

Paul's Hope and Expectation for Believers: Spiritual Maturity Means Personal Purity (1 Thes 4:3-8)

1 Thes 3:8-13 – Hope & Expectation – What Does a Mature Believer Look Like?

1. That they would remain standing in the Lord (8)
2. That Paul would get the chance to see them, in order to repair what was missing in their faith (9-10)
3. That they would increase and abound in sacrificial care toward each other, following Paul's example (11-12)
4. That God would fixate their hearts blameless in active holiness as judged in the presence of God at the return of their Lord Jesus (13)

1 Thes 4:1-3 – Purposeful Maturity – How Does it Happen?

How does Christian maturity happen? Do we grow up automatically? Accidentally? Arbitrarily? NO!!

1. The Process of Maturity – building one truth on another, and living the truths we are taught
2. The Activity of Maturity – continual practice (walking) with continual purpose (pleasing God)
3. The Expansion of Maturity – considers current growth, but aims for overflowing spirituality!
4. The Necessity of Maturity – not a choice but a necessity; God's will, not pastoral creativity
5. The Elements of Maturity – involves stopping, starting, and avoiding different behaviors

Specifics of One Aspect of Spiritual Maturity – Personal Purity (Holiness) Practiced in Our Lives

1. **The Mandate of God Revealed – “this is the will of God” – God wants this in YOUR life! (3a)**
 - Interested in God's will for your life? Look no further! (several; cf. 5:18)
2. **The Maturity Area Stated – Your sanctification – your practical holiness (3b)**
 - **Heb 12:14** “Pursue peace with all [people], and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:”
 - One key area – your becoming clean, set apart, holy, in a way that is practiced (it is not presented as positional here). (v. 3, 4, 7 “holiness”; also similar in 3:13 – agiosune & “saint”; v. 8 – “holy spirit”)
3. **The Maturity Area Defined Negatively (3c) – “that you abstain from sexual immorality” – porneia**
 - Spiritual maturity involves starting some things
 - Spiritual maturity involves stopping some things
 - Spiritual maturity involves avoiding some things – “to hold oneself off”

SEXUAL IMMORALITY (porneia)

“understood as any type of unlawful sexual activity from prostitution to adultery or fornication” (Wanamaker, C. A. (1990). *The Epistles to the Thessalonians : A commentary on the Greek text*. Spine title: Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians.; Includes indexes. (151). Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans.

OUR CULTURE OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY – no shame; growing perversion; commercialized

- **Entertainment** – sexually immoral movies (most of them have some element of porneia), sports, music, novels, books & magazines, internet, bar lifestyle, etc.
- **Dress** – provocative and revealing (when clothes were designed to hide our nakedness and cover our bodies); no shame – we show our skin; we show our shape. MEN too! (God covered both Eve and Adam!).
- **Relationships** – internet chats; talk; pairing off without consideration of commitment; living together; Christian sex; recreational sex (“dating”), sex outside of marriage; same-sex marriage; prostitution; affairs within marriage

We feed the very thing God has commanded us to avoid, and we immerse ourselves in it in every way.

4. **The Maturity Area Defined Positively (4) – “that each of you ... possess his own vessel...”**

For each of us our own bodies to be able to handle in holiness and honor (BOTH are important). You can be holy and dishonorable; or unholy yet honorable?? A stewardship of self-control (a fruit of the Spirit) with two key characteristics. As stated, it indicates acquiring control of our vessel is something we each must learn how to do.

It is your job to learn (or to acquire) self-control of your own body

It is your job to possess your body in practical holiness – avoiding sexually immoral input and practices

It is your job to possess your body in honor

5. **The Maturity Area Contrasted with Unbelievers (5)**

Sanctification (holiness, purity) is NOT living like the world lives! It is NOT living by feelings of desire – what feels good, sounds good, looks good. Why live like those who have no power to live otherwise? We are to be God-driven – principle-driven – love-driven (what is best for the other person) – Are YOU any different from the world in this area???

Eph 4:17-24 ¹⁷ This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. ²⁰ But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

6. **The Seriousness of Sanctification (6)**

- **Sexual Immorality is SINFUL** – it is a trespass against the other person (you are sinning against them even if they participate – it assumes they do!) – and thus against God

Principal (1 Cor 7:1) – don't touch until he/she belongs to you. He/she is NOT here to satisfy your desires! God created sex. He designed it for your enjoyment – but in only ONE scenario – marriage. All other is porneia. It is not entertainment, etc. It is intimacy reserved by God for marriage (see OT!).

- **Sexual Immorality is SELFISH** – you do not love them; you are taking advantage of them
- **[Sexual Immorality Violates the FAMILY principle (1 Tim 5:1-2)]**
- **Sexual Immorality is TARGETED BY GOD** (“the Lord is the avenger – the Punisher – of all such”)

God will punish those who commit sexual immorality! It DOES matter what you do, and those who violate God's commands that we are obligated to keep will experience.

- *This life – misery, brokenness (e.g. David), ripple effect; broken testimony (you and ripple effect); sexual diseases, guilt; goofed up families (single moms, kids with no dads, etc.); spiral downhill; loss of true joy; promotion of Satan's agenda; broken marriages (often more than one); no true relationships; hurt family, children (stigma, even).*
- *The next life – negative spiritual impact on you, your family, your children, your extended family and your posterity; your church family; your extended spiritual family; loss of eternal rewards; eternal influencing others away from God; prevention of some from believing because of your behavior; rejection of the Gospel and the truth.*

Some of us have been here in various points in our lives. We need to acknowledge the utter sinfulness of sexual immorality, and commit by God's grace to live for Him and reject the claws of sexual immorality. Confess to God. Take measures to AVOID sin. It's much easier than fixing what breaks when we disobey our Loving God and His Clear Will. We need to hear this over and over (even more in our time).

7. **God's Purpose in His Calling (7)**

You are NOT called to uncleanness (living by lustful or impure motives), but to holiness – it is your job. (e.g. customer service – “people bug me”) – it is not just something we do as Christians, it defines the very essence of Christianity, the very reason Christ died, the realm in which we are suppose to live and proclaim the Gospel of God. If we live in sinfulness, we are without any eternal effect on our family and the culture in which we live.

- **Rom 1:24** Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, *[living by uncleanness is a curse or punishment that people are unaware of]*
- **Rom 6:19** I speak in human [terms] because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *[leading]* to *[more]* lawlessness, so now present your members *[as]* slaves *[of]* righteousness for holiness.
- **Gal 5:19** Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

8. **The Bottom Line of this Area of Maturity (and Maturity in General, as God Sees It) (8)**

- *If You Reject Sanctification, Personal Purity, You Are Rejecting God, not Man. It's not our idea. We ourselves are sinful creatures with sinful natures that would revel in sin until it killed us if not for the grace of God. No, you are not rejecting us, you are rejecting God Himself. He gave commands. He revealed His will with you. You are picking a fight with God, not men, on this, and He's already promised to punish you if you do (and God has never lost an argument, or failed to keep a promise).*
- *If You Reject Sanctification, Personal Purity, You Are Violating the Indwelling Holy Spirit (Randy – “forcing or dragging the Holy Spirit along to participate with your activity”) – there's no way not to drag God into this! – 1 Cor 6:15-20*