

## **A Call to Purity, Part II**

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:57-64

1st Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:9-20

2nd Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Hymn Insert- *10,000 Reasons*

Hymn Insert- *Power of the Cross*

Hymn #6 (Supp)- *Lead Me to Calvary*

### **Introduction:**

Paul has transitioned from the indicative (informative) portion of his letter to the imperative (command) portion of his letter. Last week, we began to consider Paul's first order of business in the imperative (the command) section of this Epistle. And we found that it deals with the significant matter of pursuing holiness of purity in our walk with Christ, and that, very consciously, in the face of great trials and tribulations. And furthermore, Paul has narrowed his focus down, to addressing that most predominant sin of sexual immorality, within the context of this call to purity.

Having worked through the text last week, this morning, I want to spend the bulk of our time, looking at several, specific, relevant applications, which we can draw out of all that we have gone over.

### **I. Closing Thoughts and Applications**

1) Recognize again, that generally speaking, the temptation toward sin and lust will often increase during times of trial and tribulation. Clearly, that is Paul's great concern here for the Thessalonians, as they are enduring significant and ongoing trials. He knows that the desire and temptation toward their former heathen practices; the desire for quick-fix relief outside of Christ, will especially become attractive, the longer they have to endure, under the weight of difficult trials.

And so, brethren, like the Thessalonians, while we must always be on the alert in our Christian walk (the devil is like a roaring lion, deceptively lurking about, seeking whom he may devour), we must be on an even higher sense of alert during times of ongoing trial, because our proneness toward weariness will leave us vulnerable toward finding immediate relief, outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. And during such times, sin, and very particularly, sexual sin, will present itself as a false Christ; a resting place for the weary in the wilderness, when ultimately, such a

short-lived fix, will only serve to divert us away from the blessed benefit that will most certainly come from persevering through the tribulation/trial.

And so, brethren, during times of suffering, we must, with our minds, remind ourselves of the big picture; that is, of the sanctifying benefits, which must and will come through our trials. We must remember, as the author of Hebrews reminds us, that God chastens those whom He loves, and that if we are trained by our sufferings, we will become partakers of our Father's holiness. We must remind ourselves that although we may not understand how (in the present), there are and will be sanctifying benefits attached to all of the trials, which we are called to endure. And so, to this end, we must fix our attention on what we *can* see, by faith, when we can't see, with our eyes. And what we can see, is that God's will is our sanctification, and He desires us to patiently endure and wait upon Him. When we can't see anything else, we can always see that God desires us to pursue holiness and to walk in purity, before Him. This we can see, if we can see nothing else. This is our certainty in the midst of all uncertainty. And so, let us be on guard to this end, recognizing that we are without excuse, if we cave into idolatry and sexual sin.

2) See that it is impossible to please God, apart from keeping the commands of Christ. You will recall that the third pillar of the Great Commission, given to the church by Christ, is to teach "made and baptized disciples" whatsoever things He has commanded us. Well, again, here, Paul speaks along those same lines, when he states what he states in the first three verses (read vs. 1-3).

Notice the connective line here, brethren. Paul calls the Thessalonians to abound more and more in accordance with what they received from Paul, concerning how they ought to walk and to please God. And then he elaborates further on this, by specifically identifying what Paul taught them, as commands given them through the Lord Jesus. And then, he attaches all of this to the foundational reality that, all of this is the case, because the will of God is our sanctification. And so, once again, we find that justification and forgiveness from sin are not ends in themselves. Rather, God's will is our sanctification, which calls us to please Him by keeping the commands of Christ, as a progressive means unto furthering our sanctification.

Again, there is a cooperative effort involved here, as we have already seen. Verses 11-13 (Paul's Benedictory prayer), combined with the call for us to strive after obedience (4:1-8), remind us of the statement, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For, it is God who is at work in you, to will and to do according to His good pleasure." And what is God's good pleasure? That we would listen to and obey the commands of His Beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased.

And so, brethren, all of this to simply make the connective link between our sanctification, God's will, and obedience to the commands of Christ. A profession of faith, which is not attached to a heart that is intent on following and obeying Christ is baseless, shallow and empty. If we love Christ, we will keep His commandments! [\*Compare with 2:13-16]

3) See the connection between what Paul said about pursuing love, as a means of advancing in holiness, and that which he says here about not taking advantage of and defrauding your brother, in pursuing his wife. Here, he talks about possessing your own vessel and maintaining self-control, so as not to fall into the gross sin of adultery. But again, if we are intentionally, proactively, consciously, and in very specific ways, seeking to increase our love toward one another, will we slip into the lustful trance of taking advantage of and defrauding our brother? You see, if we are walking faithfully with Christ, and if our attention is fixed more and more on doing good to (and loving) others, there will be no room in our hearts to covet what he has, and to take from him. It's like what Paul says in Ephesians about "putting off" and "putting on." When is a thief no longer a thief? When he stops stealing? No. When he works, so that he can begin to give to those who are in need.

And so, again, while self-restraint is important, the silver bullet is found in not just holding back, but rather, in taking the forward action of consciously striving to love and serve one another, in increasing, tangible ways.

4) If the will of God is our sanctification, then we can be certain that we are praying in the will of God, when we are praying about issues related to our sanctification. We are all familiar with the words of Jesus and the words of John the Apostle, which speak of the assurance that we can have when praying, that God hears us and that He will answer. And, of course, we are familiar with the abuses of such texts, by those of a "Word of Faith," bent.

Well, I want to suggest to you that those texts are directly related to our sanctification and to fruit bearing, both of which, in fact, are interconnected as well. [Read John 15:1-8]

Notice, the words of verse 8 again, "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." This is the context, within which, we find our Lord saying that when we ask whatever we desire, it will be done for us. All of this is in the context of being a disciple of Christ, concerned about bearing fruit unto His glory. It assumes that that is the great interest and concern of the Christian. Now, look with me at 1 John 5:14-15.

Here, we find the same idea of praying with certainty and assurance about receiving the things for which we ask, but again, it is when we pray according to the will of God. Well, brethren, all of this simply to say that, contrary to the Word of Faith ("Name it and Claim it") heresies, we find that such confident praying is directly related to matters of fruit bearing and sanctification. And so, brethren, be encouraged to know that, if it is your desire to grow in grace, and to further your sanctification unto further fruit bearing, that you can pray expectantly about these things, being certain that God hears you, and He will answer. It may not be an overnight ordeal (in fact, more often than not, it will not be an overnight ordeal), but over time, you can be certain that God will work in you, to make you more like His Son, Jesus Christ. If you long to be holy; if there are specific sins which you struggle with, which plague you and lead you to think that you will never win the battle, God invites you to pray about such things, knowing that He can and will provide the grace and the power to find victory in your sanctification. For, that is His very will!

5) I would be remiss not to say anything about sexual immorality, when it is that which Paul most emphasizes in the text. And so, let us consider for a few moments the gravity of sexual sin (fornication, adultery, pornography, homosexuality...etc). You see, the world tends to view sexual sin as minor or insignificant because it generally involves consenting adults (in the case of fornication/sex outside of marriage and/or homosexuality) or "looking without touching" (in the case of viewing pornography of any sort)...etc. But, we don't draw our moral principles from the world (which also advocates abortion) or our own natural feelings (which are corrupted by sin). We must draw our convictions from Scripture, which reveal and expose to us the heart of God. And what God says about sexual sin is pretty strong:

a- For one, in Hebrews, He tells us that the marriage bed is honorable and undefined, but fornicators will be judged.

b- Secondly, in 1 Corinthians 6 (which we read earlier in our first Scripture reading), sexual sin is highlighted and distinguished as a unique sin, that actually stands on its own in one particular evil sense: We are commanded in verses 18-20: "Flee sexual immorality (run from it fast!). Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Brethren, these are sobering words, which ought to raise the bar, quite significantly, in recognizing how serious an offense sexual immorality is. Sexual immorality is the one sin that is also a sin against one's own body. And the significance of this is greatly magnified, when we consider that our bodies are now holy vessels, akin to the tabernacle and temples of old, where the Holy Spirit of God resides! We have been purchased by Christ, unto this end! We have been redeemed out of the slavery and bondage of sin, but not to be left in some now neutral, stagnate state. No, we have been transferred into the kingdom of light, where we now belong to (joyfully belong to) Christ! [III. Imagine being a priest of old, committing acts of sexual sin, right before the ark of God, in the Most Holy Place; Hophni and Phinehas's sins - 1 Samuel 2:22]

Needless to say, brethren, if our bodies are the temple of God, we ought to recognize the severity of sexual immorality, and how it defiles that temple. You never entertain lust, without the presence of the Holy Spirit within you. [Read 1 Thess. 4:7-8 again]

6) Thanks be unto God that sexual immorality is not the unpardonable sin. Is it very serious? Absolutely! Ought we to flee from it (with Joseph) at all costs? Absolutely! Ought our redemption in Christ; the hallowing of our bodies in becoming His purchased possessions, and the reality of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, to serve as sobering deterrents against sexual immorality? Absolutely! We must fight the good fight in these regards.

And yet, thanks be unto God, that there is grace in Christ; there is attainable forgiveness for even such gross violations of God's Law as this. Christ's shed blood yet prevails, doesn't it? There may be temporal consequences in this life, but the love of Christ yet purges us; His

untarnished vessel, yet hallows our tarnished vessels. This is an encouragement for those who have fallen into some form of sexual sin. You don't have to live in yesterday's guilt, if you presently live in the grace of Christ. "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose ALL their guilty stains!" "If you confess your sins, (in Christ) God is faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness." Let that reality motivate you to pursue holiness all the more!

7) If the will of God is the sanctification (the purifying and hallowing) of redeemed sinners, then unbeliever, recognize that you are presently living outside of God's unchangeable, righteous, divine will. And if you die in such a lost, sinful, unholy condition, you will perish forever and ever in hell. You need to be holy! Your God is holy! And that holiness comes only in, by and through the Lord Jesus Christ!

Mankind is already defiled from birth. Your very nature is contaminated through and through, and so, you cannot please God in your natural state. You must be born again. And you must receive all of the benefits of the once dead and now risen Christ, who came into this world, for the very purpose of saving and sanctifying sinners!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25