

Model Morality

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[0 : 00] I'm going to read out verses 1 through to 12 and then we'll spend some time looking at it together. Let's listen to what God's got to say to us this morning. Finally then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God, 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 before and solemnly warned you, For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

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, 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, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders, and be dependent on no one.

[1 : 46] Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, as we hear your word this morning, we do pray that we've been encouraged, and that you'd spur us on to live lives which are pleasing to you.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I wonder if anyone could identify you from your walk. If you were to walk down the street, and someone saw you from behind, would they be able to pick you out, and say, oh yeah, that's Rui?

Possibly from the sound of your shoes, or your thongs as they hit the ground when you take a step, or the way you shuffle, or the way you bounce, or the way that your toes are in, or the toes are out, by the way that you walk?

Could someone recognise who you were? In a similar way, we're told that there's a distinctive walk for the Christian, that is, the brother or sister in Christ, the follower of Jesus.

The walk of the Christian is to be distinctive. The way that we live our life is to be distinctive. It's the way to be culturally different, counter-culturally different.

[2 : 57] And it was supposed to be like that from the day when the Gospel first went to the Thessalonians, and to today, right where we are, right here this morning. It's to be a holy life, one that follows in the footsteps of Jesus, one after the other, after Him.

Now the Thessalonians were a model group of Christians. They have stood firm with Jesus since the day that they believed, even though they'd faced hardship for doing so.

We learn how in chapter 1, they've turned, what did we say there, chapter 1 verse 10, verse 8 and 9, 9 and 10, how you've turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Now the Thessalonians are doing well. In chapter 4 verse 1, He commends them for the living in ways which please God, and He encourages them to do so more and more.

They are not to think though that they can relax now from living to please God, they're actually to do so more and more. And they're told to then, back in verse 9 as well, they're commended for what they do, they're commended for their brotherly love, they're doing it, and encourage them to do so more and more.

[4 : 29] In verse 10. And yet He still writes to them about how they would live, how they should live, how they should walk. And so I wonder why He does that, why does He actually go on to tell them what to do, even though they know what to do, how they should walk?

If they know the instructions He gave them, and they are keeping them, why does He now write to them to tell them how they are to walk? Well let me suggest to you, that no matter how well they were doing, or how well we are doing, our ability to sin should not surprise us.

See the most godly amongst us, cannot assume that we are beyond sinning, in ways that we would think unthinkable.

And the most godly person, needs to hear this phrase, don't overestimate your godliness. Why?

And we're told in Proverbs, that pride goes before a fall. And we're told, we need to be reminded, don't underestimate your propensity for sinfulness.

[5 : 46] So don't overestimate your godliness, and don't underestimate your propensity for sinfulness. I mean, Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 9, the heart is desperately deceitful above all things, and desperately sick.

Who can understand it? Now from my understanding, our church is one, where we do well, when it comes, to our sexual morality.

Right? That's the thing that he majors on here, in this passage here, in verse chapter 4, Finally then brothers, we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you receive from us how you walk, to please God, just as you're doing, that you do so more and more.

For we know that, what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus, this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality. This morning, we're reminded of what God's will for our life is.

Put simply, God's will for our life, is our sanctification. Did you see that there in verse 3? For this is the will of God, your sanctification.

[6 : 59] Now, that's a big word, right? It's a big Christian word, but we could simply read it, and just as accurately as, a holy life.

That's what it is. A life set aside for God. Now, I'm not sure, if you've ever wondered, what God's will for your life is, or what God's will for your life should be.

And, whether you've actually, blown, God's will for your life. Is it, God's will for me to have a certain job?

Is, where do I go to God for guidance? How do I know, whatever I should go for a certain holiday somewhere, or, be a particular part of the world, or, have a particular position in life, or, where to live, or, what course to study, or, person to marry, or, how many children to have, or, list goes on.

As important as these questions are, and, they are important questions, they are of secondary importance. For hearing God's word, I can tell you, what God's will is for your life.

[8 : 13] And, you can tell me, what God's will is, for my life. And, what is it? You see it there?

Verse 3, this is the will of God, your sanctification, your holiness. Everything else, is a matter of, godly wisdom.

Now, there's two aspects, to get a hold of here, when it comes to sanctification, to holiness, right? Number one is, those who are trusting, the Lord Jesus Christ, have been sanctified, have been made holy.

We already are, 100% okay with God. We are holy, we are separate, we are belonging to Him. And secondly, the other aspect is, we are to grow, in our holiness, our sanctification, to be more and more like, the Lord Jesus Christ.

See, the Christian cannot be, any more holy, any more saved, than we already are. Right? That's, the truth. When you become a Christian, Jesus makes you holy, He washes us clean, His, our hearts made white than snow, His death makes us holy, in God's sight.

[9 : 30] We are clothed in Jesus' righteousness. We've been transferred, from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of the sun, whom He loves. Jesus, we are made holy.

And, secondarily, we're also to grow in holiness. That is, to be who we are. Right? We're to be what we are.

Putting off the old self, putting on the new self. That's the idea. We're in the process, of conforming our lives, to the likeness of Jesus. You may have heard the illustration, it's something like, I don't know, it was getting a bit out of reality, these days, but purchasing a home.

Just imagine for me, you purchase a home. Right? And when you purchase a house, there's move-in day, and then there's the process, of straightening it out. Making it how it should be, conforming it to the ideal, that it needs to be, in your plans.

Now, in our case, a long time ago, when we moved in, there was move-in day, and we had to, clear the vegetation, from the backyard, pull down the shed, knock out the rubbish, from the house, clean out the kitchen, all that kind of stuff, fix the drains, repair the doors, the list goes on, and on, and on.

[10 : 49] Becoming a Christian, is like move-in day. God's Holy Spirit, moves in, and discovers, all the things, that need straightening out, cleaning out the junk, that's collected over the years, renovating the ruins, of our lives, one by one, ripping out the, overgrown, vegetation, in the backyard, when Jesus comes to live in.

Making us holy, more and more like, his ideal, more and more like him, set aside, more like him. It's nothing new really, I mean the people, the Old Testament, were told to be holy, because I the Lord your God, am holy.

Remember Leviticus chapter 19, verse 2, set apart for God, therefore be holy, because I the Lord your God, am holy. In the end, God's major, dominant will, for our lives, in this world, is that we be sanctified, that we be holy.

There are other things, in the New Testament, that God's will, is told we're to be, like, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, we're told a whole list of things, to joy, to be prayful, in 1 Peter chapter 2, to do good, this is God's will for your life, 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 17, suffering for doing what's right, is God's will for our life.

However, they are, they are the sort of, the harmony, to the major theme, in the Bible, of being holy. Now, sanctification is a very practical thing, it's a matter of life, and lifestyle, and there's a specific aspect, of sanctification, that Paul raises here, for us this morning, the particular one is, sexual morality, sexual purity, the word is, porneia, from which we get the word, pornography, that's where the word comes from, and he tells us, we're to abstain, from sexual morality, now that is, unbiblical, sexual intercourse, prostitution, fornication, adultery, that's what, that's what sexual morality is, any form of sexual activity, outside the sanctity of marriage, that's what sexual morality is, including adultery, and all those things.

[12 : 57] Leviticus chapter 18, actually, spells out a whole list, of things, which are, not to be done, in God, amongst God's people, spells it out, pretty bluntly, write it down, and go and have a look sometime, Leviticus chapter 18, and so, Paul's urging then, that the Thessalonians, be sexually pure, isn't that the Thessalonians, are necessarily getting involved in it, but he wants, they had been in the past, more than likely, but he wants them to be changed, and not to go back to it, he wants to see progress, in their holiness, the culture of the day, was very, very lax, the Greek way of life, was flagrantly, immoral, extramarital sex, was tolerated, in some places, even encouraged, worshiping the idols, in the pagan filled, temples, and the idols, in the pagan, the pagan temples, filled with idols, there you go, included, ritual prostitution, also in society, a man, could have a mistress, a slave, as a concubine, and then a wife, for his legitimate children, homosexuality, even with young boys, was common, there was no, body of public, opinion, to discourage, poor Neya, although someone, who indulged in it, to excess, might have been seen, at the same level, as a glutton, or a drunkard, that would be the level, of the problem, now the society, in which the Thessalonians live, was saturated, in sexual immorality, and so the danger, was that they would, that would seep, into them, back into them, the culture, would become, inculcated, in their lives, and so stain, their character, let me say, nothing has changed, little has changed, for the day we live in, we live in a society, soaked in it, don't we, really we do, sex sells everything, from toothpaste, to holidays, it's assumed these days, that people have, will have experienced, and experimented, in sexual activity, way before, they get married, and to remain, sexually inactive, until marriage, is far from the norm, even seen, as being square, these days, it's reflected, in the TV shows, it's promoted, on reality TV, dating shows, saturates the internet, and homosexuality, is celebrated, form of sexual expression, it just is, sexual immorality, is an everyday thing, for those, outside of, biblical Christianity, it's seen, as little different, from having a cup of tea, or coffee, after a date, it's seen, as an exciting way, fun to experiment with, and no one seems, to count the cost, and yet it does, in all kinds of ways, and so brothers, and sisters in Christ, we need to swim, against the tide, of our culture, we need to teach, against it, and we need, to live against it, and we need, to teach, our children, from, their youth, by word, and by deed, just a little thing,

I don't think, I'm fantastic, at this, but the other night, I did do something, about it, I have banned, Bridgerton, from being watched, in our house, there you go, it's on Netflix, I've heard, I haven't seen it, but I've heard, that, it has, graphic sex scenes, with, multiple people, in it, so I just said, no, we're not going to have it, in our house, not going to watch it, now I could do better, with a whole lot of other stuff, I'm sure, but, I've made a stand, once, so far, so the question, to ask, when watching TV, is this, would I be comfortable, with Jesus, sitting beside me, watching this, because like it or not, he is closer than we think, because he is present, by his spirit, isn't he, he dwells in us, by his Holy Spirit, now not only, is sexual immorality, common outside, of biblical Christianity, it's sadly, all too common, we heard about it, haven't we, in all kinds of different, experiences in history, in our lives, that it actually happens, inside,

Christian communities, as well, and we see, and know, the destruction, and the shame, that it brings to families, and children, and churches, when it does, and so, we must never, go in that direction, so one major, of holy living, will mean, that we abstain, we avoid, sexual immorality, we'll flee from it, which brings us, to verse four, that each, one of you, know, how to control, his own body, in holiness, and honour, not in the passion, of lust, like the Gentiles, who do not know God, that's how we're to learn, what we learn, to know, to do, abstain, means not participate in, our minds, are to rule, our desires, and sinful desires, are not to rule, our bodies, passionate lust, is not to rule, our bodies, that's how, we're to abstain, that's how, to refuse, to engage, in sexual morality, to rule our hearts, not of our hearts, rule us, and so, can I encourage us, in a couple of things here,

I've got a slide up here, I don't know if you've seen it, but there's a thing, I've encouraged people to use, it's called, Verses, there you go, you can get a thing called, Verses app, on your phone, and you can, memorise, bits of the Bible, some of us in groups, I've been in the past, have got a hold of it, and you can, get it down, it's got games to play, to entertain you, while you learn, to actually, learn memory verses, it's called Verses app, and so, here is a verse, that I have tried to memorise, lots of times, and I'm, getting there, right, I'm not that good at memory verses, but here's, Philippians chapter 4, verse 8, is a good verse, to have, to have, poked into our brain, and when you're, in your memory, then you can actually, meditate on it, right, and so it goes, something like this, see if I can get it, finally brothers, whatever is, whatever is, true,

I think it is, is that right, whatever is, holy, honourable, starts with H, I knew that, whatever is honourable, okay, whatever is just, whatever is pure, if there's anything, well no, whatever is, is there another, whatever, whatever is lovely, okay, whatever is lovely, whatever is, commendable, if there's anything, excellent, if there's anything, worthy of praise, something like that, yeah, think about these things, so there's a memory verse, that I'd encourage you to, I haven't memorised it, have I, but I'm trying to, to log into our heads, and have those, those things, whatever is, commendable, anything excellent, whatever is worthy of praise, think about these things, change the way, that we think about things, and that will help us, to change the way, that we live, meditate on these things, so there's, there's a thing we could do, verses app, and memory verse, maybe we can try and,

[21 : 26] I keep saying it to people, all the time, trying to memorise it, and I don't say it for a few weeks, and I've forgotten it, so there you go, anyway, verse five, the Gentiles, those who do not know God, are without hope, without in the world, that's the way, that the Gentiles live, but we're to be different, that's not to be the case, for those in Christ Jesus, our minds, we sit on things above, not on earthly things, not on the lusts of the heart, and notice here, when someone is sexually immoral, the truth is, we transgress, we sin against our brother, now how do you do that, verse six, how is it, that we actually transgress, our brother in Christ, well, we take from them, what is not ours to take, the gift of virginity, going into marriage, or violating the sanctity, of marriage, for those who are in it, and notice it's the male, who's held responsible here, the men are to, the ones who are to lead, in holiness, it's the men, and if we cross the line, it hurts everyone, it destroys the immediate relationship, it affects a future relationship, and we damage ourselves, and others, we're taking from those, that we will marry, or those who are married, and notice also, this gets a bit harder, look at this, notice also, when we, we're not to do it, because the Lord, is an avenger, right, the Lord is an avenger, which means, we also need to, not just fear man, the implications in this life here, but fear God, for the Lord knows, can't hide anything from him, and the Lord will judge, and so the Lord will punish, that's what a vengeance means, and we're told that judgment begins, at the household of God, 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 17, and we're told that what we do in this world matters, 1 Corinthians chapter 3, that there are natural consequences for sins, scars and emotions, broken trust, broken bodies, and the real danger, of coming under the wrath of God, 1 Corinthians chapter 6, is a sober warning, 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 8, but you yourselves, he's talking to the Corinthian church, right, as he's talking to, but you yourselves, wrong and defraud, even your own brothers, do you not know, that the unrighteous, will not inherit the kingdom of God, do not be deceived, neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men, who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit, the kingdom of God,

God takes it seriously, and this is something, that Paul's already taught them, notice, he's already taught them this stuff, he said, don't go there, why?

Well, see verse 7, verse 7 says this, for God has not called us, for impurity, but in holiness, God calls us, to himself, for a purpose, and that is, not for a life, of impurity, but he's called us, into a realm, of holiness, a kingdom of holiness, a kingdom separate, from the world, we live in, day by day, so we're not called, to a vocation, we're called, to something, far far greater, we are called, to a location, set aside, to be sons, and daughters of God, into his family, into his kingdom, into holiness, and that kingdom, of holiness is good, let me tell you that, how wonderful, how beautiful, to be a community, of people, who love each other, dearly from the heart, who care for each other, who want the best, for each other, who can only think, rightly about each other, where it's safe, to be amongst, not going to be taken, advantage of by anybody, a kingdom, where men, are treating women, with high respect, and are treasuring them, and rightly caring, for them, a kingdom, where men, are looking out, for the welfare, of others, a kingdom, where women, feel safe, and nurtured, and honoured, see we are tempted, to think, that living a holy life, is boring, that living a holy life, is drudgery, that a holy life, lacks joy, and that it's not the best way, that God's a kill joy, that God doesn't want, the best for us, that God would rather, us be miserable, but that is a lie, of the devil, and it's the lie, of the devil, that's been going around, since Genesis chapter 3, where the devil, tells the lady,

God doesn't want, the best for you, he wants to, not give you the good things, and tempt into sin, that's the lie, of the devil, has begun in the garden, and continues to this day, God wants the best, for us, and his way, is the best for us, and so you see, there's a severe warning, verse 8, this is a severe warning, if anyone rejects, this teaching, see that, whoever disregards this, disregards not man, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit, to you, see if anyone, rejects this teaching, they're not rejecting, my teaching, they're not rejecting, Paul's teaching, they are rejecting, God, himself, now that's a very dangerous, position to be in, you don't want to actually, be found, to be telling God, he's not God,

I know better than you, and I wonder if, leaders of some of the, mainline denominations, those who would seek, to bless, that which God, calls immoral, have ever read this, disregarding God, has serious consequences, both now, and in the future, so we must pay, close attention to ourselves, mustn't we, because notice, it's God who gives, his spirit to his people, he gives his spirit, the spirit of God, his Holy Spirit, is given to us, and that dwells in, us, so it doesn't matter, whether we're 16 or 76, the pressure, is all around about us, to give in to the ways, of the world, and disregard, how God would have us live, and God's will for our lives, is our sanctification, it's our holiness, particularly, in this area, of sexual immorality, now that's not, where the passage ends, it goes on, to talk about, how he might live, in a different area as well, and just like, he commends them, for the way they have, pleased God, when it comes to the sexual, purity, the Thessalonians, he commends them, for their love, he urges them, to live a sober life, one in which, they will live quietly, and mind their own affairs, their love is, clearly on display, for each other, and for the churches, in Macedonia, that is the Bereans, and the Philippians, how wonderful, is that their love, for Jesus, flows out, in their lives, for each other, and the believers, in other cities, again, they are to continue, loving one another, more and more, you see that there, that more and more, verse 10, we urge you brothers, to do this, more and more, that's the word, for us as well,

[29 : 49] I'm sure, may that be, a distinctive mark, of our church, that flows out of us, that we live, love each other, more and more, and love others, beyond us, more and more, now we love Jesus, because he first loved us, and we love God, the one who sent his son, and gave his Holy Spirit, to us, and we love his word, which reveals God's love, for us, and shows us, how we're to live, in this world, and we love God's people, because they are our brothers, and sisters in Christ, and we love the lost, that they would know, the love of Jesus too, and so be rescued, from the coming wrath, of Jesus, and brought into the kingdom, of his son, that's not a bad way, to summarise, the Thessalonian church, and it'd be a nice way, at one level, to summarise our church, as well, and their love, flows out, to contributing, for the needs of others, engaging in profitable work, notice, they're not being dependent, upon others, and they could provide, for themselves, and then they can provide, for others who can't, in a society, where physical labour, was seen as demeaning, and looked down upon, the Thessalonians, are hard working, minding their own business, living in quiet, sober lives, and so doing, knows what they do, look what happens, when they do that, they commend, the gospel, to the outsiders, so you may walk, properly verse 12, before outsiders, but the world outside, would see, that we're actually different, and they might be, influenced, at one level, just by our life, and our lip, to follow Lord Jesus as well, well the great danger, of a passage like this, is that we hear it, and the scars, of the sins, of the past, rise up, to condemn us, so I don't want to leave you, in that situation, we need to know, that there is a sure hope, that lifts us, out of despair, and raises us, to the heights, of heavenly hope, our relationship, with the true and living God, is not based upon, our performance, or our latest failing, but on the finished work, of Jesus at the cross, for God's word tells us, as we've already prayed, this morning, when we confess our sins, to him, and asking forgiveness, he does forgive us, and he removes our sin, as far as the east, is from the west, he washes us clean, washes us whiter than snow, we're given a fresh start, we can actually, push on in life, knowing that the past, is forgiven, there may be consequences, yes, but we're not to beat ourselves up, over past failures, as we repent, and change, and move forward, as we live each day, honouring Jesus,

Lord and Saviour, we're not alone, he's given us his Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, and strengthen us, to resist the temptation, and to live lives, of holiness, and to walk, in such a way, that's distinctive, as we wait, for the coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring us, safely home, so let's pray to him, our Father in heaven, we ask in your mercy, that you would help us, to live, in ways, which are pleasing to you, that we would abstain, from sexual immorality, that we'd live, lives of holiness, in this world, in this age we live in, and pray Father, you'd help us, to be those, who love each other, deeply, for we know that love, covers a multitude of sins, and that this love, will be evident to all, in our church, and beyond, for we ask in Jesus name,

Amen. Amen.