

The Hope of Heaven

1Thessalonians 4:7-18

- The Apostle Paul has emphasized throughout this book the importance of helping people to know Christ, then get rooted and grounded in Christ, so that they may fulfill their ministry for Christ, and for that to occur we must resist the temptation of being self centered and become others centered. Last week Paul said this kind of living takes great sacrifice, one in which we must dedicate our mind, body, and heart to the glory of the Lord **V3**. That meant saying no to worldly pleasure, sexual immorality, which ran rampant during this time, in fact Paul went as far as to say it was God's will and their sanctification to live in this manner > **Prov 16:32, 25:28**.

V7-18

- **V7-8** earlier Paul had given the **first of four reasons** why we should remain sexually pure > **1st** because it is the will of God, and all who disobey this call will come face to face with His punishment as He is declared the "**Avenger of all**". Now we see the second reason for sexual purity > **2nd** as it's a "**calling**", as the call is not to uncleanness but to holiness, therefore sexual immorality is simply inconsistent with who we are suppose to be in Christ period!
- This is one of the reasons people get so uncomfortable when it comes to scripture, as it gives no wiggle room to impurity. It's in our nature to find loopholes for us to escape through and feel justified in either what we're doing or saying, but the bible its primarily a yes and no owner's manual of what is right or wrong in the Lord's sight, if you want truth then the Word of God is a welcomed refreshment surrounded by nothing but dry land, but if you don't then its seen as an unwanted guest whom everybody is waiting to leave before they can get the party started.
- This brings us to the third reason > **3rd** its not man's call its God's call, so much of our reasoning in rejecting God's Word is to wrongly associate it with it originating from man, God used man but it's His Word, and when we're rejecting it ultimately we're rejecting God and not man > **Lk 10:16**. The fourth reason given by Paul to stay pure is > **4th** we have the Holy Spirit inside of us > **2 Cor 4:7**- God has given not only His Spirit to empower us to victory but to live inside of us for guidance and assurance, so we have all the resources we need to overcome our sinful desires.
- **V9-10** once we're loose from the entanglements and bondage of sin then we're free to love and serve one another as good intended, this is why the world cannot increase in love as God's Word encourages us to do. The world is all about impurity, and yet it believes that it can still love and help others without bias, except its love is filled with envy, jealousy, strings attached, it's a contaminated false emotion that parades itself as love but in reality its self serving.

- **V11-12** is connected closely with **V10**, because if you don't increase in love it's impossible to follow what's listed here. The word "**aspire**" means to study or labor, meaning this is going to take some serious effort on our part > **1. To lead a quiet life**- not generate confusion, **2. To mind you own business**- stay away from gossip, **3. Work with your own hands**- no time to be a trouble maker because God has me so busy. This takes not only having the Spirit, but surrendering to the Spirit, and being filled with the Spirit. In fact if you practice this you'll so focused on the Lord that you'll block out the distractions of the world immersed in His will.
- This causes us to be more of a witness to unbelievers to surrender and less of an excuse for them to use as to why they're not, and by doing so it helps us to continue to mature in Christ. **V13-18** in the **NT** alone four times the Apostle Paul has used the phrase "**he doesn't want people to be ignorant**" **1st Rom 11:25**- Plan for Israel, **2nd 1Cor 12:1**- Spiritual gifts, **3rd 2Cor 2:11**- Spiritual warfare, **4th 1Thess 4:13**- The Rapture, yet all four of these are probably some of the areas most Christians are ignorant of today because many preachers or bible teachers will say the plan of Israel doesn't concern me I'm not Jewish, spiritual gifts too controversial, spiritual warfare too time consuming, and the rapture or eschatology is too complicated.
- If God didn't want us to know about this subject why would he have Paul write about it so extensively? Every chapter ends with some mention of the soon return of Christ and this is no different, he starts out by letting them know that we shouldn't grieve over our loved ones who have entered eternity as if we will never see them again and therefore have no hope. Scripture says when someone dies without the Lord that is when we should mourn; but when a believer dies we shouldn't mourn for them but for ourselves, as they are with the Lord which is far better
- Paul explains that since Jesus lives and our union with Him is far stronger than death, then we know that we will see them again once Jesus returns or we go into eternity. Just so that we know this isn't some made up theory of his he declares "**by the Word of the Lord**" he emphasizes that this is an authoritative command that those who precede us in death our not at a disadvantage but will return in victory with our Lord as we all rejoice with a shout at His triumph. This Paul says is how only God can bring life to replace death and by letting us know His glorious plan ahead of time how this should remove sorrow and bring comfort to one another.