

THE DISCIPLINE OF SEXUAL PURITY: BE HOLY

(1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

Series: "The Disciplines of a Godly Life" (Part 13)

...Have you noticed, we no longer live in a puritan America, but in an ever increasing Sodom and Gomorrah? When our first parents sinned, God provided clothing for their bodies and shame...ever since that day men and women have shed their clothing and engaged in all sorts of sordid sexual behaviors.

...This should not surprise us as God told in Romans 1 that in man's rebellion against God, he would fall into greater and greater idolatry and sexual perversion. We are living in such a day. We have lost many of the former moral "fences" that helped suppress such evils, for many of them are gone today. God has never changed His mind on...

...Paul in writing to the believers in a Greek seaport city warned them (and us) about the great danger of sexual sins.

TWO OBSERVATIONS UNFOLDING GOD'S UNCHANGING WILL FOR US IN SEXUAL MATTERS.

...Sex is God's wedding gift to be enjoyed only within marriage.

I. The Exhortation: God Demands Sexual Purity for His Children. (1Thessalonians 4:1-6a)

...Paul tells of our sanctification, as applied to sexual behavior. God's will for you is sexual purity.

...Three coordinated points are given unfolding the demand:

A. We as believers are to abstain from fornication. (3b)

1. To "Abstain" means "Complete abstinence." Present tense..."Always do this."
2. "Fornication" is a very broad word (pornea) referring to every kind of sexual sin.
...It is any activity that deviates from the monogamous relationship between a husband and wife. Such a thing is immoral by God's standard. (Hebrews 13:4b)
3. No doubt many of the believers in this church had come from very sordid lifestyles.
...Sexual immorality was the rule of the day. (Temple cultic sexual worship, etc.)
4. Paul knew their conversion would not automatically undo the moral habits of a lifetime.
5. Christians are not free to adapt their moral standards to the practices of the day.
...Abstinence is essential and the ever-present need for developing personal holiness.

B. We as believers are to know how to possess our "vessel." (Body) (vv.4-5)

1. Positively: Possess your vessel in holiness and honor. Gain complete mastery over it.
...This is the persistent struggle to control our bodies with its cravings and passions.
...Know that sexual sin is not a servant, it is a powerful master. If left unchecked...it will destroy. (1 Corinthians 9:27) "I discipline my body...unless I be disqualified."
2. Negatively: Possess your body, "not in passionate lust like the godless." (v.5)
..."Passion" means "ungovernable" nature, as if caught up and carried away.
...God's forbidden conduct for us is typical of the lives of those who are lost.

C. We as believers are to avoid wronging a Christian brother or sister in sexual matters. (v.6a)

1. When we violate this and engage in fornication we pass over the line that divides right from wrong. When so, we defraud our partner by selfishly taking what does not belong to us.
(Take one's virginity, innocence, spouse, etc.)
2. Note Jesus' words on this subject of taking advantage of another: Better off dead!
(Matthew 18:6-7) Deserve to be drowned...with a millstone hung around his neck.

II. The Rationale: God Provides Us With The Reasons For This Prohibition. (vv6b-8)

...Paul moves from the content of the exhortation to the motives for obeying it...he gave 3 reasons:

- A. To violate this, is to bring God's vengeance. (v.6b) This calls us to look forward to the judgment.
...The first reason appeals to the fear of the consequences of disobedience.
...Our dull hearts need to be reminded that we will give an account to Jesus. (2 Corinthians 5:10)
- B. To violate this, is to act in a way contrary to God's holy purpose for us in salvation. (v.7)
...Here we are told to look back to the day of our conversion. God has called us to holy living.
...Our calling in salvation delivered us from continuing to live in sin and uncleanness.
...God's purpose in salvation is to produce a holy people who "Would walk worthy of their calling."
- C. To violate this, is to reject God Himself. (v.8) It is the Holy Spirit who is rejected and spurned.
...At salvation God gave us the Holy Spirit who indwells us enabling us to live holy lives.
...Paul told us this in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20...that our bodies are "The temple of the Holy Spirit..."

SO WHAT? WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THIS MAKE IN MY LIFE?

1. Since we live in such a sex-saturated society, you must as a Christian discipline yourself in this matter of sexual purity, or you will be swept into sin. You must daily guard your heart in this or you will never be able to live the holy, happy, blessed life God wants for you.
2. Realize again that apart from the power of the Gospel, you could never really change. The same power that raised Jesus from the grave resides in you as a believer and can provide you with victory, even over an old and persist pattern of sexual sin. Begin again...start today.
3. Take to heart the dire warning from Jesus about "offending" a "little one," by taking something that does not belong to you. God will not hold you guiltless at the judgment.
4. To help you live holy for Jesus in our unholy world, practice these things: Accountability, prayer, memorize Scripture, guard your thoughts, put hedges in your life, and practice God's presence in your daily life.
5. Are you a Christian? Have you called upon the Lord Jesus to save you from your sin? You must. He made you, even in His likeness, and you are responsible to your Creator, and will stand before Him and give an accounting of your life. Believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and receive Him as your Savior and Lord today.