

Honoring God in our Sexuality

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Thessalonians series #8

June 4, 2023

### PreSermon Comments

- Heads up for parents, and for everybody

### PRAYER

### Let's Talk About Sex

**1 Thessalonians 4** <sup>1</sup> Additionally then, [finally] brothers and sisters, we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received instruction from us on how you should live and please God—as you are doing—do this even more. <sup>2</sup> For you know what commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup> For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality...

- First thing out of the gate?! Oh here they go again, Christians always talking about sex
- Imagine: a culture that had religious-level devotion to sexual pleasure

### Preliminary Mythbusters

Myth #1: The Bible (and therefore God) is anti-sex

- Truth: There is a sad history of misinterpretation going all the way back to Paul's day.
  - Building of extra fences around sexual immorality
  - Col 3: promote severe body treatment, 1 Tim 4: liars...who forbid marriage
- Truth: The Bible's portrayal of sexuality is good and beautiful, but must be utilized with care due to its potency.
  - Gen 1&2, Song of Songs, Revelation
  - Generation of human life made the most pleasurable experience in life

Myth #2: The Bible is inconsistent around sexual behaviors

- E.g. "The bible clearly forbids homosexual activity, but allows polygamy. What gives?"
- Truth: The Bible sets an ideal, and then tells stories about those who deviate from the idea and the devastation that follows.
  - *Didn't Abraham have multiple wives? Yeah, and how did that turn out?*
- Truth: The Bible does contain many instructions that are accommodations for less-than-ideal situations.
  - Lots of examples: Divorce (Jesus himself said so!). Church discipline.
  - *Why are there rules for polygamy? Not* God's ideal, but reflective of the culture.
  - Today, we have different ways that we misuse God's gift of sexuality.

## Jesus Upheld God's Ideal

**Mark 10** <sup>6</sup> But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' <sup>7</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, <sup>8</sup> and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

## I. Know God

**1 Thessalonians 4** <sup>3</sup> For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, <sup>4</sup> that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, <sup>5</sup> not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don't know God...<sup>8</sup> Consequently, anyone who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

- Notice: A claim of a divine message, not human opinion | *God's will...reject God*
- **Contrast:** those who know God vs. those who don't
  - We don't expect non-Christians to live like Christians

## Knowing God As...

- Creator and king | Motivated by respect
  - God made the world, everything works incredibly!
  - God rules the world, therefore he gets to say how things work
- Redeemer and savior | Motivated by gratitude
  - So much heartache and brokenness around misuse of sex (pastoral work)
    - Every single person in this room: sinned or sinned against, or both!
  - Jesus's death as forgiveness: *I forgive you for the wrongs you've done*
  - Jesus' death as cleansing: *My blood cleanses you for the wrongs done to you*
  - "I'm so grateful for you saving, forgiving, cleansing me. Let me follow you!"
- Teacher and guide (**Holy Spirit**) | Motivated by love
  - A teacher who helps us to think rightly
  - A guide who helps us to walk the path rightly
  - A convicter who lets us know when we have messed up
  - A comforter who reminds us of Christ's grace to forgive

*Again, we don't expect those who don't know God to live as those who do. But if you do you know God, there becomes a new way to think of yourself and your sexuality in light of who God is.*

## II. Know Yourself

**1 Thessalonians 4** <sup>7</sup> For God has not called us to impurity but to live in holiness.

- Remember Leviticus: when we hear "holy" we think "morally good," but it's more than that
  - Holy vs. profane, set apart vs. common | **Daily dishes vs. China**
- More of a status: *you have been made holy, you have been set apart for special use*

- Therefore, we avoid sin for sure, things that the Bible explicitly calls sin
- But we also may behave differently even in things that aren't explicitly sin
- Holiness is neither **legalism** (elevating human rules) nor **license** (no wisdom or discretion)

### III. Know the Stakes

**1 Thessalonians 4** <sup>6</sup> This means one must not transgress against and take advantage of a brother or sister in this manner, because the Lord is an avenger of all these offenses, as we also previously told and warned you.

- This verse may give us a clue as to the specific situation that had happened in Thessalonike
  - *Remember what we taught you?*
- Sexual sin invariably is—in some way or another—taking advantage of another
  - Using a person for your own gratification, rather than mutual enjoyment in the covenant of marriage
- The Lord takes these things super seriously
  - **No 1-to-1 correlation**, “this happened because you did this”
  - But still a warning, in this life or the next, justice will be done

### IV. Know What to Do

**1 Thessalonians 4** <sup>3</sup> For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, <sup>4</sup> that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, <sup>5</sup> not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don't know God.

- Holiness and honor | This has to do with our status as image-bearers
  - Psalm 8 *lower than angels, rulers over all sheep and oxen, crowned with glory and honor*
  - Animals vs. humans | Animals just do whatever they feel like
    - They only respond to pleasure or pain, not logic
  - In Christ, our honor is being restored
- “Control his own body” is a notoriously difficult phrase to translate from the Greek
  - Literally: acquire his own vessel
  - Metaphor for only being with a wife? As in “to have and to hold”?

### Self-Control

- Practice self-denial | **Fasting**, exercise (1 Cor. 9 | discipline my body), giving
- Try difficult things | Giving in to sin is sometimes because we haven't faced difficulty
- Beware extremism | No asceticism, no “just because” vows of celibacy
- Get used to holiness | set apart, different, and distinct
- Live in the gospel | God is your King, Jesus is your Redeemer, the Spirit is your guide