

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8
“How to Live a Holy Life”
“Sanctification”

Introduction

- Paul has already given them many points on “Practical Christian Living”, especially in the area of “Persecution”.
- But now, Paul’s going to give some more instruction on “Practical Christian Living”, in the area of “Morality”.
- That is, how to live as a Christian in a “Moral sense” and/or “Sexual sense”.

Is the “Moral Walk of a Christian” really that much different than the “Roman Culture” around Paul?

- Is there a big difference?
- Or just a slight difference?

4:1-2 you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God

1 Thes 4:1-2

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.

A. Finally then:

Paul’s use of “finally” **does not mean he is finished**. It means **he here began the closing section of the letter**, with practical instruction on how God wants His people to live. (Guzik)

Quote: (Hiebert)

“The word rendered ‘**finally**’ (*loipon*) is an ***adverbial accusative***, ‘**as for the rest,**’ and serves **to mark a transition rather than a conclusion.**”

This last part is about, “Practical Christian Living”, most likely addressing the issues that they brought up and wanted answered.

B. That you should abound more and more:

Paul was thankful for the growth he saw in the Thessalonians, but still looked for them to **abound more and more... “in a walk that would please God”**. (Guzik)

Abound more and more:

This means that Christian maturity is never finished on this side of eternity. No matter how far a Christian has come in love and holiness, he or she can still **abound more and more**. (Guzik)
 Just like in any and all relationships.

C. Just as you received from us:

What Paul wrote in the following verses was nothing new to the Thessalonians.

In the few weeks he was with them, he instructed them in these basic matters of Christian morality. Paul knew it was important to instruct new believers in these things. (Guzik)

D. How you ought (i.e. must) to walk and to please God:

Paul took it for granted that the Thessalonians understood that the purpose of their **walk** – their manner of living – “**was to please God and not themselves**”.

When a Christian has this basic understanding, the following instruction regarding Biblical morality makes sense.

When a Christian comes to maturity he understands that moment by moment, day by day, his/her life is not to be lived to please themselves, but God.

Paul had said earlier:

1 Thes 2:12

12 that **you would walk worthy of God who calls you** into His own kingdom and glory.

Paul had said:

Eph 4:1

1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, **beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,**

Note:

That doesn't mean we can't enjoy life, quite the opposite, **God has given us all things to enjoy!** But as we have a life in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

1 Tim 6:17b

17b nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, **who gives us richly all things to enjoy.**

1 Cor 3:21b -23

21 ... **For all things are yours:** 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come--**all are yours.**

23 And **you are Christ's,** and Christ is God's.

What did Jesus say to Abraham, (i.e. all promises are yea and amen to us as well)

Gen 14:18-19

18 Then **Melchizedek king of Salem** brought out bread and wine; he was **the priest of God Most High.** 19 And **he blessed him and said:** "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, **Possessor of heaven and earth;**

Note: (Carnal Christians)

So many Christians are so unhappy and depressed, often blaming it on God, the Bible, the Church, etc., but it is really because of their own fleshly worldly desires, that there is a **grieving (Eph. 4:30)** and **quenching (1 Thes. 5:19)** of the Spirit.

Rom 8:5-8

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Quote:

“So many Miserable Christians! Because they have too much of God, to enjoy the world and too much of world to enjoy God”.

Ought

Greek word (dei) – must, ought

It is the same word in **John 3:7**, where Jesus said, **you “MUST” be born again.**

Quote: (Morris)

“When a man is saved by the work of Christ for him it does not lie open before him as a matter for his completely free decision whether he will serve God or not. He has been bought with a price (1 Cor 6:20). He has become the slave of Christ.”

1 Cor 6:20

20 For you were bought at a price; **therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit**, which are God's.

E. For you know what commandments

These were not suggestions from the pen of Paul. These are **commandments** from **the Lord Jesus** and must be received that way.

Commandments

The Greek word (parangelia) – commandment, charge, announce, proclaim

Quote: (Morris)

Morris on the word translated commandments:

“It is more at home in a military environment, being a usual word for the commands given by the officer to his men (cf. its use in Acts 5:28, 16:24). **It is thus a word with a ring of authority.**”

Acts 5:28

28 saying, "Did we not **strictly command** you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

Acts 16:24

24 Having received such **a charge**, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

F. we gave you through the Lord Jesus:

These were not our “Religious feelings” on the matter!

Paul is going to end this section by saying:

1 Thes 4:8

8 Therefore **he who rejects this does not reject man, but God**, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

4:3 This is the will of God, your sanctification...you should abstain from sexual immorality

1 Thes 4:3

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

A. For this is the will of God, your sanctification:

Paul gave these commands to a first-century Roman culture that was marked by sexual immorality. At this time in the Roman Empire, chastity and sexual purity were almost unknown virtues. Nevertheless, Christians were to take their standards of sexual morality from God and not from the culture.

Paul said this was a *commandment* (1 Thes 4:2). That **word was a military term describing an order from an officer to a subordinate**, and the order came from Jesus and not from Paul.

1 Thes 4:2 for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

Note:

People are often asking, “What is the will of God on this matter or that matter”? But before we can be a people to **“KNOW” the will of God**, we must first be a people who are **“of God’s will”**. We must first be “Walking and Living” in the will of God!

Gal 5:17-18

17 For **the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh**; and these are **contrary to one another**, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Gal 5: 24-25

24 And those who are Christ's have **crucified the flesh with its passions and desires**.

25 **If we live** in the Spirit, let us **also walk** in the Spirit.

Rom 8:8 So then, **those who are in the flesh** cannot please God.

B. The will of God, your sanctification:

Paul made it very clear what the **will** of God was for the Christian. The idea behind **sanctification** is to be *set apart*, and God wants us *set apart* from a godless culture and its sexual immorality. If our sexual behavior is no different than **the Gentiles who do not know God**, then we are not sanctified – set apart – in the way God wants us to be.

Those **who do not know God** do not have the spiritual resources to walk pure before the Lord; but Christians do. Therefore, Christians should live differently than those **who do not know God**.

C. That you should abstain from sexual immorality:

Note:

- Paul's strong command here did not seem to come because the Thessalonians were deep in sin.
- No specific sin is mentioned; it seems that this was meant to *prevent* sin rather than to *rebuke* sin, in light of the prevailing low standards in their society and because of the seductive strength of sexual immorality.

Sexual Immorality:

The Greek word (*porneia*) – fornication; sex outside of marriage;

KJV - translates it *fornication*. **Note:** we get our English word “pornography”.

- We live differently than the world when we **abstain from sexual immorality**.
- The ancient Greek word translated **sexual immorality** (*porneia*) is a broad word, referring to any sexual relationship outside of the marriage covenant.

This word includes all immoral sexual behavior:

- Fornication – sex before or outside of marriage
- Adultery – having sex with someone else besides your own spouse
- Homosexuality – male to male sexuality
- Lesbianism – women to women sexuality
- Bestiality – human with an animal
- Effeminate – today we call it “transsexual” or some type of “trans-person”.

Deut 22:5

5 "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.

- Etc. – the evil heart of man can come up with an infinite amount of ways to Blasphemy God with the use of sexuality. (**Lev. 18**)

Interesting that Paul uses 4 different words in Galatians to describe, sexual sin.

Why? Because our sinful mind tries to do a work-a-round.

Example: “What about heavy-petting, but we keep our clothes on?”

Gal 5:19

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are:

adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness (KJV – licentiousness)

Gal 5:21 Paul adds,....and the like (anything similar to these)

Quote: (Hiebert)

“*Fornication* is used here in its comprehensive meaning to denote every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.”

In a sentence: “*All sexual behavior outside of the marriage covenant is sin*”.

Heb 13:4

4 **Marriage is honorable among all**, and **the bed undefiled**; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

D. Important note:

- **Sexual immorality is not “sin” because God says it.**
- **Sin is sin because it’s “not pure”, not as it was designed. It will hurt us.**

But God tells us what is “sinful”, in order to protect us, from many harmful things that will come about as a by-product of “sin”.

Paul says exactly this, uniquely about “Sexual sin”:

1 Cor 6:18

18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

Analogy:

Barbecue (Or a bonfire) – an telling a toddler to stay back, so they don’t get burned.

- The toddler says, I am mad at you because if you didn’t say that it would burn us, it would not have burned us.
- Not true.
- The Barbecue/bonfire would have burnt you either way, but if I didn’t tell and warn you I would not been a good parent.

4:4 We are to possess own bodies in sanctification and honor

1 Thes 4:4

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

A. That “each of you” should know how to possess his own vessel (i.e. body):

- The phrase, “Specifies that this command or charge is being made to each person individually as a member of the church.
- The same moral standards hold for all.” (Hiebert)

his own vessel

Paul is encouraging each Christian Individually, to **possess** or **hold his own “Vessel” (i.e. body) in a way that is honorable to God.**

- Each of us have “**different-triggers**” in our brains, especially when it comes to “sexuality”, and you know what you need to stay away from.
- You **know your “body”, and the things that will tempt you, or that will trigger you** and cause you to begin down a dark tunnel of lust and covetous.

James 1:12-16

12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

Note: For so many today, it is the easy access to "**porn**" on **the internet**.

B. In sanctification and honor:

sanctification

The Greek word (hagiasmos) – **consecration**, purification; sanctification of heart and life

- This word comes from the word hagiazo, which means "**to make holy**".
- The **root idea of being "holy"** is to be "**set apart**" from something, or set apart for a specific purpose.
- Another related word is hagios, the **word used for "saints"**, or simply the idea of being "holy".

God is "holy" in that He is "set apart" or "different" or "unique".

A Christian is to be "**holy**" in that they are set apart for God's use, **being as He/God is**.

1. We are made in His image. (**Gen 1:27**)
2. We are told that we are to aim to "walk and live" in that image, and another way of saying that is, "to be Holy as God is Holy" (**Lev 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16**)

God tells us to "Be Holy", not be bind us up and weigh us down, but to free us up and to lighten our hearts and to give rest to a burned or regretful conscience.

C. Holiness is what brings us "TRUE Freedom"!

1. Freedom is not doing whatever you want and everyone leaves you alone about it, or no one makes you feel bad or condemned about it.

Example:

A guy wins the lottery and builds a big barn and feels if up with alcohol and tobacco, and drinks and smokes all day and night the rest of his life.

2. **A person is "Really, Truly Free", when he is able to keep doing over and over again the right things, and that choice of doing right is NOT super hard for them to do it.**

D. Not just being "Holy or Sanctified" but also a person of Honor!!

honor

- Not just to be "Holy" so we can be a "holier-than-thou type".

- But to be an honorable person.
- One who doesn't take and hurt people,
- But all of our actions are to bless and help people.

To also be an "Honorable Person":

1. It is not just about not sinning!!!
2. There are many selfish, self-centered, and unfruitful things we can do or say, or a life-style we could live that is not "technically a sin", but it is not honorable either.

Heb 12:1b

1b**let us lay aside every weight**, **and the sin which so easily ensnares us**, and let us **run with endurance the race that is set before us**,

We are to live "Honorably" in our "Sexuality" as well:

1. Immorality is the opposite of **honor** because it degrades and debases the self.
2. Those who do not restrain their sexual desires act more like animals than humans, following every impulse without restraint.

4:5 Not in passion of lust, like the world

1 Thes 4:5

5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God

A. Not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God:

- Not like the "prevailing permissiveness" of the culture around you.

Quote: (The ancient writer Demosthenes)

He expressed the generally amoral view of sex in the ancient Roman Empire:

"We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for the day to day needs of the body; we keep wives for the faithful guardianship of our homes."

- Not like the world you are living in, this is always true no matter what the country or the time-frame in history.
- The singular act of "sexuality" of a Christian doctrine (is only in marriage), will always stand out differently in this lost world.

Gal 1:3-4

3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 **who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father,

B. For most people in these last days, including those who go to church and call themselves Christians, do not have such a "mindset" of "belief", that all "Sexuality" outside of marriage is sin.

As God spoke through His Servant Joshua:

Joshua 24:15

15 "And **if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD,** **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,** whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

God gives us a warning and instruction towards such people:

2 Tim 3:1-5

1 But **know this,** that **in the last days perilous times will come:** 2 For men will be **lovers of themselves,** lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, **unholy,** 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, **without self-control,** brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, **lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,** 5 **having a form of godliness** but denying its power. **And from such people turn away!**

1 Tim 4:1-2

1 Now **the Spirit expressly says** that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

2 Thes 2:1

1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ...

2 Thes 2:3a

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless **the falling away** comes first,

the falling away

The Greek word (apostasia) – falling away, apostasy, defection

Matt 24:9-13

9 "Then **they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you,** and **you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.** 10 "And then **many will be offended,** will **betray one another,** and **will hate one another.** 11 "Then **many false prophets** will rise up and **deceive many.** 12 "And because **lawlessness will abound,** the **love of many will grow cold.** 13 "But **he who endures to the end shall be saved.**

Matt 24:32-35

32 "Now **learn this parable from the fig tree:** When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 "**So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors!** 34 "Assuredly, **I say** to you, **this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.** 35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Luke 17:26-27; (Matt 24:36-39)

26 "And as it was in the **days of Noah**, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 "**They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage**, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

Luke 17:28-29, 32

28 "Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: **They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built**; 29 "but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

Luke 17: 32 "Remember Lot's wife.

Peter gives us insight in the life of Lot:

2 Peter 2:7-8

7 and delivered righteous Lot, **who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked** 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, **tormented (KJV – vexed)** his righteous soul from day to day by **seeing and hearing their lawless deeds**)—

Matt 24:40-44

40 "Then **two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left**.

41 "**Two women will be grinding at the mill**: one will be taken and the other left.

42 "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

43 "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, **he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into**.

44 "**Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect**.

Luke 21:36

36 "**Watch therefore, and pray always** that **you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man**."

4:6 no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter

1 Thes 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.

A. That no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter:

They were evidently, "Fellow Christians", or maybe "other Pastor's" that were teaching "Permissiveness, rather than holiness.

Personal Example:

Hanging out with these older Christian guys and I really respected them and looked up to them. One day they said, "it's ok to look at naked pictures of girls, because it was like looking at "God's creation", it was no difference than looking at a sunset."

B. Because the Lord is the avenger of all such:

Not teaching the truth about any subject is going to be judged.

James 3:1

1 My brethren, **let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**

Gal 1:8

8 But even **if we, or an angel** from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, **let him be accursed.**

Rom 14:10b-13

10 ... **For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.**

11 For it is written:

"As I live, says the LORD,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God."

12 **So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.**

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but **rather resolve** this, **not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.**

2 Cor 5:9-11

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

11 **Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;** but we are well known to God, and **I also trust are well known in your consciences.**

4:7 God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness
--

1 Thes 4:7 For God did **NOT** call us to **uncleanness**, but **in holiness.**

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

Christians should be sexually pure – because sexual immorality is simply inconsistent with who we are in Jesus Christ.

Paul developed this same line of thought in 1 Corinthians:**1 Cor 6:15-20**

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!

16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh."

17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

4:8 he who rejects this does not reject man, but God

1 Thes 4:8

8 Therefore **he who rejects this does not reject man, but God**, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

A. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject (KJV – despise) man, but God:

If you disagree with what the Bible says here, you are not rejecting man, but God Himself.

Reject

The Greek word (atheteo) – despise, reject, **to cast off as nothing**

Most of the church received Paul's teachings as "The Word of God".

1 Thes 2:13b

....because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, **you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God**, which also effectively works in you who believe.

If they want the Peace of God in their lives, they need to listen and follow Paul's example:

Phil 4:9

9 The things which you **learned** and **received** and **heard** and **saw** in me, these do, and **the God of peace will be with you.**

Despite the petty ways many rationalize sexual immorality, we still reject God when we sin in this way.

B. Who has also given us His Holy Spirit:

- We have been given the Holy Spirit, who *empowers* the willing, trusting Christians to overcome sexual sin.
- By His Spirit, God has given us the resources for victory; we are responsible to use those resources. (Guzik)

Conclusion

God does give us the command, "**to hold the tension**" and that tension in this case is **to live a holy life** in the area of "sexuality".

Example:

Guitar have to keep it in tune.

Quote:

"Without us He won't, and without Him we can't"

Be of good cheer, "Without Him we can't", and He knows it!!**1 Thes 5:23-24**

23 **Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you** completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

Phil 1:6

6 being confident of this very thing, that **He who has begun a good work in you will complete it** until the day of Jesus Christ;

On the cross He already finished it!!

Heb 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected forever **those who are being sanctified.**

Applications:

1. We must live our lives according to God's Word.

Isaiah 55:8-9

8 "For **My thoughts are not your thoughts,**
Nor are your ways My ways," **says the LORD** (i.e. Yahweh).

9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

2. Do you know God's Word, thus His ways, thus His will?

Hosea 4:6

6 **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.**

Because you have rejected knowledge,

I also will reject you from being priest for Me;

Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

3. God's definition of sexual purity, is always going to be different of the world's mindset.

Rom 3:4b ... let God be true but every man a liar. ...

4. We will one day have to give an account for all that we have done in our bodies, the good and the bad. Plus, we can now reap what we have sown:

2 Cor 5:10

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Gal 6:7-8

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; **for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.** 8 For **he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption,** but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.