

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

How to Walk Pleasing to the Lord 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 Part 2

In the first three chapters, Paul focused on his relationship with the Thessalonians. In **chapter 1** he spoke about his role in their spiritual birth. In **chapter 2** he spoke about his role in their spiritual nurturing. In **chapter 3** he spoke about his concern for, and his role in, helping them to stand firm in the faith. We have now come to a major transition in the book of **1 Thessalonians**. Paul will now, rather than focusing on his personal relationship with the Thessalonians, be focusing on instruction. Paul in **1 Thess. 4:1 - 1 Thess. 5:22** will be building upon instruction he had already given to the Thessalonians on his first visit, and even though they had done well in respect to this instruction he is exhorting them, in **VV. 1-2** to “**excel still more.**”

Paul in **VV. 3-12** identifies three areas of particular concern which are absolutely necessary if we are going to walk pleasing to the Lord. The first area that we have begun to consider is **WALKING IN SEXUAL PURITY** in **VV. 3-8**.

As we have already noted the Church at Thessalonica was very much challenged in this area, the City of Thessalonica was known for sexual debauchery, very much like the City of Corinth. In a similar, although not identical way, the American church is also being very much challenged. Certainly sexual purity is still a relevant topic for the Church of Jesus Christ, and certainly sexual purity is a relevant topic for Valley Bible Church.

It is my hope and prayer that as we study these verses together, that we cooperate as well as individual, commitment will be to live sexually pure lives. In discussing sexual purity Paul gave the Thessalonians three specific commands.

THAT THEY WOULD ABSTAIN FROM SEXUAL IMMORALITY (V. 3)

Let us read **V. 3** “**For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.** The word “**immorality**” is the word “**PORNEIA**.” This is a very broad term that refers to any sexual activity with anyone other than your spouse.

If we are going to experience sexual purity as a congregation there can be absolutely no sexual activity outside of a marriage relationship!! This leads us to the second command in **VV. 4-5** “**that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, (5) not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.**”

THAT EACH OF YOU KNOW HOW TO POSSESS HIS OWN VESSEL (VV. 4,5)

What does this mean? What does it mean to “**know how to possess his own vessel?**” What is Paul referring to when he speaks of “**vessel?**” The word **SKEUOS** in this context can be understood as referring either to a “**wife**” which is the most common interpretation. Or it could be referring to our “**physical body.**” I favor the latter translation. I believe that Paul is referring to the human body.

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It is true the word SKEUOS on occasion has been used by Bible writers to refer to a “wife” such as in **1 Pet. 3:7** which says, **“You husbands, likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”**

But I would quickly add that SKEUOS has also been used to refer to our physical body, and what is particularly significant is the fact that Paul has chosen to use the word SKEUOS to refer to our physical body in other passages. In **2 Cor. 4:7** Paul writes, **“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.”** Another very interesting passage to consider is **1 Sam. 21:5** where David is assuring the priest of Nob that his young men have kept themselves from women. And he says, **And David answered the priest and said to him “surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels be holy?”** Certainly this passage was originally written in Hebrew but when the Septuagint translated the Hebrew word for “vessel” it chose the Greek word “SKEUOS.”

Though most commentators have chosen to believe that the reference to vessel in this passage refers to a “wife,” I do not believe this. The NIV supports this position. The NIV version says, **“that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable.”**

And doesn't this make sense? If we are ever going to be able to live sexually pure lives , abstaining from all sexual immorality we must learn to possess our own bodies. Or in other words as the NIV puts it “control” our own bodies.

We live in a society of instant gratification. People just find it very difficult to wait for anything. And people are finding it very difficult to wait for marriage before they become sexually active.

When a young child is born we as parents must understand that they will mature and with that maturing they will experience sexual feelings. We must seek to prepare them to handle those feelings. How can this be done?

1) It begins by loving them - We saw in **1 Thess. 3:12** Paul praying that the Lord would cause the Thessalonians to increase and abound in love for another and for all men. Certainly this would include a parents love for their own children no matter how difficult those children might be. Loving parents can be such a great help to their children in the area of sexual purity.

I believe it is much more difficult for young people to handle their sexual feelings righteously when they feel unloved. This is particularly true, I believe of girls. When a girl has not felt the love of the parents particularly of the father it seems that they are so much more susceptible to the amorous advances of a young man. Not so much because of their sexual desires as much as they feel a need to be loved.

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If our children are going to be successful in learning to control their bodies in a way that is holy and honorable, it is important that they have come to believe that we really do in fact love them.

2) As our children continue to grow up it is important that in addition to what I have just shared with you concerning the importance of love that we give them clear instruction from God's word about what is right or wrong.

Not just once or twice, but rather continuously. **Deut. 6:4-9** is very clear. **“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; (7) and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. (8) And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. (9) And you shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates.”** We need to be continuously speaking the truths of the Word of God. Even the secular world recognizes the value of the instruction of the parents. On NBC news just this past week they reported that it has been demonstrated that when parents actively instruct their children concerning the dangers of drugs that drug use drops by 25%. Parents, you are not helpless. And besides, before the Lord as Christian parents you are responsible for teaching your children the difference between right and wrong.

BUT IN ADDITION TO LOVING OUR CHILDREN AND TEACHING OUR CHILDREN WE ALSO MUST SEE THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING OUR CHILDREN TO REDEEM THE TIME BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL.

3. Redeeming the time - We must help our children to learn to discipline themselves to stay busy in meaningful activities. Young people need to learn to stay busy. In school, at work, and around the house. We need to help them to learn this. When young people tend to spend large blocks of time doing nothing it can spell trouble for them. This, of course, can be a lot of work for parents but it will pay huge benefits as the children grow older. And it can keep them out of trouble.

If we are going to help our children to learn to control their bodies in holiness and honor we need not only to love our children, teach our children, and train our children we need to protect them.

4) Protecting our children - When I speak of protecting our children I am speaking specifically of protecting them against any kind of sexual experiences. When our children are young we need to protect our children against sexual predators. We need to know where our children are and who they are with. As they get older we need to continue to be vigilant. Attempting to keep our children away from situations that might lead them down the path of sexual encounters. I remember a time when I was home from college and I was driving a high school student back to my Aunt's house where this girl was staying. We were outside of the house and were “really talking” but about after 15 minutes, the porch light flashed off and on. This was a signal for her to come on in. Then, I remember this being an annoyance, but looking back on this it was love. It was done out of a desire to protect.

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This is a wonderful work the Lord has given us, but how quickly it ends. And those that we have sought to love, teach, train, and protect grow up. And this is good. And it is a wonderful thing when our children begin to seek to find their own way. And it is then we will see how truly successful we have been.

Last week I told you that I would be addressing singles and hopefully give you something that could help you as you seek to live lives of sexual purity, as you seek to abstain from sexual immorality, as you seek to possess or control your body in sanctification and honor and so far the only people you might say I have talked to is parents and in a sense that is true. But really I am talking to you.

As we move from childhood to adulthood, we must, as a single person choose to follow in the path that our parents, have hopefully set for us. If we would do this, we will be well prepared to walk in sexual purity. If we would do this we would find ourselves being able to abstain from all sexual immorality. If we would do this we would be able to possess our vessel in sanctification and honor.

1. Just as it was important for us to feel loved when we were children by our parents in order not to be vulnerable to various temptations, it continues to be true. As long as there is a void in our lives for love we can do some very stupid things. A key to sexual purity. A key to abstaining from sexual immorality. A key to controlling our physical body is the certain knowledge that we are loved. Not so much by our parents, but rather by the Lord.

Do you feel that the Lord truly loves you? And this thought, this feeling is your constant companion. If this is so then you are well prepared to walk in purity. You are well prepared to control your body. WHAT ELSE?

2. Just as it was important for our parents to feed us the word of God in order not to be vulnerable to various temptations, it continues to be true, as we get older our parents will have less and less ability to transfer truth to you. You must continue to feed yourself. As long as there is a void in this area of our lives we can do some very stupid things. A key to controlling our physical body is to choose to let the Word of Christ richly fill us.

Do you feel that the Lord truly loves you? And this thought, this feeling is your constant companion? Have you chosen to fill your heart with the Word of Christ? If these things are so, then you are well prepared to walk in purity. You are well prepared to control your body. WHAT ELSE?

3. Just as it was important for our parents to train us to redeem the time knowing that the days are evil we must continue that discipline. If you are single it is very important for you to continue to remain busy in meaningful activities. I am so concerned about young people who have no structure or order to their lives. Get involved, get busy, get tired for the kingdom.

Do you feel that the Lord truly loves you? And this thought, this feeling is your constant companion? Have you chosen to fill your heart with the Word of Christ? Have chosen to get busy in meaningful activity? If these things are so then you are well prepared to walk in purity. You are well prepared to control your body. WHAT ELSE?

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4. Just as it was important for our parents to protect us from sexual experiences we must continue that discipline.

Single people, when considering this question typically ask what sexual experiences are you talking about. I would say that it is clear that we must protect ourselves against all sexual experiences in any shape or form.

Probably the number one killer of spiritual vitality in Christian singles lives when they are dating is the fact that they go far too far in respect to the physical. Then someone might ask, then what do you say as to how far we can go? That really is the wrong question. We must rather ask, what must we do to remain righteous?

Let the Apostle Paul answer that question for you. In **1 Cor. 7:1** Paul writes, “**Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.**” This does not mean that a young man and a young woman cannot or should not express affection for one another. People that care about one another do express affection. But I believe that a young man should be consistent. He should express himself in a physical way toward a girl who is special in his life as he would toward his own mother or sister.

CONCLUSION

THE GOAL IS SEXUAL PURITY. THE GOAL IS ABSTAINING FROM ALL SEXUAL IMMORALITY. THE GOAL IS CONTROL OF PHYSICAL BODIES. IT IS REACHABLE. LAST WEEK I SHARED WITH YOU WHAT MARRIED INDIVIDUALS CAN DO IN ORDER ACHIEVE THESE GOALS. AND THIS WEEK WE HAVE SHARED WHAT SINGLE INDIVIDUALS CAN DO TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS. LET US TOGETHER STRIVE TO EXCEL STILL MORE.