

1 Thessalonians 4 (Part 1) :1-12 •

Living to Please God

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First Thessalonians, chapter four. So head on over. Wednesday evening, we're making our way through the book of Isaiah, which has been a great study so far. We've been having a great time with that one. But here in chapter four, we're going to be taking the first 12 verses of the chapter, and then he's (Paul) going to kind of talk about some other cool stuff. The end of chapter four, and then the beginning of chapter five is quite good.

If you've ever had any questions about the Rapture. What it is, when it's going to happen, stuff like that. Be sure you're here next week and the week after because we're going to be talking, well, we might even do it all in one week, but we're going to be talking about the Rapture. Now my luck, the trumpet will sound before next week and I won't get a chance to even tell you and stuff. You'll be all unprepared.

But anyway, it's going to happen when it's going to happen, and I pray that it does happen this week. So, it'd be wonderful. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, follow along with me as I read the first 12 verses. It goes like this:

“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. ² For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ 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; ⁶ 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. ⁸ Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you. ⁹ Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, ¹⁰ for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, ¹¹ and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, ¹² so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.” (ESV)

Let's stop there, and let's pray. Heavenly Father, just take this Word that we've read these first 12 verses and speak to us here about what it means. Talk to us Lord, about what Paul has written because Lord, we believe this is Your Word and we believe that it is important for us to hear it, understand it, and apply it and we need Your help to do that. We ask, Lord, that You would open our spiritual ears. In Jesus' Name we pray, amen.

These first 12 verses of chapter four, I wanted to take alone because there's really one kind of overriding theme that Paul is talking about in it, and we'll put it up on the screen for you as a kind of a headline.

SANCTIFICATION

It's sanctification. So that's it. You can see it in verse 3, where Paul says, *"For this is the will of God, your sanctification."* I love how the New Living Translation kind of simplifies it. And they basically just say this is— let's put it on the screen here for you.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NLT)

God's will is for you to be holy...

That's what sanctification basically means. God's will for you and I, *"to be holy."* Well, so there we are. Let's close in prayer. No, I'm just kidding.

You see, the problem, I mean, I could have said that. I mean, I could have just said, okay guys, you know Paul says the will of God is for us to be holy, so be holy. Bye. You know, just kind of leave it at that.

Problem is, many of us have, or struggle to have, perhaps a better way of saying, a real, good, Biblical view of what holiness means. And I'll be honest with you, we— the Church has had about 2,000 years to muck things up, and to confuse and kind of muddy the water as it relates to holiness.

I mean, you hear people say sometimes, well, he feels— he acts like he's so holy and he, she has a holier than thou attitude or something like that. And so those become kind of our definitions, our go-to definitions. But at its root, holiness is really about living our lives to please God instead of living them to please ourselves. It's really what it comes down to.

Now I was raised in the world just like you were. I wasn't raised in the church from the standpoint of my morality. We went to church, but I didn't listen. And I didn't care. So, I was taking my cues from the world, and I learned very well from the world that the chief end of man is to please himself.

In fact, you're considered to have a successful life if you've lived a life that makes you happy. If you're happy, if you've pleased your own self in your life, you're doing good.

And then you get saved, and you start coming to church and reading the Bible and you start learning that the chief end of a Believer, the chief goal of a Believer is to live to please God.

Completely different set of directives and goals. Living to please God. Wow! What a mind blower. Well, what it all comes down to is that if you and I are going to understand holiness from a Biblical standpoint it's going to mean we're going to look very different from the world around us.

It means the way you live your life, the way you do life, the way you do marriage, the way you do business, the way you do child rearing, the way you speak, the way you act, the way you respond to people when they get on your last nerve, and all the other things that go along with life— it's going to be different. It's going to look different... if you're living to please God. Right? You're going to look— people are going to look at you and go, whoa that's different.

So Paul begins in this chapter by saying in verse one, *“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,”* you know, he (Paul) says that you would do it.

And then he says in verse two, *“For you know what instructions we gave”* Notice in verse one, he says, *“what you received from us.”* In verse two, *“what instructions we gave.”* That's really interesting. Remember, Paul was only in Thessalonica three weeks. But he spent time talking to these people about how they were to live— to live a life to please God, and not to please self.

And you'll notice that the emphasis on this whole idea of living to please God comes down to one simple topic throughout these verses: Sex. Yeah, I don't mean to be crude about the way I say it, but that's what he's talking about here. Look in verse 3, *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification:”* and then read these words, *“that you abstain from sexual immorality.”* That's the topic. That's

the emphasis. Okay? That's the emphasis of his words to them about living their lives, not to please self, but instead to please God.

Sexual immorality. Okay, here's the deal. The words sexual immorality, which are used in pretty much most all of the modern English language translations, all come from a single Greek word, and that word is “pornea.”

It's where we get our word pornography or pornographic. But it is essentially a general term to describe a whole manner of sexual activity that is contrary to the will of God. Now, some people were raised in church thinking that sex was contrary to the will of God. I got news for you. God created sex, and it's pretty cool.

But what He did is He put guidelines to the function of sex. And He basically established in the Word that sexual activity is to take place within the context of marriage between one man and one woman. And if it operates outside of those guidelines, it is referred to as “pornea,” or sexual immorality, that which is beyond God's created guidelines, His order.

And think of His order as that which makes something function the best. Don't think of God's order as, oh man, He put up another rule in our path. No, think of order as, This is the way it works the best.

I assume most of you have a car. And you put the right gasoline in the gas tank and you put the right oil in the crankcase and you put coolant in the radiator and you put transmission fluid in the transmission. And if you mess those up, if you put the wrong thing in the wrong place, you're going to get that thing out of order and things don't work well when they get out of order.

I used to work at a gas station when I was a teenager and there were a couple of times we accidentally— I didn't do it, thankfully, a couple of guys put diesel in a gas tank. And gas in a diesel— it doesn't work very well, at all. And if you run, and then when I was a teenager, I, oh man, what a kid I was.

I didn't take care of my first car at all, and I actually, I mean, I like never changed the oil. Like, never. And I was always hot rodding around, smoking my tires and driving fast. And I didn't take care of it. And eventually, it just wouldn't start anymore. Just— the engine seized up.

It just went, erk. I ran it low on oil, and it was just like, Paul, you idiot. Well, all I did is, I got out of order. If you look in the owner's manual, it goes: Put oil in the crankcase, and do this and do it, and if you do it, it works. It's incredible! To

me, the more I learned about a combustion engine, I thought, it's a miracle the dumb thing starts. But it works. But you get out of order and it doesn't work.

Listen, God's order for sex works within the context of what He's laid down. You get out of that context, you're going to have problems. And some of them are going to be severe. Some of them are going to take you to the doctor to try to find a cure. Others are going to take you to a counselor to try to find happiness or a solution. But either way— and some of them will take you to the grave. So, the issue is, stay within God's order. God built order into things so that there would be— so things would work well.

And so when we're talking about, when we're talking about physical relations between a man and a woman, we see in the Word of God that sex is a beautiful creation by God, but it's one that is to be exclusively treasured within the scope of marriage. One man, one woman... married. Let me show you how the writer to the book of Hebrews kind of expressed this a little bit. On the screen, he said:

Hebrews 13:4 (ESV)

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

When the writer says here, “*Let the marriage bed be undefiled,*” he's basically saying, let it be according to the wisdom of God's order. Right? Because anything outside of that is defiling. It taints what God originally created.

I don't know if you guys have read through the entire New Testament, but if you have, you may have been taken aback by how many warnings there are in the New Testament about sexual immorality, about “pornea.” Man, they're just all over. And the reason there are so many warnings in the New Testament about it is because the writers, the New Testament writers, were writing to people, Believers, who were living in various cities in the Roman Empire, and Rome was incredibly perverse as it relates to their sexual activity.

And, I mean, the United States of America had nothing on Rome. I mean, there are a lot of similarities, but they were very sexually perverse. And it came from religious sides; it came from cultural sides. Do you know that a lot of the larger cities in the Roman Empire... had temples in them where people would give themselves to cult prostitution, the worship of pagan gods that actually involves sexual activity.

And men and women would be required to work in these— serve— in these temples and have sex with people as a form of worship. Right? And this was common. This was *common* in these Roman cities. And so, here's Paul writing a letter to these people who've grown up around religious expressions of sexual perversity.

And then, of course, you've got social sexual perversity, which is pretty much exclusively what we do here in the United States of America. We're sexually perverse too, but it's more— it's mostly on a social level. But it was just considered normal, just like it is today. It's considered normal.

Today, I talk to young people and I talk to them about, hey, God doesn't want you to live together before marriage and have sex. They're like, you're joking. What transport did you just jump off from the past? I mean, how in the world are you supposed to know if you're compatible if you don't live together? I don't even know how to respond to that question!

But the point is that it just becomes so normalized in our culture, we don't think anything of it. Oh, you guys are living together? You're Believers? Cool. Yeah. Wonderful.... That's sexual immorality. That's sexual perversity. And it's normal today in the United States, and it was normal back in Paul's day too.

And that's why he and the other biblical writers mentioned it so often. Because it had to be dealt with. You might remember that Corinth— you probably heard about the city of Corinth. It was... over the top crazy, sexually crazy. In fact, if you wanted to really offend somebody, you could call them a Corinthian.

You'd say, you Corinthian. Doesn't matter if they ever stepped foot in the city or not. They would call people a Corinthian. It would be today similar to calling somebody a sexual pervert. Because perversion was so widespread in Corinth that it was just off the charts. Look what Paul said when he wrote to the Believers in Corinth from chapter 6, verse 18. He said,

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 (ESV)

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

You've got to remember Paul's writing to Christians. Okay? This is not written to unbelievers. This is written to Christians, people who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. And He says for you, sexual immorality is even worse. Because you're sinning against your own body, which is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

It's like, hey, you got saved, right? Wonderful. Jesus? Accepted Him as your Savior? Great. Got the Holy Spirit living in your heart? Wonderful. Guess what? Now [when] you engage in sexual perversity, you're literally defiling the temple. And that's a serious issue.

Not that it's any less serious for people outside of the body of Christ. We know that there's great danger also— physically, emotionally, spiritually, for those who are not Believers.

You guys are aware of the fact, right, that there's an agenda today in our culture to normalize homosexual activity? A man and a man, a woman and a woman? Yeah. There are some places, even among Christians, where it's like, yeah, we don't talk against that stuff because we don't want to hurt anybody's feelings. And I get that. I mean, I'm not saying you should go around and try to offend people and be an idiot about it. But the Word of God is pretty clear. The Word of God is pretty clear about homosexuality. Let me show you what Paul wrote in Romans chapter 1, verse 26. He said,

Romans 1:26-27 (ESV)

... their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

“... their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving (look at this) in themselves (that means in their bodies) the due penalty for their error.” Another Bible translation (International Standard Version) says the due penalty *“for their perversion.”*

And remember, perversion just simply means anything outside of God's established order for sex. Now, see, there's a lot of people who don't want to hear this. They don't want to hear it. They don't want to hear these guidelines or something like that. Don't cramp my style here, Pastor.

You know what? It's the Word of God. And it's kind of like somebody telling you, hey, don't... put that in your crankcase, put oil in there. It's going to run—it's going to run better that way. You want your life to seize up like my car when I was 16? Then just get out of order. Put things out of order, do things out of order.

Hey, don't be surprised if your life is sitting on the side of the road with the hood up and it's smoking and it won't go anywhere. And there's a lot of people, believe me, whose lives are going nowhere. Because they've just gotten out of God's order. And they've just said, I'm going to do it my way. I don't care what God says. I just don't care. I'm going to do what I want to do. I'm going to follow my passions. You know what? You're free to do that. But don't be surprised. Don't be surprised when your life doesn't work anymore, and it's a mess.

God wants to spare you from that. And so you and I are called to live a life that is radically different from the lives of the people around us. And that is what the Bible calls sanctification. Or holiness. Whatever....

Now, I need to stop here for a moment, and I need to kind of talk to you for just a little bit about how we've gotten off track in the area of holiness in the Church, because if I were to go through church history and talk to you a little bit about the various holiness movements that have kind of cropped up over the years, you might be surprised to find out that there are actually some dangers that go along with the Biblical exhortation to be holy.

And we're called to be holy. I don't want to diffuse that or make you think I'm not saying we should do that. We are called to be holy, but there are dangers that go along with it, and I want to share some of them, all right? Let's start with, let's put up the heading, dangers connected to holiness, or at least the pursuit of holiness. And let's— okay, first one; number one. Sanctification becomes the means of one's righteous standing before God.

Dangers Connected to Holiness

1. Sanctification becomes the means of one's righteous standing before God.

What that means is, my holy living literally becomes the means by which I believe now that God loves me, accepts me, and gives me wonderful things. Do you know that's not what the Bible says? The Bible doesn't say that God blesses those who are— who always do right.

Your righteous standing before God, listen to me; your righteous standing before God is not predicated upon *your* righteousness. It's predicated upon the righteousness He (Jesus) *gave* you. You can try [air quotes] “living a good Christian life.” You can try living a life of perfect holiness, and you're not going to be any more acceptable to God as the man who, by faith, believes. Let me show you what Paul wrote when he wrote to the Romans. He said,

Romans 3:20 (NIV)

... no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

“...no one is going to be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the law; (that means doing good, living that righteous life. In fact, he said) *rather, the law ought to make us conscious of our own sin.*” (and our inability to keep it, that's what it ought to do).

When we look at the law, when we look at holiness even, when God tells you and I to be holy, and He talks to us about sexual immorality. Do you know what our response ought to be? I can't do that. I can't do that. I'm not able. I'm not strong enough to stand against the temptations. I need You (Jesus). Right? I need You (Him).

So that's what it ought to be doing in us. But it is so subtle.... When we begin to try to live the way we think we ought to. It's so subtle that we actually begin—we think that we've gotten there. And then we start thinking, well that's why God loves me and that's why God's blessing me and that's why God is doing wonderful things in my life. It's because I've been living a life of holiness.

That's not it. God doesn't accept you because you [air quotes] “live a life of holiness.” He accepts you because of what Jesus did on the cross and because you've accepted that for yourself. And now He (God) has imputed to you *His Son's righteousness*. Do you understand that?

Do you understand that when we stand before God, we are righteous before Him because of what Jesus did, not because of what you do? And believe me, guys, that is so freeing. That is so freeing. Ah! (Pastor cries in relief) I don't have to sit and work hard to be accepted before God. He gives it to me by faith.

I am righteous by faith. Oh, what a glorious thing. Now, it doesn't mean I relax my desire to live for Him. I still want to live for Him with all my heart, but I know that my living for Him is not my key to get through that door. *The key is*

Jesus. And we have to be careful never to forget that. Number two on our list of possible dangers: Sanctification or holiness is incorrectly understood by some to mean the eradication of the sinful nature.

Dangers Connected to Holiness

1. Sanctification becomes the means of one's righteous standing before God.
2. Sanctification/Holiness is incorrectly understood to mean the eradication of the sinful nature.

Believe me, that has happened. Some of— you may not be aware of this, but whenever the Church goes through what we call Movements of Holiness or Holiness Movements, do you know that whole denominations can be birthed out of those movements? Did you know the Nazarene Church, (speaking of a local church) and I'm not criticizing the Naz. I love my brothers and sisters down there. I know the pastor very well, and I consider him a friend.

Do you know the Nazarene Church came out of the holiness movement? I don't know if you knew that. It was literally birthed out of the Holiness Movement. Do you know that part of the doctrines that grew out of the Holiness Movement was the belief that you could eradicate the sinful nature? You can literally do away with your sinful nature so that you no longer sin.

And during the popularity of the last major Holiness Movement in this country, which really began in the late 1800s, it was known by several other names like the Second Blessing or Higher Life along with other expressions. But one of my favorite authors from that time period actually got caught up in the Holiness Movement.

And by the way, the Holiness Movement in and of itself wasn't bad. It was what grew out of it. It was some of the emphases that grew out of it, and he got caught up in some of those emphases, which was the idea that you could eradicate the sinful nature. And he was only a teenager at the time, but he was very serious about his walk with the Lord, and he ended up later on in his life writing a paper on what he got caught up in and he called it "Holiness, the False and the True." You can actually find it online if you— if you were just to do a Google search of Harry Ironside and then put "Holiness, the False and the True." You can read the whole thing that he wrote. Let me give you a little excerpt of how he explains what that doctrine taught. He said,

“... the teaching was this: When converted, God graciously forgives all sins committed up to the time when one repents. But the believer is then placed in a lifelong probation, during which he may at any time forfeit his justification and peace with God if he falls into sin from which he does not repent. In order, therefore, to maintain himself in a saved condition, he needs a further work of grace called sanctification.”

– **H. Ironside**

And again, that's not Biblical sanctification, but that's what they called it. That was their definition. And by definition of this second work of grace, according to this teaching, the Believer could eradicate the very sinful nature that is within them, and they would be from henceforth incapable of sinning.

Yay, [says Pastor sarcastically]. I mean, it sounds like a good deal to me if it were only possible. And that's the problem. It's not possible. And eventually people who bought into this idea that the sinful nature could be eradicated, they began, just like Harry Ironside did, they began to realize, wait a minute, I still feel the same fleshly impulses that I felt before. What's going on?

Well, when some of the people realized they'd been duped. I mean, literally deceived and brought into false teaching, many of them fell away from the Lord altogether and never came back. And Harry Ironside talks in that article about how he saw his share of that. In fact, he goes on in that article to say that some people actually went insane trying to maintain a holiness that by definition was not possible.

In fact, Harry Ironside in that paper goes on to describe that idea that the sinful nature can be eradicated this way, as quote, “an absolutely unscriptural use of isolated passages of scripture,” which is really where all error springs from anyway: an unscriptural isolated focus. So therein lies the danger.

And then the third danger that we're going to put up here is, “The pressure to walk in holiness, which becomes so great that believers actually turn to the flesh slash the soul to mimic the life of the Spirit.” And this is more common than you can imagine.

Dangers Connected to Holiness

1. Sanctification becomes the means of one's righteous standing before God.
2. Sanctification/Holiness is incorrectly understood to mean the eradication of

the sinful nature.

3. The pressure to “walk in holiness” becomes so great that believers eventually turn to the flesh/soul to mimic the life of the Spirit.

I don't know if you're aware of it, but the flesh and the soul can mimic the life of the Spirit. Mimic it. Not for very long, but for a while, at least while you're looking. I might go back home and then start slapping my wife around and saying rotten things to my kids, but while I'm in church, I can look *real holy*. And you understand the soul is your emotions and your intellect and your will, essentially.

And then, of course, the flesh, you know what the flesh is. It's just that physical part of you that is that carnality. And we can do it. We can do it. We can fake it. People do. And they do, and they particularly did during the Holiness movements because there was great pressure.

Harry Ironside used to talk about how people would get up at church every single time they had a service, somebody would get up and give a testimony of how they had their sinful nature expunged from their life. And how glorious the freedom was that I no longer sin or have any desire to sin in any way! Oh, thank you, Lord!

And there's such pressure that is placed upon people to conform. That they basically just kind of start to, they start to fake it. We call it the Eddie Haskell syndrome. For those of you that remember “Leave it to Beaver” (1960s sitcom). Some of the young people are going, Leave it to what? But some of the people whose hair have started to change color like me, remember the black and white TV back in the 60s and “Leave it to Beaver,” and there was a character on that show named Eddie Haskell.

And Eddie Haskell was a snake. But whenever he was around Mr. and Mrs. Cleaver, he was the picture of manners. Hello, Mrs. Cleaver, that's a lovely dress you have on today. And, of course, as soon as Eddie's outside of any kind of adult supervision, he turns into a total jerk, always saying the wrong thing.

And that is just such a picture of the flesh. We can do it. We can fake it. I can fake devotion to God and holiness when it's not there at all. And it becomes this total work of the flesh, but it's fake. So, I've given you all these danger possibilities. Some of you are kind of going, yeah, I don't want to go anywhere near holiness.

No, you see, we can't do that. We can't say that. Because biblical holiness remains something that we are told to have. Let me show you how Peter put it. In 1 Peter chapter 1, he says,

1 Peter 1:14-16 (ESV)

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, (in other words, the way you lived before you met Jesus) but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy for I am holy.'" (A quote from the Old Testament).

So, we have to ask ourselves the question, what is true Biblical holiness— and how do you get it? We know all the pitfalls. Well, it should come as no surprise that Biblical holiness, true Biblical holiness, begins and ends with Jesus.

And it really has very little to do with you at all. It's all about Him. It's all about His ability, His power, working in you to change your life. Let me show you a couple of quotes. First, from the book of John, chapter 15. This is Jesus speaking,

John 15:5 (ESV)

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Isn't that a slap in your carnal face? It ought to be. It ought to be a slap in our carnality, *"Apart from Me, you can do nothing."* Nothing. He didn't say apart from Me, you can do little. Nothing. Yeah.

So it's abiding, isn't it? He says that, "Whoever abides in Me...." And because of that, I'm abiding in you. Now we've got a combination going on where you can begin to walk out the reality of what it means to live a holy life. But listen, without His power, you're dead in the water. Your gas tank is empty, your crankcase has no oil, you've got nothing in your transmission, there's no brake fluid in the reservoir, you are dead on the side of the road without Him.

But with Him, you can do it. Look what Paul said to the Philippians over in chapter 2.

Philippians 2:12-13 (ESV)

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, (Boy, we can't stop there, can we? We've got to keep reading) for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

Do you know why Paul can say, “*Work out your own salvation*”? Because it's God who works in you. That's why he can say it. That's how he can say it. If he would have left off that last statement, that would have been base legalism. Work out your salvation!

And some people just drop it right there. They just leave it there. And I've had people write me and say, what does it mean when Paul says that we're supposed to work out our salvation? And I go, did you read the rest?

You can't say, work out our salvation, without going on to read the rest. It is God who works in you. Yes, you and I are called to a holy life. How are we going to do that? It's God who works in you, to will and to act according to His good purpose. That's the only way it's ever going to happen.

And I love telling God that, personally. When I pray, I tell the Lord regularly how much of an idiot I am. Not that He needs me to remind Him, but I tell Him. I go, Lord, I can't do this. I can't do this. You call me to a life of holiness. I can't do it. I know it. You know it. I need You. It is only going to happen as You work in me to will and to act according to Your good purpose.

Now, my heart has to be willing. But then again, that willingness is even something that comes from Him. I have to respond to that and then yield to Him, right? But it's Him that does the work. It's Him who enables us to will and to act according to His good purpose. And only when we understand that can we understand the many references in the Bible to you and I to live a godly life.

If you don't understand it, you know what you're going to end up with? Rules. Rules by angry people... who tell you things like, Christians don't do that [scowling]. Or, real Christians [scowling again]....and that's what happens.

See that's often, you know, these holiness movements came into the church and they started off as a breath of fresh air, I'll tell you. Like most movements do. But then they tumble into legalism after a while because we forget about the Spirit. We forget about the power of the Spirit, and we just start doing it on our own. And then we come up with a list of rules, and we go, "Anybody who goes to a theater [scowling and growling] is going to hell; simple as that. Doesn't matter what's playing. It's evil."

And then we— and they come up with dumb stuff like, Drums are of the devil. Yeah, it's like, come on, you guys. And you kind of left— you let go of the Spirit way back when, and now you're just talking nonsense. Because you think that holiness is connected to all *these* things, you know? I once had somebody tell me that only certain organs were approved in church. Good grief. That was a long time ago, but still.

So we think about our need for the Spirit, the fact that we need the Spirit in order to walk out holiness. Now we're able to read the rest of what Paul says. Look at verse 4 (1 Thessalonians). He says that, "*each of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor.*"

Listen, you don't have control over your body. That, again, is a work of the Spirit. You've got to read into these passages that the life of the Spirit is essential; critical, right? So when Paul says, "*control your body,*" you know, because we hate control, don't we? I hated it when I was a kid. I don't much like it as an adult.

You know, when I was a little kid, we had to sit in church, and I, yes, I grew up in church, but it wasn't really.... They never taught the gospel or anything, but I grew up in church and we were on hard wooden pews. And there was no such thing as Sunday school during church back in those days. We just sat, you know, in our row.

And I was one of four kids that were all born within a five year period of time. My mom had her work cut out for her (snickering in fond remembrance). She used to just bring her purse chock full of crackers and stuff. But we had to learn to sit there, and we had to learn to kind of control ourselves. And I hated it. I hated every minute of it.

And then I grew up and I realized I still hate it. I don't like control. I don't like to control. Somebody insults me, I want to deck them. Don't you? Say, hey, you get in my face, I'm going to deck you. No, no, no, no, I've got to control my body. See that's what I'm called to do. That's what you're called to do.

Instead of decking somebody, I need to respond with grace and forgiveness. But that's a supernatural work of the Spirit. You see, holy living is a supernatural work of the Spirit. It's not a work of the flesh, including self-control. He (Paul) says, "*Not in,*" verse 5, "*not in the passionate lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.*"

And then notice what he says in verse 6. He's— again, remember the emphasis: the topic is sexual immorality. He says, "I want you to also understand that no one among you, as far as Believers, is to wrong his brother in this matter." Why? Because the Lord is an avenger. He will avenge.

What's he talking about here? Remember, the topic is sexual immorality. Don't wrong your brother. Don't take advantage of anybody. If you're here in church to see if you can get somebody into bed, then I would say leave right now because there is a solemn warning in the Word of God [points to open Bible].

You know, I heard a pastor one time talking about how after he got saved, he was all excited about inviting his friends to church and he finally got one of them to agree to come and he actually waited at the door for this guy and when he saw him, he was just overjoyed. Gave him a big hug, man I'm glad you're here! First thing out of this guy's mouth, man you guys got a bunch of pretty ladies in this church.

And he was like— Red Alert! I mean he was just new in the Lord, but he knew enough to be able to respond to his friend and say, hey listen, if you've come here to hear about Jesus and God's Word, wonderful. If you've come to prey on women, you might as well turn around and leave right now because that just isn't going to happen.

And that's why Paul says, let no one wrong his brother in this matter of sexual immorality. Because God is an avenger, and we need to be very careful. Verse 7 goes on, he says, "*For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.*"

And so, you know, if you're going to disregard this, you're not disregarding me, you're disregarding God, who's given you His Holy Spirit (paraphrasing verse 8).

Finally, Paul says in verse 9 (paraphrasing) and following that note about love, he says, concerning brotherly love, we don't even have to talk to you about this because you guys know it. You've been taught by the Lord, and you're loving each other, in fact, your love is known all throughout Macedonia.

And then he says this (paraphrasing verse 10), instead of going, good job, guys, way to go, great work. He goes, no, do it more and more. Isn't that great? You would think that Paul could at least on one thing go, hey, good job, guys. I don't have anything I need to say about this. You did a good job.

No! He goes, you know what, you guys really have learned how to love, and I mean really care about people, now do it more! I find that interesting because that should be our attitude. I don't think we should ever come to a place where we go, I've arrived. If I'm walking with the Lord, if I'm living to please the Lord, I should always be striving to do more and more to live my life to please the Lord.

He goes on in verse 11 (and 12), and he says, “*and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs,*” Now there's a good word that we need to hear in this day of social media. I once heard someone say that there are a lot of things that happen in a given day, but very few of them are any of your business. And I kind of like that because we love giving our opinions, don't we today? He says, “*and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders*” that means unbelievers, so he says, work hard. Let them see your hard work, and then, “*and be dependent on no one.*” Be dependent on no one.

What he's talking about here is basically saying that you're not going to ever be able to effectively share your faith if people who don't know the Lord don't respect you, so work hard, and earn the respect of unbelievers so that you can turn around and you can say, let me tell you about Jesus, and they're willing to listen.