

I Thessalonians 4: 3b-8

*The Worthy Walk- Part II:
(Sanctification for 3 Reasons)*

HHBC



- I. For Sexual purity
- II. For Brotherly Love
- III. For Orderly Living



I Thessalonians chapter 4: 1-9

Last Week's passage & Today's in Blue:

*1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 **For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you***



I Thessalonians 4:1-3a: LAST WEEK

1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. **2** For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. **3** **For this is the will of God, your sanctification;**

REVIEW material from last week

- Verse 1 is a command (in grace) for a general WALK That is pleasing to God
- We are requesting (urging; pleading with you) that you must (ought to) bring PLEASURE TO GOD with your Christian day to day life. [Roy: "indeed, be giving pleasure to God"]
- They were walking pleasingly to God, but could always and forever still do more as they grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ
- NOTE: It was not Paul, Silas & Timothy making this lifestyle command request, it is directly from the Lord Jesus Christ and by His authority
- OUGHT to Walk = you MUST walk. Same word as "You **must** be born again" given to Nicodemus

Roy Smith's Literal Translation from last week:

1 In addition therefore, brethren, we are requesting you- indeed we are urging you with the Lord Jesus- that just as you received from us the way you must be walking, indeed be giving pleasure to God (just as indeed you are walking) that you may be exceling even more. **2** For you have come to know what instructions we gave to you on behalf of the Lord Jesus. **3(a.)** For this is being the will of the God- the sanctification of you-, **(b.)** that is, you to be keeping away from sexual immorality.



I Thessalonians 4: 3 & 4

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;
4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

1. (The) **Will of God:** (no def. article)

- a) The Will of God (def.): **defined as the Things which God determines to do; to have done by others; His settled thought on the way Things are to go; His desires/wishes; His inclination; His choice; His pleasure (Strong's)**
- b) Q: How do we know God's will beside what Paul tell us? (ie. To verify what Paul is saying is God's will?)

A: by going to God's word spoken from His own mouth: **1)** We see His will in Gen. 2:22-24 in the creation of Eve, and the first marriage, **2)** Christ Himself in Matt. 19:4-6: "shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife..." **3)** We see God's will expressing itself in Lev. 18 (sexual purity laws). **4)** We see that sexual union meant marriage, or sex = marriage. Case in point: Adam and Eve, how do they get married? (They become one flesh). Issac & Rebekah: never "get married" Here is how they are considered married: ***Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*** Gen. 24:67

And finally: Paul rejoins with this moral Will of God in I Cor. 6: 15 ***Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! 16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."***



I Thessalonians 4: 3 & 4

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;
4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

2. The Will of God: is our Sanctification

- a) **Sanctification:** *hagiasmos* from *hagiazō* - “to set apart, consecrate, dedicate, separate from one (profane) thing to another thing (that is highly venerated)
- b) We know: sanctification in three aspects: I. **POSITIONAL/PAST:** set apart by God in Christ as an operation of the Holy Spirit in the baptism of the New Birth: *sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints (hagios) by calling* (I Cor. 1:2) , II. **PRESENT/ EXPERIENCIALY:** we are being set apart progressively; growth in holiness of life as a function of knowing and growing in grace; but more importantly as we know Christ Himself (Jn 17:17; I Pet. 3:15; I Cor. 1:30, II Cor 3:18, I Thes. 4:3), and III. **FUTURE/ ULTIMATE:** final, permanent in our glorious state in the presence of Christ as a result of having transformed bodies without the Sin Nature, we are perfectly “like Him” and fully conformed to His image, holy and blameless (I Thes. 5:22-23)
- c) So: we know we are in Phase II Sanctification mode here in Verses 3 and 4

3. The How of this experiential sanctification: by means of **abstinence**

- a) **To Abstain:** is a very strong word which is to keep on abstaining: holding back from, hold off, keep away from, *apechō*. In the middle voice, so we are to do it for our own benefit



I Thessalonians 4: 3 & 4

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;
 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

1. Verse 4: Possession of your own vessel in sanctification and honor:

- a) The Greek word for 'vessel' = **skeuos** = *household utensils, everyday implements, fishing and sailing gear*. Metaphorically: a man of quality, a chosen instrument
- b) There is a challenge in interpreting this verse:
 The Greeks metaphorically meant the 'body' when using skeuos. But the Hebrew meaning of the Hebrew word transliterated 'kelee' can refer to one's **spouse**, so which does Paul mean here, is he talking to them as Greeks (likely) or as those with Jewish ancestry as Peter does in I Pet. 3:7..
 "giving honor unto the wife, as the weaker vessel" ?
- c) So it is your body, or is it your spouse that you are to possess? J. Hampden Keathley gives this answer: It is the spouse: your own husband or your own wife.... Why?
- d) 'possess': **ktaomai** was frequently used of courtship and contracting a marriage, i.e., acquiring a wife. Used in Boaz 'acquiring Ruth the Moabitess...
- e) 'possess': **ktaomai** : in the N.T. has the meaning of 'acquire, purchase for oneself' as well - but is never used as 'gaining control and mastery over'
- f) We looked at what 'sanctification' means. 'Honor' is to **esteem, value your spouse as precious**;
- g) So then: possess your spouse in the sphere/atmosphere of respect for marriage as a special and holy creation of God and an institution set up by Him is the force of 'set apart & honor' [KEATHLEY]



I Thessalonians 4:5

5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

1. (each of you know to possess your own vessel) **Not in lustful passion**

- a) Lustful passion = ***en pathei epithumias***: ‘passionate’ refers to what one suffers or experiences as in suffering, like the passion of Christ, or of sexual passion. And lustful = a strong desire, longing, craving. **Ungovernable desire** [Merryman]
- b) Passionate desire: not wrong within marriage, e.g. *Song of Solomon*
- c) But is incredibly destructive and incendiary on the mind/soul/spirit stability and harmony when it’s outside of God’s boundaries

2. ... Not like the Gentiles:

Gentiles had come out of gross idolatry which had little or no restraint on their moral character especially in matters of sex. In fact, prostitution was a very prominent part of their religious life since the worship of the so-called gods involved the use of temple prostitutes. The moral climate in the Roman Empire was morally decadent. “Immorality was a way of life; and, thanks to slavery, people had the leisure time to indulge in the latest pleasures. The Christian message of holy living was new to that culture, and it was not easy for these young believers to fight the temptations around them.”

[J. Hampden Keathley]



I Thessalonians 4:5

5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

2. ... Not like the Gentiles: *continued....*

Especially in view of the moral climate that has developed in this country in the last 40 years, William Barclay has a significant comment about conditions in Rome. He writes:

In Rome, for the first five hundred and twenty years of the Republic, there had not been one single divorce; but now, under the Empire, as it has been put, divorce was a matter of caprice. As Seneca said, "Women were married to be divorced and divorced to be married." In Rome the years were identified by the names of the consuls; but it was said that fashionable ladies identified the years by the names of their husbands. Juvenal quotes an instance of a woman who had eight husbands in five years. Morality was dead.

"Long ago Demosthenes had written: 'We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for the day to day needs of the body; we keep wives for the begetting of children and for the faithful guardianship of our homes.' So long as a man supported his wife and family there was no shame whatsoever in extra-marital relationships."

I THES.: J. HAMPDEN KEATHLEY & I NOTES ON I THES.: DR. THOMAS L. CONSTABLE, 2003



I Thessalonians 4:6

5 *not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God*; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.

1. ... and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter:

- a) To 'transgress' = **hyperbainō**: to 'go beyond'- *Overreach, transgress, overstep the proper limits*
- b) To 'defraud' = **pleonekteō**: *to gain or take an advantage, greater share over another*
- c) 'his brother': not technically a fellow Christian male; but includes Christian women of course, and most likely fellow mankind (ie. Strangers in the Thessalonian temples)
- d) One who fornicates: sins against his/her own body and against the Lord (I Cor. 6:13-16)
- e) **And:** THERE IS ALWAYS A VICTIM, OR SEVERAL VICTIMS in fornication;
- f) It is a sin against someone else's body, too. It's easy to think of who are the victims of 'going beyond' and defrauding another person

2. Reason not to defraud: The Lord avenges the wrong on behalf of victims

- a) God will exact penalty, punish.. How?
- b) He intends bad consequences for bad things: (I AM) **'The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.'** Isa 45:7
- c) The 2nd Law of Thermodynamics: Ordered things will descend into disorder and chaos: *Case in point: the play-out of events in the film 'Fatal Attraction'*



I Thessalonians 4:6

7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you

1. Sanctification: bookends this passage

- a) From Verse 3, Paul tells us that the Will of God is our sanctification
- b) The Thessalonians (and all believers) are to abstain from fornication here in Verse 7 for a greater reason: we are called to sanctification
- c) Calling: **kaleō**. same word and meaning as:
 1Th 2:12 - so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
 Rom 8:30 - and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

2. Vs. 8: ‘strong’ ‘coercive’ language Paul gives to those rejecting this command (Keathley and Constable quoting Wannamaker)

- a) Was Paul addressing a specific problem at Thessalonica regarding immorality, and is that the reason it is stronger than even the I Cor. 6 passage on same topic (but with great immorality?)
- b) Or, as Merryman says, is he doing preventative maintenance on their walk?
- c) ‘God giving the Holy Spirit to you’ is a final key phrase and I think the key to the whole command...



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3. Is the command impossibly high for the Thessalonians given where they live and their Greek culture?

- a) I would venture: yes
- b) **However:** there is the Holy Spirit given, which is the One Person who can bring in something so foreign to them (fidelity, honor, monogamy, sanctity) and give them the power to do it.
- c) The deeds of the flesh are evident, *immorality, impurity, sensuality* (Gal. 5:19)
- d) **But:** the fruit of the spirit is: *Love ... Goodness... Faithfulness...* All good to keep away from immorality. But most of all: **self-control** (Gal 5:22-23)
- e) And further: ' those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires' (Gal. 5:23)

4. Do you agree with the following in my little I Thes. 1970s Teaching Guide?

- a) *“The believer is under authority, under law, under responsibility, under rules and regulations. Like a slave, he comes and goes at the bidding of his master”* given by the booklet in relation to how one can be obedient to this passage . . . Are the commentators right or wrong?