

Sexual Purity: The Joy of Moral Freedom 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

INTRODUCTION

We continue our study on revival. Lest we forget...

Revival is... *“the extraordinary movement of the Spirit of God in the hearts of _____ producing extraordinary results.”*

Revival is the Reviver at work in the life of His own, the church. **When revival hits a church, she gets her life in order!** This means that revival impacts both the **vertical** aspect of our relationship with God as well as the **horizontal** aspect of our relationship with each other. In other words, a right relationship with God affects our relationship with others...it must!

And **nothing** destroys spiritual momentum like sin, specifically **MORAL IMPURITY**. Immorality, in all its forms, is perhaps the single greatest killer of revival in the church today. These sins drain the church of her life and withhold the blessing of God.

The authors of **Seeking Him** put it this way: *“Just watch five minutes of television ads or page through a magazine and you’ll notice that Western culture is saturated with sexual images and is intent on promoting the ‘joys’ of so-called sexual freedom. God created us as sexual beings and our sexual drive is a good and a powerful part of us. But when those desires surpass our desire for God, or when we seek to fulfill them apart from God’s prescribed means and timing, they can be our downfall.”* (Seeking Him, p. 191)

Since the 1960s, when the modern sexual revolution really accelerated, Western society has had fewer and fewer rules governing sexual attitudes and behaviors. Freedom of sexual expression has in many ways become the cultural god that rules over all the other idolatrous gods of our culture.

Battling lust...dealing with sexual temptation is not a 21st century phenomenon. God’s people have always had to deal with this reality. The apostle Paul confronted this matter head-

on when, under the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, he wrote to the church in Thessalonica about their Christian conduct. Please turn in your Bible to **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8**.

The city of Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. Roman morality tended to be lax in sexual matters and the worship of some Roman deities involved ritual prostitution. Though the surrounding culture continually lowered its moral standards, the Thessalonians could not lower theirs. Paul had to underscore for the believers in Thessalonica that Christian faith meant, among other things, the pursuit of moral purity.

For this morning, please take note of two things:

I. The call and reasons to _____ moral purity

The word for immorality is the word *“porneia”* from which we get our word pornography. **Immorality is any sexual involvement (mentally or physically) that is outside the guidelines God has given.** Paul addresses the issue of sexual sins not necessarily because they are the worst sins but because they are the most prominent. Paul called the Thessalonians to go against the culture of their day. Even though everybody was doing it Paul urged them to embrace God’s standards rather than the standards of the world.

Some people point to the Old Testament and observe that some prominent people in the Bible had multiple wives. Some Biblical characters were guilty of incest (like Lot). The sexual mores of the Old Testament were much looser than what the New Testament seems to proclaim. **However, just because these people lived this way doesn’t mean this was a lifestyle approved by God.** Nowhere does God command anyone to take a second wife. The Laws of Exodus and Leviticus give a great deal of attention to rooting out sinful perversions. **The Bible accurately records what was taking place.** That doesn’t mean it approves those actions.

Please note that the verses we read contain important reasons as to why we should live a life that is morally pure.

Let's see them together - it's fill-in the blank time!

- v.1 - it _____ God
- v.3 - under diving inspiration, the divine author instructed us to _____ from sexual immorality
- v.3 - it is the _____ of God that we be holy in every area, including sexually
- v.5 - we _____ - God
- v.6 - other believers are our _____ in Christ. We are family!
- v.6 - the Lord will _____ all those who wrong others sexually
- v.6 - the Scriptures solemnly _____ us against sexual sin
- v.7 - God has _____ us to holiness
- v.8 - God has given His _____ to live in us

Three truths emerge from these verses: (1) have absolutely _____ to do with any form of immorality (v.3); (2) be a student of your own person - _____ your desires (vv. 4-5); (3) Be sure you do not take advantage of or wrong others _____ (v.6)

Clearly, when one is thinking righteously, rationally and responsibly, a life of moral purity is the only wise and proper choice. **But life isn't' always rational and human nature isn't always responsible.** The onslaught of moral temptation can be almost overwhelming, even for believers. In the face of such a severe and constant assault on our souls, we must actively guard ourselves against moral failure.

Please allow me to share with you some practical safeguards for moral purity gleaned from God's word. **Once again, I'm indebted to the authors of Seeking Him for what I will share with you.**

Please note...

II. The safeguards for the _____ and _____ of moral freedom

A. Recognize your _____ for moral failure

"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)

B. _____ that you don't have to give in

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

C. Resolve to be _____ -

"Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct." (1 Peter 1:13-15)

D. _____ all bitterness

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." (Ephesians 4:31)

E. _____ your fleshly desires

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." (Romans 13:14)

F. Run from every form of _____

"So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22)

G. _____ your mind with the Word of God

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Philippians 4:8)

H. Recruit _____

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." (James 5:16)

I. Remember the _____

"But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." (James 1:14-15)

J. _____ to remain in defeat and depression

"for the righteous falls seven times and rises again" (Prov 24:16a)

K. _____ on the Holy Spirit

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16)

CONCLUSION

Where do we go from here? Time to make it personal. Would you come before the Lord and thank Him, praise Him for the victory you have in Christ? Would you come before the Lord and thank Him for the gift of His Spirit who enables you to live victoriously? Would you come before the Lord and ask Him to help you where you are weak?

This morning you can be Joseph or David. You can flee from sin or justify it. You can leave a legacy of triumph or a legacy of tragedy. Moment by moment decisions do make a difference. *Will you commit today to pursuing a life of moral purity so you can experience the joy of moral freedom?*