

# Sexual Purity – 1 Thess 4:1-8

**Introduction** – Does a conservative, Bible-believing church really need teaching on sexual purity? Don't we at least have something right? This short series of messages is less concerned about the sins "out there," although we will be making some connections. One of the central things to take home in these teachings is that while occasions for sin are external, the real problem is the ongoing battle with our lusts within. Paul gave instructions and commands on sexual immorality in almost every epistle to churches he wrote, both to churches that were a mess (i.e. Galatia and Corinth) and to churches that seemed to be extremely strong and healthy (i.e. Thessalonica). Yep, this is an issue that affects us and so we should speak to it head on.

**Abound More and More** (vv1-2) – The pursuit of holiness is an ongoing journey, a hard journey, for all of our days here before we go to be with the Lord. Paul knows this and therefore he urges and exhorts in the Lord Jesus for these Christians to put into practice all the things he has taught them. There isn't a command from the Lord that we do not need to have repeated to us, with exhortation, for our flesh is tricky and always is seeking to push limits, cross lines and satisfy its lusts.

**"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from sexual immorality"** (v3) – Lots of things are included in our sanctification, but this takes front and center for the Thessalonians. Holy living is about what we do with our minds and our bodies, especially in relation to one another. The word *porneia* has a broad definition including any kind of sexual uncleanness. A practical definition would be that *porneia*/fornication is any kind of unmarried fooling around, and every reasonable person knows what fooling around includes. The problem is that our flesh tends to make us very unreasonable people.

**Possess One's Own Vessel** (vv4-5) – This phrase is ambiguous and could refer either to one's own body or the body of his or her spouse. Fortunately, whichever way we take it, it amounts to the same thing. We are to know how to handle our bodies in holiness and honor. Christians must learn how to possess their bodies in a holy way and not in a pagan way, which means there are stark differences which we must understand.

**Do Not Defraud One Another** (v6) – There is a way to take advantage of others with fornication and there are ways to defraud and shame others. There are sober warnings here: the Lord is the avenger of all such. The Lord gives persons and societies over to His judgment when they fail to submit to Him in these ways.

**Fornication is a Rejection of God** (vv7-8) – To reject God's pattern defrauds others, but worse, it despises God. It rejects God who has given us His Holy Spirit. It is to fall into the works of the flesh and the judgment therein.

**Biblical Chastity is not Sexlessness** – While the world around us touts all forms of fornication as natural, to stand against this is in fact to uphold true sex and sexuality. Notice, they are the ones denying that God created man in His image, male and female He created them (Gen 1:27). Gender and marriage (and therefore all things sexual) must be understood in light of God's ways and not in the ways of the world. We are not the result of time and chance working on matter. Therefore male and female, sexuality and family – none of these are evolutionary works. This is why the marriage bed is a glorious place (Heb 13:4) and why we need to learn to make love like a Christian and not like the pagans. Marital lovemaking glorifies God, but all acts of fornication, by definition, cannot and will not glorify God.

**Men and Women are Different** – We must live in the creational center of this. Male and female is not a sideshow and this is why all the foolishness of the transsexual issues is actually a full scale assault on the image of God. This is why it really does matter what they are doing over there – because it can never simply stop over there. They must have our transcendent approval of how they are defining the world.

**The Marriage Bed and Sexual Purity** (Heb 13:4) - There is nothing shameful about talking about sex. There is something shameful about talking about it the way our unbelieving culture does. But that is because what they are talking about is not really sex, but sexual fraud. Let's put it another way: fornication and adultery are not lovemaking any more than a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill is money. *"Sexual union is such an intimate aspect of our lives that it has to be protected if we are to be protected. It must have a tall covenantal fence all the way around it...When a sexual union is sealed with a lawful covenantal oath, it is called marriage"* – Douglas Wilson. Before the Fall, lovemaking in marriage was designed as the means of procreation and close, relational pleasure (Gen 1:26-31, 2:18-25). After the Fall, God also established marital lovemaking as the primary protection against sexual temptation (1 Cor 7:2-5).

**The Gospel Proclaimed** – The gospel is proclaimed through biblical sexuality (Eph 5:32). But this also means that the gospel is the center of where we find what we need to fight for sexual purity. We cannot battle temptations with the flesh; we must battle with faith and by the Spirit (Gal 3:1-4). Of course you have temptations and you certainly have fallen short. What saves us from such grimy sins is what sanctifies us from the same battles with the flesh: the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:8-10). What leads us out of expected temptations (and we should prepare for them) is the faithfulness of God (1 Cor 10:12-13). It is by means of the Holy Spirit, by means of God's grace, and only of those means received by faith in Jesus Christ that we will be able to *"possess (our) own vessel in sanctification and honor."*