knew what they needed to do to please God, (literally to strive to please God) and glorify Him in everything, they needed to:

- **confess their sins regularly** (Ps 32:5, Isa 1:18-19, Matt 6:12, 1 John 1:9)
- **to pray continually and trust Him** (Ps 27:8, Phil 4:6, 1 Thes 5:17, 1 Tim 2:8, Heb 4:16, 10:22, Jam 1:6)
- **to pursue humility** (Matt 20:26-28, Eph 4:1-2, Phil 2:3-4, Col 3:12, Jam 4:6)
- **to be content with God’s will** (Ps 37:16, 1 Tim 6:6, 8, Heb 13:5), as revealed in His Word (Ps 119:105, Prov 6:23, 2 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Pet 1:19)
- **to be willing to suffer for His name** (Matt 5:10-12, John 15:20, Acts 5:41, 2 Tim 3:12)
- **to evangelize the lost** (Matt 4:19, 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, 2 Cor 5:20, 2 Tim 4:5)
- **to celebrate the Lord’s table** (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:23-28)
- **to care for one another** (Acts 2:44-46, Gal 6:2, Phil 2:3-4, 1 Thes 5:11, 14, Heb 13:1-3, Jam 1:27, 2:15-17)
- **to honor God in their marriages and families** (Eph 5:22-6:4, Col 3:18-21, 1 Tim 5:3-16, Tit 2:1-8, Heb 13:4)
- **to be diligent and fruitful in all avenues of service** (Matt 3:8, Eph 2:10, Col 1:10, 2 Tim 3:16-17, Tit 3:8, 14, Heb 10:24, 13:21)

Now obviously this is not an exhaustive list but it surely is a good snapshot of general Christian living. Here ask yourself, have I attained to the practice and habit of all these things in order to “please God” in my life? In fact “you ought to walk and please God” in this way. These then are the things in which they and we are to “excel still more” as we seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Let us be careful therefore not to lose sight of these things and to pursue this life that pleases God and continue to “excel still more.” May I suggest a few more for the list that I believe will be the catalyst to your further spiritual growth in the above exhortations.

- **to love God and delight in Him sincerely from your heart** (Jos 22:5, Ps 97:10, Matt 22:36-40, 1 Cor 16:22)
- **to regularly worship and praise God both corporately and privately** (Ps 96:1-9, 111:1, 113:1-5, 135:1-3, 149:1, 150, Isa 12:5-6, John 4:24, Rev 14:7, 15:3-4)
- **to treasure, delight in and regularly feed on God’s Word** (Ps 112:1, 119:127-128, 165-169, 1 Pet 2:2)
- **to commune with God regularly in prayer and meditation on His Word** (Jos 1:8, Ps 1:1-3, 119:47-50, 119:91-99)

B. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus – Paul again brings them to remembrance of the things he said, stating “for you know.” It wasn’t Paul’s word that he came preaching, but God’s, and he did it “by the authority of the Lord Jesus.” This he says so that they will not take his gentle exhortations for granted, but understand that what he says here come from the highest authority, even the “Lord Jesus” Himself. God has indeed commanded us to live in a manner worthy of Him, and the Christian faith indeed holds forth divine imperatives that are to be fully obeyed. We don’t keep the commandments in order to be saved, we keep them because we are saved. They are our delight and pursuit.

1 Corinthians 7:19-20 - 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. 20 Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called. NASB
In fact, the keeping of God’s commandments is the assurance that we have that we both love Christ and that our faith is real and genuine.

1 John 5:3 - 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. NASB

John 14:15,21 - 15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me: and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." NASB

1 John 2:4-6 - 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. NASB

It should be pointed out that God’s commandments are not unclear. They are contained in both the Old and New Testaments. God has given us imperatives and we are to obey them. Every Christian should be able to make clear distinctions between the Law and the Gospel, and understand the context in which the commandments apply to their life.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 - 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. NASU

A. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification – This statement is Paul’s unequivocal affirmation that God’s desire for Christians is that they be holy and in a state of blameless holiness. In fact he had just finished praying in 3:13 and asking that God would “establish your hearts without blame in holiness.” In order to clarify and instruct further, he says in no uncertain terms that “this is the will of God, your sanctification.” Your “sanctification” is your holiness, your continued growth in His perfection, your abstaining from sin and living and walking in continual repentance and righteousness before Him. The word for “sanctification” is the Greek hagiasmos, meaning the state of purification or purity, holiness. Paul here makes it crystal clear that the “will of God” or His commanded and moral will of desire is that we be pure, without sin, and live in a state of purity and blameless holiness. This is no foreign idea to the teaching of Jesus or the Apostles.

Matthew 5:48 - 48 Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. NASB

2 Corinthians 7:1 - 7 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. NASB

Philippians 2:15 - 15 that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, NASB

Titus 2:11-13 - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, NASB

1 Peter 1:14-16 - 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." NASB

1 John 3:6-10 - 6 No one who abides in Him sins; 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil: for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. NASB

In fact, it is clear that it is because of the sin and impurity that is in the world that God’s wrath is coming upon the world, and it is from this sin and impurity that we turn to Christ when we...
repent, the first step we took in trusting Christ for salvation. The wrath of God is coming upon
the world because of its sin and impurity.

Romans 1:18 - 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and
ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, NASB

Ephesians 5:5-8 - 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man,
who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with
empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
NASB

Colossians 3:5-7 - 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity,
passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is on account of these things that the
wrath of God will come. 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. NASB

In fact God will destroy all people who live in the practice of all such sins and willfully belittle
Him by their sinful rebellion against Him. No one who lives in the practice of sin shall enter
Heaven or God’s presence at any time.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?
Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor
homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the
kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you
were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. NASB

Revelation 21:8 - 8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and
immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns
with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” NASB

It is therefore “the will of God” that those whom He has called and chosen should live in a state
of purity and holiness, continuing to grow in “sanctification.” Another way to state this is to say
that the Christian’s life should demonstrate a pattern of decreasing frequency of sin and an
increasing frequency of righteous and godly behavior accompanied by the worship and service of
God.

B. that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his
own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not
know God – Now Paul wants to make it really clear that “sexual immorality” is a grievous sin
that is to be abstained from. This is because the pagan culture of the Greco Roman world was
one that was steeped in “sexual immorality,” as it was not only the featured practice in many of
the hundreds of pagan religions and worship of false gods there, but also a part of everyday life.
Many Greco Roman men would have not only wives, but also mistresses and concubines as well.
A quote from the 3rd century B.C. Greek Demosthenes states, “Mistresses we keep for our
pleasure, concubines for our physical well-being, and wives to bear us legitimate children and to
serve as trustworthy guardians over our households.” Note well the hardened heart toward sin
and the calloused attitude that accompanied such blatant and brazen sinful behavior that
permeated the culture in Thessalonica. This is not very much unlike the current culture in
America which is even now in a moral freefall, becoming more and more like this ancient culture
in its tolerance of sexual immorality. Despite the benefit of Christian morality that once
governed our culture’s laws and practices, the public display and wanton promiscuity of our
culture deepens and plunges further and further, almost exponentially, as the days go on. But the
standard of God for His holy people has not changed, nor will it ever. His will is for our
“sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how
to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles
who do not know God.” This again was no foreign idea to Christians throughout the New
Testament.

Ephesians 5:3-8 - 3 But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as
is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not
fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person
or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no

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