

Theme: A Christian must be holy in their sexual conduct, avoiding all sexual activity other than a man and woman within marriage.

I. Intro - National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy 2012 study

- A. 88% of unmarried 18-29 year olds having sex
- B. Self identified evangelical singles aged 18-29
 - 1. 80% have had sex
 - 2. 64% had sex in past year
 - 3. 42% currently in sexual relationship
- C. Ashley Madison site survey - 25% identified as evangelical! Highest of any group!
- D. Average age of marrying has risen sharply - makes 'Holy Waiting' harder to do
- E. We live in a sexually confused, sex-saturated culture
- F. So did the early believers - and this caused problems!
- G. 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. Not just human opinion; divine command
 - b. Same as he said of original teaching they received
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. Our 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**. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of **the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?** You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore **honor** God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:18–20 NIV

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 among you there must not be even a hint of **sexual immorality**, or of any kind of **impurity**, or of **greed**, because these are improper for God's **holy** people. Ephesians 5:3 (NIV)

1. This was clearly standard teaching (1Th 4:1-2, 6)
2. One can not 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

IV. A Holy Motive

- 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
- B. God's grace motivates and empowers us to obey 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. Am I living in sexual holiness?

1. God's word has much to say 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
3. Do I submit to the authority of God's Word?
4. Am I obeying God's revealed will in my sexual behavior?
5. Do I submit my sexual desires to God - or do I try to alter God's Word to fit my desires?
6. The word of grace - if you have sinned, repent, confess, and receive forgiveness and power to walk in sexual holiness
7. Do I realize that true blessing is found in embracing God's will in my sexual behavior? (AfterHours)

B. A prayer for sexual holiness

A Holy Sexuality

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

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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

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, 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, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ 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. 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 4:1–8 ESV