

# Holy Living in Unholy Times

1 Thessalonians 4:1 – 8

## I. Intro

- A. Continue focus on discipleship – this year, the church prepared
- B. Letters to Thessalonians written along with Paul’s fellow missionaries – Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy
- C. Thessalonica a major port city; accessed from the Via Egnatia – major Roman highway that connected Rome with its eastern provinces; population of city included blended cultures, and philosophies and religions (very similar to US population)
- D. While in Thessalonica, as Paul was preaching and new converts were being won and this new body of believers was established, unbelieving Jews in the city and city government officials were looking for Paul to stop him so Paul had to leave the city suddenly after being there only a few weeks; described – **READ Acts 17:1 - 10a**
- E. Because of threat, Paul was unable to return to Thessalonica, which was very difficult for him, so he sent Silas and Timothy to look after these new Christians; Paul actually wrote these letters from Corinth
- F. Paul wrote these letters in order to encourage these new believers to persevere in the face of persecution and to live in a way that pleases the Lord while looking for/anticipating the Lord’s return; Paul also answers questions raised by these new believers conveyed to him through Silas and Timothy
- G. Four topics Paul addresses:
  - i. **1** – His own conduct in his ministry
  - ii. **2** – Persecution and suffering
  - iii. **3** – Sanctification, living pure/blameless lives before God
  - iv. **4** – Jesus coming back again
- H. Today and next week (Mother’s Day), focus on 3<sup>rd</sup> topic – sanctification, what does the model Christian life look like (simple answer, like Jesus); go through this first letter from middle and work out
- I. **READ 1 Thessalonians 4:1 - 8**
- J. This passage speaks to two aspects of the life of a believer/disciple of Christ – a life that glorifies God, and a life sanctified

## II. A Life that Glorifies

- A. First, the life of a model believer in Christ honors and glorifies God; model believer lives to please God
- B. How? Live as God tells them to live, keep the commandments of God – specifically the two greatest commandments (state them)

- C. In these verses one specific issue is discussed – immorality
- D. Know God’s intention/design for family has gotten way off course; family unit is quickly becoming more and more fragmented, even destroyed
- E. Major reason for this destruction – immorality; immorality is sin that destroys more lives, families, and nations than any other evil; example, all focus and obsession today on sexual orientation and gender identity – complete lies being promoted
- F. [SLIDE] Simple fact: if we please God in our lives then we will be accepted by God; if we don’t please God in our lives then we won’t be accepted by God
- G. **v. 1**: Paul says ... *you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God ... do so more and more*
- H. The Christian life often described as a “walk” meaning it’s a journey that starts with a beginning and has a destination, it’s a process, forward progression – all the while, please God with every step; not a sedentary, stalled existence
- I. Passage shows us that Thessalonians had been taught, sitting under the teachers and preachers of God’s Word, how they should live to please God; even more, this is what was taught by Jesus Himself – there is not greater authority than the Lord; these teachings of Christ were actual commandments, not options
- J. So, Thessalonians had no excuse, and neither do we; we have God’s Word, we’re taught God’s Word, at the least, every Sunday, we know what God requires of us

### III. A Life Sanctified (Set Apart)

- A. Major commandment of the Lord that Paul is focusing on in this particular chapter – sanctification, which is simply moral purity
- B. Idea behind sanctification is cleansing, purification that causes a person to be set apart, separated from that which is unclean, or that which is unholy
- C. Paul describes this being sanctified in three ways: [SLIDE]
  - i. **1** – Sanctification is abstaining from all forms of sexual immorality; he clearly states - ... *this is the will of God*
    - a) Immoral acts that Paul is referring to: adultery, sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, and any other forms of sexual deviation
    - b) The body of a believer in Christ belongs to Christ therefore, we are to honor Him with our bodies
  - ii. **2** – Sanctification also means a person knows how to control their body; in a marriage relationship, not only their own body but also their spouses
    - a) 1 Corinthians 7:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup>For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

**b) Why? Bible tells us that when two are joined together in the union of holy matrimony they become one flesh**

**c) To dishonor our spouses in the marriage relationship through participating in immoral acts is to dishonor the Lord Himself; how common/normal this dishonoring the Lord has become in our society; sad part, how this has become so tolerated in the church**

**d) 2 Corinthians 7:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

**iii. 3 - Sanctification means resisting the passion of lust**

**a) Dr. Mac's description of lust; driving around the block**

**b) The beginning of lust leads to becoming enslaved to lust which then leads to being so held by the power of lust to such a degree it's almost impossible to break free**

**c) The passion of lust is the way of the world, it is the life-style of those who do not know God – meaning they have rejected God and His commandments**

**D. One who professes to be a believer/follower of Jesus Christ is live a life that pleases/honor the Lord by keeping His commandments – and the major commandment is that of sanctification (moral purity)**

**E. 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup>Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,

<sup>10</sup>nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

<sup>11</sup>And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

**F. 2 Timothy 2:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup>Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

**G. Disobeying God's commandments in this area of immorality steals; immoral lifestyle steals a person's heart, affection, thoughts, purity, body, innocence, trust and trustworthiness**

**H. Biggest tragedy – none of these can be recovered; the bond of trust in a marriage relationship is gone forever; why sexual immorality is the only**

**reason God allows divorce; *allows not commands* it – all efforts should be made to save a marriage and allow time to restore the trust; divorce should be the last resort**

#### **IV. Close**

**A. When the Lord saves us, He doesn't save us to live unclean/unholy/unrighteous lives**

**B. He saves us to be made holy, as He is holy; lives that are separate from those of the world, set apart to Him and to purity, to our spouses and families**

**C. It's this holiness that leads to strong marriages, families, communities, churches, and nations**

**D. This is what Christ died for; [SLIDE] 1 Peter 3:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup>For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit ...; **when we surrender our lives to Christ as Savior and Lord we also die to flesh and all its desires and through the presence of Holy Spirit in us we are made alive in Christ**

**E. [SLIDE] Hebrews 12:14–16 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup>Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

<sup>15</sup>See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

<sup>16</sup>that no one is sexually immoral or unholy ...