

*1 Thessalonians 4:6-8***PREFACE**

No one in this class would be surprised to learn that at the end of our drive, at the entrance to our property, there is a sign that reads, "No Hunting." Years ago I expanded on this, painting my own sign that read, "Wildlife refuge. No hunters allowed. Please brake for rabbits." But that sign eventually weathered away.

The sign at the end of our drive (and, indeed, posted elsewhere around the perimeter of our land) makes it clear that if your intention is to kill animals for sport, you are not welcome. And this order I defend passionately; I have learned that when my dander is up I have no innate fear of men carrying shotguns—nor am I a respecter of persons. [One day our beloved pastor was there with someone else to pick up a load of firewood. They both remarked at the stretch of timber, and asked if we had deer. I assured them we did, in abundance. Pastor, in jest, offered his services to protect us from them, the deer. I, quite seriously replied, "No, I will be the one protecting *them* from *you*."]]

In v6 of our text—which begins in the middle of a sentence—Paul uses a word and phrase not found elsewhere in the NT, which would literally translate, "not to go beyond." We see this in the KJV: "That no man go beyond..."—only here it is not talking about men with shotguns disregarding a "No Hunting" sign, but men stepping over the line, going somewhere they shouldn't, in regards to "sanctification and honor."

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:6.

Verses 3-5 address the importance of sexual purity within the marriage; verses 6-8 address the importance of not "going beyond" your own marriage, not stepping over the line and into someone else's.

v6

Some commentators are of the opinion that with v6 Paul changes topics, referring to general business dealings. And that case can be made. But, for one thing, if that were the case, the word translated "matter" would be plural. The KJV "*any* matter" is a poor insertion. The Greek is "the matter," and the NKJV and ESV explicitly connect it to the topic of vv4-5 with "this matter"—that is, the matter at hand, what I have been talking about.

Sidebar: I learned a new word this week, and I will happily share it with you. That word is *asyndeton*, which means "the practice of leaving out the usual conjunctions between coordinate sentence elements"—e.g., and. Look at the break between v5 and v6: In the better translations, v5 ends with a semicolon, followed by "that no..." That is, the "and" inserted by the NASB and NIV is not in the Greek. Thus the sentence uses an asyndeton: two items connected without an "and."

So v6 is a continuation of the sentence that begins in v3. If we were to look at it in just the big chunks, it would be,

v3: God wants you to be sexually moral,

v4: by controlling your own body, and honoring the body of your spouse,

v5: not with the unbridled, out-of-control lust of those without God;

v6: part of this is that such sanctification also honors the life of your brother.

If this pertained to business dealings, we can easily understand the injunction against transgressing and defrauding a brother. Greed carried to the point of dishonesty and fraud is commonplace, and God's commands against this are strewn throughout His word. But you may be questioning how sexual sin "defrauds" a brother.

Recall what we read in our last session, what Paul wrote to the Corinthians regarding marriage, including v4:

The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. (1 Corinthians 7:4)

This is the picture of mutual *ownership* in a marriage. And this NT concept is an expansion of what Moses wrote in the Pentateuch.

Read Leviticus 18:16.

There the Lord makes it clear that when you have illicit relations with, for example, your sister-in-law, you are "transgressing and defrauding your brother," as Paul writes to the Thessalonians. [Look also at Chapter 20.](#)

Read Leviticus 20:20-21.

This shows divine judgment coming down on those who have trespassed—"gone beyond" where they should—into someone else's marriage and defrauded the spouse.

David Guzik: When we are sexually immoral, we take advantage of and defraud others and we cheat them in greater ways than we can imagine. The adulterer defrauds his mate and children. The fornicator defrauds his future mate and children, and both defraud their illicit partner.

Repeatedly in Leviticus 18 the idea is given that one may not uncover the nakedness of another not their spouse. The idea is that the nakedness of an individual belongs to their spouse and no one else, and it is a violation of God's law to *give* that nakedness to anyone else, or for anyone else to *take* it.

And Leon Morris speaks to the impact of this *before* marriage.

Adultery is an obvious violation of the rights of another. But promiscuity before marriage represents the robbing of the other that virginity which ought to be brought to a marriage. The *future partner* of such a one has been defrauded.

So far we have come at this mostly from a *moral* perspective: it is just wrong, and an offense against a brother or sister in Christ. But there is also a judicial perspective; Paul had warned the Thessalonians of this earlier, when he was with them, and he reminds them now:

because the Lord is the avenger in all these things,

1. Divine Vengeance

From the second half of v6 through v8 Paul lays out four reasons for sexual purity (Guzik), and the first is that the offender will not escape the judgment of the Lord. There certainly can be immediate, temporal consequences to this behavior, but our passage refers to the day when each of us will stand before the *bema* of Christ. If the world blithely dismisses such things, be assured that the Lord will not. The word Paul uses is a strong, serious word:

avenger = *ekdikos* (ek'-deek-os) = from <G1537> (ek) and <G1349> (dike);
carrying justice out, i.e. a punisher :- a (re-) venger.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 with comments.

Throughout our life we build on the foundation of Christ. Sometimes we build with precious, substantial materials—

- good works performed in the Lord's name;
- sacrificial giving to others;
- growing in Christ, rather than growing in the things of this world;

—and sometimes we build with cheap, insubstantial materials:

- good works performed for our own self-aggrandizement;
- hoarding our wealth;
- remaining a child in the things of God, while deepening our relationship with this world.

On the day we stand before the throne, the latter will be consumed in the fire of holy judgment—it will all have been for naught—while the former will be used to construct our crown, as it were. No matter the balance, no matter who we are in the eyes of man, we *all* will stand there to have our deeds judged. The apostle John confirms this in the Revelation.

Read Revelation 20:12-15.

Those who are not in Christ, whose names are not in His book of life will not have their deeds judged; they failed at the one thing that counted: faith in Christ. Thus they will be immediately consigned to hell. But those whose names *are* in the book will be “judged...according to their deeds.” Based on the importance God places on sexual purity in His word, on how He uses this to illustrate our fidelity to Him [e.g., [Ezekiel 16:30-43](#)] it should be of utmost importance to *us*.

2. Our Call

We find the second reason in v7. It is our calling.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:7. (NOT NIV or KJV)

This verse is a perfect illustration of the importance of having more than one translation at your disposal. As we have seen recently, the NIV can get it right, even at times rising to the top. But here the NIV drops the ball, with “For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. In v7 the prepositions make all the difference, and the NIV uses the same for each (“to”), when they are not. [The KJV does the same, but employs a marginally more agreeable “unto”.]

God has indeed *not* called us *to* (or “for” in the NASB) impurity, but—and here we would expect how the NIV translates it, an equivalency with another “to.” But these are not equivalent: God has called us to *dwell in the sphere of holiness*.

For the last eight years, every time someone does something that President Obama doesn’t like, he has, with nauseating regularity, said something like, “That’s not who we are.” What he really means is, *That’s not who I think we should be*, but that’s a topic for another day. The point is this: Paul intentionally switches prepositions from one that means aim or intention [*epi: to, or better, for the purpose of*] to one that means in the state or sphere of [*en*] to emphasize the all-encompassing environment in which we dwell when we are “*in Christ*.” It is, as Obama would put it, *who we are*. When we are in Christ, sanctification is our natural environment: we dwell *in* it, we swim in it, we are enveloped in it.

Why is this distinction important? Why does Paul choose *en* instead of repeating *epi*? Because he wants the Thessalonians, and us, to understand what an offense sexual impurity is to our “natural” state in Christ. It’s not who we are. He is pointing out that we do not just *strive* for holiness as an intention; as Christians we *dwell* in holiness.

3: A Rejection of God

Verse 8 gives us the third reason for Paul’s command, and is the logical implication of v7.

Read v8.

If, in impurity, we rebel against our “natural” state in Christ, we are essentially rebelling against God Himself—we are rejecting God. And here it is the ESV that has it a little soft with “disregards.” It is a stronger word than that; the KJV translates the word “despiseth.”

reject = *atheteo* = from a compound of <G1> (a) (as a negative particle) and a derivative of <G5087> (tithemi); **to set aside**, i.e. (by implication) to disesteem, neutralize or violate :- **cast off, despise**, disannul, frustrate, bring to nought, **reject**.

Guzik: Despite the petty ways many rationalize sexual immorality, we still reject God when we sin in this way. Paul’s strong command here did not seem to come because the Thessalonians were deep in sin. No specific sin is mentioned; it seems that this was meant to *prevent* sin rather than to *rebuke* sin, in light of the prevailing low standards in their society and because of the seductive strength of sexual immorality.

4: The Holy Spirit

The end of v8 gives us the final reason for sexual purity—but at the same time it is our strongest ally against the temptation that would pull us away from it: The indwelling Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us the power, the support, the *resolve* to withstand temptations of the flesh; without Him we would be far more vulnerable.

At the same time, He is one of our best motivating reasons not to give in. ***The Spirit is God living in us!*** What an egregious offense it must be against Him, when we let our earthly temples to be used in this way. The Spirit is not an “it”; the Spirit is a “He.” He is as much a “person” to us as the other two members of the Godhead. And when we do this to our bodies, we are doing it to *Him!*

So let us close with Paul’s eloquent treatment of this to the Corinthian church—where we know there were, indeed, problems with sexual purity.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:15-20.