1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 (Sermon Notes) "Excel Still More"

NIV: Do this more and more; abound more and more; "Try even harder" ; You are already living that way, but try even harder. (Contemporary Eng. Version)

Waiting well requires excelling more and more in our walk with Christ. Excelling more and more demands a growing dependency on the gracious resources God provides for our sanctification

Paul's desire and prayer are to see them and complete what their faith lacks, with the goal of ultimate perfection in holiness before God. (3:11-13)

- A life of repentance and revival . . outwardly waste away, inwardly renewed day by day
- To increase their love and to finish out their sanctification in a final and perfect way
- Don't ever let yourself grow complacent or sluggish - the stakes are too high, the danger too severe . .**(Excel Still More: 4:10)**

Faith is a gift, and we are commanded to add to this: *our relationship with God in Christ*
2 Peter 1:1-11 - in 8-10 this word promises: you will be useful, fruitful, never stumble, and the way to heaven is opened up to you along the way.

Are we increasingly adding to your faith those seven ingredients?
- If these are yours AND ARE INCREASING, you will never stumble and will always be useful and fruitful.

Timothy's report revealed areas which needed improvement, expanded in 1 Thess. 4 and 5

But how does this happen? What exactly does this mean?

Five Essentials For Progressive Sanctification: Rely on God's gracious provisions:

1. **Listen to Empowering Appeals:** *Finally, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus; notice that Paul repeats this in 4:10*
    a. Finally - settles on what is needed to be added and taken away; immediacy
    b. Brethren - we are family and loving; love - he requests nothing selfish, but only what is good for them!
    c. We - not just one single individual . . a community of people
    d. Request - I am not demanding or pushy or manipulating here; asking . .
    e. Exhort - I am appealing, for the sake of Christ and your own benefit- *to plead, appeal; encourage,*
    f. Just as you actually do walk. (conduct yourselves) . . (how is your walk going?)
    g. 2 Cor. 5:20-21 - we need people to come alongside us and do this for us at the various turns and twists of life: *we urge you*
        i. This is what Paul does, and the burden we must have as well

2. **Engage in Intentional Adoration:** *in the Lord Jesus; the authority of the Lord Jesus; (the supremacy of the Lord Jesus; Christ Above All)*
    a. A central perspective and awareness, a controlling principle for excelling more.
        i. Jesus Christ is Lord: declared to be the Son of God with Power by the resurrection from the dead. (Romans 1:1-4; Lamentations 3:37-40)
        ii. Review often the passages of John 1; Phil. 2; Colossians 1; Hebrews 1: Christ-centered passages: He alone has the authority and power and love to sustain continual and progressive excellence. Why Jesus? Who is He?
            1. I determined to know nothing among you, but Christ and Him crucified. (1 Cor. 2:2)
            2. If Christ be not risen, we are of all men most miserable. But now Christ is risen from the dead. (1 Cor. 15)
    b. Top Tier Issue: Who rules the world?
        i. Until this is right, nothing else will be right (Matt. 6:33)
        ii. See everything as vertical first; see everything as coming from Him and related to Him - Romans 11:33-36
        iii. To get our bearings; orientation is needed every day, in every situation. What would Christ have me do? What would Christ have me think and say? How would He have me respond in this situation?
    c. Isaiah 6: this RESET sets everything right: conviction, cleansing, calling
        i. For every look at self, take ten looks at Christ.
        ii. Examples: Genesis 50; Psalm 2; Psalm 39; John 3:30
            1. He makes all things beautiful in His time; Romans 8:28
        iii. 2 Cor. 11:3: the myth of complexity: “But I am afraid, that just as Satan deceived Eve, so too your minds have been led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”
        iv. Psalm 16:8-11: “I have set the LORD continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”

3. **Receive Ongoing Instruction:** *you received from us instruction on how you ought to live - you know what commandments we gave you . . (They were tempted to grow slack)*
    a. Faith is a gift: comes with instructions and responsibilities: how does this work?
        i. Adorn the Gospel: Titus 2:10; Ps. 119:9-16, healthy desire for the Word
        ii. Instructions . . . walk this way (this word was used for military orders)
        iii. Commandments... not optional preferences (They already knew these)
    b. They had already received this... but continually need it as well because of drifting, laziness, complacency... we need constant reminding of what we need
        i. An Example: read Matthew 6:39-48; what are the instructions?
        ii. A Warning: Not the lust of sexual immorality: (1 Thess. 4:3-8)
        iii. An Exhortation: But the love of self-sacrifice: increasingly give your life away (1 Thess. 4:9-12)
        iv. An Encouragement: we will all be together forever (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

4. **Maintain a Glorious Ambition:** *walk and please God, just as you do walk (conduct yourselves)*
    a. An ultimate ambition we must aim for and strive for: to please God more and more, which increases my joy and pleasure in a "kickback" way.
        i. Read Psalm 19 and Psalm 139, describing the purest of ambitions, in response to God's sovereign rule over their lives; total resignation and honesty
            1. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)
            2. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; see if there is any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way. (Psalm 139:23-24)
    b. The faulty ambition: pleasing yourself
    c. The foolish ambition: pleasing others;
    d. The central ambition and motivation . . that pulls and draws us forward into holiness - *what man needs is not some tensionless state, but a goal worthy to press on toward* . .
        i. God Himself, and His pleasure: we exist for His pleasure and glory, and God will not give this glory to another (Revelation 4:11)
    e. 2:4: "But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts."
    f. 2:11: "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands"
    g. Therefore, whether at home or away, we make it our ambition to please Him. (2 Cor. 5)
        i. Humanism: of man, by man, for man's glory; you are a consumer and a cog in the wheel . .
            1. He is Lord
            2. He is Love
            3. He is Judge
        ii. Galatians 2:20
    h. He is Director, He is Audience, He is Lord - - why wait? How do we wait?
        i. This is why we strive for sexual purity (the topic of lust in 4:3-8)
        ii. This is why we increase in love (the topic of love in 4:9-12)
        iii. This is why we don't grieve as those who have no hope (4:13-18)

5. **Practice Daily Execution:** take these first four essentials, and do them every day. Do not be overwhelmed with the journey or the "Excel More" command. Be fueled by the excellent faithfulness of God
    a. Matthew 7:24-29: to hear them and do them; Matt. 28: teaching them to observe - insight and agreement are not sanctification; they are rather first principles to practice and apply . .
    b. If you try, you will find that obeying the commandment is the enabling. This creates momentum and traction for growth . .
        i. Evangelism... as you open your Bible and mouth, He works
        ii. Forgiveness: as you extend your hand and voice, He works
    c. Good News: this will be the path, step by step, of completion of our sanctification.
        i. Tolstoy: "A man on a thousand-mile walk has to forget his goal and say to himself every morning, 'Today I'm going to cover twenty-five miles and then rest up and sleep.'" (1812: French army walking from Moscow, War and Peace)
        ii. One day, we will finally be pleasing to Him; one day like Him; see Him
            1. This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased
            2. This is the pleasure our soul aches for... we feel the love and favor and approval of God - praise from God
        iii. We will max out - and stay there, with no decline
        iv. In the meantime, be about the Father's business for the Father's pleasure

    d. The End: 1 Thess 5:23-24; Jude 24
        i. The only power for doing better is in DONE: the finished work of Christ, applied daily to my own heart.
        ii. Psalm 8: How excellent is Thy Name . . .
        iii. Psalm 150:2: Tell of His excellent greatness

"Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible." (CS Lewis)

"What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost, but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him." (**Viktor Frankl)**