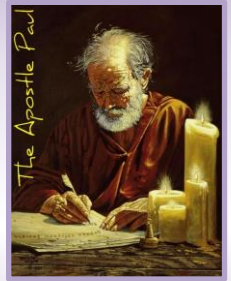


THESSALONIANS

There Is Hope!



Lesson 06: Purifying Hope: Part II ... [1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12]

PREVIEW

Paul urges the Thessalonian believers to continue on in holy living and moral purity, including abstinence from sexual immorality. Paul wants them to abound even more in unpretentious agape love toward one another and to live a life with a pure testimony before the unbelieving world.

PLEA FOR PURITY: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

Verse 1 begins with a “finally”, which for Paul does not mean he is finished, only that he is entering a final section of the letter. This final section of the letter marks the beginning of the practical instructional portion of the epistle.

Paul urges and exhorts the Thessalonians to abound more and more. Paul was thankful for the growth he saw in them, yet he still looked for the believers to abound more and more in their walk to please God. Paul was referring to their deepening maturity in the Lord as part of their process of sanctification.

THE THREE TENSES OF SALVATION

Salvation consists of three tenses, namely past, present and future. The past tense is referred to as “Justification”; the moment a believer is “born-again”, this starts the process of “Sanctification”- present tense salvation; running the race set before us. Finally there is the future tense of salvation, often referred to as “Glorification”; an event that leads to the eternal state – the believer in Heaven.



JUSTIFICATION: SAVED from the PENALTY of SIN.
SANCTIFICATION: SAVED from the POWER of SIN.
GLORIFICATION: SAVED from the PRESENCE of SIN.

In verses 2 Paul reminds the believers in Thessalonica that they had received instructions on how they ought to walk. In the book of Romans, Paul refers to this as “reasonable service” (Romans 12:1-2).

12 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.
²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. – Romans 12: 1-2 ... NKJV

In verse 3 Paul expresses the will of God as the believer’s sanctification. Note sanctification can be defined as the process of separation for service to God, with the final state in the sanctification process being holiness; this state is achieved at Glorification.

Paul initiates his plea for purity here in verse 3 with a command to the Thessalonian believers to abstain from sexual immorality. At the time of this writing the Greek culture was steeped in the excesses of sexual sins, which were accepted simply as the mores of modern society - does this sound familiar? Paul however was pushing back; he refused to allow the values of the church to be compromised by the philosophies of contemporary society. This is a lesson for us; we need to push back on the cult of political correctness and tolerance where Christian standards are compromised.

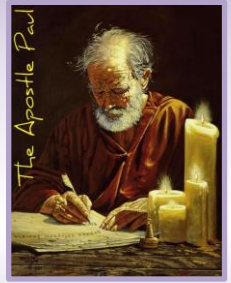
In verse 4 Paul continues with his appeal for purity with instruction that each should know how to possess his own vessel (body) in sanctification and honor. Paul is extolling the virtue of self-control; one of the aspects of the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:16-26). Notice Paul is telling us that sanctification brings honor to God.

ADULTERY: sex between a married person and one not their spouse.
FORNICATION: all forms of illicit sexual intercourse.

In verse 5 Paul contrasts sanctification and honor with passion of lust. Passion here is a desire for what is forbidden, i.e., sexual immorality mentioned in the previous verse. Note Paul always uses the term “passion” in a negative sense.

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In verse 6 Paul makes an interesting argument, namely, the sexual immoral person takes advantage of and defrauds others. The idea is that the adulterer defrauds their spouse and children, and the fornicator defrauds their future spouse and illicit partner. *Leviticus 18* presents God's instructions for Israel regarding sexual morality and purity. In a nutshell God's instructions are to not uncover the nakedness of another who is not your spouse. The underlying truth is that the nakedness of an individual belongs to their spouse and no one else; it is a violation of God's law to give that nakedness to anyone else, or for anyone else to take it.

In verses 7 and 8 Paul presents four reasons for purity. The first reason is: GOD'S PUNISHMENT. God will punish sexual immorality; no one gets away with this sin – even if it is undiscovered. The Lord is the avenger of all impurity (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

The second reason for purity is: OUR CALL TO HOLINESS. We are called to holiness not uncleanness. Fornication is inconsistent with who we are in Jesus Christ. We should glorify God in our body and in our spirit, both of which belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). God calls us to be holy.

The third reason for purity is: OUR REJECTION OF GOD. To reject God's call to sexual purity is not rejecting man, but God Himself. Despite the paltry ways many rationalize sexual immorality, we still reject God when we sin in this way. Note Paul's strong command here did not seem to come because the Thessalonians were deep in sin, as no specific sin is mentioned; it seems that this was meant to prevent sin rather than to rebuke sin. Paul was being proactive not reactive which in light of the prevailing low standards in their society and the seductive strength of sexual immorality. Rationalizing immorality is a rejection of God; societal mores are no excuse for rejecting God.

The fourth and final reason for purity is: THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. We are given the Holy Spirit who empowers us to overcome all sin, including sexual sins. God has given us the means for victory through the Holy Spirit. We are accountable for how yielded we are to the power of the Holy Spirit.

You must YIELD to the Spirit, before you can WIELD the Spirit!

BROTHERLY LOVE: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-10

In verses 9 and 10 Paul introduces the topic of Brotherly Love. He states that there is really no need to write to the Thessalonian believers about it for they were taught by God to love one another. This is an obvious reference to Jesus, who commanded His disciples to love one another (*John 13:35*). Jesus' disciples, in turn, taught all believers to love one another (1 *John 3:11*; 1 *John 4:12-13*). Note this command to love one another, is the distinctive of every "true" believer (*John 13:35*); it is not just a good suggestion. Paul acknowledges their love toward all in Macedonia and encourages them to increase in their love one for another.

WALK PROPERLY: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:11-12

In verses 11 and 12 Paul encourages the Thessalonian believers to heed his command to aspire or make it their ambition to (1) lead a quiet life, (2) mind their own business and (3) work with their own hands.

"There is a great difference between the Christian duty of putting the interests of others first and the busybody's compulsive itch to put other people right." ... F.F. Bruce

