

The Spiritual Value of Sexual Purity

1 Thessalonians 4.1-8

Modern sexual mores are viewed as enlightened and new, but they aren't. First-century pagan culture was rife with sexual perversion. Like those early Christians, we must realize that sexual purity is not man's idea, but God's...and it is a *key* to our spiritual growth.

Sexual purity is foundational to Christian living (1-3a, 7)

- *It is pleasing to God – His will (1-3a)*
- *It's a lifestyle (1; cf. 2.12)*
- *It's part of our 'Christian calling' (7)*

Sexual purity involves controlling your passions (3b-6)

- *Abstaining from sexual immorality (porneia) (3b)*
- *Disciplining your own sexual drive (4-5)*
- *Failure brings vengeance from the Lord (6)*

Rejecting this instruction = rejecting God (8)



1. When Timothy returned from Thessalonica and gave Paul news of the church there (cf. 3.6), there was much that was good, but not all. Some pagan cultural sexual attitudes proved hard habits to break. While we don't know what these were, they evidently involved members of the church (4.6). Paul is clear that sexual sin is unacceptable, but he doesn't condemn; he calls believers to embrace God's will for their lives. Sexual sin infects society today, and afflicts many Christians. How can we confront this persistent evil in a way that helps believers avoid it and grow?
2. Too often the church has 'moralized' sexual purity, making it into a list of do's and don'ts which increase temptation instead of decreasing it. What does the word "walk" (2.12; 4.1) suggest to you? What – beyond following a set of rules – does 'walking in a manner worthy' entail?
3. Verse 3 begins, *For this is the will of God, your sanctification.* The Greek word translated *sanctification* (ἁγιασμός, *hagiasmos*) comes from ἁγιάζω (*hagiazō*), meaning 'holy.' Sanctification is the *process of becoming holy*. In other words, God's will for us is that we be *progressively* set apart from the world and sin and instead set apart to Him. Is your life reflecting God's will?
4. The Greek word translated *sexual immorality* in v3 is *porneia*, from which we get our English word *pornography*. Cyber-porn infects many with its poison today. There are Bible studies and video series and online sites committed to helping overcome an addiction to porn; if you feel the need, avail yourself to some of these. Read 2 Tim. 2.22. The key to successfully *fleeing* from sin is *pursuing* righteousness. How can you do that?
5. Verse 8 is about as 'absolute' a statement as you can get: If you reject sexual purity, you reject God. Why do you think this is so unequivocal? What effects have progressive relativistic morals bequeathed to our society? Is God a kill-joy, or showing us the way to 'abundant life'?