

Sexual Immorality!

1 Thessalonians 4:1-10

Online Sermon:

http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567

For those born of the water and Spirit how could God's commands ever be seen as optional? How can one convince the lukewarm and disobedient Christians, who have become chameleons



of the broad path of choice and pleasure, that standing on sifting sands of culture defies God and greatly displeases Him? Are not our churches in great need to return to holiness that is not based on one's conscience or worldly customs but on the

word of God?¹ Having been bought at the price of Christ's very life and empowered by God's very own Spirit² ought to compel us to

¹ Gary Steven Shogren, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 157.

² Gary Steven Shogren, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 156.

³ Gary Steven Shogren, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 155.

throw off the shackles of sin that so easily entangles us (Hebrews 12:1-2) and embrace His ways that are infinitely higher than that of our own (Isaiah 55:8-9). God's laws are not an optional³ listing of niceties to be followed by the most pious but instead the bread by which the believer is to be sustained by (Matthew 4:4)! To remain blameless in the face of trials of persecution, tribulations, and the temptations⁴ to imitate world's insatiable desire for self-indulgence and pleasure, the believer's foundation must be securely built on a personal faith in Christ, our cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20-22), that transcends all understanding. We must be doers of the word and not hearers only (James 1:22-25)! Instead of reading books with "quick and helpful fixes to life's problems,"⁵ that tickle one's ears but rarely ever satisfies one's cravings to be fed, let us dive deeply into the depths of Scripture and through His transformative grace let us cry out Abba Father may your word "spill over into every area of my life"⁶ so that I might be more like You! With all this in mind let us turn to one of the biggest temptations that the Thessalonians in Paul's day were facing, sex!

Sexual Immorality

While Timothy testified that most of the Thessalonians were living blameless lives, sadly some of them were imitating the Greco-

⁴ Mark Howell et al., *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 76.

⁵ Mark Howell et al., *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 78.

⁶ Mark Howell et al., *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 78.

Roman's perverse views on sex.⁷ Unmarried Greek men often indulged in intercourse with prostitutes, slaves, and other males, while married men often kept "mistresses for their pleasure and concubines for their day-to-day physical well-being. This was considered



acceptable behavior as long as one did not sleep with another man's wife!⁸ Marriages were usually "family arranged"⁹ and as such often wives

were viewed by their husbands as nothing more than the means to bear them legitimate children and serve them as trustworthy guardians over their households.¹⁰ Attitudes towards sexuality were as diverse as they are today!¹¹ "One of Satan's most effective methods for destroying lives and ruining relationships is sexual sin."¹² Revenues

from pornography have been estimated to be in the range of 50¹³ to 97 billion dollars per year worldwide!¹⁴ Only approximately 3 percent of people are virgins when becoming married¹⁵ and the average person will have at least seven sexual partners in their lifetime. There's a prevailing belief that only surpassing 14 or 15 partners is considered to be excessively promiscuous.¹⁶ Approximately 7.2% of the U.S. population identifies themselves as part of the LGBTQ community with only 25% believing such relations to be morally or spiritually wrong.¹⁷ And while America's 100 top churches do not have LGBTQ+-affirming policies, they are constantly being pressured by society to ordain, hire, marry, and baptize LGBTQ+ people!¹⁸ I recall a conversation with a young man from my congregation who approached me seeking guidance regarding a sexual dilemma he was confronting. He confided in me that he had engaged in sexual activity with a woman, which his girlfriend discovered, leading to her anger. Despite my counsel that sexual relations are intended within the sacred bond of marriage between a man and a woman, he disregarded divine commandments. He calmly asserted that he would simply disclose the

⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 141.

⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 419.

⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 419.

¹⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 419.

¹¹ Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 141.

¹² Mark Howell et al., *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 76.

¹³ Mark Howell et al., *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 76.

¹⁴ Taken from the following website: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/30/internet-porn-says-more-about-ourselves-than-technology>

¹⁵ Taken from the following website: <https://bedbible.com/virginity-statistics/>

¹⁶ Taken from the following website: <https://www.healthline.com/health/healthy-sex/average-number-of-sexual-partners#can-it-be-too-high-or-too-low>

¹⁷ Taken from the following website: <https://www.statista.com/topics/1249/homosexuality/#topicOverview>

¹⁸ Taken from the following website: <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/none-america-s-100-largest-churches-are-lgbtq-affirming-new-n834266>

truth to his girlfriend, suggesting that among his peers, casual sexual encounters with both women and men were commonplace and inconsequential, mere recreational pursuits devoid of deeper significance! Let see what God says about when sex is considered a sin.

God's Word on Sexuality

Apostle Paul, and the Bible in general, has much to say about sexual immorality. The creation account of Genesis states that God created a suitable companion for man from his rib (2:20-22) with the intent that he would leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, the two becoming one flesh (2:24).¹⁹ While sex is the means of procreation, God also intended it to be enjoyed, not just physically but an expression of a “deep level of devotion and commitment of the spouses to each other.”²⁰ Sex outside of the marriage between a man and woman is considered immoral because it goes against God's holiness and also demeans the dignity of other people.²¹ Paul told the church at Corinth that we are to run from sexual

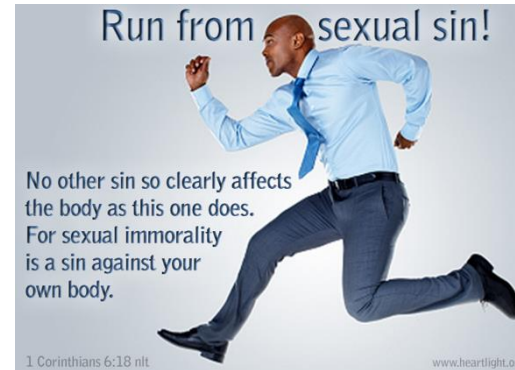
¹⁹ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “[Sex and Sexuality](#),” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1144.

²⁰ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 161.

²¹ Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 83.

²² Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 84–85.

immorality for “every sin a person can commit is outside the body” whereas “the person who is sexually immoral sins against his (her) own body” (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).²² Despite sexual integrity not being the norm either in Greek, Roman or today's



culture,²³ as God's covenant people grafted into the vine we are called to be distinct by respecting God's boundary in regards to sex.²⁴ This means that any sexual activity outside of the heterosexual marriage²⁵ such as “seduction of a virgin (Exodus 22:16), incest (Leviticus 18:6-18), bestiality, homosexual intercourse, cross-dressing (Leviticus 18:22-23, 20:13; Deuteronomy 22:5) and adultery in general (Exodus 20:14);²⁶ are sins and as such are punishable by God who alone sets the rules in regards to what is right and what is wrong (Psalms

²³ Daniel M. Gurtner, “[1 Thessalonians](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 620.

²⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 419–420.

²⁵ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 160.

²⁶ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 160.

77:13).²⁷ Not only does one risk divine punishment but by being sexually immoral one does “great harm to one’s spouse, fiancé, family members, and fellow Christians.”²⁸ John Phillips is right to declare, “God has written ‘No Trespassing’ over every man or woman who is not one’s own wife or husband.... He has also posted the warning ‘Trespassers will be prosecuted!’”²⁹ It would be wise to heed the advice of the author of the book of Hebrews and honor God by keeping our marriage beds pure!³⁰

God’s Approval Must be our Passion

Rather than pursuing immoral sexual activities, Apostle Paul urges us to passionately seek the Lord! While we were not much when we were called to be God’s own children (1 Corinthians 1:26), those who are born of water and Spirit (John 3:5) are entrusted with the divine expectation to mirror God’s holiness (1 Peter 1:16). “God alone has the right to establish boundaries for your life.”³¹ Apostle John states that the litmus test of knowing we are children of God is by loving Him and carrying out His commands (1 John 5:2-4). While the vast number of commands in the Bible might make strict obedience

²⁷ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 157.

²⁸ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 165.

²⁹ Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 83.

seem impossible, John reminds us that God’s commands are not burdensome to those who passionately seek Christ as the Treasure and Pearl in the field that is of infinite worth (Matthew 13:44-46)! With Christ’s promise that those who “hunger and



thirst for righteousness” will be filled (Matthew 5:6), should we not be like the Psalmist and in “this dry and parched land where there is no water” thirst for the living God (Psalms 63:1, 42:1-2)? Isn’t

receiving even a glimpse or a crumb of mercy and grace from the Master’s table worth far more than all the riches, fame, power, or fleeting pleasures this world has to offer? And doesn’t this fervent pursuit of God inherently entail a disdain for sin? Despite our innate impurity, where even our best deeds seem like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), God, through His Son’s redemptive sacrifice, promises to draw near to those who earnestly seek to shed their old selves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:22-24). Christ’s teachings in the

³⁰ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 164.

³¹ Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 83.

Sermon on the Mount reveal that one aspect requiring shedding for God's people is the desire for sexual gratification outside the sanctity of marriage (Matthew 5:27-30). This is why Apostle Paul implores God's own to honor Him with their bodies, reserving sexual intimacy solely for the sacred covenant of heterosexual marriage!

Loving one Another

Putting off the old self that gratifies sexual sin³² does not come from trying harder, but “yielding to the Spirit of God.”³³ Thankfully we live in the Messianic age when “God lives so intently in and amongst His people” that human intermediaries are no longer necessary³⁴ because our wisdom comes directly from God Himself (Isaiah 54:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13). Though Apostle Paul was in great anguish that Satan had blocked his way (2:18) to visiting the Thessalonians, his heart was overwhelmed with joy knowing that He who had written His

³² Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 93.

³³ Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 93.

³⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 420–421.

³⁵ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, [Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1–2 Thessalonians](#), ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 289.

laws upon their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33-34)³⁵ was working on the believers to grow in their love for both Him and one another. By our “common relationship to God”³⁶ through the cornerstone of the church, we are brothers and sisters of the



same family (Romans 8:29; Galatians 6:10).³⁷

Understanding and embracing the truth of God's reciprocal love³⁸ enables us to extend it to our biological, spiritual, and social families, as

well as to treat our enemies with compassion and forgiveness, thus permeating and transforming all our relationships. What characterizes a healthy church is not just Spirit led worship, prayer, evangelism, and biblical preaching but love that is always growing for both God and one another. In seeking the Lord's presence passionately His love grows in our hearts to

³⁶ Gordon D. Fee, [The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 159.

³⁷ Gary Steven Shogren, [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 168.

³⁸ Mark Howell et al., [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 92.

such an extent that His divine love overflows into the lives of others. To not seek or withhold God's love for others is to "rob others of the love they deserve and rob ourselves of the joy that comes from loving them!"³⁹

Conclusion

Our churches are in great need to return to holiness that is not based on one's conscience or worldly customs but on the word of God. One of Satan's most effective ways of destroying lives and ruining relationships is sexual sin. Sex in the Bible was not only the means of procreation but was intended to be enjoyable physically and an expression of a deep level of devotion and commitment of the heterosexual couples to each other. While I acknowledge the paramount importance of equal rights and individual freedoms in the public sphere, this does not negate the truth that sex outside the heterosexual marriage is a sin against a holy God who as our Creator alone has the right to define the boundaries of our sexual activity. Indulging in immoral sexual activity one not only risks divine punishment but one also does great harm to one's spouse, fiancé, family members, and fellow Christians. While we live in a land that sex has become almost like recreation this does not mean that living in this dry land of unrighteousness that we have a license to "bed" anyone we please. While the pressures of society to

declare freedom to indulge in any kind of sex are intense, believers are called not to try harder to be sexually pure but merely to yield to the Spirit of God who has written His laws upon our hearts and empowered them to keep their marriage beds pure! If we are to demonstrate passion, may it not be for immoral sex but to draw nearer to God, who in turn, will teach us how to rightly love Him and one another, Amen!

³⁹ Mark Howell et al., [*Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 96.