



6/30/26

I read this in a book called If, by Amy Carmichael, "Perhaps prayer needs to be followed by a little pause, that we may have time to open our hearts to that for which we have prayed. We often rush from prayer to prayer without waiting for the word, which says, 'I have heard you, My child.'" Wow. To stop and remember that our prayers reach the Lord as incense, a sweet fragrance to Him... that's beautiful. It reminds me of Gabriel's words to Zechariah as he stood at the altar of incense, lifting prayer to the Lord in Luke 1. Gabriel said, "Your prayer has been heard." I pray that you and I will take that pause today and know, even though we don't hear God's voice YET, our prayer has been heard.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ? Jesus said in Luke 9:23, "Whoever would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me." That's a pretty hefty calling. There's no wiggle room there. To truly follow Jesus is to deny my own rights and concerns in order to bow to His. It's to take up my cross daily. That means I will be much less consumed with my comfort, and much more consumed by my King, Jesus Christ. I will not make decisions based on my feelings or desires, but on what will please Him. I am always being made aware of the ways I deny Christ, take up my feelings, and follow my desires. O Lord, please remove anything that doesn't align with You! Please show me from 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 how to cooperate with You better.

Vs. 1-2 ~ "Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus."

In the Greek transliteration, Paul says, "Finally, brothers (believers) we IMPLORE you and STRONGLY ENCOURAGE you as you are up close and personal with the Lord Jesus..." Why be

so adamant? God's purpose for us is to walk as Jesus walked and seek to please God more and more! Do I do that? Do I seek that? Do I take God's word to heart, or do I pick and choose what I like to hear and throw out what I don't?

Why would I NOT walk according to Jesus' example? Why would I NOT seek to please God? I do what I do because I think what I think because I want what I want because I worship what I worship.

If I'm seeking SELF...

I Do... seek what looks good, feels good, and shows me off

Because I THINK... this is what satisfies me

Because I WANT comfort, control, pleasure, and self protection

Because I WORSHIP self.

The problem is, it's a lie. Seeking self will never satisfy.

I may say, "My relationship with God is good enough." Would I want someone to say that about me? "My relationship with Jonna is good enough. I don't have to know her any better." That would be awful! When I am seeking self, I'm being deceived.

To DO what pleases God brings the most satisfaction!

To THINK how He thinks brings the most pleasure.

To WANT what He wants is the safest place to be.

To WORSHIP Him is to let Him have full control and to experience His perfect love.

O Lord, the more I walk as Jesus walked and seek to please You, the more peace and rest and relationship I get to experience. Please help me to see that, and to surrender to that even when my feelings are screaming to go the other way.

Vs. 3-6 ~ "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you."

What is God's will for me? What pleases Him? My sanctification... my holiness... my consecration to Him. God's goal for me is to be holy like He is holy. How do I cooperate with

His goal?

- *To be sanctified, I abstain... distance myself from sexual immorality. This is kind of the lowest bar for a believer... and yet sexual immorality is so completely accepted and encouraged by the world. It has become its own religion in many ways. It's so easy for believers to say it's no big deal. But it draws us away from God. For the unmarried, it often seems like it's treated as acceptable to do, even expected... but no one can truly be pursuing a relationship with the Lord while ignoring His will. It's a slippery slope. For the married, sexual immorality is VERY obviously damaging. The reason the Lord says don't is because He's saying, "Don't hurt yourself and don't hurt someone else." He knows the damage this will cause even if we try to rationalize and justify it. He wants to protect us from that damage. That's why He says no. I pray that I will be even more concerned about not hurting God's heart than I am about not hurting my husband's.*
- *To be sanctified is to control my body in holiness and honor, not like unbelievers who don't know God. This is specifically talking about sexual immorality, but I know it goes way beyond that. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do ALL to the glory of God." God wants me to honor Him in all I do. He wants me to be holy, consecrated to Him, purely devoted to Him in all I do and even think! O Lord, please make this so in me! I'm thankful that I've been faithful to my husband and he's been faithful to me... but James 4:3 says that when I choose to think like the world thinks, I commit adultery against You!!! "Sinning against God is much less about breaking the rules of God and much more about breaking the heart of God" (Timothy Keller). O Lord, I don't want to break Your heart. Let me never demand my "freedoms" over Your will.*
- *To be sanctified is to see that engaging in unholiness and dishonor with another believer is sinning against and taking advantage of that person. That is so wrong!!! Nothing but regret comes from doing this! O Lord, please help our hearts not to be so desensitized and hardened by sin that we think there's nothing wrong with taking advantage of our brothers or sisters in Christ!*

The Lord WILL bring justice down on the one who ignores Him in this. Why? Because He loves us too much to let us continue down such a destructive path. He is also patient and merciful. He gives time to repent... and He disciplines with the intention, not to condemn, but to rescue from the snare of the devil.

Vs. 7-8 ~ "For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you."

God has not called His people to impurity... to uncleanness. He has also not just come to forgive us for our sins, but to rescue us from our sins. Sin never produces anything good. That's why God's goal is my holiness.

If I disregard God's goal, I am disregarding God. The unfortunate thing we often do when we don't like the command is blame those who speak the truth from God's word. We deflect and say we don't like the PROCESS of how they handled it. Whether they handled it perfectly or not, the word of God remains true. If I don't like what a person says, let me not get caught up in his process, but let me bow to God's word.

O Lord, I want to be holy like You are. I want to love what You love and hate what You hate. I want to do Your will, to walk as Jesus walked, and to please You. Please help me to pursue that goal. Help me to throw out any desires or feelings or choices that distract me from pursuing You. You are worth pursuing.

Here are some quotes about God's holiness...

Holiness is that attribute of God whereby He always is, wills, and does what is supremely good, and He desires what is supremely good in His creatures and gives it to them... His holiness is what wills what is good for all; it moved Him to redeem sinners... Holiness in us is nothing more than oneness with God. ~ Andrew Murray

God sanctifies no man against his will... True sanctification is fellowship with God and His dwelling in us. ~ Andrew Murray

"Holiness is the perfection of all [God's] other attributes. His power is holy power, His mercy is holy mercy, His wisdom is holy wisdom. It is His holiness more than any other attribute that makes Him worthy of our praise." ~ Jerry Bridges

"God's holiness means He is separate from sin. But holiness in God also means wholeness. God's holiness is His "God-ness." It is His being God in all that it means for Him to be God. To meet God in His holiness, therefore, is to be altogether overwhelmed by the discovery that He is God, and not man." ~ Sinclair B. Ferguson

O Lord, please make me holy like You.