

Sexual Purity Is Essential for Holy Living
Dr. Michael A. Cox
Original: 10-20-02; Revised: 3-5-17; 8-17-25

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

1 Thessalonians: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: A Life Pleasing to God

Central Idea of Message: Sexual desires must be controlled and sexual immorality avoided in order to live a life pleasing to God.

Introduction: This message is not for the faint of heart. It may bring to mind past sins. If so, thank God for the forgiveness provided by the grace of Jesus Christ activated, at least partially, by our own repentance.

But if the sins are current, may God's Spirit convict our heart such that we can have no rest until we confess and forsake our sin.

No temptation faced by the early Christians was more troublesome than that of sexual immorality. Greek culture was notoriously horribly immoral - and Thessalonica was a very Greek city!

The sexual revolution of the 1960s and the homosexual and transgender revolution we are now experiencing in America rank the United States on a par with the depths of immorality to which Greek culture stooped.

How many times have we heard about a sexual sin disrupting a life? How many times have we heard about a sexual sin destroying a marriage? In many cases, abortion itself is resorted to in an effort to eliminate the product of a sexual sin.

Sexual sins come in different forms: premarital sex, adultery, rape, masturbation, homosexuality, transgenderism, pornographic viewing or production, and more. God's word clearly teaches that sexual purity is essential for holy living.

Sexual desires must be controlled, sexual immorality avoided, and sexual energies channeled toward spouses alone, only through heterosexual relationships, in order to live a life pleasing to God.

I. Receive New Testament Instruction (vv. 1-2)

- A. Have a teachable spirit which is receptive to New Testament instruction (v. 1)

1. Written to Christians: brethren
2. Requested and exhorted readers to receive instruction: what did the apostles and New Testament authors believe, say, and write?
 - a) Regarding how to walk with God
 - b) Regarding how to please God
3. God wants believers to excel spiritually
 - a) **No person still alive has peaked spiritually**
 - b) To stop growing spiritually and level off is to stagnate
 - c) Some people are very unteachable
 - (1) Know it all
 - (2) Mentally lazy
 - (3) Stubborn
- B. Obey New Testament commandments (v. 2)
 1. The New Testament writers and the apostles were entrusted with authority from Jesus
 2. Their authority was to be recognized
 3. Their declarations were to be obeyed

II. **Abstain from Sexual Immorality (vv. 3-8)**

- A. Sexual immorality (v. 3)
 1. Fornication
 - a) **Fornication: sexual activity outside of wedlock**
 - b) **Fornication: homosexuality**
 - c) **Fornication: pornographic activities**
 2. **Adultery: sexual activity involving a married person but outside of wedlock**
 3. **It is God's will for every person to abstain from all forms of sexual immorality. Period.**
 4. **God's purposes for marriage: companionship (Gen. 2:18-22), procreation (Gen. 1:28), and constructive sexual fulfillment (1 Cor. 7:5; see also Henlee H. Barnette, *Introducing Christian Ethics*, 112)**
 5. Marriage is God's way of providing sexual fulfillment without sinning
 - a) It is good for a man not to touch a woman (1 Cor. 7:1-2)
 - b) Marriage is God's way of providing sexual fulfillment without sinning (1 Cor. 7:5)
 - c) Sexual abstinence within marriage may lead to sexual infidelity (1 Cor. 7:5)

- d) If you cannot control your sexual urges, you should get married (1 Cor. 7:9)
- 6. The sanctification process requires each believer to declare war on sexual immorality
- 7. Sanctification
 - a) Set apart for God's intended use
 - b) Ongoing process
 - c) **God cannot and will not use those who are morally impure**
 - d) **God can and will use those who were morally impure**
 - (1) Because the immorality is in the past
 - (2) Because they have repented
 - (3) Because they are forgiven
- B. God wants every believer to control sexual desires and not be controlled by them (v. 4)
 - 1. Honor God with your body (2 Cor. 4:7)
 - 2. Vessel may imply "wife": this would mean treat one's wife honorably by not cheating on her
 - 3. **Sex within the context of heterosexual marriage is holy and honorable, otherwise, it is sinful**
 - 4. See [A Christian Perspective on Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage](#) for more on this
- C. God does not want believers to be ruled by lustful passions like those who do not know him (v. 5)
 - 1. Ignorance of God and God's standards is the parent of immorality
 - 2. Pagan cultures looked upon sexual immorality indifferently or favorably
 - 3. **Christians are commanded to maintain the highest sexual standards and be exceedingly different from the world!**
- D. Sexual immorality is a sin against God, a sin against oneself, and a sin against someone else (v. 6)
 - 1. Transgression and defrauding
 - a) Transgression against someone else
 - (1) Parent of the person you had sex with outside of wedlock
 - (2) Spouse of the married man or woman you had sex with
 - (3) Children of the married man or woman you had sex with
 - b) Defrauding of someone else
 - (1) Satisfying your lust at someone else's expense

- (2) "It is the overstepping of the line between mine and thine" (Vincent 4:37)
 - (3) Sexual immorality always invades the rights of someone else
- 2. The Lord Jesus is the avenger
 - a) Justice will prevail; punishment is coming
 - b) We have been warned
 - c) God is the avenger for sexual wrongs
- E. God never calls people into impurity but into purity (v. 7)
 - 1. The context suggests purity of body regarding sex
 - 2. Any urge to satisfy a sexual passion by way of any type of fornication does not stem from God
 - 3. God stimulates people toward sanctification
 - 4. The world, the flesh, and the devil stimulate toward immorality
- F. To reject these instructions regarding sexual purity is to reject God who gives his Holy Spirit to believers (v. 8)
 - 1. Rejecting biblical preaching is not rejecting the preacher
 - 2. Rejecting biblical tenets is rejecting God
 - 3. **God gives the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion for the purpose of sanctification and prompting toward holiness: this is why he is called the "Holy" Spirit**
 - 4. Those wishing to participate in illicit sex set God and his word aside because both stand in their way

Conclusion: Perhaps what you have heard here today has prompted you to make peace with God by receiving his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, by faith and by repenting of your sin. Sexual purity is essential for holy living.