

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

A Walk the Pleases God: Purity

1

Introduction

This begins a new division in 1 Thessalonians. It involves the model walk or life of the believer. The model believer should walk to please God. Six of the Ten Commandments are covered, one in this passage and five in the next passage. This passage addresses moral impurity. It is a rampaging monster that destroys more lives, families, and nations than any other single evil. What God has to say is strong, and it must be heeded by all.

1. The earnest but tender exhortation: walk and live to please God (vv. 1–2).
2. The commandment of God: be sanctified, set apart to God, holy, pure, righteous (vv. 3–5).
3. The reasons for purity (vv. 6–8).

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1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; ² for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. ⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

3

Walk to Please God

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Paul gives an exhortation to walk to please God and do so more and more. The Christian life is often described as a walk. Walking is a picture of moving forward and progressing step by step and day by day. It pictures the utter necessity of pleasing God with every step we take. Our heavenly rewards will be on the basis of how we live and walk. Therefore, the primary concern of our lives must be to please God.

Note how tender, yet strong Paul's exhortation is.

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1. The tenderness is seen in the words urge and brethren. By calling believers brethren, Paul was expressing deep affection and care for them. The word urge means to ask or request. But it always has a sense of urgency about it. Paul was tenderly requesting his dear brothers to continue to please God in their daily walk, but it was an urgent request. Their walking to please God was an absolute necessity, a necessity that carried with it great blessings for obedience and consequences for disobedience.

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2. The strength of the exhortation is seen in the following.

a. The believers had been taught how they must walk and please God. They had sat under the teachers of the Word; therefore, they were without excuse. The word ought means must; it is an imperative, a necessity. Once the believers had heard and been taught how they should live and please God, they were responsible to live that way. Pleasing God was not an option, it was a duty.

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b. The exhortation was based upon the Lord Jesus.

It was what the Lord Himself had taught. There is no greater authority than the Lord. He is the supreme ruler of the universe; therefore, the exhortation to live and walk to please God is of the highest authority.

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c. The exhortation involves the actual commandments of

the Lord Jesus. This is a repeat of verse one. Keeping the commandments of the Lord Jesus is not an option. A commandment is a commandment, a law that is to be obeyed. In addition, it has been given by the Lord Himself. Therefore, it must be kept. We must walk and please God, and we must grow in our Christian walk day by day more and more.

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The Command for Sanctification

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God.

The major commandment is sanctification, that is, moral purity. It can be stated no clearer: **“This is the will of God.”** There is no higher will than the will of God. Our Sanctification and moral purity are **the will of God**. The word **sanctification** means to be **set apart and separated**. We are to be set apart to God and His will, and His will is moral purity. Therefore, we are to be set apart to live pure lives before God. **This means three things.**

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1. **Sanctification means abstaining from sexual immorality.** The word sexual immorality is **“porneias”** and means all kinds of immoral sexual acts: adultery, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, and all forms of sexual deviation.

The believer is not to give their body to an immoral person. The believer’s body belongs to Christ, which means that we are to honor Christ with our bodies. We are to take the sexual drive and energy of our bodies and use them as He has instructed.

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2. **Sanctification means that a person knows how to control his body.** The word **vessel** can refer either to **a person's own body or to a person's spouse**. Both hold great meaning for the Christian believer. A believer is to know how to **control his own body and how to guard their spouse**. A person can neglect, ignore, and abuse his body and a person can neglect, ignore, and abuse his or her spouse. This can bring about temptation and can contribute to the spouse becoming unfaithful and impure.

Note that the believer is to **know**, to possess his or her body and spouse in sanctification and honor. There is no excuse for ignorance in this matter nor for disobedience.

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3. **Sanctification means resisting the passion of lust.** We must resist the passion of lust. The **passion of lust** speaks of the **enslaving power** of lust. When a person begins to lust, he can soon become enslaved to it; he can be held by the grip of lust to such a degree that it is almost impossible to break the bondage.

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The passion of lust is the way of the world. It is not the way of God. It is the life-style of those who do not know God. This does not mean that they do not know that sexual immorality is wrong. It means that they have rejected God and His commandments and have chosen to live in the passion of their lusts. The believer is commanded to please God and to keep the commandments of the Lord Jesus. And the major commandment is our sanctification, that is, moral purity. Therefore, we are to abstain from fornication—from all forms of immorality.

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The Reasons for Purity

1 Thessalonians 4:6-8

that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. ⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

There are four reasons why we are to live pure lives, and the reasons stand as a severe warning to us.

1. Immorality defrauds and cheats a brother. Fornication steals from a person. It either takes a wife from her husband or else it takes the husband from his wife. It is also stealing because a person is taking that which does not belong to them. A person's body belongs to their spouse or future spouse. Sexual immorality is taking that which does not belong to them.

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2. **Immorality shall be revenged by God.** This point needs to be heeded, especially in a **promiscuous society** like ours where immorality is not only **accepted but is encouraged.** **God is going to judge immoral behavior no matter how much society accepts it.** Society does not make the rules for man's behavior. God **makes the rules.** He has given the intimacy and preciousness of sex for marriage and only for marriage. And He has made it perfectly clear that any sex outside of marriage will not only be judged (Hebrews 13:4).

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3. **Immorality is not God's call; holiness is.** When God calls us to salvation, He does not call us to live unclean lives. **Sexual immorality destroys genuine love, trust, and commitment for self and for others. It destroys families and nations.**

God calls us to lives that are set apart to Him and to purity, to our spouses and families. God calls us to build strong character and communities, strong families and nations. God calls us to holiness so that we can be strong enough to reach out to a world that reels under the awful weight of suffering and death.

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4. **Immorality is a sin against God.** Man rejects this commandment as being old fashioned and unacceptable in an intellectual and enlightened society. But note what Scripture says that **the person who rejects this commandment is rejecting God.**

God has given believers the Holy Spirit. **The very presence of God dwells within our bodies.** We must not misuse our bodies in actions that defile us and destroy others. **We must, therefore, keep our bodies holy.**

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So What ...

We live in a wicked and immoral society. The very fabric of marriage, and family are being eroded and destroyed. It is time for believers to recognize the dangers that surround us and make the choice to live differently. We must:

1. **Make the commitment to guard our hearts.** We are to make the choice to please God over self.
2. **Make the commitment to guard our eyes.** What we choose to look at we choose to shape and form our values and worldview.
3. **Make a commitment to guard our minds.** We must choose to take every thought captive.
4. **We must take our sanctification as serious as God does.** He cared enough to die for it!

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