

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians:

1 Thess 3:12-13

12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, 13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

The ultimate goal is that the Lord will find you and me blameless

- and living in holiness.

Many of the churches we read about in scripture had pagan neighbors.

They were too busy living in the world,

- living for their own pleasures of sexual immorality,
- living for self,

Paul didn't write this letter

- until after he'd received a report from Timothy
- on how the church was doing.

Could it be that Timothy reported some issues

- or potential issues he saw in the church,
- yes, that's possible.

It could also be that Paul wanted to encourage them

- since they were doing so well,
- knowing that the potential was there
- for some to return to their old ways of living.

It may be that some were also becoming discouraged since

- they were thinking Christ
- was going to return at any moment,
- even during their lifetime.

Remember, they were only about 20 years removed from

- the death and resurrection of Christ.

At the same time, discouragement may have begun to settle into

- some of the minds of people.

2 Peter 3:3-4

3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

2 Peter 3:9

9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

1 Thess 4:1-8

1 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.

Paul opens the 4th chapter

- with, “Finally then,”

This brings the letter to a shift in discussion.

1 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;

Paul’s desire for the young church of Thessalonica

- was that they wouldn’t be content
- thus becoming complacent with
- what they already had in the Lord.

He wanted them to desire more of the Lord

- and to act upon what they’d learned

Notice the overarching theme in verse 1 which covers chapters 4 & 5.

- Paul talks about how we are to walk and to please God.

Paul said something similar to the Corinthians as he said here in verse 1 of chapter 4:

1 Cor 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Thess 4:1

1 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;

To walk is a metaphor implying that you're alive.

Paul said in Ephesians that we were once dead

- in our trespasses and sins.

Fortunately, God in His mercy

- made us spiritually alive

Now, walking implies progress.

- You're moving forward and not falling back.

Our walk is to please God, not self.

There is an old song by Ricky Nelson called "Garden Party."

In the chorus he sings,

But it's all right now, I learned my lesson well.

You see, ya can't please everyone, so ya got to please yourself.

That's the mindset of the world.

- I'm going to please myself,

But Paul says, no, our walk is to please God!

It is possible to try to please God with the wrong attitude? Case in point, Jonah!

- God wanted Jonah to go to Ninevah,
- did Jonah want to go, no!

Johan was not happy because God

was going to extend His mercy to Ninevah.

Jonah was preaching destruction to Ninevah.

He went there, but his heart wasn't right.

Notice twice in verses 1 & 2 Paul mentions the Lord Jesus.

- And those two verses are a general
- introduction to a pure walk.

Paul says in verse 2, for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

In other words, the Lord Jesus will equip you

- to get thru the trails or temptations you'll face.

Why we should walk in purity?

- 1) It's the will of God

1 Thess 4:3

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

The will of God is one, for all people and

- two, for us as individuals.

Twenty-three times in the NT there is reference to something

- concerning "the will of God."

Mk 3:35, whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.

Romans 12:2

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

1 Peter 2:15

¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—

We should be seeking God's will in our life.

We need to seek first the kingdom of God.

Well, how do I know His will?

Notice two words in verses 3, 4, & 7, sanctification and holiness.

- The Greek word is *hagiasmós*;
- It means to be set apart to be used for a specific purpose.

The following are 3 categories of sanctification:

- 1) Positional -

If you're a believer, a follower of Christ

- then you possess this sanctification.

- 2) Then there is progressive sanctification:

Positionally, we're all sanctified in Christ. He has saved us.

- But practically, some are living a more sanctified life than others.
- 3) Perfect sanctification: When we are in heaven we will be perfectly righteous.

Paul himself said

Phil 3:12

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

Our spiritual growth and progressive sanctification on this earth

- is in preparation for the day
- we stand before Christ.

1 Cor 15:54

54 So when this corruptible has (will) put on incorruption, and this mortal has (will) put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Notice what Paul says next in verse 3:

1 Thess 4:3

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

The American Standard Version says to abstain from fornication.

The word fornication is derived from the Greek word Porneia.

- We think of the word Pornographic,
- but it's sex outside of a covenant relationship
- in a marriage between a man and a woman.

Paul says to abstain from this.

James said in chapter 4, Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Paul said in Titus:

Titus 2:11-12

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

If we look at our society today,

- we can see that a desensitization has taken place.

Isa 5:20

20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;

Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

John 8:44

44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

The culture today is all about sin. More in specific sexual gratification.

So, the first reason to walk in purity.

- It's the will of God

The second reason to walk in purity:

- Your body belongs to Christ

1 Thess 4:4

4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

In Job's final defense of his integrity, he says in chapter 31:1, I made a covenant with my eyes.

Job 31:4

4 Does He not see my ways,
And count all my steps?

We can't hide anything from God, including our sin.

James 1:27

27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

The word "vessel" in verse 4 is speaking of the body.

- We shouldn't let our body control us,
- rather we should control the body.

Peter uses the word vessel to speak of a man's wife.

In honoring our wife

- or in honoring your husband
- you are honoring the Lord as well.

1 Peter 3:7

7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Cor 6:13

13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

1 Cor 7:2

2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

In chapter 10 Paul said, Therefore my beloved, flee from idolatry.

He wasn't interested in their temporary flight from idolatry,

- he's telling them to
- make a permanent avoidance of such sinful behavior.

Gal 5:16

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Now the third reason to walk in purity:

- Sexual immorality is the way of the world.

1 Thess 4:5

5 not (don't walk) in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

Lust can lead to more dangerous activity:

An article was put out by forbes.com in Nov 23

- stating that an estimated 736 million women,
- one in three, have been subjected to
- some form of physical and/or sexual violence,
- at least once in their life.

In 2020 approximately 47,000 girls and women

- were killed by their intimate partner
- or by a family member with Asia and Africa
- having the largest number of deaths
- relative to its female population.

God created us to be much more intelligent than animals.

- Animals are controlled by instinct,

- we are to be controlled by God, by His Holy Spirit.

Amnon in the OT had a half sister by the name of Tamar.

- Scripture says he loved her,
- it means that he had an attraction to her.

He was so distressed over his sister so much so that he became sick.

- But Amnon had a shrewd friend
- named Jonadab who said to him:

2 Sam 13:5-6

5 So Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'" (I think he was looking at a different food, lust of the flesh) 6 Then Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let Tamar my sister come and make a couple of cakes for me in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

This all started with a thought.

- And because he didn't take that thought captive,
- because he didn't nip it right away
- the thought grew until
- he eventually raped his sister.

And so it is with us in any form of sin.

- If we don't take those thoughts captive
- to the obedience of Christ,
- we too can fall into the temptation of lust,
- lies, deception, theft, whatever it is.

1 Cor 2:14

14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The fourth reason to walk in purity:

- Sexual immorality is harmful to others.

1 Thess 4:6

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.

When Paul mentions "brother" in this matter,

- he's speaking of mankind in general,
- not a fellow Christian.

He also says no one is to defraud another person,

- that means to go beyond
- which literally means “to step over.”
- We are not to trespass.

The fifth reason to walk in purity

- sexual immorality brings God’s judgment

Notice verse 6 says that the Lord is the avenger of all

In Colossians 3 Paul said he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Gal 6:7

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

The sixth reason to walk in purity:

- God has called us to walk in holiness (sanctification)

1 Thess 4:7

7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

God has called us to be set apart.

- We walk with the Lord,
- that becomes natural as we mature in the Lord,
- but we can’t let our guard down
- because we still have an enemy
- that tries to poke us from time to time.

Eph 5:25-27

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her (that is, Christ sets the church apart) with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

When Christ returns for us, His bride, His church, we want to be found faithful.

The seventh reason to walk in purity:

- Sexual sin grieves the Holy Spirit of God

1 Thess 4:8

8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, (to reject means to set aside, to not rely on) who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

Luke 10:16

16 He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

When we tell someone the truth of God's word,

- it's up to them to listen,
- to receive or to not receive the message.
- They have the choice, accept it or reject it.