

Theme: Because God has called His people out of impurity and into holiness, sexual purity is not a cultural preference but a divine command — one the Holy Spirit empowers us to keep.

I. Current Views and Practices of Sexuality

- A. 90% of Americans have sex prior to marriage
- B. 40% of children are born to unmarried mothers
- C. 79% approve of sex in a “committed relationship”
- D. Only 33% of evangelicals said this is never allowed!
- E. The growth of the LGBTQ+ movement
- F. We live in a sexually confused, sex-saturated culture
- G. So did the early believers - and this caused problems!
- H. What is God’s will regarding our sexuality?

II. A Holy Command

- A. This is a divine command - not a human suggestion
Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you **in the Lord Jesus**, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. ² For you know what **instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus**. ³ For this is **the will of God**.... ⁷ For **God has not called us** for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸ **Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God**, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. 1 Thessalonians 4:1–3, 7–8

- 1. Paul is stressing that this is a divine command
 - a. In the Lord Jesus (v1)
 - b. Instructions through the Lord Jesus (v2)

- c. The will of God (v3)
 - d. The call of God (v7)
 - e. To disregard is to disregard God, not man (v8)
- 2. Paul wants to remind them this is not his opinion; it is God’s Word and will
 - a. This not just human opinion; it is a divine command
 - b. He already pointed out they knew this
And we also thank God constantly for this, that **when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God**, which is at work in you believers. 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- 3. In every age we are tempted to treat God’s Word as the mere human opinion, but this leads to destruction rather than blessing.

B. The word and will of God call for holy conduct

- 1. Holiness is a central idea in this passage
For this is the will of God, your **sanctification**: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body in **holiness** and honor,.. ⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in **holiness**. ⁸ Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his **Holy** Spirit to you. 1 Thessalonians 4:3–4, 7–8
 - a. ‘Holy’ words used 4 times in this section
 - b. The first three deal with our holy conduct; final one reminds us the name of God’s Spirit is HOLY Spirit
 - c. This is a strong message to encourage growth in holy conduct/sanctification (v3)

2. The Christian life is a life of holiness - past, present, and future

- a. When God called us into His Kingdom we became His holy people (justification)
- b. Our life is to be one of growing in holiness in our conduct (sanctification)
- c. At the return of Christ we will be transformed and made completely holy (glorification)

III. A Holy Sexuality

A. The specific area of holiness in view is sexual conduct
For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from **sexual immorality**; 1 Thessalonians 4:3

- 1. Sanctification includes abstaining from sexual immorality
- 2. Sexual immorality - broadest term in Scripture for sexual sin
 - a. πορνεία (porneia) – Includes all forms of sexual sin - sex before marriage; adultery; homosexual activity; incest; prostitution; etc.
 - b. In Scripture, all sex outside of a man and a woman married to one another is πορνεία (porneia)

B. We must submit our desires to God's holy will
that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; 1 Thess 4:4–5

- 1. To prevent sexual sin requires “possessing our vessel in holiness” - probably a euphemism for controlling our bodies sexual parts (1 Sam 21:5)
- 2. It is the opposite of “passionate lust of the heathen Gentiles” (v5)

3. Greco-Roman society was very loose sexually
“We keep mistresses for pleasure, concubines for day-to-day bodily needs, but we have wives to produce legitimate children and serve as trustworthy guardians of our homes.” - Demosthenes

- a. Modern cultural sexual vices are becoming similar
- b. The call to live sexually chaste lives in the midst of moral decadence is nothing new - the Thessalonians faced the same thing we do

4. If we are to live in God's will and blessing, we must reject the sexual ethics of our culture and embrace God's call to sexual purity

5. To live in holiness in our sexual lives requires knowing that we must say no to sexual urges and temptations that do not line up with God's revealed will in Scripture.

6. It does not matter how deeply we “feel” a sexual activity is right - if it is anything other than what Scripture teaches (a man and a woman within marriage) it is sin and disobedience to God

C. We must not sin against others sexually
that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. 1 Thessalonians 4:6

- 1. Sexual sin not only violates God's law - it violates other humans as well
- 2. In adultery we sin against the spouse of the person - and our own spouse if we are married
- 3. In all sexual sin we involve the other person in our sin - we are both guilty before God

4. This is the opposite of living in the love Paul prayed for in 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13!

- D. Constant call in the NT (red are same words as 1Th 4)
Flee from **sexual immorality**. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the **sexually immoral** person sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of **the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God**? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Now the works of the flesh are evident: **sexual immorality, impurity**, sensuality, Galatians 5:19

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: **sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire**, and **covetousness**, which is idolatry. Colossians 3:5

But **sexual immorality** and all **impurity** or **covetousness** must not even be named among you, as is proper among **saints**. Ephesians 5:3

1. This was clearly standard teaching (1Th 4:1-2, 6)
2. One cannot claim to be a disciple of Jesus and then live a sexually immoral lifestyle, following the ways of the culture rather than God's Word.
3. From Genesis 1 and 2, through the whole Old Testament, and specifically reinforced by the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, the only proper context for sex is a man and a woman who are married to one another.
4. All other sexual activity is sinful, violating God's law and ultimately does not lead to the flourishing of either individual or the relationship. (After Hours)

IV. A Holy Motive and Power

- A. God's Judgement motivates us to obey
that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, **because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you**. 1 Thessalonians 4:6
1. If we wrong others by our sexual conduct, God sees
 2. God's Law can't be ignored; we reap what we sow
 3. This is unpopular, but true - God judges sexual sin
 4. This mainly looks forward to judgement day - and we want reward on that day
 5. Remember Paul's prayer right before this
so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. 1 Th 3:13
 6. We want to be walking in holiness when Jesus returns – including in our sexual behavior!
- B. God's grace motivates and the Spirit empowers us
For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. 1 Th 4:7–8
1. We have been called by God to be His people
 2. Through the call of God, we have been brought from death to life, darkness to light, the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God - and from lives of impurity to lives of holiness
 3. Gratitude for the Gospel should motivate us to obey God by living sexually holy lives, obeying God's Word rather than cultural norms.

4. As God's new covenant people, we have been given the fulness of the Holy Spirit, Who empowers us to walk in holiness.
5. Thus, the Gospel and its blessings - especially the gift of the Holy Spirit - is the primary motivation and power for us to live in holy sexuality.

V. Applying the Word

A. Do I have a biblical view of sexuality?

1. God's word speaks a lot about human sexuality!
2. God's word is very clear on human sexuality - we are created male or female; all sexual activity is prohibited except a man and a woman who are married to each other (After Hours)
3. Many judge homosexual behavior but not heterosexual behavior that violates God's Word – but both are sinful!
4. Are my thoughts and attitudes derived from Scripture or the culture?
5. Paul is clear – these are not human opinions or part of the culture – they are God's commands and instructions for us.
6. Do I realize that true blessing and flourishing is found in embracing God's will for sexual behavior?

B. Am I living in sexual holiness?

1. Do I submit to the authority of God's Word in this area?
2. Am I obeying God's revealed will in my sexual behavior?

3. Do I submit my sexual desires to God - or do I try to alter God's Word to fit my desires?
4. The word of grace - if you have sinned, repent, confess, and receive forgiveness and power to walk in sexual holiness
5. But the Spirit wants to empower us to walk in holiness in this area!

C. The Table of holiness

1. We come to this holy Table to confess sin
2. We come to this holy Table to receive forgiveness
3. We come to this holy Table to receive strength to walk in holiness!
4. BCP confession of sin and the Table

A Holy Sexuality

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

June 11, 2017

Prayer

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Teaching keywords: sexual sin; holiness; self-control; sanctification

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. 1 Thess. 5:23–24