



1 Thessalonians - Study Guide for the Teaching Series

Week 6 – Sunday 9th August 2020: 1 Thessalonians 4.1-8 Pleasure, Purity & Pleasing God

Please read 1 Thessalonians 4.1-7; 1 Corinthians 7.2-9

Living the sanctified or holy life changes our whole lives – every aspect is to be redeemed and restored in God's image. Different parts of scripture focus on different aspects of our lives to work on. In this passage, Paul addresses the Thessalonians about an aspect of life that was an everyday battlefield in living to please themselves or living to please God: their sex lives.

The city of Thessalonica was not unusual; it was, like most places, a highly sexualized society. The practice of sex outside the covenant of a marriage was widely accepted as the norm; it was even ritualized in religious and business practice. In addition, the influence of power, particularly the power of men in society, also meant that this was a place where the powerless, the slaves and the weak were sexually vulnerable.

The sexual ethics (or morality) Paul taught as the instruction of God's will for how we live to please Him were radically different to those that were accepted and practiced by their society. God's ways were not set nor defined by the accepted values and practices of their society. For the Christians in Thessalonica as well as in Corinth, to learn to practice godly sexual morality in their society would involve a change of mindset, attitudes and practice. As it does for us too.

1. Paul says that the Thessalonians have started well in following the instructions for a holy life. He urges them to learn and practice more and more. Why do you think there is such a sense of urgency and authority in his instruction? How are doing in your learning and practice of the holy life?
2. See v3-5 & 1 Corinthians 6.12-13, 18-20. God's instructions here are about us taking back control of our bodies – for God's sake, for other's sake, and for our own sake. God's will is about redeeming and restoring sex. Sexual lust is all about "me" – it's about what I want, when I want, with whom I want. It's about living to please yourself rather than living to please God and honour others. To live like this – without godly control of your body – is to live like those who don't know God.
How have you learned (or are learning) to avoid sexual immorality (virtually or in practice) and control your own body in a way that is holy and honourable?
3. See v6. Sex is an exciting, God-given desire – but out of control, that desire easily becomes something damaging. Sex is not a human right: it's a gift from God, to be enjoyed not abused. Out of control, people get taken advantage of, they get manipulated and coerced and damaged. Selfish motives can be masked as expressions of love. Selfish desire out of control doesn't care about God or the other person – it cares about "me." Paul wasn't naïve enough to think that the church was immune to all this. He speaks to stop brothers and sisters being involved and damaged.
How might we protect others, ourselves and God's honour in the church (and elsewhere) in this regard?
4. See v7-8. We're not made for impurity or sexual immorality – it's dehumanising, destabilizing and destructive – it hollows us out. We're made for more – for purity in relationships and for love, not lust. It's God speaking to us with authority and in love – it's personal.
How can we live this life?
What can we do if we fail?
Please pray for ourselves and our church family.