

1 Thessalonians 4:3 Commentary

PREVIOUS

CLICK VERSE
To go directly to that verse

NEXT

- [1 Thes 4:1](#)
- [1 Thes 4:2](#)
- [1 Thes 4:3](#)
- [1 Thes 4:4](#)
- [1 Thes 4:5](#)
- [1 Thes 4:6](#)
- [1 Thes 4:7](#)
- [1 Thes 4:8](#)
- [1 Thes 4:9](#)
- [1 Thes 4:10](#)
- [1 Thes 4:11](#)
- [1 Thes 4:12](#)
- [1 Thes 4:13](#)
- [1 Thes 4:14](#)
- [1 Thes 4:15](#)
- [1 Thes 4:16](#)
- [1 Thes 4:17](#)
- [1 Thes 4:18](#)

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN
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Chart by Charles Swindoll

1 Thessalonians Overview									
1 Th 1:1-10		1 Th 2:1-20		1 Th 3:1-13		1 Th 4:1-18		1 Th 5:1-28	
LOOKING BACK					LOOKING FORWARD				
Personal Reflections History					Practical Instructions Hortatory				
Ministry In Person			Ministry in Absentia (Thru Timothy)		Ministry by Epistle				
Word and Power of the Spirit			Establishing & Comforting		Calling & Conduct		1Th 4:13ff Comfort		1Th 5:12ff Commands
1 Salvation		2 Service		3 Sanctification		4 Sorrow		5 Sobriety	
Paul Commends Spiritual Growth		Paul Founds the Church		Strengthening of the Church		Directions for Spiritual Growth		Holy Living in Light of Day of the Lord	
Exemplary Hope of Young Converts		Motivating Hope of Faithful Servants		Purifying Hope of Tried Believers		Comforting Hope of Bereaved Saints		Invigorating Hope of Diligent Christians	
Written from Corinth Approximately 51AD									

1Thessalonians 4:3 [For this is the will of God, your sanctification](#); that is, that you [abstain from sexual immorality](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [touto gar estin](#) (3SPAI) [thelema tou theou. o hagasmos humon apechesthai](#) (PMN) [humas apo tes porneias](#)

Amplified: For this is the will of God, that you should be consecrated (separated and set apart for pure and holy living): that you should abstain and shrink from all sexual vice, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: God wants you to be holy, so you should keep clear of all sexual sin. [NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: God's plan is to make you holy, and that entails first of all a clean cut with sexual immorality. [Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: for this is the will of God, your being set apart [from sin to holiness], that you should hold yourselves off from fornication;

Young's Literal: for this is the will of God -- your sanctification; that ye abstain from the whoredom,

FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD YOUR SANCTIFICATION: touto gar estin (3SPAI) thelema tou theou o hagasmos humon

- 1 Th 5:18; Ps 40:8; 143:10; Mt 7:21; 12:50; Mk 3:35; John 4:34; 7:17; Ro 12:2; Eph 5:17; 6:6; Col 1:9; 4:12; Heb 10:36; 13:21; 1 Pe 4:2; 1 Jn 2:17
- 1Th 4:4; 5:23; Jn 17:17, 18, 19; Acts 20:32; 26:18; Ro 6:22;; 1Co 1:30; 6:11; Ep 5:26,27; 2Th 2:13; Titus 2:14; 1Pe 1:2
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Resources](#)- Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See list below for Multiple Excellent Resources on Dealing with Lusts, etc from Dr John Piper](#)
- [See Series of 4 Messages from Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones on Romans 8:12-13](#)

1 Thessalonians 4 can be divided as follows...

1 Thes 4:1-2 = General Call to a God Pleasing Walk

1 Thes 4:3-12 = Specific Aspects of God Pleasing Walk

1 Thes 4:3-8 = Sanctification in Area of Sexual Purity

1 Thes 4:9-12 = Sanctification in Area of Love and Work

1 Thes 4:13-18 = Hope for Grieving Saints

For (gar) Notice the little preposition "**for**" (there are over 7000 "for's" in Scripture) and if the [context](#) indicates, as it does in this passage, that the "for" is a [term of explanation](#), pause and ask yourself what is the Spirit seeking to explain? In fact, stop reading right now and observe and see if you can determine what for is explaining. Notice how pausing to ponder will always force you to examine the [context](#). You can (and should) practice this simple discipline every time you encounter a for, and while not every instance is a term of explanation, a "for" at the beginning of a verse is almost always is used with that grammatical sense. I guarantee that if you begin to "pause and ponder," you will radically rejuvenate your "Read Through the Bible in a Year" program! You might even get a small journal and begin to keep notes on what the Spirit illuminates and how this truth can be applied to your daily life.

Here the use of "for" enforces the assertion that his **commandments** were "by (the authority of) the Lord Jesus", the One Who always did the will of His Father and explains what is involved in living God-pleasing lives in harmony with the orders that had been given. The charges delivered to the converts did not originate with the missionaries but were expressive of the will of God. And since this is the will of God, believers are to let it be their will also.

Related Resource

- [The Will Of God](#)

Eadie says "*for* (gar) introduces an illustrative reason" and that "*touto* (is) emphatic in position."

Paul like a commanding officer who has received his orders from the Captain of the Host (cp, Joshua 5:14, 15), passes along the

order (commandment - 1Th 4:2-note) as an officer would do to his subordinates.

As **Jesus** instructed His disciples...

If you love Me, keep My **commandments** (John 14:15)

You are My friends if you do whatever I **command** you (John 15:14)

To please God is to do His will

Nathanael Emmons - Holiness has love for its essence, humility for its clothing, the good of others as its employment, and the honor of God as its end

This - This demonstrative pronoun is in essence the "subject" of the sentence and introduces what follows, all that is comprehended in **this** being designated as **the will of God**.

How often Christians search hither and yon for how to determine God's will. As one commentator has concluded, behind this interest to determine God's will is a desire to have Him make our choice for us! In this passage God's will is clearly revealed and needs no guess work, no attendance at a seminar, etc. All that is left once this passage is read is the choice of whether the reader will obey His good and acceptable and perfect will. His will or my will. Do you want to be holy? If you do (and you should) you the choice is clear - His will done on earth in your life as it is in heaven. You will never regret doing His will.

The will of God - Literally "a thing willed" by God, His will being best ascertained in His Word, the only place that gives His will in absolute terms! There are many areas where we do not know the explicit will of God but sexual behavior is not one of them. To please God is to do His will and to do His will is to be continually becoming holy in the area of sexual morality. Christians daily have a choice to yield themselves to God's sovereign will or assert their own independent will. Don't attempt to live the Christian life without the Bible for if you do, you are far more likely to seek your sinful will than His perfect will. We should be grateful that God has given believers His absolutes in this vital area of sexual conduct so we can make clear, decisive decisions that are pleasing to our Father.

Harry Ironside introduces this chapter noting that...

In this section the apostle set forth the walk that pleases God. During his ministry among the Thessalonians, Paul had been careful to emphasize the practical side of Christianity. Sometimes we are apt to neglect this. We are so taken up with doctrine that we do not sufficiently stress our responsibilities as believers. Both sides of Christianity are important.

There is a special warning in this passage against sins of impurity. In Paul's day, immorality was so common among the heathen that even Christians were apt to look on it with a measure of indifference or even complacency. As Alexander Pope wrote:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien*,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

(*Mien = air or bearing especially as expressive of attitude or personality)

Among pagan nations the vilest kind of lasciviousness was connected with the worship of their false gods. But our God is infinitely holy and we who know Him are called to be careful to avoid every tendency to uncleanness. (1Thessalonians)

Gloag notes that "The phrase, "the will of God," has two significations in Scripture: the one is the determination of God—his decree; the other is his desire, that in which he delights—a will, however, which may be frustrated by the perversity of his creatures. It is in this latter sense that the word is here employed. ([The Pulpit Commentary: New Testament](#))

Hiebert - Such a setting forth of the will of God should be of vital interest to believers; it should provide the direction and inspiration of their lives. Christian conduct must have its source in the divine plan. The obligation being pressed upon them roots in God's revelation of His will for them. It is His will that His people should be holy precisely because He Himself is holy (Lev 11:44, 45, etc.; 1Pe 1:15, 16-see notes). ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

Vine makes the point that "The character of a person is expressed in his **will**; therefore, since God is holy, He can desire only holiness for His children, (*"but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.'*" 1Pe 1:15, 16-**notes** 1Pe 1:15, 16). But all men by nature follow the desires, **thēlemata**, of the flesh and of the mind, (*"Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."* Ep 2:3-notes), and are thus in inveterate opposition to the will of God,

("those who are in the flesh cannot please God" - Ro 8:8-note ("A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised." 1Cor 2:14). Hence the need of all men for a new and spiritual birth, ("Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God... Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" - John 3:5, 7), and for that conversion to the state of the child which is the evidence of the new birth, ("Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" - Matthew 18:3); and hence, too, the need for that lifelong discipline in which is learned by experience "what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God," ("I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Ro 12:1,2 -see notes [Ro 12:1](#); 12:2) ("so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." 1Pe 4:2-note) ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

Will (2307)(**thelema** from **thelo** = to will with the "-ma" suffix indicating the result of the will = "a thing willed") generally speaks of the result of what one has decided. One sees this root word in the feminine name "**Thelma**." In its most basic form, **thelema** refers to a wish, a strong desire, and the willing of some event. (**Note:** See also the discussion of the preceding word **boule** for comments relating to thelema).

Zodhiates says that **thelema** is the "Will, not to be conceived as a demand, but as an expression or inclination of pleasure towards that which is liked, that which pleases and creates joy. When it denotes God's will, it signifies His gracious disposition toward something. Used to designate what God Himself does of His own good pleasure. ([Zodhiates, S. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. AMG](#))

Thelema has both an objective meaning ("what one wishes to happen" or what is willed) and a subjective connotation ("the act of willing or desiring"). The word conveys the idea of desire, even a heart's desire, for the word primarily expresses emotion instead of volition. Thus God's will is not so much God's intention, as it is His heart's desire.

Thelema - 62x in 58v - **NAS** = desire(1), desires(1), will(57).

Mt 6:10; 7:21; 12:50; 18:14; 21:31; 26:42; Mark 3:35; Luke 12:47; 22:42; 23:25; Jn 1:13; 4:34; 5:30; 6:38, 39, 40; 7:17; 9:31; Acts 13:22; 21:14; 22:14; Ro 1:10-note; Ro 2:18-note; Ro 12:2-note; Ro 15:32-note; 1Cor 1:1; 7:37; 16:12; 2Cor 1:1; 8:5; Gal 1:4; Ep 1:1-note, Ep 1:5-note, Ep 1:9-note, Ep 1:11-note; Ep 2:3-note; Ep 5:17-note; Ep 6:6-note; Col 1:1-note, Col 1:9-note; Col 4:12-note; 1Th 4:3-note; 1Th 5:18-note; 2Ti 1:1-note; 2Ti 2:26-note; He 10:7-note, He 10:9-note, He 10:10-note, He 10:36-note; He 13:21-note; 1Pe 2:15-note; 1Pe 3:17-note; 1Pe 4:2-note, 1Pe 4:19-note; 2Pe 1:21-note; 1Jn 2:17; 5:14; Rev 4:11 [note](#).

Knowing God's Will - I tell my friends in jest that I make three difficult decisions every day: What should I eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? I live in Singapore, where we enjoy the food of the Chinese, Malay, and Indian cultures, to name just a few. We are spoiled by having so many choices.

Life is full of decisions—far more serious ones than choosing what to eat. Perhaps this explains why some people constantly wonder what God's will is for their lives.

Discovering God's will is not necessarily a complicated process. He has given us many simple and clearly stated principles for life. For example, we are told, "This is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1Pe 2:15-note). In 1Th 4:3 we read, "This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality." And in 1Th 5:18-note we are told, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

As we live by faith and do what the Bible clearly tells us to do, we can be sure the Lord will lead us through the difficult decisions when the options may not be clear. Above all else, God's will is that we submit to Him and be willing to follow wherever He leads. — Albert Lee

If you will choose to do God's will
And follow what is right,
God will confirm to you His truth
And give you greater light. —D. De Haan

**The best way to know God's will
is to say "I will" to God.**

Your sanctification - (Literally "your sanctifying"). Keep the cultural context in mind as you study this section. Remember that a major problem for the early church was maintaining sexual purity (e.g., see 1Cor 5:1, 9, 10, 11).

See related discussion in notes on Romans 1:23

Greek cities like Thessalonica were wide open to all kinds of sexual looseness, including immorality associated with their pagan idol worship. Pagan religions did not demand sexual purity of their devotees, and their so-called gods and goddesses were themselves grossly immoral. These so-called gods were half human, half god, and as immoral as the hearts of the vain imaginings of the men who hatched them and gave them a license to act according to their lewd desires. Their consciences became dull and hardened and the law of the conscience had little effect (cp Ro 2:14, 15-notes Ro 2:14; 15). There were even priestesses (little more than "religious" prostitutes) in the pagan temples who were to help the men who came to "worship" the immoral idols. In fact it is a bit ironic that there were 1000 priestess prostitutes at the Temple of Aphrodite in **Corinth** - the very city from which Paul was writing these words about walking in holiness! Roman culture had few sexual boundaries and the Greek religion considered prostitution a priestly prerogative. The sanctity of marriage was so distorted that extramarital sex was actually considered to be an act of worship. Paul is saying in this section that for believers the **will of God** is holiness and that such a lifestyle excludes sexual immorality! No appeal to Christian liberty or freedom can justify fornication. Such appeals have no Biblical mandate and in fact only give rise to licentiousness.

Barclay as he often does has an interesting note to help understand the historical/cultural context...

In Rome for the first five hundred and twenty years of the Republic there had not been a single divorce; but now under the Empire, as it has been put, divorce was a matter of caprice. As **Seneca** said,

Women were married to be divorced and divorced to be married.

In Rome the years were identified by the names of the consuls; but it was said that fashionable ladies identified the years by the names of their husbands. Juvenal quotes an instance of a woman who had eight husbands in five years. Morality was dead.

In Greece immorality had always been quite blatant. Long ago **Demosthenes** had written

We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for the day-to-day needs of the body; we keep wives for the begetting of children and for the faithful guardianship of our homes.

So long as a man supported his wife and family there was no shame whatsoever in extra-marital relationships.

It was to men and women who had come out of a society like that that Paul wrote this paragraph. What may seem to many the merest commonplace of Christian living was to them startlingly new. One thing Christianity did was to lay down a completely new code in regard to the relationship of men and women; it is the champion of purity and the guardian of the home. This can not be affirmed too plainly in our own day which again has seen a pronounced shift in standards of sexual behaviour. ([Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series. The Westminster Press](#))

As **Gloag** rightly remarks...

Our holiness is the great design of Christ's death, and is the revealed will of God. ([The Pulpit Commentary: New Testament; Old Testament; Ages Software](#))

Hiebert reminds that...

Since God is holy and separated from sin, this "sanctifying" must express itself in purity of life. The possessive genitive **your** means that this sanctifying process is God's **will** for the readers personally. Because of their living union with Christ, believers are **the holy ones** (the saints) and therefore **can** and **should** seek daily to grow in personal holiness in **character** and **conduct**. ([Ibid](#)) (Bolding added)

Barnes writes that **holiness** (hagiasmos)...

means here purity of life, and particularly abstinence from those vices which debase and degrade the soul. Sanctification consists in two things,

(1.) in "ceasing to do evil;" and

(2.) in "learning to do well." Or in other words, the first work of sanctification is in overcoming the propensities to evil in our nature, and checking and subduing the unholy habits which we had formed before we became Christians; the second part of the work consists in cultivating the positive principles of holiness in the soul.

R. J. Stewart

Holy has the same root as wholly, it means complete. A man is not complete in spiritual stature if all his mind, heart, soul, and strength are not given to God.

Richison has some excellent advice on the **will of God** warning us that...

Christians cannot set their sail as to how the wind may blow. That is relative ethics. We must set our sail according to the will of God, which may mean that we sail against the prevailing winds of opinion. We want to sail in the same direction God is going. Before we can do the will of God, we must be willing to do His will no matter what the cost. The Christian who is willing to open himself to God's will unconditionally is the Christian God will use.

If any man is **willing** (present tense = as their lifestyle. Verb = thelo - active decision of one's will implying volition and purpose) to **do** (present tense - note he says not just know but do as your habitual practice!) His **will**, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself. (**John 7:17**)

It is possible to understand the will of God. It is no mysterious, ethereal, abstruse will. God reveals His will in very clear terms.

So then do not be foolish, but **understand** (present imperative = command to make this your daily practice) what the **will of the Lord is**. (see **note Ephesians 5:17**)

It is possible to **test the will of God**. We do this by a "renewed mind.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (see **note Romans 12:1; 12:2**).

Those committed to living carnal lives cannot prove the will of God. We cannot conform ourselves to the world and find God's will at the same time. These things are mutually exclusive.

Do not love (present imperative with a negative = stop an action in progress) the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who **does the will of God** abides forever" (**1 John 2:15-17**)

It is possible to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (see **note Colossians 4:12**)

The motto of one of my alma maters, William Tyndale College, is

**The will of God,
nothing more,
nothing less,
nothing else.**

Getting into the will of God and staying there gives the believer a great sense of satisfaction. Certain things in the Christian life are not open to debate. We do not rethink our view of sexuality. We do not rationalize sexual sin so that it meets some convenient need that we perceive that we might have. (**1Thessalonians 4:3**) (Bolding added)

Sanctification (**38**)(**hagiasmos** from **hagiazō** = sanctify from **hagios** = holy, set apart, consecrated) literally means **sanctification** and includes the ideas of consecration, purification, dedication and holiness. The dominant idea of sanctification is separation from the secular and sinful and setting apart for a sacred purpose, for God's special use, all made possible by the atoning work of Christ. **Hagiasmos** does not denote the state of holiness but rather the process of being made holy, of becoming more and more in character and conduct that which God desires us to be. A sanctified person puts himself or herself at the complete disposal of God.

Eadie comments...

Your sanctification is God's will; and His will for you under this aspect, and in your present position in Thessalonica, is that you abstain from fornication, which the heathen around you scarcely reckon a sin, and to which previous habits, beliefs, and surrounding temptations may be ever tempting you. ([A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistles to the Thesslonians](#))

In 1Th 3:13-note Paul used **hagiosune** which is the state of being holy.

It is fascinating to note that the most concentrated use of the masculine noun **hagiasmos** is found here in 1Thessalonians 4:1-7 where we encounter 3 of the 10 NT uses. (1Th 4:3, 4, 7 see notes 1Th 4:3, 4:4; 4:7)

The idea of sanctification is that something or someone is set aside for the use intended by the designer. For example, a fountain pen is "set aside" or "sanctified" for the purpose of writing. A pair of glasses is "sanctified" and set aside for use in improving one's sight. In short, as used in the Bible, things are sanctified when they are used for the purpose God intended. A human being is sanctified, therefore, when he or she lives according to God's design and purpose, walking in a manner which is pleasing to His and worthy of His great Name. That is the practical meaning of **hagiasmos**.

G. Campbell Morgan was right when he said that the church did the most for the world when the church was the least like the world.

Resources Related to Holiness and Sanctification:

- Holiness Quotes
- The Lord Who Sanctifies
- The Lord Who Sanctifies 2
- Holiness by J. C. Ryle
- Exposition of 1 Peter 1:15-16 "Be Holy as He is Holy"
- The Attributes of God - His Holiness
- The Holiness of God - by A W Pink
- [Why Would Anyone Want to be Holy? 33 pp booklet in Pdf](#)
- [John Piper's Strategies for fighting lust](#)
- Puritan [Thomas Watson on "Sanctification"](#)
- [Thomas Brooks The Crown and Glory of Christianity or, Holiness the Only Way to Happiness](#)

THREE KINDS OF SANCTIFICATION

The New Testament delineates 3 kinds of sanctification...

(1) Positional sanctification - is the once for all setting apart of sinners as saints at the time of salvation when they are taken out of Adam and placed into Christ and His righteousness is imparted to them. This aspect of sanctification is possessed by every believer the moment of conversion and we will never be more saved than at the moment we put our trust in Christ. We are accepted in the Beloved and not because of who we are. (see 1Corinthians 1:2, 6:11, Acts 20:32, 26:18; He 2:11- note; He 10:10 - note)

**Our initial salvation experience:
A POINT IN TIME EVENT
OUR POSSESSION
OUR ETERNAL POSITION IN CHRIST**

When we are initially saved, the Bible sometimes refers to this as

we were **sanctified** (hagiazō) (1Co 6:11 [note](#)).

At the moment we confessed "with (our) mouth Jesus as Lord, and (believed) in (our) heart that God raised Him from the dead" (Ro 10:9-note) we were saved, sanctified or set apart from sin, Satan and this present evil age and unto God for His good pleasure and use.

The epistle to the Hebrews records that

By this will we **have been sanctified** (hagiazō) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
(He 10:10-note)

In Hebrews 10:10 (note) , **sanctified** is in the **perfect tense** which indicates a past completed action (the moment of salvation, a one time event when we were placed in Christ) with present ongoing effects or results. In other words, holiness is every saint's permanent possession, for at salvation we were made holy in Christ and will always be "holy" whether you feel holy or not.

(2) Progressive (practical) sanctification - is the process by which believers are set apart by God as a special people to grow spiritually in personal holiness and to develop Christ-like character this process continuing as long as we live. Progressive sanctification is the daily growth in grace, so that believers are becoming in practice more and more set apart for God's use. The primary means of sanctification is the Holy Word. The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and makes the child of God like the Son of God, as we walk in the Spirit and obey the Word. Stated another way, progressive sanctification is the Holy Spirit working in our lives to produce holiness in our walks. (see John 17:17, Eph 5:26 - note, Ro 6:19 - note, Heb 10:14 - note)

Our daily growth in Christ-likeness: A PROCESS OUR DAILY PRACTICE PROGRESSIVE

Sanctification includes the critical work of the Holy Spirit at conversion whereby we are set apart or born of the Spirit (#1 above). Once that has taken place, the Holy Spirit continues to work in us to make us more holy. That is the process of sanctification which continues throughout our lives.

As **Richard Shelley Taylor** said "Holiness is inwrought by the Holy Spirit, not because we have suffered, but because we have surrendered." (Yes, but that "surrender" does give us a pass to be passive in the process! We are 100% dependent, but we are also 100% responsible to kill sin. It is not "let go and let God," but "let God and let's go!")

(3) Perfect (ultimate, total) sanctification - is when we are fully and completely set apart to God in heaven and is also known as glorification (1Thes 3:13 -note; 1Thes 5:23 - note)

See the related study on the **Three Tenses of Salvation**.

Erwin W. Lutzer - Although we become Christians instantaneously by faith in Christ, knowing God and developing faith is a gradual process. There are no shortcuts to maturity. It takes time to be holy.

A T Robertson observes that in secular Greek **hagiasmos** conveyed the technical idea "of consecration to a god or goddess that did not include holiness in life. So Paul makes a sharp and pointed stand here for the Christian idea of sanctification as being "the will of God"... as further explained by the... infinitive **that ye abstain from fornication**. Pagan religion did not demand sexual purity of its devotees.

Oswald Chambers - It is quite true to say, "I can't live a holy life," but you can decide to let Jesus make you holy....he destined end of man is not happiness, nor health, but holiness. God's one aim is the production of saints. He is not an eternal blessing machine for men; he did not come to save men out of pity; he came to save men because he had created them to be holy.

Hagiasmos was used in the Greek pagan religions to describe buildings, altars or offerings set apart for religious purposes. The object set apart was thus declared sacred, holy, and devoted to religious purposes. In a similar way worshippers were set apart persons or religious devotees of the temple. As thus the people were sanctified just as was the temple or its utensils. In the same way, in the Bible, just as a sanctified building, lampstand, or utensil was designated to be used only in service to God, so too sanctified persons were set apart for His service. And in the process as already noted it is the Holy Spirit Who both sets us apart for God's service and empowers us to render that service.

In Paul's second epistle to the **Thessalonian** believers (whose faith had been shaken by false teachers cf 2Th 2:1, 2, 3ff) **Paul** reminds them of the source and security of their salvation, explaining that they are

brethren beloved (perfect tense = their permanent state) by the Lord, because God has chosen you (election -- middle voice = for Himself) from the beginning for salvation through **sanctification** (hagiasmos) **by the Spirit** (God's part) and faith (man's part, realizing that even faith is a gift) in the truth (believers need to stay "in the truth" for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ). ([2Thessalonians 2:13](#)).

The Spirit uses the Word of Truth (the Gospel) to convict men of sin, righteousness and the judgment to come (John 16:8), to point them to safety in the "Ark" of Christ and to set them apart from the world.

The writer of Hebrews then goes on to explain that...

by one offering (of His Own Body on the Cross) He (Christ, our Great High Priest) has perfected **perfect tense** = speaks of the permanence or eternality of this perfection) for all time those who are **sanctified** (present tense, passive voice {"divine passive" = God enables this progressive setting apart in believers} = more literally = "*are continuously being sanctified*" = speaks of the process of sanctification as discussed below). (see **note** Hebrews 10:14)

Having been saved, sanctified or set apart in the past, now daily we are being saved, sanctified or set apart from the world and unto God. (See topic Three Tenses of Salvation - see also the lengthy discussion by Lehman Strauss re [Regeneration, Justification and Sanctification](#)) The first **sanctification** is a one time event, never to be repeated. The second **sanctification** is a daily event and represents an ongoing process by which the Spirit is continually conforming us into the image of God's Son by producing internal transformation.

Paul says it this way...

we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror (the Word of Truth) the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. ([2Cor 3:18](#)).

Jesus prayed for the sanctification of saints, asking His Father to

Sanctify (aorist imperative) them in the Truth. Thy Word is Truth. (Jn 17:17)

Dearly beloved, if you are not in the Word daily (cf Mt 4:4), and the Word is not in you and/or you are not (as you are enabled by the Spirit) obeying the Word, you will not experience significant progressive sanctification. Peter charges believers (after exhorting them to lay aside growth stunting sins - see **note** 1 Peter 2:1) to be

like newborn babes (and) **long for** (aorist imperative = a command demanding urgent attention. Do this now! Don't delay! Do it effectively! Develop an appetite for, have an insatiable craving for) the pure milk of the word (unadulterated, no additives, not devotionals or books about the Word but the "pure Word"), that by it (they) may grow in respect to salvation (i.e., the process of sanctification or present tense salvation.") (see **note** 1 Peter 2:2)

The process of sanctification is dependent not only on the intake of the Word, but on our response to the Word. Is the Word "in one ear and out the other" or does it truly impact your walk, beloved? Paul explains that our daily growth in Christ-likeness is a "cooperative effort" writing that

if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but **if by the Spirit** (this is God's part - His power in us to will and to work for His good pleasure) **you are putting** (this part is our responsibility, it is present tense - habitually, daily - the process of sanctification) to death the deeds of the body (prompted by sin still resident in the physical body), you will live. (Ro 8:13+ MEMORIZE THIS VERSE AND ROMANS 8:12!).

Comment - Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones says Romans 8:13 is the most important verse in the Bible for our sanctification. Listen to his sermons on this passage. **Sermons by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

- [Romans 8:12-13 A Call to Action](#)
- [Romans 8:12-13 The Way of Sanctification](#)
- [Romans 8:12-13 Sin and the Christian](#)
- [Romans 8:12-13 Sin and the Body](#)

He reiterates this vitally important spiritual dynamic in Philippians exhorting the saints to...

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. (See **notes** Philippians 2:12; 2:13)

In other words, the indwelling Spirit is the believer's Source of power enabling us to not "walk according to the flesh" (Ro 8:4-note) but to "walk by the Spirit (for then) you will (be empowered to) not carry out the desire of the flesh." (Gal 5:16-note)

Note that the **process of sanctification** although enabled by the Spirit is the believer's responsibility and that holiness is not produced by personal passivity or just letting go and letting God as some have taught. We need to learn to trust the Holy Spirit to make us holy... His *sanctifying work* alone saved us the first time and His *sanctifying work* alone saves us every day and both are activated by faith, a faith that obeys His still small voice without hesitation. That's "walking in the Spirit". That's being "filled with the Spirit". That's being controlled by the Holy Spirit. (see related topics Walking in the Spirit ; Filled with Spirit - Ephesians 5:18 or see

exposition of Ephesians 5:18)

As believers, we daily must remember who we are (in Christ) and Whose we are (Christ's bride)

for God has not called (note calling is part of the salvation process) us for the purpose of impurity (an unnatural pollution, context is speaking of sexual uncleanness or filthiness), but in (in the sphere of) **sanctification** (hagiasmos) (see note 1Thessalonians 4:7).

Hagiasmos is used to describe the **process** of sanctification in **Romans 6:19** Paul writing to the Romans saints...

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh (because of their intellectual difficulty in grasping divine truth which often needs to be illustrated to be fully intelligible). For just as you presented (yielded, surrendered) your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present (once for all, yield - this necessitates a deliberate decision on the believer's part) your members (your faculties, the parts of your physical body, the headquarters from which and through which sin operates, members might also include mental faculties) as slaves to righteousness (right being and right doing), resulting in **sanctification** (hagiasmos). (See notes Romans 6:19)

In **Romans 6:22** Paul goes on to explain

"but now having been freed from sin (because of our union with Christ [= "in Christ"] Who broke the tyranny, dominion and controlling power of sin, see Romans 6:2- note, Ro 6:11-note - not referring to the believer's daily struggle with sin but to a one-time, past completed event - now we are "in Christ" and He died in our place and we are counted dead with Him) and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit (reward, fruit - if you present yourselves as slaves to God voluntarily, you can anticipate the sweet fruit of progressive sanctification - holiness - and fullness of eternal life cf. Jn 10:10; 17:3), resulting in **sanctification** (hagiasmos - here referring to progressive, daily setting apart from the world and unto God = a process which is not automatic but requires a daily, moment by moment, decision of our will to live for God, not the world, this process being enabled by the Holy Spirit), and the outcome, eternal life." (see Romans 6:22-note)

In his first epistle to the Corinthians Paul reminds us that our salvation is all of God for it is by His

doing you are in Christ Jesus, Who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and **sanctification** (hagiasmos - set apart to belong to God and to serve Him - this reference is to positional sanctification = "in Christ" our eternally secure position!) and redemption." ([1Cor 1:30](#))

Christ is our Sanctification. In ourselves we have no personal holiness, but **in Christ** we are positionally sanctified and by the Spirit of Christ's power we will be transformed (being progressively sanctified) from one degree of sanctification or holiness to another as discussed above.

Another example of Paul's use of **sanctified** in reference to the initial salvation experience is in his description of the "before" and "after" picture of some of the Corinthian saints --

Such were some of you (see what they were in 1Cor 6:9; 10); but you were washed, but you were **sanctified** (hagiazō, aorist tense = at a definite point in time in the past = moment of salvation), but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." ([1Cor 6:11](#))

Hagiasmos is used in Hebrews to describe progressive sanctification, the author charging saints to

Pursue (present imperative - command to continually seek after) peace with all men, and the **sanctification** (holiness and consecration) without which no one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14-note)

See J C Ryle's sermon on Hebrews 12:14. Don't misunderstand this command to pursue holiness -- the writer is not saying that we can work our way to heaven. To the contrary those who have been sanctified by the Spirit {genuinely saved} will be enabled and empowered by the same Spirit to daily pursue holiness with the result that the lost will see the Lord in their holy lives. See Matthew 5:16- note

Ray Stedman explains that

if we truly practice a continual reckoning of ourselves as already righteous within by a gracious act of God on the basis of the death and resurrection of Jesus, we will find ourselves strongly motivated to live righteously and inwardly distressed at any failure to do so. This inward distress will bring us again and again to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16-note) for forgiveness and recovery. (See [Stedman's commentary - scroll down to section on "The Dangers to Watch For - Hebrews 12:14-17](#))

Easton's Bible Dictionary writes that "**Sanctification** involves more than a mere moral reformation of character, brought about by the power of the truth: it is the work of the Holy Spirit bringing the whole nature more and more under the influences of the new gracious principles implanted in the soul in regeneration. In other words, sanctification is the carrying on to perfection the work begun in regeneration, and it extends to the whole man (Romans 6:13 [note]; Col 3:10 [note]; 1 Jn 4:7; 1Cor 6:19). It is the special office of the Holy Spirit in the plan of redemption to carry on this work (1Cor 6:11; 2Th 2:13). Faith is instrumental in securing sanctification, inasmuch as it (1) secures union to Christ (see Galatians 2:20-note) and (2) brings the believer into living contact with the truth, whereby he is led to yield obedience "to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come.

Hodge - The more holy a man is, the more humble, self-renouncing, self-abhorring, and the more sensitive to every sin he becomes, and the more closely he clings to Christ. The moral imperfections which cling to him he feels to be sins, which he laments and strives to overcome. Believers find that their life is a constant warfare, and they need to take the kingdom of heaven by storm, and watch while they pray. They are always subject to the constant chastisement of their Father's loving hand, which can only be designed to correct their imperfections and to confirm their graces. And it has been notoriously the fact that the best Christians have been those who have been the least prone to claim the attainment of perfection for themselves.

Luther - I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him." It is the Holy Spirit who awakens within us the first faint longings for God and goodness. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us of our sin and leads us to the Cross where that sin is forgiven. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to be freed from the sins which have us in their grip and to gain the virtues which are the fruit of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the assurance that our sins are forgiven and that Jesus Christ is Lord. The beginning, the middle and the end of the Christian life are the work of the Holy Spirit.

To sum up **sanctification** as used in this verse speaks of the separation of the believer from evil things and evil ways. This **sanctification** is God's will us and is the reason He elected and called us by His gospel (we need "know how" - 1Th 4:7-note). Practical holiness however must be learned (1Thes 4:4-note) as His Spirit teaches us through His Word (see John 17:17, 19, Ps 17:4; 119:9). Holy character is not vicarious and cannot be transferred or imputed, but is to be pursued day by day, by obeying the Truth we have learned (1Ti 2:15; Heb 12:14- note) and imitating the example of Truth personified, Christ Jesus our Lord (Mt 11:29; Jn 13:15; Ep 4:20 - note; Php 2:5 - note), enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ro 8:13 - note; Eph 3:16 - note; Gal 5:16 note)

Ray Pritchard's Practical Guidelines for dealing with sexual temptation...

1. Know your limits.
2. Stay out of questionable areas.
3. Don't fight the battle alone.
4. Don't make excuses.
5. Be honest about your problem.
6. Trace the cycle of lust in your life.
7. Remember who you are.

That last point is critical. You have a father and a mother, you probably have brothers and sisters. You certainly have friends who love you. You've got people at work or at school who depend on you. You've even got casual acquaintances who watch you and unbelievers who know you are a Christian. Put simply, you can't afford to let all those people down.

Above and beyond all that, remember who you are in Christ. You are a child of God, a totally new creation, you are saved, redeemed, justified, forgiven, regenerated, and seated with Christ in heavenly places. All the promises of God now belong to you. You bear the name of your Heavenly Father. You are called to live to his glory. You made for better things! You were not made to live in sin. ([Abstain! - sermon by Dr. Ray Pritchard - October 1996](#))

**THE NEXT TIME...
YOU ARE TEMPTED
BY LUST (Jas 1:14)**

The next time you are sorely tempted to commit sexual immorality (or evil in any of its grotesque guises from gossip to greed!) in thought, word or deed, stop and ponder what our Messiah has accomplished for each of us on that Old Rugged Cross over 2000 years ago... 1Co 1:18, Ro 6:6, 11, 12, 13 = takes care of the flesh, Gal 6:14 = takes care of the world and Col 2:13, 14, 15, He 2:14,

15 = takes care of the devil... therefore... Jn 3:30 remembering 1Co 11:25, 26 - "until He comes"! And then close your eyes and/or watch as Sandi Patti sings this haunting version of Via Dolorosa - click...

[Jesus the Messiah — Via Dolorosa](#)

Isaiah 53:5KJV, John 8:36

[We Shall Behold Him](#)

Dearly beloved of God the Father, the next time (not "if" but "when") temptation sweeps in suddenly like an unforecast storm and seizes you (1 Cor 10:13NIV+), make the conscious choice (based on Php 2:13NLT+) to fix your eyes on Jesus the Christ (He 12:2NLT - [see devotionals on Fix Your Eyes on Jesus](#)) and His Cross and His Coming Again (1Jn 3:2,3+) and you will be enabled by His Spirit and His adequate grace (2Co 12:9, 10+) to stand firm (Ep 6:11+, Ro 13:14NLT+) and resist (Jas 4:7+, Ep 6:13+) the attacks of the world, the flesh and the devil, to the glory of God.

THAT YOU ABSTAIN FROM SEXUAL IMMORALITY: apechesthai (PMN) humas apo tes porneias:

- Mt 15:19; Acts 15:20,29; Ro 1:29; 1Co 5:9, 10, 11; 6:9-20; 7:1, 7:2; 2Co 12:21; Ga 5:19; Ep 4:17, 18, 19, 5:3, 4, 5; 8 Col 3:5; Heb 12:16; 13:4; Rev 21:8; 22:15
- [1 Thessalonians 4 Resources](#)- Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Phillips translation conveys the sense of Paul's instruction...

God's plan is to make you holy, and that entails first of all a clean break with sexual immorality (1 Thes. 4:3, ph)

You abstain from sexual immorality - It is no accident that the first instruction designed to produce greater holiness is abstinence from sexual immorality which alone can result in purity of life and being holy as God is holy. This phrase is explanatory of the "negative" aspect of sanctification and obviously deals with sexual conduct. Notice that second personal pronoun **you** marks this as a demand upon the readers directly (and by application to all saints of every age). (Listen to S Lewis Johnson audio sermon on [Purity in Christian Life](#))

Patrick Morley makes a convicting statement that speaks volumes to our motivation to abstain from evil behaviors...

I would rather go to jail than be seen in a bar. Frankly, the reasons are not spiritual, but selfish. I don't want my reputation to be tarnished, so I categorically avoid bars. This has less to do with what Jesus might think than what my friends might think. The visibility of our speech and actions helps us keep these in line. Visibility brings a certain level of self-discipline. **Sometimes I think peer pressure actually influences us more to live righteously than the fear of a holy God.** We all want to get along with others and have a good reputation, and these ambitions keep our behavior in check.

The nonbeliever doesn't have control of his high-visibility sins because he doesn't have the Holy Spirit to make him aware of his sins and bring him under conviction, nor does he have the peer pressure of a church family.

Of course, the peer pressure of visibility isn't bad. If no **peer pressure** existed, then I would have no **accountability**; and the temptation to sin would be more alluring (although I'm not suggesting that going in a bar in and of itself is a sin).

But the **low visibility** of our **thought life** has no peer pressure, no accountability of any sort, save our own self-discipline and dependence upon the Spirit, by which we are forced to pass muster. The result of low visibility? We lead a secret, often unruly, thought life, which we would find embarrassing for others to know about...

The answer to winning the battle for our mind—the secret thought life—is to open up ourselves to examination by ourselves and the Spirit. Our prayer should be the prayer of King David: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24NIV).

Jerry Bridges - It is time for us Christians, to face up to our responsibility for holiness. Too often we say we are "defeated" by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated; we are simply disobedient. It might be well if we stopped using the terms victory and defeat to describe our progress in holiness. Rather we should use the terms obedience and disobedience. (See [multiple Mp3's by Jerry Bridges dealing with the pursuit of holiness](#))

Faith and **holiness** are inextricably linked. **Obedying** the commands of God usually involves **believing** the promises of God.

McGee notes that "The great tragedy today is to hear of some Christian worker who has become involved in sexual sin. And,

unfortunately, there are even churches that will defend a minister who has been guilty of such. We are people who are supposed to be set aside for the use of God! Paul says that you cannot be involved in sexual sin and at the same time be used of God. One cannot live in sin and be a preacher or singer or Sunday school teacher or an officer in the church. I don't care who you are, if you do, you will wreck the work of God. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

The idea is that we as Christians, whether we are leaders or laity, must avoid those situations in which we might be tempted to commit sexual sin. We need to put some distance between ourselves and the temptation. We must not foolishly see how close to the fire we can come without being burned. In fact the Bible gives a clear solution to the one who is tempted to sexual sin and that word is **flee**!

Flee (present imperative = not a suggestion but a command to make it our habit to flee - continually flee and keep fleeing until the danger is past - when the sensual commercial comes on at halftime of the game, excuse yourself and leave the room beloved!) **immorality** (porneia). Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body (**Porneia** is more destructive to the sinner than other sins because the one who engages in it cannot undo their act. In the Screwtape Letters C. S. Lewis says that each time a man and a woman enter into a sexual relationship a spiritual bond is established between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured!) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1Cor 6:18-20-[note](#))

Now **flee** (present imperative = not a suggestion but a command to make it our habit to flee) from youthful lusts, and **pursue** (present imperative = command to pursue as a practice) righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (find a godly person with whom you can be accountable. King David did not and see what happened 2Sa 11:1, 2, 3, 4, 5ff, 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10ff). (2Ti 2:22-note)

Note: Don't just flee evil, but pursue holiness with holy people! In fact even better pursue holy and that will be a powerful antidote to kill unholy. See the pattern in Gal 5:16 - Spirit first Who enables us to not carry out the desire of the flesh. The sermon by Thomas Chalmers describes the pattern of the expulsive power of a new affection. Think of it this way - what forces the old, dead leaves off of the tree in the Spring? It is the growth of the new, living leaves.

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers (sojourners, we're just passing through) to **abstain** (present tense = continually, as your habitual practice; middle voice = you must initiate the abstaining or putting some distance between you) from fleshly (sarkikos = belonging to the **flesh**) lusts, which **wage war** (strateuo = engage in a war; present tense = pictures continual waging of war - so don't become complacent, lax or lazy in spiritual warfare) against the soul. (D L Moody understood Peter's exhortation once stating "I have more trouble with D. L. Moody than with any man I know.") (see **note** 1 Peter 2:11)

Beloved, is the trend in your thought life and actions moving toward increasing purity or increasing enslavement to sin? You must consciously, continually choose to abstain. For men it is the "eye gate" which is most vulnerable, so like David take your stand in the power of the Lord resolving...

I will set no worthless (unprofitable, Hebrew word is Belial also a name for Satan in 2Cor 6:15! Could there be any relationship?!) thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten (stick like glue) its grip on me. (Ps 101:3)

William Gurnall has a pithy description of holiness...

Pray not only against the power of sin, but for the power of holiness also. A haughty heart may pray against his sins, not out of any inward enmity to them, or love to holiness, but because they are troublesome guests to his conscience. His zeal is false that seems hot against sin, but is key-cold to holiness. A city is rebellious that keeps their rightful Prince out, though it receives not his enemy

Abstain ([568](#))(**apechomai** or **apecho** from **apó** = away from - conveys the idea of putting some distance between; serves as a marker of dissociation, implying a rupture from a former association + **écho** = have) means to be away or be at a distance (see discussion of 4 basic meanings below). (Click additional study on **apecho**)

Apechomai is **apecho** in the **middle voice** (reflexive = the subject initiates the action and participates in the results) and here in 1Thessalonians 4:3 calls for the believer to hold one's self from or keep one's self away from contact or influence of sexual immorality. The **present tense** is what is known as durative of action signifying that saints must constantly keep aloof from sexual immorality which in turn calls for continued exercise of self-control "*by the Spirit... putting to death the deeds of the body*" (see notes Romans 8:13). In parallel passages Paul commands believers who are setting their minds on things above to...

consider (Mortify! - KJV) (aorist imperative - Do this now, don't delay! It is urgent!) the members of your earthly body as **dead** to **immorality** (**porneia**), impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (see **note** Colossians 3:5)

(and to) **discipline** (present imperative - habitually, examine your lifestyle) yourself for the purpose of godliness for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (see **notes** 1 Timothy 4:7; 4:8)

Surer than autumn's harvests
Are harvests of thought and deed;
Like those that our hearts have planted,
The yield will be like the seed. —Harris

The best reason for doing what's right today is tomorrow.

Dearly beloved, each of us must realize that sexual immorality is one of the greatest enemies of Christian sanctification and must be dealt a "death blow" lest it do the same to our spiritual lives!

Webster defines **abstain** as to refrain deliberately and often with an effort of self-denial from an action or practice. This is a good definition **except** that self denial is the world's way. Believers have access to the empowering fruit of the Spirit, self-control (Gal 5:22) and yet are still responsible to make daily choices that cultivate the fruit of self control (see **note** 2 Peter 1:6).

[Hudson Taylor](#), famed missionary to China wrote:

We are not only to renounce evil, but to manifest the truth. We tell people the world is vain; let our lives manifest that it is so. We tell them that our home is above and that all these things are transitory. Does our dwelling look like it? O to live consistent lives!

The NT meanings of **apecho** vary considerably depending on the context but basically convey 4 ideas:

(1) **Apecho** was used as a commercial technical term meaning "to receive a sum in full and give a receipt for it". (Mt 6:2, 6:5, 6:16). In the papyri **apecho** is used repeatedly in the sense of "I have received" as a technical expression in drawing up a receipt. And so it can refer to a commercial receipt which gives way to the NT meaning to receive in full payment, to have in full or to have received what one had a right to except (e.g., referring to Paul's financial support from the church at Philippi - Phil 4:18). A similar meaning is to receive back a person (Philemon 1:15).

(2) **Apecho** is used literally to describe a measurement of distance and so to be distant or a given distance away (of the boat from the land - Mt 14:24) or figuratively to describe separation or distance from a person (of one's heart from - God Mt 15:8)

(3) In the **middle voice apecho** (apechomai) is used to mean abstain from or keep away from something (Acts 15:20, 29, 1Th 4:3, 1Th 5:22-note, 1Pe 2:11-note)

(4) **Apecho** conveys the meaning it is enough or sufficient, referring to sleep in Mark 14:41.

Apechomai is used 19 times in the NT and is translated --abstain (5), abstaining (1), away (1), have back (1), have in full (3), have received in full (1), it is enough (1), off (1), receiving in full (1), was away (2).

Matthew 6:2 (note) When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they **have** their reward in full. (**Comment:** Here apecho means to receive payment in full. Apecho was often used in the sense of receipting an account which has been paid in full.)

Matthew 6:5 (note) "And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they **have** their reward in full. (**Comment:** Deissmann writes that "*in the Sermon on the Mount we are led to understand 'they can sign the receipt of their reward: their right to receive the reward is realised, precisely as if they had already given a receipt for it'*" from Light from the Ancient East)

Matthew 6:16 (note) "And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they **have** their reward in full.

Matthew 14:24 But the boat **was** already many stadia **away** from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.

Matthew 15:8 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart **is far away** from Me.

Mark 7:6 And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart **is far away** from Me.

Mark 14:41 And He came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?**It is enough**; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. (Comment: Here *apecho* could be construed to mean "Enough of this!")

Luke 6:24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you**are receiving** your comfort in full.

Luke 7:6 Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He **was** already not far **from** the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof;

Luke 15:20 "And he got up and came to his father. But while he **was** still a long **way off**, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him.

Luke 24:13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which**was** about seven miles **from** Jerusalem.

Acts 15:20 but that we write to them that they **abstain from** things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

Acts 15:29 that you **abstain from** things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

Philippians 4:18 (note) But I **have received** everything **in full**, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

1Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you**abstain** from sexual immorality;

1Thessalonians 5:22 (note) **abstain** from every form of evil (literally abstain from all which "strikes the eye" or is exposed to view!)

1 Timothy 4:3 men who forbid marriage and advocate**abstaining from** (present tense = continually) foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

Philemon 1:15 For perhaps he was for this reason parted from you for a while, that you should**have** him **back** forever,

1 Peter 2:11 (note) Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to**abstain** (present tense = continually) from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.

Apecho is used some 29 times in the Septuagint (LXX)

Ge 43:23; 44:4; Num. 32:19; Deut. 12:21; 18:22; 1 Sam. 21:5; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; 13:21; 28:28; Ps. 103:12; Prov. 3:27; 9:18; 15:29; 22:5; 23:4, 13; Isa. 29:13; 54:14; 55:9; Jer. 7:10; Ezek. 8:6; 11:15; 22:5; Joel 1:13; 2:8; 3:8; Mal. 3:6) where Job provides a good illustration of one who abstained from evil...

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and **turning away** (Lxx = **apechomai** in the middle voice indicating Job initiated this action) from evil.

Job 1:8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and **turning away** (Lxx = **apechomai** in the middle voice indicating Job initiated this action) from evil."

Job 2:3 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and **turning away** (Lxx = **apechomai** in the middle voice indicating Job initiated this action) from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause.

What was **Job's "secret"** of abstaining to the point that God Himself testified to his pattern of abstinence? The passages indicate that Job had a healthy fear of God, a fear of offending Him, a fear of impugning His character and a fear of "disappointing" His goodness and lovingkindness. **Fear of the Lord** is a powerful motivating force the Spirit uses to energizes the saint's abstaining

from evil.

Paul describes a similar dynamic in his letter to the church at **Corinth** situated in the midst of a sex saturated society that was energized by pagan idolatry...

Therefore, having these promises (read them in 2Cor 6:16,17,18 and also the three commands to **Come out from their midst and be separate... and do not touch what is unclean**), beloved, let us cleanse ourselves (our part in daily sanctification) from all defilement of flesh and spirit, (continually, habitually) perfecting holiness (hagiosune) in the fear of God (practically reflected in a self-distrust, a serious caution, a tenderness of conscience, a watchfulness against temptation and a courageous withdrawing from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ our Bridegroom). ([2Corinthians 7:1-note](#))

Based on Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians, why do you think so few individuals are serious about a pursuit of holiness? In the context it appears that it is because there is such a low level of healthy, reverential fear of God, either as a Father or as a Judge, both of which should serve to activate a vigorous, Spirit empowered, pursuit of holiness. (1Pe 1:17-note, He 12:28-note)

[Dwight L. Moody](#) (See "[Why God Used Dwight L. Moody](#)" by R. A. Torrey) once said that...

A holy life will make the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns, they just shine.

"It is a great deal better to live a holy life than to talk about it. We are told to let our light shine, and if it does we won't need to tell anybody it does. The light will be its own witness. Lighthouses don't ring bells and fire cannon to call attention to their shining—they just shine."

One of the best illustrations of **abstaining** I have ever read comes from the world of nature where Our Daily Bread relates the story that...

In the forests of northern Europe and Asia lives little animal called the ermine, known for his snow-white fur in winter. He instinctively protects his white coat against anything that would soil it. Fur hunters take advantage of this unusual trait of the ermine. They don't set a snare to catch him, but instead they find his home, which is usually a cleft in a rock or a hollow in an old tree. They smear the entrance and interior with grime. Then the hunters set their dogs loose to find and chase the ermine. The frightened animal flees toward home but doesn't enter because of the filth. Rather than soil his white coat, he is trapped by the dogs and captured while preserving his purity. For the ermine, purity is more precious than life. - H G Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

How can believers stay pure in an impure world? Here are just a few Scriptural guidelines...

- By hiding God's Holy Word in our hearts (Ps 119:11) and in obedience living holy lives according to God's Word (Ps 119:9)
- By walking continually under the control of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, Eph 5:18, 19, 20-see notes Ep 5:18; 19; 20).
- By making the conscious, Spirit intitated and empowered, choice not to lust (Job 31:1, Ps 101:3, see Mt 5:28, 29, 30-notes Mt 5:28; 29; 30, Col 3:5-note, Ro 8:13-note).
- By consciously, continually choosing to flee from sexual temptations (even the "form" of - see 1 Th 5:22-) and pursuing righteousness (2Ti 2:22+, cf Joseph in Genesis 39:12, 13)

Sexual immorality ([4202](#))(**porneia**) originally referred to any excessive behavior or lack of restraint, but eventually became associated with sexual excess and indulgence. **Porneia** originally was used especially to describe the practice of consorting with prostitutes (**porneis** = "prostitute") and eventually came to mean "habitual immorality." **Porneia** is the comprehensive term denoting any and every form of sexual practice that lies outside the circle of God's revealed will, including adultery, premarital and extramarital intercourse, homosexuality, bestiality and any other perversion of God's design.

Porneia is the opposite of the Greek word **egkrates/enkrates** (literally "holding oneself in"), which usually implied sexual self-control (see Acts 24:25)

Porneia as used in the Scriptures describes any illicit sexual activity outside of the divine bounds established by marriage and thus includes the ideas of unlawful sexual intercourse, unchastity and fornication.

Richards makes an interesting remark...

The Gk. *porneias* here encompasses all sex sins which holiness demands the Christian reject. Like other

temptations, sexual temptations have a positive side. When we resist them, they enable us to develop self-control (v. 4). The pagan who ridicules the believer for his "hang-ups" is himself the captive of his own "passionate lusts." The person who masters his body has the real freedom. The person who is driven by her glands acts like an animal rather than a human being, and so loses touch with her real self by indulging in sex sins. (Richards, L. O. The Bible Readers Companion. Wheaton: Victor Books)

Alexander remarks

St. Paul insists, with great solemnity, upon a truth which at various times, even in the Church, has been, if not denied, yet half forgotten, that moral evils are always spiritual evils of the first magnitude.

It is a sad commentary that sexual sin in the ancient world was intimately linked to pagan "religious" practices which undoubtedly some of the saints at Thessalonica had come out of when they turned to God from idols (1Th 1:9-note). Furthermore loose morals were a continuous problem in the ancient world just as they are today! The heart of fallen mankind (Ro 5:12-note) is desperately sin sick and has not evolved or changed despite the passage of two millennia. In fact Gibbons in his monumental secular work The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire wrote that "*The friends of Christianity may acknowledge without a blush, that many of the most eminent saints had been before their baptism* (Ed note: Gibbons not a believer probably means water baptism but Paul would refer us to spiritual baptism in genuine repenters as described in Ro 6:4-note) *the most abandoned sinners.*"

Fausset goes so far as to say that **fornication** was...

not regarded as a sin at all among the heathen, and so needing the more to be renounced.

Renouncing the sin of fornication is exactly what the early church leaders in Jerusalem called for, Luke recording their commands that the Gentiles were to...

abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.
(Acts 15:20)

The moral life of the the ancient world had sunk to such a moral low point that, while protests against moral impurity were never entirely wanting, sexual immorality had long come to be regarded as a matter of moral indifference, and was indulged in without shame not only by the masses, but by the intelligentsia including the philosophers and "distinguished" men who otherwise led exemplary lives.

Vincent has an interesting historical comment regarding Thessalonica noting that...

Paul wrote from Corinth, where sensuality in the guise of religion was rife. In **Thessalonica**, besides the ordinary licentious customs of the Gentiles, immorality was fostered by the Cabeiric worship. About the time of Paul, a political sanction was given to this worship by deifying the Emperor as Cabeirus.

In Paul's day **Corinth** was like much of our culture today, for people were strongly intent on having their own ways, doing what was right in their own eyes, and this aberrant behavior was especially manifest in fulfilling their physical lust. Corinth was so conspicuous for its immorality that to "**corinthianize**" was the term for reckless debauchery. And so sexual permissiveness was rampant and then, as now the church was not unaffected. Sensuality in the guise of religion was rife. And so Paul writing to the Corinthian church declares that

It is actually reported that there is **immorality** (porneia) among you, and **immorality** (porneia) of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has (present tense = an ongoing, habitual activity) his father's wife. (1Cor 5:1 read the entire chapter which is devoted to immorality in the church - and by the way - this chapter is directed not so much to those committing immorality but to the church who stood by doing nothing about it and in fact arrogantly refusing to do anything about it!)

In this case it was a form of incest, because a man was living with his father's wife, that is, his stepmother. Sexual relations between a man and his stepmother are in the same category as relations between him and his natural mother and anyone guilty of those or other sexual "abominations" was to be cut off from his people ([Lev 18:7-8,29](#)), a reference to capital punishment. From Cicero we know that such incest was even strictly forbidden by Roman law. Later in this same letter Paul gives his instruction to

Flee (present imperative = continually flee and keep fleeing until the danger is past - when the sensual commercial comes on at halftime of the game, excuse yourself and leave the room beloved!) **immorality** (porneia). Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body (**Porneia** is more destructive to the sinner than other sins because the one who engages in it cannot undo their act. In the Screwtape Letters C. S. Lewis says that each time a man and a woman enter into a sexual relationship a spiritual bond is established between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally

endured!) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1Cor 6:18, 19, 20)

Porneia includes including (but not limited to) adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, and prostitution. As an aside, **porneia** refers primarily to sins of the flesh, but those sins can never be divorced from the sins of the mind or heart, because all sin is related. Sin in one area always makes us more susceptible to sin in other areas. Whenever the NT mentions immorality, there is at least an implied condemnation. Certainly no where does Scripture sanction the commitment of any form of extramarital sexual activity... a far cry from our modern American culture!

Although masturbation is not a popular subject, it should be addressed and in my humble opinion (the Bible does not specifically discuss masturbation) it is a sin in one's heart against God when it involves fantasizing (as it usually does) over a pornographic image for the sole purpose of gratification of self (specifically the Old Self inherited from Adam). (See Piper's thoughts on [Masturbation](#)) Jesus made it quite clear that we don't have to touch a woman to be guilty of the sin of adultery for

everyone who looks (present tense = continues to look) on a woman to lust (manifest a strong depraved desire or drive - see related noun epithumia) for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Mt 5:28-note) (**Comment:** And thus gratifying self via a pornographic picture in one's mind, on the "premium" cable channel, in an "adult" magazine, or on the Internet, is tantamount to "looking with lust".)

Jesus' instructions and warning are quite clear and in fact in His perfect wisdom He knew that this was a serious issue for men (who are excited especially by sight) that called for an explanatory radical remark. Thus our Lord declared that...

if your right eye makes you stumble (into sin - verb = skandalizo fromskandalon which literally is that part of a trap on which bait is laid and which when touched causes the trap to close on its prey! You get the picture! Jesus says guard your eyes or you will be entrapped!), tear it out (turn that channel, don't click that link!), and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell. (Mt 5:29, 30-see **notes** Mt 5:29; 30)

David gives us an excellent pattern to emulate in his song writing...

I will set no worthless (Hebrew = **belial** = good for nothing, unprofitable and also a name for our Adversary, the Deceiver) thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip (Hebrew = dabaq = stick like glue!) on me. (Ps 101:3-[note](#))

Spurgeon comments on Psalm 101:3 -

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. "I will neither delight in it, aim at it or endure it. If I have wickedness brought before me by others I will turn away from it, I will not gaze upon it with pleasure. The psalmist is very sweeping in his resolve, he declines the least, the most reputable, the most customary form of evil -- no wicked thing; not only shall it not dwell in his heart, but not even before his eyes, for what fascinates the eye is very apt to gain admission into the heart, even as Eve's apple first pleased her sight and then prevailed over her mind and hand.

I hate the work of them that turn aside He was warmly against it; he did not view it with indifference, but with utter scorn and abhorrence. Hatred of sin is a good sentinel for the door of virtue. There are persons in courts who walk in a very crooked way, leaving the high road of integrity; and these, by short cuts, and twists, and turns, are often supposed to accomplish work for their masters which simple honest hearts are not competent to undertake; but David would not employ such, he would pay no secret service money, he loathed the practices of men who deviate from righteousness. He was of the same mind as the dying statesman who said, "Corruption wins not more than honesty." It is greatly to be deplored that in after years he did not keep himself clear in this matter in every case, though, in the main he did; but what would he have been if he had not commenced with this resolve, but had followed the usual crooked Policy of Oriental princes? How much do we all need divine keeping! We are no more perfect than David, nay, we fall far short of him in many things; and, like him, we shall find need to write a psalm of penitence very soon after our psalm of good resolution.

It shall not cleave to me. I will disown their ways, I will not imitate their policy: like dirt it may fall upon me, but I will wash it off, and never rest till I am rid of it. Sin, like pitch, is very apt to stick. In the course of our family history crooked things will turn up, for we are all imperfect, and some of those around us are far from being what they should be; it must, therefore, be one great object of our care to disentangle ourselves, to keep clear

of transgression, and of all that comes of it: this cannot be done unless the Lord both comes to us, and abides with us evermore.

Sexual sin not only is against God and other persons, it is also against ourselves. Part of our moral responsibility to ourselves is to be sexually pure. When Christians are immoral, the testimony of the gospel is polluted.

Don't dabble with **porneia**, (and "pornography") trifle with it, argue about it, debate it, explain it and certainly don't try to rationalize as a "spiritual challenge" to be met but as a "spiritual trap" to be escaped. Cut the dripping faucet off, the at the first drop! Get away as fast as you can! God gives such a clear and strong command because porneia is so serious, corrupting and shattering spiritual relationships, both human and divine! So flee!

An excellent illustration of **fleeing immorality** is found in the account of Joseph when he was tempted to sin by Potiphar's wife Joseph addressing her advances declared

There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. **How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?** (Joseph feared Jehovah and so turned away from evil, cf [Job 1:1](#) Why is there such a problem with porneia even in Christian circles? There is minimal to know healthy fear of God. See 2Cor 7:1-[note](#)) 10 And it came about as she spoke to Joseph day after day, that he did not listen to her to lie beside her, or be with her.11 Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside.12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and **fled**, and went outside.) (Genesis 39:9, 10, 11, 12)

While there may be safety in numbers, sometimes there is more safety in flight! It is like the pastor cautioned his handsome new assistant about the dangers of immorality in the ministry. The assistant said that he always did his socializing in a group setting and concluded that "there is safety in **numbers**." The wise pastor replied, "Yes, that is so, but there is more safety in **Exodus!**"

How serious is immorality? Paul's rhetorical question indicates the consequences can be eternally serious asking...

Or do you not know that the unrighteous **shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, **shall inherit the kingdom of God.** (1Cor 6:9, 10)

Comment: Paul is not implying that Christians can practice such sins and be lost, but rather he is saying that people who practice such sins are not Christians.

Paul goes on to explain that a healthy marriage is the main bulwark against immorality writing that

But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. (1Cor 7:2)

Porneia is the more general term for all kinds of sexual sins and encompasses the more specific sin of **adultery** ([moichea](#) [\[3430\]](#)) which describes sexual sin in at least one person who is married. Jesus used porneia to describe adultery in marriage, declaring

that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity (porneia - fornication), makes her commit adultery (moichao = verb related to moichea); and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (moichao = verb related to moichea) (see note Matthew 5:32)

Porneia as used in this verse in the context of marriage always constituted **adultery**, which, by definition, is illicit sex by a married person. The verb form of **porneia** is used by Paul to describe the immorality for which 23,000 (of the total of 24,000) Israelites were killed by a plague in one day ("Nor let us act immorally [porneuo], as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.1Co 10:8; cf. Nu 25:9). Because the majority, if not all, of those slain were probably married, **porneia** clearly includes adultery.

Porneia is used most often with its lurid literal meaning but some NT uses (as well as uses in the Septuagint) utilize porneia in a figurative sense to picture **idolatry** or the forsaking of the true and living God to worship dead idols. Scripture describes God as married to His Church through Christ, so that any **idolatry** is unfaithfulness toward God and is often depicted as analogous to sexual unfaithfulness to one's marriage partner!

In the OT God's relationship to Israel was pictured as that of a Husband to His wife (cf Isaiah 54:5). And so in Jeremiah we see Jehovah describe His punishment of the **adulterous** northern kingdom of Israel by allowing her to be defeated and exiled into Assyria (He gave "her a writ of divorce"). In spite of God's clear warning, the southern kingdom described as Israel's

treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and **was a harlot** (Lxx = **porneuo** verbal root of porneia) also (why did she play the harlot? no reverential fear of the holy God). And it came about because of the

lightness of her **harlotry** (Hebrew = zenut refers to sexual sin that violates the marriage covenant; and is used most often figuratively to describe the wickedness of the nation of Israel, this wickedness usually being associated with the worship of idols, and occasionally even descriptive of outright rebellion Nu 14:33; Lxx = **porneia**), that she polluted the land and committed adultery (Lxx = moicheuo verbal form of moicheia) with stones and trees. (Jer 3:8, 9)

Addressing Jerusalem, Jehovah declares to her that

you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot (Hebrew = zannah = fornicate, prostitute, figuratively of Israel's illicit relationship with other so-called gods; Lxx = **porneuo** verbal root of **porneia**) because of your fame, and you poured out your **harlotries** (Lxx = **porneia**), that she polluted the land and committed adultery (Lxx = moicheuo verbal form of moicheia) on every passer-by who might be willing... and besides all your abominations and harlotries (Lxx = **porneia**) you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare and squirming in your blood." 23 "Then it came about after all your wickedness ('Woe, woe to you!' declares the Lord GOD), 24 that you built yourself a shrine (Lxx says "a house of fornication" or for harlots) and made yourself a high place in every square. 25 "You built yourself a high place at the top of every street (Lxx has "on the head of every way thou didst set up thy fornications [**porneia**]") and made your beauty abominable; and you spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your **harlotry** (Lxx = **porneia**). 26 "You also played the harlot ("go a whoring" Lxx = related verb **ekporneuo** = to be utterly unchaste, to give self over to fornication; to indulge in flagrant immorality) with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry (Lxx = related verb **ekporneuo**) to make Me angry... 32 "You adulteress (Lxx = moichao) wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband!" (Ezekiel 16:15,22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 32 read all of chapter 16 to see how God feels about **porneia**!)

Sex is a gift of God which is like a great river flowing through life which, kept within its banks, is a source of pleasure and power. When it overflows its proper banks it becomes destructive and, ultimately, disastrous. In the ancient world (? our modern world also) sexual activity (physical unfaithfulness) was often connected with the idolatrous worship of false gods (spiritual unfaithfulness) (cf Nu 25:1, 2, 3, Rev 2:14-[note](#), Re 2:20-[note](#)). Within marriage, sex is beautiful, fulfilling, creative and as noted above has protective effect against immorality. Outside marriage, sex is ugly, destructive, and like fire. In a fireplace, it's warm and delightful. Outside the hearth, it's destructive and uncontrollable.

As **Billy Graham** has observed...

Satan fails to speak of the remorse, the futility, the loneliness, and the spiritual devastation which go hand in hand with **immorality**.

Thus **Paul** warned the Ephesian saints to

not let **immorality** (**porneia**) or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 **Let no one deceive** you (stop being deceived as some already were) with empty words (Stop letting them seduce you and lead you astray into error with false words-- in context specifically words like "you can live any way you want and still go to heaven as long as you have believed in Jesus"! That is the age old lie and will send the deceived one eventually to the Lake of fire!), for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience (How does one discern if he or she is a son of disobedience? By the pattern of their life - continual disobedience to God's will without evidence of a change in one's lifestyle is a strong clue that one is a son or daughter of disobedience and does not belong to the family of God. Be careful here - Paul is not saying you will never commit individual acts of sin. What he is warning against is the habitual practice of sin without evidence of repentance.). (see **notes** Ephesians 5:3, 5:4; 5:5; 5:6)

Jesus explained **porneia** declaring that

the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the **heart**, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, **fornications (porneia)**, thefts, false witness, slanders. (Mt 15:18-19)

Jesus' point is that the basis of all sin is the inner thought, not the outward act. **Porneia** begins in the heart. When a person is defiled on the inside, what he does on the outside is also defiled. And so beloved, listen to the wise words of Solomon who himself paid a dear price for not heeding them...

Watch (imperative mood - includes ideas of preserve, guard with fidelity, keep blockaded) over your **heart** (the

seat of our intellect, will, emotions - moral actions and attitudes of life are determined by the condition of one's heart) with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life. (Proverbs 4:23)

Comment: The picture in this proverb is of a watchman standing guard on the watchtower of the walled fortress. The watchman is looking out for those "Judas desires", those lusts of deceit {Ep 4:22-note} which cause "corruption" in our integrity {2Pe 1:4-note}, which lead us off the highway of holiness and ultimately to death {Jas 1:15}. Remember that when the Spirit of God measures the "worth" of a man's life He puts the measuring tape around his heart, not around his head. Be a man after God's Own heart.

Matthew Henry adds that "We must keep a watchful eye and a strict hand upon all the motions of our inward man... God, who gave us these souls, gave us a strict charge with them. We must set a strict guard, accordingly, upon all the avenues of the soul; keep our hearts from doing hurt and getting hurt, from being defiled by sin and disturbed by trouble; keep out bad thoughts; keep up good thoughts; keep the affections upon right objects and in due bounds"

John records that in the last years just prior to our Lord's return indescribable sexual perversions will be running rampant. He writes that those who dwell upon the earth

did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts. (Re 9:21 [note](#))

And near the end of the **Revelation John** lists those who will be cast into the Lake of fire...

for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and **immoral** persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Re 21:8-[note](#))

Porneia is an all-encompassing sensual or sexual immorality, a perfect description of modern day America. Let's be honest. Most men (even Christian men!) have problems with this area that they would not even dare tell anyone! When you realize that you are complete in Christ and can now say "no" to this sin, from that point on you are responsible what kind of mess you get yourself into or keep yourself out of by not saying "Yes" to Jesus and "No" to immorality. Remember that "victory" is not so much me overcoming the problem but it's me having been overcome by Christ and it's now Christ in me who can overcome. You don't have to live the way you did when you were dead in your trespasses and sin and if you have never seen a change in your life, then you need to examine yourself to see if the Holy Spirit really lives in you (Ro 8:9-note) Your body is now dead to sin (the power of sin) and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Immorality is evidence of turning your back on God as Paul teaches in Romans (Ro1:25, 26, 27-[see notes](#) Ro 1:25; 26; 27). God will judge illicit sexual sin (He 13:4-note) whether one is a believer or an unbeliever and Peter adds that but judgment begins at the household of God (1Pe 4:17-note) because believers are even more accountable in view of the fact that they have the power (Ro 6:11-note, Ro 8:13-note, Gal 5:24-note) to flee youthful lusts and to abstain from fleshly lusts (1Pe 2:11-note). As Paul explained to believers who thought that now that they were "*covered*" by **grace** and could sin with impunity since grace abounded where sin increased, he countered this deceptive teaching with horror

"May it never be! How shall we who died (dead men are positionally uninfluenced and unaffected pleasures of this life) to (the) sin (the power of sin inherited from Adam is broken along with the previous powerlessness to say "no" to it's reign and demands to be gratified) still live in it?" (Ro 6:2-note)

William Barclay has an interesting historical note to put Paul's teaching in the proper cultural context writing that

Chastity was the one completely new virtue which Christianity brought into the world. In the ancient world sexual relationships before marriage and outside marriage were the normal and accepted practice. The sexual appetite was regarded as a thing to be gratified, not to be controlled. That is an attitude which is not unfamiliar today, although often it is supported by specious arguments. The Christian ethic insists on **chastity**, regarding the physical relationship between the sexes as something so precious that indiscriminate use of it in the end spoils it." ([Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press](#))

Pastor **Ray Stedman** writes that "Words like **immorality** do not seem to register with many people. Let us put it plainly: **Immorality** means no sexual wrongdoing; no pre-marital sex (no fornication); no extra-marital sex (no messing around with someone else's wife or being faithless to your own husband or wife); No homosexual sex (that is very clear in Scripture in many places); No pornography (no standing in the news section at the airport and flipping through Penthouse or Playboy magazine and getting yourself turned on by looking at the pictures; that is sexual fantasy and that is wrong, too, as Jesus pointed out). So to "flee immorality" means to have none of those things going on in your life. (from [Handling your Sex Drive](#))

Richison offers a good word of encouragement to those who have fallen into the sticky wicket of sexual sin observing that...

It is never too late to walk with God. Many of you have already sinned sexually. It is God's will that you move on. He will welcome you into His fellowship. God makes it clear that He will restore us to fellowship. As we trusted the finished work of Christ for salvation, so we trust His finished work on the cross for our sin (1 John 1:9, 10, 2:1, 2:2)

Vine sums up the phrase **that you abstain from sexual immorality** observing that Paul...

the apostle in stating the will of God for the sanctification of His people, had in mind those particular temptations to which, from their past history as idolaters, his readers were peculiarly susceptible, and to which, from their present environment, they were still exposed. Since the Gentiles refused to have God in their knowledge, God had given them up to a reprobate mind and to the doing of unseemly things, (Ro 1:21-note; Ro 1:28-note) resulting in familiarity with vice and deadness to the claims of moral purity. From such conditions those to whom the apostle wrote had been delivered by the gospel. **Now lest, growing careless under the evil influences to which they were daily exposed, they should relapse into Gentile ways, it was necessary that conscience should be aroused and instructed,** (cp. "You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led" 1Corinthians 12:2) (Ep 4:17, 18, 19-see **notes** Ep 4:17; 18; 19; 1Pe 4:3-note). Apparently Timothy's report had given the apostle some ground for apprehension on this point, (1Th 3:10-note); hence he begins the section of his Epistle in which he seeks to supply the things lacking in their faith, (1Th 3:10-note), by words concerning the self-control which they must exercise in order to be preserved in holiness as regarded themselves, (1Th 4:4-note), and in righteousness as regarded each other, (1Th 4:6-note). ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#)) (Bolding added)

Hiebert comments that...

We need not infer that Timothy had brought back a report that actual cases of immorality existed in the Thessalonian church. The absence of any direct censure for immorality (such as that given to the church at Corinth), as well as the commendatory tone of the epistle, seems to indicate that this advice is intended to be preventive. Writing from Corinth, a notoriously licentious seaport, Paul well knew the penetrating moral taint to which his converts in the seaport of Thessalonica were constantly exposed.

Further, the warning was timely since many of the readers, until a few months before, had lived by the low moral standards prevailing in the pagan world surrounding them. Paul well knew that he could not assume that their conversion would automatically undo the moral habits of a lifetime. He was aware that strong temptations to licentiousness constantly assailed them. Constant admonitions and urgent warnings were always needed, and the New Testament epistles repeatedly touch upon the subject. It may well be that Timothy had reported that some of the members were finding it difficult to maintain the moral standard the missionaries had taught.

Fornication was one of the conspicuous forms of immorality in all areas of the pagan world. It was regarded as a matter of indifference and even defended as a necessity of nature, like eating and drinking. The well-known proneness of the pagan gods to sensuality had a degrading influence on public morals. Fornication received ritual sanction in some of the religious cults of the day.

Adultery was a common subject of poetry, and all the arts were employed to make it a pleasing and seductive practice. The disclosures from Pompeii and Herculaneum bear painful testimony to the moral degradation that pervaded even the most civilized portion of the heathen world.

The strong position of the New Testament against impurity in all forms shows that Christianity did not adapt its moral standards to the practices of contemporary society. Its moral demands stand in stark contrast to the immoral practices of that day. The Christian church insisted that abstinence is an essential and ever-present need for the development of personal holiness and God-pleasing conduct. Unlike the pagan cults, it refused to tolerate, much less foster, immoral practices among its members. Its demands for chastity root in the fact that the body of the Christian belongs to God and is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:13, 17, 18, 19, 20).

In these days of neo-paganism the Christian church must again aggressively reemphasize and promote the New Testament moral standards for the Christian life. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

The new morality
is only the old immorality
brought up to date!

Perfecting Holiness - I had not worked in my yard for several weeks, and I was amazed at how quickly weeds had sprung up and taken over. Weeds don't need tending; they seem to love to sprout up for anyone who just lets things go. A bed of beautiful flowers, however, takes watering, feeding, and of course, weeding. Flowers thrive under the care of one who is not afraid to get dirt under his fingernails.

The Christian life takes work too. It requires the commitment of one's whole being to Jesus—body, mind, emotions, and will—to have a life that is wholesome, attractive, uplifting to others, and fulfilling to oneself. Even then, weeds of selfishness and sinful attitudes can quickly spring up and overrun the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23-note).

That was the problem with many believers at Corinth. They had become overgrown with envy and divisiveness (1 Corinthians 3:1, 2, 3). So Paul told them to cleanse themselves from all "filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1-note). By "holiness" he didn't mean they could be sinless, but blameless.

Lord, help us uproot any weeds of the flesh and the spirit before they become ugly habits. May the beauty of Jesus' character be what others see in us.—Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Weeding Process

1. Identify sins of the flesh or the spirit (Gal. 5:17, 18, 19, 20, 21).
2. Call them sin and confess them (1 John 1:9).
3. Stand firm in your position in Christ (Gal 2:20-note).

If you yield to God, you won't give in to sin.

The Right Light - Eating in the dark is no fun. Low light in a restaurant is one thing; eating in a room with no light at all is another. The same is true in our walk with God. Unless we take advantage of the light He gives, we will miss seeing what He is doing for us.

We have an Old Testament picture of this—the tabernacle. As the priest entered a room called the Holy Place, he could see only by the light of a golden lampstand (Exodus 25:31-40). Like everything else in the room, it had been carefully fashioned according to the pattern God gave Moses (v.40).

The lampstand is a picture of spiritual light. The gold speaks of value. The oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The six branches coming out from the center shaft portray unity in plurality. The symbol of the almond blossom is linked to God's anointed priesthood (Numbers 17:1-8). When all this is combined with a New Testament reference that uses a golden lampstand to represent the church (Revelation 1:20), we have the complete picture. God gives light through the Spirit, who works through His congregation of anointed people (1 Peter 2:9).

Yes, the Holy Spirit provides us with the light we need. Are we daily spending time in prayer and reading God's Word so that we can take advantage of it?—Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Holy Ghost, with light divine,
Shine upon this heart of mine;
Chase the shades of night away,
Turn my darkness into day. —Reed

The light of God's holiness convicts the sinner and guides the saint.

Housekeeping Of The Heart - As a young homemaker, I enjoyed cleaning our house from top to bottom. The trouble was, it never stayed clean for long. Eventually I discovered that if I kept our house reasonably tidy, it appeared to be clean even when it wasn't. Gradually I concentrated more on the appearance of a clean house and neglected thorough cleaning. This compromise was not only convenient, it was convincing. Sometimes even I was fooled. But on sunny days my clean-looking house was revealed for what it

was—dusty and dirty.

In Jesus' day, the scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites who concentrated on the appearance of holiness while neglecting their heart-holiness (Matt. 23:25). When the light of Jesus shined on them, He revealed the truth about their outwardly religious life. He didn't say these external acts were necessarily wrong, but they were wrongfully used as a coverup for wickedness. For them, inner housecleaning was long overdue.

Keeping up appearances in our housework isn't wrong, but pretending our hearts are clean is. Only those who are clean on the inside will welcome Jesus with confidence when He returns. Is your heart ready? Or is heart-cleaning needed? Now is the time to take care of it! —Joanie Yoder([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thinking It Over

What is the only way to get a clean heart? (Titus 3:3, 4, 5, 6-note).

After we have put our faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16),

how do we keep our heart clean? (1 John 1:9).

At the heart of holiness is holiness of the heart.

Dirty Laundry - Whenever my husband and I leave the house, our dog Maggie goes sniffing for old shoes and dirty laundry. She surrounds herself with what she finds and then sleeps with it near her nose. The familiar smells comfort her until we return.

Of course Maggie doesn't realize she's following a Levitical command to "distinguish between ... unclean and clean" (Leviticus 10:10). Nor does she know she's violating it.

In a world still swirling in sin long after its catastrophic collision with evil, God commanded His followers to live holy lives (Leviticus 11:45). Distinguishing between clean and unclean is essential to that task.

Such discernment requires more than finely tuned physical senses. The apostle Paul wrote that the "natural man"—that is, a human being in his sinful state—"does not receive the things of the Spirit of God... they are spiritually discerned" (1Corinthians 2:14). It is the Holy Spirit who provides this wisdom (1Co 2:13).

Just as Maggie finds comfort in old shoes and socks, many people seek comfort in old dirty sins. We must be mindful that our comfort and consolation come from God, who loves us and who establishes us in "every good word and work" (2Thessalonians 2:16, 17).—Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Search me, O God, and know my heart today;
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray.
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin and set me free. —Orr
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**There is no true happiness apart from holiness,
and no holiness apart from Christ**

A Walk In The Woods - A friend of mine wrote to me about certain "reservations" in his life—areas of secret sin that he reserved for himself and into which he frequently withdrew.

These "reserves" are like the large tracts of wilderness in my home state of Idaho. It may sound exciting to wander around these untamed regions by oneself, but it's dangerous.

So too, each journey into sin takes its toll. We sacrifice our closeness with God, forfeiting His blessing (Psalm 24:1, 2, 3, 4, 5-note), and we lose our influence on others that comes from purity of mind and body (1Ti 4:12).

The wild areas in us may never be fully tamed, but we can set up perimeters that keep us from wandering into them. One perimeter

is to remember that we are dead to sin's power (Romans 6:1-14). We do not have to give in to it.

The second perimeter is to resist temptation when it first attracts us. Initial temptation may not be strong, but if we entertain it, it will in time gain power and overwhelm us.

The third perimeter is accountability. Find a person who will commit to ask you each week, "Have you 'taken a hike in the wild'? Have you gone where you should not go?"

Impurity is ruinous, but if we long for holiness and ask God for help, He will give us victory. Press on!—David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord, help us to recognize
When we begin to compromise;
And give us strength to follow through
With what we know is right and true. —Sper

**Beware—
the more you look at temptation, the better it looks!**

Just A Closer Walk with Thee - Nobel Prize-winning physicist Martin Perl was asked what he attributed his success to. "My mother," he answered. "Every day when I came home from school she asked me, 'So, Marty, did you ask any good questions today?'"

David asked the best question of all: "Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?" (Psalm 15:1-[note](#)). There are two words ancient Jews had for expressing the question "who?" One is similar to our usage. But David used another word here that asks, "What kind of person dwells close to God?"

The answer came in a series of character traits: "He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart" (Ps 15:2-[note](#)).

It's one thing to know the truth; it's another to obey it. God delights to live on His holy hill with those who are holy—who reflect the reality of the truth they believe. He loves men and women who "ring true."

This psalm, however, is not about any holiness of our own that we think will qualify us to gain entrance to His presence. It is rather about the beauty of holiness that God forms in us as we dwell in fellowship with Him.

The closer we get to God, the more like Him we will become. —David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

More purity give me, more strength to o'ercome,
More freedom from earth-stains, more longings for home;
More fit for the kingdom, more used would I be,
More blessed and holy—more, Savior, like Thee. —Bliss

Walk so close to God that nothing can come between.

A Lesson From the Oak Tree - Have you ever noticed that in winter some oak trees retain their crisp, dry leaves long after the maples, the elms, and the walnuts have become bare skeletons? Even the strong winter winds and the early spring rains do not completely strip the oak branches of all their old leaves. But as springtime progresses, warmer winds blow and something wonderful begins to happen. Tiny buds start appearing at the tips of the twigs, and the dried remnants of the preceding season fall off. New life replaces the old.

At times, old habits cling to our lives with the same tenacity as those oak leaves. Even the winds of adversity do not remove all the lifeless leftovers of our fallen human nature.

But Christ, who dwells in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, is at work. His life within us continually seeks to push off the old habits—renewing us when we confess our sins, steadying us when we falter, and strengthening us to do His will.

When every effort to cast off an old sinful habit ends in failure, remember the mighty oak. Thank God for His Spirit who lives in you. Keep saying yes to His gentle urging to be kind, loving, compassionate, honest, and faithful. Those "lifeless old leaves" will eventually drop off. —Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When stubborn sins tenaciously
Hold to their former place,
We must rely on Jesus' strength
And His unfailing grace. —Sper

**To get rid of a bad habit, start a good one—
TRUST GOD!**

Let's Get Growing! - Several years ago my interest in flowers had our home resembling a nursery. There's something about the presence of growing plants that I find very enjoyable. As I daily inspected their progress, I gained from my little green friends a new appreciation of the joy and necessity of the wonderful process of growth.

As Christians, we too are like plants. We should put down our roots, break up through the earth, spread out our branches, and burst into blossom. Such a thriving condition, however, isn't always evident in our lives. It's so easy to become bored and listless in the bland routine of our daily activities. Often we just hang on and merely exist without moving steadily toward maturity and fruitfulness.

At such times we are at a spiritual standstill and must allow Jesus the "Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4:2) to warm our hearts anew with His love. We must send our roots deep into the Word of God by meditating on it day and night (Psalm 1:2). Then we will be like a fruitful tree planted by rivers of living water, and our branches will extend outward in an ever-increasing influence and witness. They will be filled with blossoms that reflect the beauty of righteous living.

If we've become dormant, let's get growing!—Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If God can make a tiny seed
Into a bloom so fair,
What can He make, O soul, of you
Through study, faith, and prayer? —Anon.

Decay starts when growth stops.

Knowing God's Will - I tell my friends in jest that I make three difficult decisions every day: What should I eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? I live in Singapore, where we enjoy the food of the Chinese, Malay, and Indian cultures, to name just a few. We are spoiled by having so many choices.

Life is full of decisions—far more serious ones than choosing what to eat. Perhaps this explains why some people constantly wonder what God's will is for their lives.

Discovering God's will is not necessarily a complicated process. He has given us many simple and clearly stated principles for life. For example, we are told, "This is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1Pe 2:15-note). In 1Thes 4:3-note we read, "This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality." And in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 we are told, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

As we live by faith and do what the Bible clearly tells us to do, we can be sure the Lord will lead us through the difficult decisions when the options may not be clear. Above all else, God's will is that we submit to Him and be willing to follow wherever He leads. —Albert Lee ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If you will choose to do God's will
And follow what is right,
God will confirm to you His truth
And give you greater light. —D. De Haan

**The best way to know God's will is
to say "I will" to God.**

Butterfly Man - The Internet is one of the most remarkable developments of our time. How astounding that with a few keystrokes you can find out the address of Uncle Frank in Schenectady, New York, or the recipe for a Brazilian fish dish, or the statistics for your favorite athlete.

Of course, the Internet opens up a whole world of sinful choices as well. That's why many Internet providers offer a service to protect a family's computer from sites that promote immorality. One company used a comical-looking man dressed as a butterfly to represent the service, and in an advertisement showed him shielding children from various immoral activities.

Christians already have a similar resource, and it doesn't cost us a monthly fee. It's not the butterfly man—it's the Holy Spirit, who lives in the heart of each believer. As we seek guidance from God's Word and pray, He will enable us to detect and filter out the immoral. He can help us to keep from going where we shouldn't go, doing what we shouldn't do, and saying what we shouldn't say.

The world, like the Internet, has much we need to avoid. As we daily seek to "walk in the Spirit," relying on His wisdom and power, we can stay clean.—Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Spirit gives us power to live
A life that's pleasing to the Lord;
He also guides us and provides
Direction in God's holy Word. —Sper

The Holy Spirit is our ever-present Protector.

Take Action - Shameful behavior is being displayed in magazines, movies, and on television. Immorality is even joked about. The world is seeking to convince everyone that nothing is sinful anymore. So we must be on guard against any compromise in our hearts.

While I was in the military, I realized that I was becoming unmoved by the obscene words and conduct of some of my fellow soldiers. When I recognized what was happening, I asked the Lord to restore my sensitivity to the grievous nature of sin.

A permissive attitude toward evil will lead us to fall into sin. That's why we are to deal radically with every form of wickedness.

Jesus went so far as to say that we should pluck out our eye if it causes us to sin (Matthew 5:29). He didn't mean we should maim our bodies, but rather we are to take strong action when tempted to sin. Books, magazines, or video images that arouse wrong desires must be deliberately avoided. This is also what Paul had in mind when he said we are to "put to death the deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13). Someone who is indifferent to the sin around him or trifles with it in his own life is in grave danger.

We cannot ignore the seriousness of this issue. It's time to take action! —Herbert Vander Lugt

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul,
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole. —Wesley

**To avoid being tempted by forbidden fruit,
stay away from the devil's orchard.**

Remote Control - Flick. "That's tonight at 8 on ABC." Flick. "A high pressure system is moving in." Flick. "He kicked the ball wide of the goal!" Flick. "I'll take 'World History' for \$600, Alex." Flick. "In the news today ... " Flick!

What's happening? It's a TV viewer giving the thumb a good workout with the remote control, looking for something to watch, filtering through the maze of choices.

Each time we stop on a channel, we've made a choice. We've made a decision to allow that program to influence us in some way.

But have we been discerning? Are we using our time wisely and beneficially? Will what we watch build us up or tear us down? These are vital questions for the Christian, for we have been told to do all things for God's glory (1Corinthians 10:31).

One set of guidelines is outlined in Ephesians 5. We are to steer clear of immorality, filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting (Eph 5:3, 4). And we are to have no "fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" nor "speak of those things which are done by them in secret" (Ep 5:11, 12-note).

We need to keep learning what is "acceptable to the Lord" (Ep 5:10-note). And sometimes that means taking the remote and clicking the TV off. —Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Take heed to what you see and hear,
For it affects your soul;
Be sure it's pleasing to the Lord
And that He's in control. —Fitzhugh

The best TV guide is the Bible.

Flee! - I didn't see the movie The Exorcist, but I do recall its impact on my community. It left a lasting impression on many people about Satan's power. Even many Christians began to live in fear, swayed by the vivid images of evil. It seemed as if the devil was almost as powerful as God.

Is this perspective biblically sound? Of course not. God is the Creator, and all others, including demons, are just created beings. Only God is almighty.

It's easy to blame the devil when things go wrong. Although he does propagate wickedness and sin, we must be careful not to conclude that we are powerless against him. We are told in the Bible that the Holy Spirit within us "is greater than he who is in the world" (1John 4:4).

The Bible also says we have a role to play in overcoming evil and doing what is good. We are to "flee sexual immorality" (1Corinthians 6:18, 19, 20), "flee from idolatry" (1Cor 10:14), "flee" from the love of money (1Timothy 6:10, 11), and "flee also youthful lusts" (2Timothy 2:22-note).

James said that our attitude toward the devil should be to "resist" him (James 4:7). How do we do this? By submitting ourselves to God, allowing Him to direct our lives. Then it will be the devil who will flee from us.—Albert Lee ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When Satan launches his attack,
We must take heart and pray;
If we submit ourselves to God,
He'll be our strength each day. —Sper

**To defeat Satan...
Surrender to Christ**

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