

**Sermon Title: The Picture of a Consistent Sexual Purity**

**Sermon Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to a biblical view of sexual purity.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 5 Biblical principles to follow for Christian sexual purity.**

**Introduction:** “Far from prohibiting sexual immorality, the cults of Dionysus, Aphrodite, Osiris and Isis, the Cabirus, and Priapas promoted sexual license. The Gentile members of the Thessalonian church would have found it difficult to understand how their conversion to the living God necessitated abandoning those pleasures that their previous religious alliances had approved or ignored. Moreover, the social norms of the day permitted those practices that the Christian ethic prohibited. For example, it was socially acceptable for young men to have sexual relationships before marriage. Cicero, who spent some time in Thessalonica during the mid-first century BC, argued in favor of this freedom for youths. He commented, ‘Let not pleasures always be forbidden... let desire and pleasure triumph sometimes over reason,’ but only if these pleasures do not damage to oneself or others. He went on to argue that after hearing the voice of pleasure and concupiscence, the empty desires of youth, the young person could give himself to the interests of both domestic and public life.

In Greek society, a man who owned female slaves could use his ‘human property’ to satisfy his sexual desires, while prostitutes were at the service of any man. Antipater of Thessalonica commented on the price of love with prostitutes, saying, ‘Homer said all things well, but best of all that Aphrodite is golden. For if you bring the cash, my friend, there is neither porter in your path nor dog chained at the door. But if you come otherwise, Cerberus himself is there.’ Not only the single person but also the married man could avail himself of her services. A number of centuries earlier, Demosthenes expressed the social opinion regarding male sexuality that continued to prevail: ‘For this is what living with a woman as one’s wife means – to have children by her to and introduce the sons to the members of the clan and of the deme, and to betroth the daughters to husbands as one’s own. Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households.’ At times a voice arose against sexual relationships outside of marriage, but in such cases the concern was only that illegitimate children might be sired in such liaisons who would then be the cause of shame. Plutarch’s advice was that a wife should not be angry if her husband sought sexual pleasure with another woman.

The practice that was roundly and universally condemned was having sexual relations with the wife of another man. However, violations of even this social norm were well known. Dio Chrysostom commented, ‘Yes, the seduction of women – especially, one might almost say, of the freeborn and virgins – has been found easy and no task for a man who pursues that kind of game with money; and even against the highly respected wives and daughters of men really respected, the libertine who attacks with the device of Zeus and brings gold in his hands will never fail.’ On the other hand, the married woman should never have sexual relations with anyone but her husband. In marital contracts the husband was prohibited from taking another wife, while the restrictions for the wife were more limiting. For example, one such contract stipulated, ‘Isidora will neither sleep apart nor be absent for a day from Dionysios’ house without his knowledge nor will she ruin his house nor live [or, ‘have sexual intercourse’] with another man or if she is convicted of doing any such thing she will be deprived of her dowry, etc.’ This kind of disparate norm prevailed in Greek as well as Roman society. However, there were women who ran the risk. In one of his epigrams, Philodemus records the comments of a woman who engaged in adultery, ‘I have defrauded my husband and came at midnight, wet from the torrential rain. Should we only sit, doing nothing, not talking and not sleeping as lovers should sleep?’ It appears, however, that Paul addresses the men in this section instead of the women as those in the Thessalonian church who were resisting the apostolic teaching on sexuality (see commentary). In the context of the sexual mores of the era, these new believers found it difficult to comprehend and practice the strict sexual ethic the apostles taught.” [[Gene L. Green, \*The Letters To The Thessalonians\*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 2002, p. 187-189](#)]

God created men and women as sexual creatures. Therefore sex should be viewed as a good gift from a great God. Sex as God designed it is to be enjoyed within marriage between a man and a woman. It should be good, exciting, intoxicating, powerful and unifying.

The 6 dogmas of societies permissive sexual outlook.

- “1. First, people are basically good and all but the most heinous activities should be tolerated. Therefore, virtually any kind of consensual sexual activity is good (except for child molestation), especially if one views sex as merely a way to personal gratification.
2. Second, since sexual activity is only a biological function (cf. 1 Cor. 6:13), it is normal and necessary to engage in it without placing on it any moral restrictions.
3. Third, since ‘casual’ sex is just another form of fun and pleasure, it is permissible to enjoy sexual activity recreationally, any time with any consenting partner.
4. Fourth, fulfilling one’s sexual desire is a major goal in life, more important than developing meaningful personal relationships.
5. Fifth, instant gratification is more important than delayed satisfaction. Therefore, having premarital sex is legitimate and preferable to waiting until marriage to have sex.
6. Sixth, enjoyable sexual intercourse is the most important factor in establishing a good marital relationship. Therefore, the early stage of every romantic relationship should include sex. The couple should live together to determine sexual compatibility and fulfillment before they marry.”

[John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Moody Press, Chicago, 2002, p.102]

- I. The **rationale** for sexual purity among Christians. V.3a
- II. The **rule** for sexual purity among Christians. V.3b
- III. The **responsibility** for sexual purity among Christians. V.4-5
- IV. The **ruling** for sexual purity among Christians. V.6
- V. The **reason** for sexual purity among Christians. V.7-8

I. The **rationale** for sexual purity among Christians. V.3a

The whole of Scripture contains God’s will both affirmative and prohibitions. Here sanctification related to sexual purity refers to being set apart from sexual impurity in particular, holding oneself away from immorality by following the instructions in vv.4-8, which is based on the Old Testament and New Testament teachings on this subject. (**1 Thessalonians 3:13**)

**1 Corinthians 6:11** And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

II. The **rule** for sexual purity among Christians. V.3b

The passage does not mean to abstain from sex practiced in the context of marriage but sex that deviates from God’s standards. This would include premarital sex, incest, homosexuality, LBGQT, bestiality, adultery, petting, or anything like these. (**Leviticus 18; Deuteronomy; Matthew 19:1-6; Mark 10:5-9; 1 Corinthians 5:1-8; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20; 1 Corinthians 7**)

**Romans 7:1-3** Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? **2** For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. **3** So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Abstain means complete abstinence, in this case staying completely away from any thought or behavior that violate the principle of sexual purity.

### III. The responsibility for sexual purity among Christians. V.4-5

A. Learn how to control your own body. V.4a

“possess his own body” is the preferred translation or interpretation. (**Romans 6**)

**1 Corinthians 9:27** But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Being married does not guarantee sexual purity. (**1 Corinthians 6:15-20**)

**2 Corinthians 4:7** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

**2 Timothy 2:21** Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

**Ephesians 5:3** But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;

**Colossians 3:3-5** For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. **5** Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

B. Learn how not to live like an unbeliever. V.5

Passion (pathos) means “uncontrollable desires, compelling feelings, overpowering urges.

Lustful (epithumias) refers to an out-of-control craving, usually for that which is prohibitive.

**Galatians 5:24** And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

**1 John 3:9-10** Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. **10** In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does not love his brother.

### IV. The ruling for sexual purity among Christians. V.6

A. Never take advantage of other believers or non-believers. V.6a  
(transgress – don't step over the line)

B. Never defraud another believer or non-believer. V.6b

Defraud means to selfishly, greedily take something for personal gain and pleasure at someone else's expense.

**Matthew 18:6-7** "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. **7** "Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

### V. The reason for sexual purity among Christians. V.7-8

A. Abstain from sexual impurity because of God's purpose for sex and the believer. V.7

B. Abstain from sexual impurity because of the Holy Spirit in you and that empowers the believer. V.8