

PLEA FOR PURITY

Thursday, October 23

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:5-8

1 Thessalonians 4:7 *For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you His Holy Spirit.*

Paul calls the world's evil desires "passionate lust." 'Passion' describes an overpowering urge or uncontrollable desire. "Lust" refers to an out-of-control craving or longing. Put together, they describe the unbeliever's complete lack of control over their sinful desires. They are controlled by their lustful impulses.

In contrast, Paul states that believers should not act like unbelieving Gentiles. The Gentiles act in these sinful ways because they do not know God. Since believers know God, they should know how to control their old sinful nature. These sins not only affect the believer who sins but also those whom he or she sins against. When Christians have an affair, they are taking advantage of not only their partner in the sin but their spouses and families as well. This is a most selfish act!

Paul concludes this passage by giving three warnings for believers.

1. **RISKING GOD'S WRATH (4:6b)** – The struggle with immorality would be natural for people just coming out of a pagan culture like that in Thessalonica. Paul had recognized this problem within the church and had warned them before he was chased out of the city. God does not overlook sin especially in the lives of His people.
2. **DISREGARDING GOD'S CALL (4:7)** – Paul now refers to God's call of salvation which these believers had received. He had previously appealed to the believers to "walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (2:12). When believers fall into sin, they are ignoring the salvation God has given them and acting like the world instead. God has called Christians to be holy as He is holy.
3. **REJECTING GOD'S COMMAND (4:8)** – Paul knows that there will be some who will criticize his warning and declare that it is merely the apostle's personal opinion. Paul warns them that to reject the call to purity is to reject God Himself. This is further reinforced by the reminder that God has given believers the Holy Spirit. By willfully sinning, believers are not only rejecting the Word of God, they are rejecting the Spirit of God who lives within them.

"For some reason Christians in our culture have lost their way regarding their walk and conduct. We are no longer committed to long-term relationships, we are not committed to the tough discipline it takes to make a marriage last, and we are not committed to behaving in a way that is radically different from the world."¹

It is no more popular to talk about discipline and abstinence today than it was in Paul's day. Our culture glorifies sex. Everything from magazines to TV and movies to commercials flood us with a wrong view of sex. We must be careful to communicate God's truth to the next generation – not just the prohibition but the beauty of sex when shared in the marriage relationship as God created it. Sex is a sacred gift from God and is a picture of God's love and desire to share life with His people.

¹ James H. Grant Jr. 1 & 2 Thessalonians: The Hope of Salvation (Preaching the Word series), p. 95