

A Call to Holiness

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Introduction:

- Juice Britt & Reality LA
- Me...
 - Tell them the story
 - Who I am, Youth here, Been at Reality SB since the beginning (4 years ago sept)
- Ventura
 - The Ventura campus will be joining us for this sermon
 - Lets let them know we love them
 - Lead everyone clap (look at center camera)

Our Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

NASB

1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God just as you actually do walk, that you excel still more. **2** For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. **3** For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; **4** that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, **5** not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; **6** and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. **7** For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. **8** So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

NLT

1 Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God, as we have taught you. You live this way already, and we encourage you to do so even more. **2** For you remember what we taught you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. **3** God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. **4** Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor— **5** not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways. **6** Never harm or cheat a fellow believer in this matter by violating his wife, for the Lord avenges all such sins, as we have solemnly warned you before. **7** God has called us to live holy lives, not impure lives. **8** Therefore, anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human teaching but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

Re-cap

How good is the letter of 1 Thessalonians !?

- Paul not only loves this church
- They're doing it...they're living for Christ
- One or maybe the only letter to not have Paul doctrinally correcting them in anyway...
- Encouraging them in what they're doing, tells them of his heart for them, Timothy went to check on them and brought back a great report!

Been reading the book over and over preparing for this message

- Its done two things
 - Fall in love with Gods word (when you read it properly as a letter)
 - In context with proper understanding of what's happening.
 - Spurred me on to love Christ and have these things said about me
 - I too want to love Christ, walk in a manner worthy of his calling...

Vs.1 & 2

Paul is somewhat trying to wrap up the letter, even though...he goes on for 2 more chapters...

- Really only 60% done...haha
- Paul is such a preacher at heart...Everyone of us does that....
- You know Pastor Britt...my last point, almost done...ha-ha
 - Joke about his beard

In these first two verses: Paul is reminding them that they know what Gods word says and they have already learned what pleases God and how we are to walk and live life as a believer.

These Christians (like many of us) are not ignorant or unaware of what God's word says.

- Gods word is so clear and exhaustive on what our lives are to look like now that we've been saved
- In Paul's language (You have received instruction, you have been taught & you know God's commandments)
- All Past tense....

His point...is that you not only know, but you are walking & obeying

- Much of the first 3 chapters is explaining and exhorting them in this...
- But Paul says, keep going! Don't give up, don't become stagnant or think you've reached it!
- There's still so much more...So Paul says, "I request you, urge you, to excel still

more or encourage you to do so even more.

- Paul is calling them to know God more! Paul is calling them to continue to pursue and be like Christ in all they do!

Philippians 3:13-14

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Vs. 3-5

Paul's main point of this section...

- Starts by saying...
- "For this is God's will...Your Sanctification!"

One of, if not the clearest places in scripture that tells us what God's will is for us:

- "This is God's Will...
 - So many of us are always searching, seeking & wondering what God has for us...
 - It's ok to ask...
 - But why not try, and start here!

"His word is his Will & his will is his word"

God's will for us is:

- Our sanctification
- What is that?

Sanctification: Define:

- "Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives
 - Sanctification involves increasing in the likeness of God in our thoughts as well as our words and deeds.
- The progressive work that continues throughout our earthly lives.

Sanctification (Continued):

1. Sanctification has a definite beginning at Regeneration
2. Sanctification increases Throughout Life
3. Sanctification is completed at Death

The role we play in sanctification is both a passive one in which we depend on God to

sanctify us, and an active one in which we strive to obey God and take steps that will increase our sanctification – Wayne Grudem¹

Sanctification involves your whole being & your whole life...

- But Paul chose to hone in on one specific area
- He specifically & purposefully said... "That we obtain from sexual immorality & pursue sexual purity!"

Why did he choose to concentrate on Sexual Immorality?

- Could have chosen so many other areas
- Could have chosen forgiveness, mercy, grace, anger, etc.

It's because they lived in a sexually charge culture.

- The Greco – Roman world in that times was known for its rampid sexual promoscuity
 - Pagan temples regularly doubled as brothels, and sexual practices of all sorts were at least tolerated if not actively encouraged within the society as a whole.²
- In many ways, maybe packaged differently, but almost identical to what we see in society today
 - If you look to the media, etc. & popular culture it seems that almost everything is looked thru the lens of sex.

In this instance, does “sexual immorality” mean or refer too?

- Porneia in Greek
 - Meaning “Every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse”
 - To “avoid” it is too weak a word, rather to “Clean out” or total removal of sexual immorality³

What sexual Immorality is?

- Anything that is done sexually outside of the covenantal marriage relationship between a male & female
- So that means, adultery, fornication, pornography, and anything else other than sex in a covenantal marriage relationship between a man & a women

He first describes the actions (outward manifestations) of sexual immorality...

- But then he changes the words he uses
- He gets to the root of the problem (Where it all starts)

“Lustful Passion”

¹ Systematic Theology, P.755

² N.T. Wright, Paul for Everyone: Galatians & Thessalonians, P. 118

³ John Stott, The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians, P. 82

- Lust is the mental place in where the impure thoughts start
- Fornication, adultery, etc. are just results or symptoms of what has already transpired in your mind/thoughts

Jesus said this as well...

Matthew 5:27-28

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; **28** but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

There's many of us...that may think, bc we've never acted on anything we've thought that were ok or in the clear..

- That's just not true...
- What happens in your mind is just as serious, damaging and just as much a sin as any outward act to God
- God is calling us to more. A higher standard. To sexual purity.

God cares about where the affections and attention of our heart and mind lie.

Paul goes on to tell us, that since we "know God;" we are to...

- Posses our vessel for sanctification & honor (NASB)
- Controlling our own body and live in holiness & honor (NLT)
 - Same thing Paul tells the Corinthian Church
 - Incredibly sexually charged city/culture
 - One of the main reasons that book was written
 - Says this

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? **20** For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Are you seeing what Paul is trying to do??

- He's speaking to Christians...reminding them of how they now ought to live due to the fact that they are born-again, saved, set free, redeemed, saved, etc.
- Everything about our lives are to be different.
- Sexuality involves and plays a part of much of our lives, especially in this day and age.

He's confronting the fact that we already know the truth, and in a lot of awesome ways, living it out. But when it comes to our sanctification (specifically our sexual purity) that we are to excel more and have every aspect of that part of our lives be lived out in a way that pleases and glorifies God.

Colossians 3:1-5 NLT

1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. **3** For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. **5** Therefore [consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Vs.6-8

The repercussions of sin

- A reminder of why to we fight for sexual purity

The repercussions of sin:

- Talks specifically of when a man commits adultery or fornication
- That not only does he hurt himself, but not only sins against that women, but also against her dad or her husband if she has one.
- Every person you sin with, has family members that you are sinning against as well
 - Sometimes we may not care, or know, but in some cases the temporal consequences can be absolutely devastating

The point we can take away is:

Our sexual sin (Impurity, immorality) effects more than just ourselves or even the other party.

- Sexual sin can, has & will ruin marriages
- Rip apart families
- Damage children
- Etc.

Even lust or pornography can and will have tangible effects.

- Future marriages
- How you treat the opposite sex, etc.

Sin (sexual sin) does not happen in a vacuum or is isolated to just you. It hurts others around you, and dishonors God. You reap what you sow.

Most importantly (vs.8)

- Regardless if we do hurt anyone, or we think it's not that bad, etc.

All sin, is against God first and foremost

After King David committed adultery with Bathsheba...

- He realized this
- He was broken over his sin & really grasped the weight/significance of what he had done.

Psalm 51

1 Have mercy on me, O God because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. **2** Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. **3** For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. **4** Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight.

Application

What now?

- It depends where you're at
- Either way, this is hard & heavy
 - This for many of us has struck a cord, been hard to hear and stirs up lots of emotion.

I get that...the hardest part of being a pastor is sitting in a room counseling a couple or individual that has been devastated by sexual sin

- There's almost nothing harder

1. First we need to know the Lord's heart.

- He doesn't just tell us no, for no good reason
- He designed us a certain way, and his original design & purpose for us is perfect
- Will be the most joyful, life –giving, we will be nearest to God as we follow what he says

He is our perfect heavenly father, that gives his kids good gifts.

2. Know that its not us that can keep us from sexual sin (only God)

- a. We can stand pure by the power of the Holy Spirit

We all need to repent.

- Acknowledge (a coming to grips with what were doing with our vessels)
- Surrender & turning from
 - Confession to God and others
 - Give up, stop, remove, break it off
- Turn to God

Here's the good news.

- When we repent, we draw near to God.
- We get to experience the grace, love, forgiveness & mercy of Christ!
 - We get to experience the power & beauty of the gospel!

Hebrews 4:16 NLT

16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

1 John 1:9 NLT

if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.