

Skin in the Game: Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

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Following God's Will in an Impure World (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8)

1. God's Will for Sexual Holiness

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God..." (vv. 3-5)

2. God's Why for Sexual Holiness

"...that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness." (vv. 6-7)

3. God's Way to Sexual Holiness

"God...gives his Holy Spirit to you." (v. 8)

For further thought and discussion:

Getting Started

1. What was helpful to you in this week's sermon? What didn't you understand?
2. How do you think people idolize sex in our culture?

Going Deeper

3. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1, Paul shifts from recounting his history with the Thessalonians (1:1-3:13) to offering moral instruction which will "*supply what is lacking*" in their faith (3:10). The first issue Paul wants to address with them is sexual purity (4:3-8). Why is this issue so critical to discipleship (see 1 Corinthians 6:12-20)?
4. Where did Paul receive his teaching on sexual ethics (see vv. 1-2, v. 8)? What does Paul mean when he says that his instructions are "*through the Lord Jesus*" (v. 2; see also Mark 7:21; Matthew 19:1-12)? Why is this significant?
5. What does it mean for us to abstain from "*sexual immorality*" (v. 4)? What behaviors does this entail? How would Paul's teaching have sounded to the dominant culture of his day (see v.5)? Why is this important for us to keep in mind, as we think about sexual faithfulness in our day and age?
6. Paul offers two reasons Christians should pursue sexual holiness (vv. 6-7)? What strikes you about Paul's reasoning in these verses? What motivates us to pursue holiness in this area?
7. How does God help us walk in purity (see v. 8; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)? How does this encourage you personally?

Application

8. With a trusted friend, discuss your own struggles in the area of sexual holiness. What lies are you tempted to believe? What gospel truths do you need to remember? What would repentance look like in this area of your life?
9. What's one thing you can do this week to apply this passage?