

A Clean Church

Text: I Thessalonians 4:1-12

Introduction:

- Paul continues a theme that began in 3:13- Sanctification
 - Two great themes are closely linked in this epistle holiness, and the coming of the Lord! (3:13, 5:23)
 - II Peter 3 deals with the second coming of Christ. Peter says in II Peter 3:11, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.”
- Sanctification/holiness is different from perfection
 - Illustr- the tithe. Does not change the nature of the money, but it did change its use and purpose
 - Another illustr- I Peter 1:21- “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost...” who were these holy men? Moses, David- were not perfect!
- A holy person is one whom simply has become God’s possession. It does not make that person totally righteous in and of themselves.
- Every Christian is holy before God, but not every Christian lives a holy life!
- II Cor. 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
- Illustr- medical profession- materials must be sterilized! A thing is either sterile or defiled, clean or unclean. And a person is either holy or unholy (cf. I Thess. 4:7).
- The Bible has a lot to say about this subject: Leviticus 10:10 says, “And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.”
- Only Jesus can make you clean! Only Jesus can make you holy!
- An important aspect of our sanctification is what Paul stresses here- our moral purity

I. ABSTAIN FROM FORNICATION

- a. We are to teach Christians how to “walk” with God (4:1, 2). We are to teach holiness and purity and morality (I Thess. 4:3-5). “For this is the will of God” (4:3).
 - i. Many churches have gone lax in this area!
 - ii. We are supposed to be set aside for God’s use! You cannot be involved in sexual sin and at the same time be used of God! One cannot live in sin and be a preacher, a singer in the church, Sunday School teacher, or an officer in the church!
- b. The ancient Greek word translated fornication (porneia) is a broad word, referring to any sexual activity outside of the marriage covenant. (adultery, homosexuality, premarital sex, pornography, etc.) illustr- it’s all about the ring!
- c. Our world is dominated by sex- music, advertisements, entertainment, movies, etc.
- d. The wickedness of pornography is so prevalent today!
- e. God says we must abstain- hold off; flee youthful lusts! Illustr- Joseph
- f. Messing around with a boyfriend or girlfriend, viewing filth- it’s all wicked!
- g. 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.**
 - i. The Gentiles in Thessalonica came out of pagan religions which mixed immorality and religion.
 - ii. Paul wrote from Corinth which had a temple to the wicked Aphrodite which had 1000 prostitutes performing wicked rituals and ceremonies
 - iii. The admonition to abstain from fornication is needed today as much as in the 1st century!
- h. Fornication is a form of theft

- i. When we are sexually immoral, we defraud others and we cheat them in greater ways than we can imagine. The adulterer defrauds his mate and children. The fornicator defrauds his future mate and children
 - ii. Defraud-To cross a line- God has written a sexual “No Trespassing” sign over anyone that is not one’s spouse.
 - iii. In Leviticus 18 we see the concept, uncover the nakedness of another. The idea is that this nakedness belongs to his or her spouse, and no one else! It is a violation to give that nakedness to anyone else, or for anyone else to take it!
 - iv. When you repent of fornication, you also must repent of stealing!
- i. V. 6- We can trust that God will punish sexual immorality, and that no one gets away with this sin – even if it is undiscovered. Illustr- David
 - i. These offenses are not illegal- in fact throughout our government and culture they are completely acceptable- but they will be avenged by God!
 - ii. STD’s, children out of wedlock, ruined families and marriages, ruined churches and ministries! Ruined perspectives!
 - iii. The solution- repentance- He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh shall find mercy!
 - iv. Don’t sweep sin under the rug! It needs to be dealt with thoroughly- illustr- when I clean vs. when Pam cleans
 - v. Get accountable!
- j. I’m preaching to someone today who has these issues right on their front doorstep! You better repent, get right with God, and get clean!

II. HOW TO POSSESS YOUR VESSEL

- a. Moral purity is saving your heart, your mind, and your body for one
- b. In honor- Immorality is the opposite of honor because it literally degrades and defiles our body. - I Cor. 6:15-18. What a wicked sin!

- c. Self-control (keep our bodies under subjection). Don't give in and indulge the lust of the flesh! Ex. Entertain a wrong thought, second glance, touch, words that kindle a fire
 - i. V. 5- passion, desire, craving, longing, especially for that which is forbidden
 - ii. Gentiles- heathen culture of permissiveness of all bodily pleasure (hedonism)
 - iii. Those who do not restrain their sexual desires act more like animals than humans, following every impulse without restraint. Jude 10- brute beasts
 - iv. Illustr- a juicy t-bone in front of a dog
- d. When a person...he is possessing his vessel in sanctification and honor.
- e. Know your flesh (our enemy). We must understand our vessel. We must understand our wicked flesh! Put up barriers!
 - i. God grants great sexual liberty in the marriage relationship (Hebrews 13:4, creation). But Satan's strategy is often to do all he can to encourage sex outside of marriage and to discourage sex in marriage.
 - ii. The problem is that God draws a boundary and we try and get as close as we can to that boundary. "Make not provision for the flesh!" We need to develop Biblical convictions and principles to help us
- f. Kindling a fire- Fire is a wonderful thing in the proper place. It is a very dangerous thing in the wrong environment! Prov. 6:27- Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?
 - i. If you are listening to worldly, sensual music you make it easier for your flesh to fail. The top songs today: Despacito (banned in Malaysia) translates to this: "Slowly
I want to smell your neck slowly
Let me whisper things in your ear
So that you'll remember if you're not with me

Slowly

I want to undress you with my kisses, slowly”

- ii. The number 2 song is called Wild Thoughts- “I don’t know if you could take it, I know you wanna see me naked.”
- g. This is why do not allow dating in our youth group! Teenagers play with fire when they start dating at an age when they are really not prepared!
- h. James 1:14-15 helps us understand lust
- i. Men and women are triggered differently. Men are generally triggered by sight (Ps. 101:3, Job 31:1). Ex. David- II Sam 11. Women are affected by touch.
- j. Understanding this principle, the godly woman will seek to be modest -Modesty vs. the world’s emphasis on sexiness. There are parts of a woman’s body that is only for one person! Her husband or future husband! Cover up!
- k. God had to clothe Adam and Eve despite their attempts with fig leaves
- l. Lev. 18, Isaiah 47:1-2- uncovering= shame! Cover up!
- m. Sometimes it’s covered, but it’s so skin tight anyone can see the vivid shape or form of the body! Women should not try and draw attention to themselves in this way!
- n. I Tim 2:9-10 helps us understand how women should garner attention- How you dress reflects your heart. If a woman dresses in an immodest manner, it says something about her heart.
- o. Young ladies you don’t have to dress provocative just to catch someone’s eye- that’s causing a brother to stumble! You don’t have to get attention that way to feel important, liked, or valuable. We ought to find these things in our identity in Christ! Jesus says you are beloved, you are holy, so let’s start living like it!
- p. Touch- I Corinthians 7:1- It is good for a man not to touch a woman. (romantic, kindle a fire)
- q. Important purity principle- The family relationship- I Tim 5:1-2- illustr- Vice President Mike Pence

III. HOLINESS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

- a. The indwelling Spirit
 - i. Every child of God is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That's what enables us to live holy lives. He is the *Holy* Spirit. He convicts us so that we cannot stay in our sin!
 - ii. Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 6:15-20, that we should glorify God in our body and spirit, which are God's.
- b. Gal 5:16- Overcome through the Spirit- We have been given the Holy Spirit, who empowers the willing, trusting Christian to overcome sexual sin.

Conclusion:

- We want a clean church! The call is not to uncleanness, but to holiness; therefore, sexual immorality is simply inconsistent with who we are in Jesus Christ.
- Sexual impurity is contrary to your calling! And is a rejection of God! V. 7-8
- People who are not yet Christians (those who are outside) will see our example and be influenced to become followers of Jesus. Moral purity distinguishes us from the world!- V. 5, 12
- Robert Murray McChesney wrote to a newly ordained missionary, "In great measure, according to the purity and perfections of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus."
- I John 1:9- We have a provision to help us get clean!