

From Death to Life

A Study of 1 Thessalonians

A Life Pleasing to God – 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Focus:

In chapters 1-3, Paul has expressed his gratitude, concern, and joy for the Christians in Thessalonica. He's also reminded them of the truth of their new gospel identity – most importantly, that they are those who are in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1). With that foundation now laid, Paul turns to address specific matters of ethics and doctrine that were evidently surfacing in this young church. One of the most important issues is what it means for this new church to be holy in terms of their sexual practices. As is always the case in the Bible, ethics grow out of the gospel and our new identity in Christ.

Opening Question:

What experiences have you had of being held accountable for your lifestyle? How have you helped to hold others accountable?

Read:

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Some Questions for Reflection:

Once again, we see this language of "just as you are doing... more and more". Why do we all need to be constantly exhorted to grow in the Christian life, even when we seem to be doing well?

In verse 3 Paul lays out for us the answer to a question so many people have. What does he say is God's will for believers?

What is sanctification?

Paul states three instructions in verses 3-6 all related to sexual ethics. What are they?

What is the Greek word used here for sexual immorality? What word in the English language is related to it?

How does sexual immorality "wrong" others (verse 6)?

What is God's response to those who persist in unrepentant sexual immorality?

Why do you think Paul mentions the Holy Spirit in verse 8?

Closing Reflection and Applications:

Paul speaks in this passage about aiming to please God. Why is this a necessary aim for Christians? (Consider: using these verses, how would you explain to a new believer that sexual purity is imperative for pleasing God?)

How should we understand "aiming to please God" while also resting in the finished work of Christ?

It seems in some Christian circles today that holiness is spoken of very little. If that's been your experience, why do you think that's the case and how can we recover a more biblical view of the importance of pursuing holiness?

Sunday's sermon talked about the importance and yet insufficiency of a person's conscience. How can we shape our conscience so that it's a better guide for us in life? (The sermon's answer to that question mentioned Psalm 119, John 15, and Matthew 28.)

[NB: home group leaders, it may be wise for you to break your group into two groups at this point – one for men and one for women.]

Clearly, God takes sexual immorality very seriously. Do you? What are you doing to ensure that you remain sexually pure?

If married, what measures are you taking to protect the purity of your marriage? Are there ways in which you have grown lax and need to once again take steps to ensure the purity of your union?

If you are single, how are you living out this radical purity to which we are called?

How can we help one another with this?