

BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS
THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD!
1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

Introduction

One of God's chief desires for you and me is that we be holy, that we be like our Lord Jesus Christ in His divine attribute of holiness!

1 Peter 1:13-16

If we are to study our Bibles and be honest and open about what the Scriptures teach, then we cannot escape the fact that a key issue in holiness is the subject of sexual purity.

This is perhaps one subject that Christian people like to discuss the least – at least in the light, and most don't enjoy hearing it from the pulpit.

It's not that Christian people aren't talking about it or aren't exposed to it. Quite the contrary! Everywhere we go it is a hot topic. It's inescapable! It's on the TV with most every program having some sort of sexual agenda or innuendo!

It's now even infiltrating news and sports and even game shows like never before!

The internet and social media has caused it to explode to the forefront of society!

It's coming through on our smart devices!

It's on the radio, in magazines, in our schools, in our government and just about everywhere else you can think of.

It's in the displays of stores as you try to shop with your family!

Because sexual issues are confronting God's people so frequently, and because it is a frequent subject in the Scriptures, it is necessary for us to deal with the subject from time to time and that time is now!

We are going through this letter of Paul's to the Thessalonian Church on Sunday evenings and we have come to where Paul deals with it, and so now we will deal with it this mornin g while the children are out of the service!

It is an issue that effects both men and women of all ages, and more and more

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it is involving boys and girls at younger and younger ages! This is not a new problem!

If you read God's instructions to His people in Leviticus 18, you'll notice that He took time to spell out very specifically His desires for the Israelites concerning sexual purity.

It deals with such things as **pedophilia, incest, bestiality, homosexuality, adultery and so forth**. God had to get graphic with those folk because He already knew what man left to his own devices would do!

God's desire for us as His people is that we be sexually pure in every way, both in the light and in the dark, both in public and in private, so that our character is consistent with our reputation. God's people must be a people of sexual purity and integrity!

Let's read our text in **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8**

I. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND HIS WORD IS OUR SOLE AUTHORITY ON MAINTAINING SEXUAL PURITY! (Vs 1)

When Paul began this section, he said, "*Brethren, we beseech, (or beg and exhort) you by the Lord Jesus Christ (by His authority)...that as ye have received from us how ye ought to walk, (conduct your lives) and please God, that ye would abound more and more.*"

Then he goes on in the next verse to mention the teachings he gave them by the Lord Jesus.

He doesn't mention any teachings in particular, but we can see from the context that he had spent some time dealing with this subject of sexual purity to the Thessalonian believers.

You see, Paul was saying to this church, "*I taught you what I did by the authority of Jesus Christ. I left you those instructions because they were His instructions.*"

Why did Paul have to deal with sexual purity in their church?

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He had to do so because **sexual immorality was a major problem.** Temple prostitution was a common form of worship to the false gods of the day.

It was considered an honor for a woman to serve as a temple prostitute. Homosexuality was common!
Using slaves for sexual gratification was too!

Now, we know that the Jewish believers had grown up under a strict moral law, so the high standards of Jesus Christ, while still difficult, would have been easier for them to accept.

On the other hand, you take the Gentile pagan converts who had grown up in a sexually immoral, anything goes culture and tell them to stop, that was quite a different thing!

Aren't we facing the same thing today? **We're living in a society where sex and sexual imagery is rampant! You can't turn anywhere without being faced by it!**

Perhaps for a handful of Christian people who grew up in the strictest of Christian homes, the problem may not be as difficult, but they are the exception to the rule. **Most of us have grown up and have lived around people and ideas and images that have worked to desensitize us to sexual sins!**

Public schools are being used to tear down moral restraints and to introduce and promote a more pagan culture to children under its influence in the name of tolerance!

Lately our own government has taken more aggressive role in shaping attitudes, and certainly television and the mainstream media does also. I call it what it is...Anti-God Bullying! They are wanting to bully Christians into accepting that which is diametrically opposed to God!

But listen, sometimes our authority is our own lust! We set our moral standards according to **what we want to do and how comfortable we**

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are with those things! The problem with all these standards or authorities is that they change!

There has to be some authority that transcends all the issues to set the moral standard for our lives, and Jesus Christ and His Word is the only authority that can do that!

Who decides if sex outside of marriage is right or wrong?

Who decides what a real marriage is?

Who can say whether homosexuality is wrong?

Who can rightly decide on issues like abortion?

What about adultery? Is it wrong? Who is to say?

What about incest? What about pedophilia? What about transgenderism?

Who says pornography is bad?

Who says you can only have one wife?

Is it wrong for a man to lust after a woman who is not his wife?
What harm does it do?

You may say that some or all of those things are wrong, and the next guy says they are right, so who is right?

You see, there has to be an authority that transcends you and me, one that transcends time and culture, one that transcends economic status and race barriers, because if there's not, then anything can and will go.

It doesn't matter if you're single or married, if you're young or old, what your circumstances are, the Bible sets the standard for sexuality

for all people in all times and it doesn't budge.

It boils down to the question of who are we trying to please? Because all of us are striving to please somebody! **We can live in order to please ourselves!** (And that is where most of this world is at!) **We can live to try to please our family or friends or coworkers or even somebody else! But it is Christ that we ought to please!**

So, what is your authority? By what standard do you gauge whether your sexual desires are pleasing to God or not? Is it the Bible? Is it whoever is President? Or have you been allowing some other authority to be your moral compass in this thing? Jesus Christ wants to be your sole authority even in this most sensitive area of your life!

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND HIS WORD IS OUR SOLE AUTHORITY ON MAINTAINING SEXUAL PURITY! (Vs 1)

II. WE NEED TO ACCEPT GOD'S WILL AS IT RELATES TO ISSUES OF SEXUALITY IN OUR LIVES!

God's will is one of those things that believers look for in their lives, and we should! But the will of God they are looking for is in the area of where should I work, who should I marry, where should I live, and other such things.

But what about in the day to day quest for holy living? Does God express His will for us in that? Look again with me at Paul's admonition in verse 3.

God's Will Is For Us To Be Sanctified In Our Lives!

The word sanctify is a noun form of the Greek root word for holy.

What does that mean for us? It means that God's will for our lives is that we be holy, that we be sanctified.

Sanctified has a two-fold meaning.

One the one hand it means that we have been set apart from something, and on the other hand we have been set apart unto something! Believers have been set apart from sin, but set apart unto the LORD which implies that we are set apart unto holy living, or holiness as a way of life!

Now, when Paul says that God's will is our sanctification, he expresses that with three very practical areas of life:

A. **We Are Told To Abstain From Fornication!**

We know what abstaining means. It means we are not to have any part of it! We are to keep our distance from it! Don't engage in it!

But what about that word fornication? Some folks see that word fornication and think it just relates to sexual relations before marriage!

But the word fornication is translated from the word *pornea*, from which we get our English word *pornography*.

The word *pornea* actually involves most any sort of sexual immorality that you might think of. It is an all-encompassing term that takes in most of the sexual struggles that any of us might face.

So when Paul says, "*abstain from pornea*," he says, "*Brother, you'd better keep your distance from anything that even looks sexually immoral.*"

Are believers immune from sexual temptations? Of course not! That's why the LORD has Paul addressing this over and over!

*1 Corinthians 6:18 **Flee fornication.** Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.*

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Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry...

lasciviousness - morally unrestrained, lewd, promoting sinful desires.

uncleanness - physical or moral impurity

Ephesians 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

inordinate affections - uncontrolled passions

evil concupiscence - evil lusts of forbidden pleasures

Titus 2:11-13 11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

B. We Are Told To Control Our Body! (Vs 4)

The believer is held responsible for what he does with his body that God has given him!

That's why in *Romans 6:12*, Paul says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof."

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

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Paul said that we are to "**possess**" or take control of our "**vessels**", (our bodies) instead of following our lustful desires.

Verse 5 says, "*not in the lust of concupiscence...*"

In other words, "*not in gratifying sensual passions... even as the Gentiles which know not God.*"

Have you ever paid any attention to all the excuses we make for our sin? We blame hormones out of control or immaturity.

But listen, if you're saved, if you're really a child of God, then **the Spirit of God lives in you and has equipped you and empowered you to take control of your body** – It matters not how strong the desire or how raging the hormones!

Did you know that in a survey done in 1997 less than 40% of Americans believed that premarital sex was wrong? And when the question was posed to the 18-29 age group, less than 25% thought it to be wrong. (Who are now ages 37-48!)

Is there any wonder that we have come to a day when people **do what they want to do** because **they will not exercise self-control** and because **Jesus Christ and His Word are not the authority in their lives!**

I'm talking about believers too!

Christian teens who are sleeping around. Christian men and women who are having affairs and are living together and don't see a thing wrong with it.

So, Paul said to abstain from fornication!

And now he says to control your body!—To possess it in sanctification and honour!

C. We Are Told Not To Defraud Other People! (Vs 6-7)

The word "*brother*" here is used in a general sense, like the

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word *neighbor*. What does he mean that we shouldn't defraud other people?

In this context it means that we need to maintain a high level of sexual purity so that we don't overstep our boundaries and take advantage of someone else.

Judah defrauded his daughter-in-law when he slept with her. King David defrauded Uriah by committing adultery with his wife Bathsheba. Amnon defrauded his sister when he raped her.

Whether you believe it or not, sexual sins always make a victim of somebody! Somebody is going to get hurt!

Some here may have guilt from having taken advantage of someone in your life a long-long time ago!

Some here may still have hurts that you are trying to get over from your having been taken advantage of by someone else!

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AUTHORITY ON MAINTAINING SEXUAL PURITY! (Vs 1)*

*WE NEED TO ACCEPT GOD'S WILL AS IT RELATES TO ISSUES
OF SEXUALITY IN OUR LIVES!*

Abstain From Fornication!

Control Your Body!

Don't Defraud Others!

**III. WE NEED TO CHOOSE TO PUT OUR OWN SEXUAL
DESIRES IN THEIR PROPER PLACE! (Vs 8-10)**

The one characteristic that is to dominate the Christian faith is "*love*"!

How is that *love* to be expressed? **By putting others before ourselves!**
Just like Jesus put our needs before His own personal comfort!

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Romans 12:9-10 9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

In 1 Corinthians 7, speaking to husbands and wives, Paul said that our bodies don't belong to ourselves, but rather to our spouses.

In other words, **their needs come first!**

How would that apply in this message? **We know that JESUS is to come first in our lives!** He claims the top priority! And if Jesus is number one and we say that we love Him, we are to **recognize His authority** and **accept His will** in every area of our lives including our sexuality!

Our desires, our lusts, our fleshly passions, our wants and **even our needs must come secondary to His!** When our body is screaming and raging and it is in conflict with His Word, His Word must win out!

We must take the high road of sexual integrity and purity by putting Jesus and His Word first!

After **JESUS** must come **OTHERS!** If we love other people the way Jesus loves them, (and we're supposed to) then we won't exploit them, we won't use them, we won't abuse them, or put them in sinful situations! We won't manipulate them for our own pleasure in this area! And we won't neglect our spouses or treat them like all they are for is our personal pleasure!

YOU must come last! Why? vs 7 "*Because God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*"

If you choose to put yourself and your sexual desires before Jesus and His Word and other people, then **verse 8** says you despise God!

But you may say, "*I don't despise God! I love Him! I'm just struggling in these areas.*" Those aren't my words, they are His! Your actions,

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your thoughts, your lusts and sinful desires speak louder than your empty words!

Conclusion

Does Jesus have first place in your heart? If not, there's your biggest problem. If Jesus does have first place, you have His Holy Spirit to help you with this!