

Morality, Modesty and Mental Purity

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

Have you been baptized for the remission of your sins? If so, good. That, however, is only the beginning. Too many act as though they are good on the basis of baptism alone. Too many parents act as though they have fulfilled their duties because their teenager was baptized. The Bible presents many aspects of Christian growth. **I Thessalonians 4:1-8** says we are called for sanctification and must now grow in morality, modesty and mental purity.

Discussion:

- I. God has called us for sanctification, not impurity.
 - A. Paul wrote that our goal is sanctification or holiness three times (**vs. 3, 4, 7**). Sanctification means being set apart for God's service. This calls to mind the Old Testament sanctification of priests. **Leviticus 8** reveals the rite of sanctification the priests went through. **Leviticus 21** established stricter laws for the priests to maintain holiness. While the laws regarding the priests are not our, the principle applies. We are God's royal priesthood (**I Peter 2:9**) and He expects us to be holy, consecrated and sanctified.
 - B. Relying on a repeated statement in **Leviticus**, Peter explained our standard of holiness in **I Peter 1:15-16**—God. When God is our standard, Paul told Timothy, we become useful to God prepared for every good work (**II Timothy 2:20-21**). Regrettably, however, Satan is constantly trying to pull us from this path of sanctification. He wants us to be impure. In the New Testament times and, seemingly, even more so today he has one amazing weapon that tugs on most of us—sexual sin. Therefore, Paul in **I Thessalonians 4:1-8**, drives home the absolute need for sexual purity and all it includes if we are going to be sanctified.
- II. Abstain from sexual immorality.
 - A. According to **Galatians 5:19**, immorality is a work of the flesh. We are to follow the Spirit. There is one rule for maintaining sexual purity. **Hebrews 13:4** says, "*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge*" (NKJV).
 - B. Society makes this increasingly difficult to preach about. There was a time when everyone understood what was condemned as part of sexual immorality. However, politicians and the media have blurred the lines. It is almost impossible to teach on these issues in the way they need to be taught without crossing over the bounds of morality in speech. We may try to preach this issue in veiled language and tact that we hope all will understand, but our society and even Christians have too often demonstrated that the only way to get the message across is explicit bluntness. I will try not to be too explicit, but I will be blunt. While everyone needs to hear this, I especially want the men, the teenagers and the parents in this assembly to listen carefully.
 - C. Sexual activity is any activity which expresses or arouses sexual desire. Certainly, sex itself is included. Regrettably too many think that is where the line is draw—it is not. Anything that is part of leading up to sex is involved. Allow me to read the Lord's word in **Proverbs 5:15-20**. I hope you can understand the extents of sexuality allowed and condemned in that passage.
 - D. We add one more issue to our list. We must remember that homosexuality, whether our society calls it marriage or not, is immoral. I am not sure how God could have been clearer than He was in **Romans 1:26-27**. Homosexual behavior is sinful. God has called us to holiness.
- III. Possess vessel with honor and sanctification.
 - A. Sexual purity goes a step further than simply being involved in sexual activity. It involves how we possess our vessel; that is, how we use our bodies. In **I Thessalonians 4:4**, Paul said we must own our bodies in sanctification and honor. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. They have been bought with Jesus' blood. They belong to God. Therefore, we must glorify God with our body (**I Corinthians 6:19-20**). Our body must be used in such a way that God is glorified.
 - B. Peter demonstrated this in **I Peter 3:3-4**. He addressed wives specifically, but the principle is universal. The way we present ourselves must demonstrate spirituality, not sexuality. We live in a sexually charged society. As such, we may lose sight of how our dress, speech and conduct affect purity. Because we see and hear blatant lasciviousness on a daily basis we can become

desensitized, not recognizing when we conduct ourselves in an unholy way. Look at the standard Paul places on how we use our bodies: sanctification and honor. He goes back to that idea of being set apart. We must not be like the Gentiles who conduct themselves in passion and lust. Our dress, our manner and our speech should set us apart from the world as holy vessels for honor. Then we are fit for the Master's use (**II Timothy 2:20-21**).

- C. We need to examine the clothes we wear, the words we say, the stories we tell and the jokes we laugh about. We need to examine how we walk, how we stand, how we sit. We need to make sure our conduct is not about fleshly desires, whether sexual or otherwise. Our conduct must set us apart as instruments for righteousness. We must be honest. How tight are our clothes? How short are our skirts and shorts? How much flesh are we revealing? What kind of movements are we making? I am amazed that many Christians have accepted the sexually explicit dancing that takes place at school dances as morally pure and allow their children to go. I am also amazed at some of the things I have seen Christian cheerleaders do and wear in the name of supporting their school. The Beach Boys once sang we should be true to our school, but first and foremost we must be true to our God. Examine yourself honestly. Do your conduct, speech and dress reflect modesty and sexual purity? God has called us to holiness.

IV. Avoid lustful passion.

- A. Not only are we to avoid sexual activity; not only are we to possess our vessels in honor; we must control our eyes and minds. **I Thessalonians 4:5** said we must not allow lustful passion.
- B. Jesus made this point in **Matthew 5:27-30**. Guys, are you listening? That old line, "Just 'cause I'm on a diet doesn't mean I can't look at the menu" doesn't work. You are not allowed to look at the menu, you are allowed to look at your wife and that is it. Wives, the same applies to you.
- C. **Job 31:1** is a great passage to remember. Job said, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?" We need to make covenants with our eyes, not to look on anyone with sexual desire except our spouse. By the way, men, this rules out pornographic magazines and web sites. It rules out Sports Illustrated swimsuit editions. It rules out taking those quick peaks at the Victoria's Secret posters while you walk through the mall. Paul explained our warfare in **II Corinthians 10:3-6**. We are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. We are not to be like the Pharisees who tried to clean the outside of their cup without cleaning the inside (**Matthew 23:25-27**). We must keep the inside clean as well.
- D. We must make a covenant with our eyes and control our minds. God has called us to holiness.

V. Excel still more and do not reject God.

- A. In **I Thessalonians 4:1**, Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to excel still more. That was a blanket statement to all Christians no matter where they were on purity's path. We must do better. Too often we are satisfied with doing better than others, justifying ourselves, "At least I am not doing what so and so is doing." In **I Thessalonians 4:7**, Paul said we are called to sanctification, not to impurity. Something is impure not because it is wholly bad, but because it has an impurity in it. Until we are completely free from impurities, we still have work to do. It is a growth process. We will not be condemned because we still have room to grow. However, we had better be growing or we will be condemned.
- B. Further, note Paul's statement that concludes this section in **I Thessalonians 4:8**. "He who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you." That is strong language. It is not my language; it is the Bible's language. When it comes to rejecting God we think about people who refuse baptism or worship God incorrectly or deny God's order for the church. But Paul says if we reject his teaching on morality, modesty and mental purity we are rejecting God. This is important. This is salvation stuff. Brethren, too many have given up these fights. We must not because people will lose their souls over these very issues.

Conclusion:

Baptism is not the end. It is only the beginning. We must remember our call to be sanctified. We must remember that we are to be different from the world, set apart for our Master's holy use. We must remove impurities. Especially within our society today, we must fight the battle against sexual impurity, standing up for morality, modesty and mental purity. Please, do not reject God. Instead, excel still more.