

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

- “How good is good enough?”
- “What can I get away with without consequences?”
- “What is the least I can do and still keep my...?”

- How often do we take this approach to life?
- How often do we consider who gets harmed by taking this approach?
- Do we ever consider that though people can be fooled, God never is?

God is Holy & He has saved us so that we might live a Holy life in this world!

“Holy” means “sacred”, “set apart”, “other than”. This should be a description of both who we are in Christ, and who we are becoming in Him!

To live a holy life is to live a life pleasing to God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and on display for all to see - so that the world might see God thru us!

It’s why Jesus proclaimed – **“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” – Matt. 5:16**

The presence of God’s people in this world has always been for the purpose of being a city on a hill, a light in the darkness, and salt adding the flavor of heaven to the tasteless realities of this fallen world.

We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works! Eph. 2:10

This is why Paul doesn’t stop after the 3rd chapter of 1 Thessalonians, there is still more for them to receive, to do, to live out as the people of God!

“Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.” – 1 Thessalonians 4:1

The Thessalonian Christians had received the gospel from Paul, & they were living in response to it. But Paul is saying here, **“But wait... there’s more!”** The very power and purpose of God is at work in you as God’s chosen people!

God’s plan for us doesn’t stop at our salvation, salvation is the springboard to living into God’s plan of making us holy!

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification” – vs. 3. The Greek word for “sanctification” here in vs. 3, can also be translated – “holiness”!

God’s will for you is to make you like Jesus, the light, salt & hope of the world!

This is an ongoing process that will take more and more of God’s power and purpose at work in your life, through the work of the Holy Spirit within you!

From Paul’s perspective, the biggest challenge of pursuing holiness in the Thessalonian context was this issue of sexual immorality!

The Greco-Roman world was a sex-crazed culture, not unlike our own today.

God’s good design for human sexuality had been perverted, ever since the fall, and if God’s good gift and design for sex is ever going to be reclaimed, then the church needs to take a stand and live out a Christian sexual ethic!

God’s Word is clear about what to avoid in pursuing holiness in this arena.

- Adultery – extramarital sexual relations (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Prov. 6:32)
- Incest – sexual relations with a close relative (Lev. 18:6-18; 20:11, 12, 17; Deut. 27:20, 22, 23)
- Bestiality – sexual relations with an animal (Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18:23; 20:15-16; Deut. 27:21)
- Homosexuality – sexual relations with a person of one’s own gender (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10)
- Lust – the sinful desire for illicit sexual relations (1 Thes. 4:5; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 13:13; James 1:14-15; 1 Pet. 4:3).

All throughout Paul’s ministry he addressed the sexual sins of his day, calling it what it is – sin, but also calling the church to live differently - for their own sake, for the sake of others & for God’s sake! Let’s read again **1 Thess. 4:3-8**.

Our job as the church is not to be the world’s moral police, condemning everyone & everything that falls under the label of “the sexually immoral”!

But our job is to address the sin within ourselves and choose to live differently! We are to be that “city on a hill”, but without the “holier than thou” attitude!

Will we receive Paul’s challenge today, to be a church, a people, that

- Pursues holiness b/c we know that God’s will for us is our sanctification!
- Pursues holiness b/c we choose not to transgress/hurt our brothers/sisters!
- Pursues holiness b/c it is a light for others to see that which is pleasing to God!
- Pursues holiness because sin is serious & God will avenge it!

When Christ returns, we will either pay the penalty of our sin, or we will be justified based upon the price Jesus paid on our behalf! If Jesus paid it all, then shouldn’t we strive to live into the identity that is already ours in Christ!

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