is pleonazo and the other is perisuo.

Pleonazo and perisuo. You say, well, that doesn't really help me. Here's the interesting thing.

If you go and dig around in the etymology and the connotation of these words as they came down into New Testament times, pleonazo is the first one. And if you look at a literal translation, it says, make to exceed. Pleonazo has the idea of something overflowing.

It's an action word. My cup runneth over. It didn't run over yesterday.

It isn't going to run over tomorrow. It is running over now. It's a growing excess.

There is an excess and an abundance. It was used in a negative sense with regard to lust, to epithumia. Your passions run to excess.

It's more than your self-control can handle and your passions overwhelm you, overflow you, overflow your self-control. But in the good sense, it simply means to exceed the bounds, to run over the lines, to pass over the top of the container. So Paul says, may the Lord make you overflowing.

There's a verbal idea here in pleonaxia as a noun, pleonazo as a verb. May the Lord cause you to be exceeding, overflowing. And then you have perisuo.

Perisuo superficially in the lexicon seems to mean the same thing, to exceed, to abound, to overflow. But it is a status word. It is the state of being.

The guy says, boy, we had such a bumper crop of lambs this spring that we don't know what to do with them all. We don't have enough room in the pasture. The lambs aren't still popping out.

You've got an excess. You've got a standing excess. So may the Lord make you to be overflowing and maintain the excess.

That's what these two words mean. One is the act of having more and abundance. And the other is not losing it.

People that gamble can be up thousands of dollars. Look at all my chips. And they throw one more pair of dice and all the chips are gone.

And Paul says, no, I want you to keep adding your chips and keep them. Don't lose them. Overflow and maintain the abundance.

This is the idea. Now, if you connect all these ideas, think about it. Connect these ideas.

We're not just rebounding. We're not just confessing our sins to get clean and get in fellowship. What Paul is saying is his prayer is that God will be able to, and this is dependent on the Thessalonian believers.

Therefore, it's dependent on us in our case. God is able to do this if we let Him, if we avail ourselves of the opportunity. So he says, may the Lord make you be increasing, make you be overflowing and continue to be abundant in or excessive in.

Both of these words have the idea of more than just the minimum, more than meeting the need. There's a super abundance. There's a super abounding.

It's not just adequate. It's not just enough. There's more than enough.

There is a super abundance. And it's the super abundance that makes the principle work. We've gone beyond the call of duty.

If you just show up for formation and you have your uniform front ways out and both of your shoes on, that's fine. You can get there. If you do your job and it's adequate, nothing was left out, nobody came down and cried foul, that's one thing.

But what do they award people for? What do they recognize people for? What do they really appreciate people for? It's that above and beyond. It's putting in that little bit extra. It's exceeding the expectation.

Contractors love to come in early and under budget. Well, we told you we've done it at the end of May and it cost \$10,000. Well, we're done in the middle of April and it only cost you \$6,000.

That's great. We love that. That's the idea here.

The Lord Jesus is going to present to His Father those who have exceeded the standard, gone beyond the norm. That's what these two words mean. Neither one of these is average.

And it is this exceeding and maintaining excess inventory of love just as we do to you. And you think, well, now this makes perfect sense once it's explained, doesn't it? Has Paul not gone above and beyond? Has he not endured a great deal on their behalf? Is he not a great model for not just doing the Jonah thing? Hey, 40 days, you're going to be destroyed. I'm going to sit in a hill and watch the fireworks.

That wasn't Paul at all, was it? He has been striving and straining and finding ways to get around the hindrance of Satan and get word back to them and maintain communication and give them anything he can to perfect their faith and to encourage them and support them and sustain them. He prays for them. He appreciates them.

He's a hard charger. He's a fast mover. Number one with a bullet.

So, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts. This is the condition upon which... Now, I know what a lot of people think. Well, that's going to be great for the Jim Elliott's and the Billy Graham's and the stellar, meteoric Christians.

I don't expect that of me. I'll just be glad if they'll let me crawl inside the gate and just perch at a safe distance in the weeds and watch all of the wonderful parades. Listen, this is satanic and blasphemous thinking.

There is not one single reason why all of us cannot be in this number. Don't give yourself some lame excuse. Don't say, well, you know, there are others far better than me.

That is a crock of warm, steaming, organic material. You can do this because it doesn't depend on what we are made of. It doesn't depend on our background.

It doesn't depend on our genetics. It doesn't depend on our circumstances. It doesn't depend on our history.

It is based on the work of Jesus Christ, the presence of God's Holy Spirit, and the power of God's Word. And all it requires is decision. There's nothing wrong with your decider.

And we are blameworthy if we fail to make these decisions. It's our fault. And don't let this toe-in-the-dirt, aw, shucks, I'm-not-that-good mentality seep in.

That's nonsense. That's exactly what Satan wants you to start thinking. Oh, well, that's for others.

I'm just not made out of that kind of spiritual material. You're made out of exactly the same spiritual material as every other church-age believer that has ever come to Christ. Saved by the same blood.

Empowered by the same Spirit. Knowledgeable about the same Word. Got the same Heavenly Father in Heaven.

Got the same Lord Jesus Christ interceding on your behalf. There is not one single reason why every single one of us should not be in this group. It is nothing but a failure of will and a failure of motivation and a failing of the grace of God to not be in here.

So, having given you the exhortation part, so that ye may establish your hearts blameless, not subject to accusation, in Hagiosune. What is this Hagiosune? This holiness? This is dedication, set-apartedness. What does the Holy Spirit do? The Spirit of Holiness, as Paul calls Him.

What does He do? He only does one thing. He doesn't speak from Himself. He only glorifies Jesus Christ.

That's His mission. That's all that He does. He is dedicated.

He is set apart. All the Holy Spirit does is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm going away, I will send you another Comforter.

He will lead you into truth. He will take of the things of me and impart them to you. What does the Holy Spirit do? Here's a pop quiz question for you.

Name one thing the Holy Spirit does that's not connected to the Lord Jesus Christ in this age. Name one thing the Holy Spirit does that's not connected to Christ. Regeneration, filling, sealing, indwelling, gifting, convicting, is there any of that that's not related to Christ? He is, he's got one mission and that's all he does.

And that's what Hagiosune is. We've got one thing and that's what we do. We are dedicated to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And that overflows in our love toward one another, our willingness to forgive, our long suffering, our gentleness, our goodness, our faith, our self-control, our peace, our joy, our love. It is all connected to Jesus Christ. He's our righteousness.

He's our sanctification, our Hagiosune. He is our peace and so on. So we're looking to qualify for that presentation and basically to not disqualify ourselves.

Remember the whole message of the first part of the book of Hebrews is let us fear lest a promise of entering into his rest we should fall short of. There's a promise of entering his rest and we ought to be afraid of falling short of it. Look at the people in the wilderness.

The promises of God were not mixed with faith in them that heard. Let us enter into that rest. Again, he says there is another day.

Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. So that brings us to chapter four. Finally then brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus.

And you can kind of, at least I have tried to convey a little bit of the urgency and the exhortation that is a part of this benediction. Paul didn't put that preceding stuff in there for no reason. That's the foundation.

That's the platform on which he builds this urgency and exhortation. I urge you, I exhort you in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more. Abound more and more, does that sound familiar? Pleonazo, perisuo, start producing in excess and hang on to it, keep it.

Excess inventory, we've got some spares, we've got a larder, we've got a stockpile and we're not running out. Abound more and more, I urge you. Exhort you that you should abound more and more.

Now, why do we have to abound more and more? Why can't we just get a C? Why can't we just

get our nose above the water and just stay there? Why do we have to abound? Why do we have to overflow? This is my thought, it's not in the passage, but this is my thought. All I have to do is think back over my week at how many deficits and shortfalls and insufficiencies and inelegancies and bad decisions and poor behavior on my part. I need that extra, I need that stockpile to, you know what I mean? I don't want to be in the red, in the red.

Oh, you got to zero? Oh, in the red, in the red, in the red. Oh, got to zero? In the red, in the red. We need some above the line stuff so that hopefully the average will be better.

You know, you don't want to do C minus, C minus, C minus, F, F, C minus, F, F. We need some Bs, we need some As, we need some super abundance. So if the Lord's going to allow us to fail and forgive us and cleanse us and let us keep going, the least we can do is try to exceed a little bit and justify his confidence in us and his investment in us and go a little bit above and beyond. Be a little bit worthwhile.

Make the Lord look down and say, you know, I'm really not too sorry I saved that one. That one's trying, that one's working at it. There's some fruit here.

It's not just a, I sowed, you know, a bushel of seed and cultivated, watered the field and I got a bushel of seed back in the fall. Well, I didn't make any headway. I'd like to plant a bushel of seed and get 10 bushels back, 30 bushels back, 60 bushels back, a hundred bushels back from the bushel that I sowed, right? We are here to excel.

We are here to abound. We are here to overflow. And it puts kind of a new thought in your mind when you get to the end of Psalm 23, that prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over. If God is giving us overflowing provision and overflowing blessing and overflowing grace, can we not make it our goal to overflow in production, to overflow in faith, and especially to overflow in love toward one another? Not do what is necessary or what is just adequate, but to go above and beyond.

Have an opportunity to do something for somebody? Pretend it's the Lord Jesus. How hard would you work? How much would you do if that was the Lord Jesus? Well, I swept and dusted. They're gonna be staying in the room.

The Lord Jesus was coming in there. How hard would you work in that room? How much forethought would you give? Seriously now, if I told you, I just got a visit from Gabriel, you wouldn't believe me, but if Gabriel came and said, hey, you know, I'm coming over to so-and-so's house. And when I opened the limo door, the Lord Jesus Christ is stepping out and he's coming in.

Just let them know so they can get ready. Don't wanna shock them, but the Lord Jesus is coming.

How fervently would we prepare? How diligently would we think about what the possible needs might be and be sure that they were filled? Well, does he like cold water? I better be sure, you know, in the old days you had to make your own ice.

Don't wanna run out. Will I have, I wonder what he likes to drink. Maybe I'll put some of that in.

You know what, just mattress, soft, medium, or hard. Big, small, cool room, warm room, blankets, no blankets, open window, closed window, air conditioning. I mean, you're just thinking about all these different things.

It's the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, if we think about one another in this light and super abound, this is what God is looking for. This is, and not doing it to be doing it, but if this is our attitude, if this is our heart, if God has been able to make our hearts shift into this gear, we're on our way to Hagia Sune.

We're on our way to holiness. We're on our way to blamelessness. We are on our way to accompanying the Lord Jesus Christ in all of the wonderful and glorious places that he's gonna go after he comes to get us.

And we're not gonna be back, you know, sorting the silverware and putting it in the drawers and, you know, lugging baskets of laundry and, you know, trimming the weeds and sweeping the leaves and somewhere back in the back will be useful, will be meaningful up there in the front. So finally, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus, in the Lord Jesus, in, by, and with the Lord Jesus. This is what Hagia Sune is.

It is always connected to Christ. It isn't connected to me. It isn't that I just wanna be rewarded.

It's in Christ. I wanna reflect his glory. I wanna be pleasing in his sight.

I wanna produce on his behalf. I wanna be useful in his service. That you should amount more and more just as.

Well, we're gonna pause and take our break. And when we come back, we're gonna see what comes from just as.