

GOD'S WILL FOR US
--1st Thessalonians 4:3-8--

INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever wondered about God's will for your life? This morning Paul in very plain language tells us God's will for every believer. In chapter 4 and onward through the rest of this book Paul is now exhorting his readers to continue to move forward in the area of spiritual growth. In verses 1-2 he taught that we should please God in everything. Then beginning in verse 3 Paul zeroes in on the issue of sexual immorality. This topic is as relevant to us as it was to the church in Thessalonica. The struggles with this issue that we face today are not so different from the struggles that these Christians faced. But as we get into this passage notice that Paul was not dealing with the evil in the culture, Paul's concern was the conduct of the church. As people came to Christ and came out of a sexually immoral world, they had to understand how to walk in a manner that pleases God. That is what Paul deals with in this passage, helping them to excel still more in their faith.

- I. GOD'S WILL IS YOUR SANCTIFICATION (1st Thess. 4:3)
 - a. Paul begins this passage by plainly telling us what God's _____ is for us.
 - b. Paul began by defining God's will as their _____. (1st Thessalonians 3:13)
 - c. Having been in Thessalonica, Paul knew that sexual immorality and perversity were not only _____ but encouraged as acts of worship in many of the false religions catered to by the city.
 - d. Paul's teaching on the subject of sexual morality in his later letters to the Ephesians and Colossians does not deviate from what he _____ of the Thessalonians. (Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:3-5; Matthew 5:27-28; 1st Corinthians 6:15-20)
- II. CONTROL YOUR OWN BODY (1st Thessalonians 4:4)

- a. The first way in which Paul says we can abstain from sexual immorality is by knowing how to _____ our own vessel in sanctification and honor. (Romans 12:1-2)
- b. Paul throughout his writings made it clear that in order for a Christian to control his body he must rely on the Holy _____. (Galatians 5:16)
- c. Paul writes that we are to control or possess our bodies for the purpose of sanctification and _____.

- III. DO NOT ACT LIKE UNBELIEVERS (1st Thessalonians 4:5)
 - a. The second way that we are to abstain from sexual immorality is by not _____ as those who do not know God.
 - b. As Christians we can no longer live this kind of life, God has _____ us from such habitual sinning. (1st Cor. 6:18-20)
- IV. DO NOT SIN AGAINST YOUR BROTHER (1st Thess. 4:6)
 - a. The third way that Paul tells us to abstain from sexual immorality is to never take sexual _____ of another believer.
 - b. We can expect the world to tempt believers and sometimes lead them into sin, but believers should never be a _____ block for fellow believers.
- V. REASONS FOR ABSTAINING (1st Thessalonians 4:7-8)
 - a. Paul then tells us why we need to abstain from sexual immorality and seek to be set _____ to God and His holiness.
 - b. First, he writes that it is because the Lord is the _____ in all these things. (Hebrews 12:11)
 - c. Paul gives a second reason to abstain from sexual immorality and it had to do with the _____ of God.
 - d. Paul gives one final reason that we should abstain from sexual immorality and that reason is that if we do not then we are _____ this command.

CONCLUSION:

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church shortly after Timothy had returned from visiting them. Paul expresses his desire that they continue to grow spiritually, that they pursue spiritual excellence. Paul is reminding and teaching the Thessalonian believers how we are to walk and please God in our daily lives. We are to conduct ourselves before God in the holiness which is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul reminds them and us that God's will for us is our sanctification—to be separated from sin and set apart to God in His holiness. Our faith in Christ makes us positionally righteous or sanctified, this is how we are seen by God at the moment we are saved, this is why we are called saints. There is, however, an aspect of sanctification that is a process and is progressive and that is what Paul is speaking of in this chapter. This process of sanctification is a lifelong process where the Holy Spirit progressively matches our character and behavior to the righteousness that we have in the Lord Jesus. Paul in this passage shows us our responsibility of cooperating with the Holy Spirit as He works out this holiness in us. Paul described it this way to the Philippian believers in Philippians 2:12-13, "*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*" (Philippians 2:12–13, NASB95) In these verses Paul tells the Philippian believers to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, in other words, this is serious business that is not to be taken lightly, but then he tells them that it is God who is at work in their lives both to fulfill His will of their sanctification and to work in sanctifying them for His good pleasure. As the Spirit does His sanctifying work, we cooperate with Him and as Paul explained in our passage today, we do that by abstaining from sexual immorality. The will of God for you is your sanctification.