

Fact Sheet for **“Sexual Holiness”**  
**1 Thessalonians 4:1-8**

Pastor Bob Singer  
11/20/2016

This week we are celebrating Thanksgiving, an American holiday with roots all the way back to William Bradford and the pilgrims at Plymouth, Massachusetts. Presidents George Washington, John Adams, James Madison, and Abraham Lincoln all made proclamations about this holiday. Finally Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a bill making Thanksgiving the fourth Thursday in November. As we celebrate this holiday we give thanks for what God has provided for us. In 1 Thessalonians Paul, in a very different vein, gives thanks to God for the response of the Thessalonians to the gospel (1:2, 13).

Paul and Silas were only with the Thessalonians a very short time (three Sabbaths, Acts 17:2). As opposition quickly arose from those Jews who rejected the gospel, Paul and Silas were quickly sent away to Berea (Acts 17:10). In that short time they first shared the gospel with the Thessalonians, who responded in faith, as was reported by many in the vicinity (1:9-10). They turned from idols to serve the living and true God (1:9). This was no small life change in a culture where idols were commonplace. Some of their instruction was about eschatology, or end time events (1:10). But Paul and Silas didn't stop there. They established a strong relationship with them and taught them about how to live to please God, both by their teaching and by their example (2:7-8, 11-12).

Wow! What an agenda for such a short time!

- Evangelism
- Eschatology
- Sanctification
- Relationship

In chapters 1-3 Paul mentions all of these in words of love and concern. As chapter four opens he then he then begins to add to what he had taught them and encourage them in their faith.

<sup>ESV 1</sup> ¶ 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.

“urge” - *appeal to, exhort, encourage*

...**that** just as you received from us as to how it is necessary for you to walk and to please God, just as also you are walking, **that** you abound more. (*RST Robert Singer Translation*)

<sup>2</sup> For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;

“this is the will of God, your sanctification” – Do you want to know the will of God for your life? This is it, or at least part of it! Sanctification is a word that literally means being holy (Look up 1 Peter 1:15-16).

“sexual immorality” – The Greek word is *πορνεία* porneia {por-ni'-ah}. This word covers every kind of extramarital, unlawful, or unnatural sexual sin. Quite appropriately we get our word “porn” from this.

**<sup>4</sup> that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, <sup>5</sup> not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;**

If you want to hide your behavior because you know it is wrong, then it is not honorable. And those who truly know God and have the indwelling Holy Spirit have a different conscience than those who *do not* know God.

**<sup>6</sup> 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.**

“wrong” – take advantage of

We don't have enough information to know what Paul has specifically in mind, but we get the drift. When Christians are immoral they both sin before God and are taking wrongful advantage of others who are around them.

A new Bible version will become available next year, the Christian Standard Bible. Verse 6 reads, “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.”

**<sup>7</sup> For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. <sup>8</sup> Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.**

The term “Holy Spirit” is found in only two passages of the OT (Psalm 51:11 and Isaiah 63:10-11). But the term “Holy Spirit” is found in multiple passages in the NT. One of those passages is 1 Corinthians 6:19 speaking of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer is more than mere theology. It is a confirmation of life in Christ! The third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, bears witness with our spirit that the disregard of Paul's words here about immorality is in fact a blatant disregard of God and His call to holiness. If you don't sense that in your life you have abundant reason to question whether or not you are in fact a Christian, whether or not you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Don't get me wrong here. Christians can still disregard God over and over again. But the Holy Spirit who dwells within them will not be silent in their consciences.

God has called us to sexual holiness. Listen to the Holy Spirit Who dwells in you. Let the Holy Spirit and this passage change you if you are struggling. Victory is possible.