

1 Thessalonians 4:6-8 Commentary

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JESUS IS COMING AGAIN
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Chart by Charles Swindoll

1 Thessalonians Overview										
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Written from Corinth Approximately 51AD										

1Thessalonians 4:6 and that **no** man **transgress** and **defraud** his **brother** in the **matter because** the **Lord** is the **avenger** in **all these things, just** as we **also told** you **before** and **solemnly warned** you. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [to me hyperbainein \(PAN\)](#) [kai pleonektein \(PAN\)](#) [en to pragmati ton adelphon autou.](#) [dioti ekdikos kurios peri panton touton.](#) [kathos kai proeipamen \(1PAAI\)](#) [humin kai diemarturametha. \(1PAMI\)](#)

Amplified: That no man transgress and overreach his brother and defraud him in this matter or defraud his brother in business. For the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we have already warned you solemnly and told you plainly. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: Never cheat another Christian in this matter by taking his wife, for the Lord avenges all such sins, as we have solemnly warned you before. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: You cannot break this rule without in some way cheating your fellow-men. And you must remember that God will punish all who do offend in this matter, and we have warned you how we have seen this work out in our experience of life. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: that no one be transgressing and defrauding his brother [Christian] in the aforementioned matter because the Lord is the One who inflicts punishment with reference to all these things, even as also we told you before and charged you. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

Young's Literal: that no one go beyond and defraud in the matter his brother, because an avenger is the Lord of all these, as also we spake before to you and testified,

AND THAT NO MAN TRANSGRESS AND DEFRAUD HIS BROTHER IN THE MATTER: [to me hyperbainein \(PAN\)](#) [kai pleonektein \(PAN\)](#) [en to pragmati ton adelphon autou:](#)

- Ex 20:15,17; Lev 19:11,13; Deut 24:7; 25:13-16; Proverbs 11:1; 16:11; 20:14; Proverbs 20:23; 28:24; Isaiah 5:7; 59:4, 5, 6, 7; Jeremiah 9:4; Ezekiel 22:13; 45:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; Amos 8:5,6; Zephaniah 3:5; Malachi 3:5; Mark 10:19; 1Corinthians 6:7, 8, 9; Ephesians 4:28; James 5:4)
- Leviticus 25:14,17; 1Samuel 12:3,4; Proverbs 22:22; Jeremiah 7:6; Micah 2:2; Zephaniah 3:1; James 2:6)

In this matter, then, no man should do wrong to his fellow-Christian or take advantage of him. We have told you this before, and we strongly warned you that the Lord will punish those who do that. (GNT)

not to take advantage of or exploit a brother in this matter, for the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you before and solemnly affirmed. (NAB)

In this matter no one should violate the rights of his brother or take advantage of him, because the Lord is the avenger in all these cases, as we also told you earlier and warned you solemnly. (NET)

He wants nobody at all ever to sin by taking advantage of a brother in these matters; the Lord always pays back sins of that sort, as we told you before emphatically. (NJB)

And this also is God's will: that you never cheat in this matter by taking another man's wife because the Lord will punish you terribly for this, as we have solemnly told you before. (TLB)

No man transgress or defraud his brother - Some commentaries favor this as a reference to a Christian **brother** but others feel Paul is speaking of men and women in general. Certainly the charge to never take advantage of another person in the area of sexuality has a broad application, for sex in any form outside of marriage is off limits.

Transgress ([5233](#)) ([hyperbaino](#) from [hupér](#) = beyond + [baíno](#) = to go) means literally to step over or go beyond. The idea is to step over a boundary, to break over a barrier, to go beyond prescribed limits, to exceed the proper limits, go over the line, go beyond the bounds, go pass the law. Clearly the idea is to go to far. Figuratively, as used here in the only NT use, **hyperbaino** means to overstep certain limits and so to transgress or sin against. The idea is don't sin against another person by stepping over the line and exceeding the lawful limits. The English word **transgress** means to go beyond the limits set by moral principles, standards, laws, etc.

Darby translates

not overstepping the rights of and wronging the brother.

Hiebert comments that the verbal form of **huperbaino**...

literally means "to go beyond" and carries the thought of passing over the line that divides right from wrong. The **present tense** with the negative (me) has the force "that there be no going beyond." ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

Huperbaino is used 10 times in the Septuagint (LXX) and most of these uses are with the literal meaning (1Sa 5:5; 2Sa 18:23; 22:30; Job 9:11; 14:5; 24:2; 38:11; Ps 18:29; Pr 9:18; Jer. 5:22; Micah 7:18) as for example in...

2 Samuel 18:23 "But whatever happens," he said, "I will run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and **passed up** (Lxx = huperbaino = outrun) the Cushite.

2 Samuel 22:30 (Ps 18:29) "For by Thee I can run upon a troop; By my God I can **leap over** (Lxx = huperbaino) a wall.

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity And **passes over** (Lxx = huperbaino) the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love.

Vincent writes that **huperbaino** is found...

Often in LXX, mostly in the literal sense of overpassing limits. Also of overtaking, passing by, surpassing, as in wickedness or cruelty. It is an expansion of the preceding thought. Pursue your business as holy men: do not overreach or defraud. It is the overstepping of the line between mine and thine. It is used absolutely, being defined by the succeeding clause. The A V is literal, go beyond. Rev. renders transgress. Weizsäcker and Bornemann "übergreife overreach." So Rev. margin. This last is the best.

That no man...defraud - Defraud means to selfishly, greedily take something for personal gain and pleasure at someone else's expense. Webster says that to defraud is to get something by dishonesty or deception and stresses depriving one of his or her rights and usually connotes a deliberate perversion of the truth. **Defraud** means to take away or withhold money, rights, property, etc., from a person by fraud (intentional perversion of truth in order to induce another to part with something of value). That is a good picture of what happens in illicit sex for the perpetrator is taking something away from the other person! As with **transgress**, **defraud** includes the idea of taking advantage of someone, here in the area of sexual sin. Whenever believers seek to satisfy their physical desires and obtain sexual pleasure at the expense of another individual, they have violated this command.

Defraud ([4122](#)) (**pleonekteo** from **pleion** = more + **écho** = have <> **pleonektes** is one who wants more, person covetous of something that others have, a defrauder for gain) literally means to have more than another and then to take advantage of any one. To claim more. To covet. To have more than one's due. To selfishly attempt to gain more at all costs and by all means disregarding others and their rights. Defraud means to selfishly and greedily take something at someone else's expense.

Hiebert adds that **pleonekteo** "does not indicate the nature of the wrong being done, but the idea of selfish and self-seeking fraud is involved in the term. The **present tense** prohibits the continuation of such a practice. ([1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

Don't go beyond the line that God has drawn and take advantage of another person in the matter of sexual sin.

See discussion of the related word **pleonexia** which describes a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions, especially that which is forbidden. This desire to have more is irrespective of one's need and thus describes an insatiable selfishness. Greed is what you desire and what you desire more of becomes your "god" and you end up serving that "god." The individual whose life is dominated by the desire to get things has set up things in the place of God and that is the essence of idolatry.

William Barclay writes that the Greeks defined **pleonexia** "as 'arrogant greediness,' as 'the accursed love of possessing,' as 'the unlawful desire for the things which belong to others.'" It has been defined as the spirit in which a man is always ready to sacrifice his neighbour to his own desires. **Pleonexia** is the irresistible desire to have what we have no right to possess. It might issue in the theft of material things; it might issue in the spirit which tramples on other people to get its own way; it might issue in sexual sin.... (**pleonexia**) is, therefore, a sin with a very wide range. If it is the desire for money, it leads to theft. If it is the desire for prestige, it leads to evil ambition. If it is the desire for power, it leads to sadistic tyranny. If it is the desire for a person, it leads to sexual sin " ([1 Thessalonians 4 Commentary](#))

Greeks defined **pleonekteo** as "the spirit which is always reaching after more and grabbing that to which it has no right." It is aggressive getting. It is not the miser's spirit, for it aimed to get in order to spend, so that it could live in more luxury and greater pleasure; and it cared not over whom it took advantage so long as it could get.) means to take advantage of someone, usually as the result of a motivation of greed, to exploit, exploitation.

What does that word **defraud** mean? It stresses depriving one of his or her rights and usually connotes deliberate perversion of the truth. Defraud means to selfishly, greedily take something for personal gain and pleasure at someone else's expense. It means to take advantage of someone for personal gain, personal pleasure.

When someone desires their sexual pleasure, they take advantage of someone else to get it.

There are only 5 uses of **pleonekteo** in the NT...

2 Corinthians 2:11 in order that no **advantage** be **taken** of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes. (Vincent writes that literally pleonekteo is "*in order that we be not made gain of, or overreached, by Satan*. Rev., that no advantage may be gained over us.)

2 Corinthians 7:2 Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, **wetook advantage** of no one.

2 Corinthians 12:17 Certainly I have not **taken advantage** of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I? **18** I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not **take** any **advantage** of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?

1Thessalonians 4:6 and that no man transgress and **defraud** his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.

John Piper comments that...

When we sin sexually we are not seeking the highest good of others, neither the woman or the man we sin with, nor the person we fantasize about nor the person in the pornography, nor the spouse or parent of any of these. It is not Christian love that moves us in any of this. It is simply selfish desire. But Christians are people deeply moved by love for others. Christians love people; they don't use them. ([1Thessalonians 4:1-8](#))

Morris writes that...

Adultery is an obvious violation of the rights of another. But promiscuity before marriage represents the robbing of the other that virginity which ought to be brought to a marriage. The future partner of such a one has been defrauded.

Guzik observes that...

Repeatedly in Leviticus 18 - a chapter where God instructed Israel on the matter of sexual morality - the idea is given that one may not uncover the nakedness of another not their spouse. The idea is that the nakedness of an individual belongs to their spouse and no one else, and it is a violation of God's law to give that nakedness to anyone else, or for anyone else to take it. (David Guzik. The Enduring Word Commentary Series)

Keener writes that...

Adultery, or "wife stealing," as it was often considered, was punishable by banishment under Roman law; in some circumstances, a couple caught in the act could be killed on the spot. Adultery seems to have been common and usually unpunished, however; but a husband who learned that his wife was committing adultery was required by law to divorce her or himself be prosecuted on the charge of lenocinium—"pimping." Palestinian Judaism could no longer execute the Old Testament death penalty for adultery, but Jewish people believed that what they could not execute, God would (especially on the day of judgment). ([Keener, Craig: The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament. 1994. IVP](#))

Brethren (80) ([adelphos](#) from collative **a** = denoting unity + **delphús** = womb) is literally one born from same womb and so a male having the same father and mother as reference person.

Figuratively, **adelphos** is usually used by Paul to refer to fellow believers in Christ who are united by lineage of being in Christ and in the family of God Who is now their Father. It is possible however that in this present usage Paul is broadening the term to include non-believers, an interpretation favored by Vine who writes that...

though there is no other instance in Paul's epistles of the use of this word of mankind in general, it is difficult to suppose that the apostle here limited its meaning to the Christian relationship; cp. Matthew 7:3 (see note). ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

Lightfoot supports this broader interpretation of brothers writing that

this is a duty which extends to the universal brotherhood of mankind, and has no reference to the special privileges of the close brotherhood of the Gospel.

Keathley comments that ...

the **brother** in this verse as most likely another person, not necessarily another Christian male. "This seems clear from the fact that this person is a victim of illicit sex. Sexual immorality wrongs the partner in the forbidden act by involving him or her in behavior contrary to God's will and therefore under His judgment."

Ryrie agrees though he acknowledges this is not the Apostle's normal use of "brother." He writes, "Paul uses "brother" here not in the restricted sense of a brother in Christ but in the general sense of a brother man. There is no other instance in Paul's writings of this use of brother." Paul's point is that just as stealing is a sin against one's neighbor, so sexual immorality is a transgression against others. ([1Thessalonians 4:1-12](#))

F F Bruce interprets brother as...

meaning probably a fellow Christian (although the action would be equally reprobated if the victim of the "trespass" were a pagan). ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

The matter ([4229](#)) (**pragma** from **práso** = to do, perform = suffix **-ma** = the result of; English = pragmatic [dealing with things in a way that is based on practical rather than theoretical considerations: practical as opposed to idealistic]; derivative words = pragmateia = affairs in 2 Timothy 2:4 [note], pragmateuomai = trade, do business, put capital to work, Lk 19:13) describes that which has been done or that which happens (a happening), and thus a deed, a thing, an event, an occurrence or an accomplished fact. In this meaning **pragma** speaks of something in the past. When speaking of something in the present or future, **pragma** means that which occurs as a result of activity -- the thing being done or to be done (in secular Greek in the phrase "great **undertakings**", "the **tasks** of everyday life"), matter, business, affair.

In this matter - Means in the sphere of the conduct prohibited where the definite article (modifying "matter") makes it specific, pointing to the matter under discussion, and therefore should not be translated generally, "in any matter" as does the KJV. Some argue that the **matter** could have one of two distinct interpretations -- sexual impurity and dishonesty in business.

Milligan asserts that

the words are too closely connected with what precedes and what follows (1Thes 4:7, 'uncleanness') to admit of any such transition to a wholly new subject.

Moffatt concludes that

Paul is still dealing with the immoralities of men, but now as a form of social dishonesty and fraud. The metaphors are drawn from trade, perhaps as appropriate to a trading community.

In the present context, which remains unchanged throughout v1-8, demands that this refer to all the destructive social and spiritual implications of illegitimate sexual activity. Solomon who ironically failed to follow his own advice wrote the following wisdom and warning regarding sexual dalliances...

Proverbs 6:20 My son, keep the **laws** of thy father, and reject not the **ordinances** of thy mother: **21** Bind **them** continually on your heart; Tie **them** around your neck. **22** When you walk about, **they** will guide you; When you sleep, **they** will watch over you; and when you awake, **they** will talk to you. **25** For the **commandment** is a lamp, and the **teaching** is light; and **reproofs for discipline** are the way of life, **24** (Observe carefully from the prior passages what serves to protect one from sexual indiscretion) To keep you from the evil woman (Septuagint or LXX = "married woman") , from the smooth tongue (LXX = diabolé = slander, false accusations - cp word for devil = diabolos from dia = between + ballo = cast - the idea is cast between, e.g., a husband and a wife and so divide them which is what adultery does!) of the adulteress (LXX = "strange woman" literally "a woman belonging to another").

Proverbs 6:25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart (not just in your eyes but in your heart, cp Jesus' warning in Matthew 5:27, 28, 29 - see notes 27; 28; 29) (LXX translation = "do not let your strong desire or lust [**epithumia**] for her beauty overcome [nikao] or conquer you"), nor let her catch (Hebrew = laqah = lay hold of, seize, snatch. LXX = sunarpazo from sun = with speaks of an intimate association + harpazo = seize - means to seize suddenly and violently! Note the passive voice = be seized by a force from without! Sunarpazo was used in Acts 27:15 of a ship caught in a storm and being swept off course by a tempestuous wind ~ think of an the effects of an adulteress!) you with her eyelids (cp Job's solution for this danger = Job 31:1) **26** (LXX = "the

value of a harlot"; ESV "the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread") For on account of a harlot one is *reduced* to a loaf of bread (reduced to poverty ~ crust of bread), and an **adulteress** (Hebrew = a man's wife = a married woman) **hunts** (Lxx = agreuo = is a term used for hunting or fishing and conveys idea of catching one unaware and taking advantage of the man in an unguarded moment! Guard your heart continually. Pr 4:23) for the **precious life** (cp the trap David fell into because he did not make a covenant with his eyes and was trapped in this unguarded moment! see 2Sa 11:2) **27** Can a man take **fire** in his bosom (see Job's comment - Job 31:12), and his clothes not be burned? **28** Or can a man walk on hot coals, and his feet not be scorched?

Proverbs 6:29 So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife. Whoever **touches** (Lxx = hapto means to fasten or cling to, to make close contact, to kindle or set on fire! What a vivid picture of the powerful effect of touch! You can't look and likewise you better not touch! In Greek the idiom "touch a woman" actually means to have intercourse with her. See hapto in Ge 20:6) her will not go unpunished. **30** Men do not despise a thief if he steals To satisfy himself when he is hungry; **31** But when he is found, he must repay sevenfold; He must give all the substance of his house. **32** The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; He who would destroy himself does it (Lxx = "procures destruction to his soul"!); **33** Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out. **34** For jealousy enrages a man, and he will not spare in the day of vengeance. **35** He will not accept any ransom, nor will he be content though you give many gifts. (**Proverbs 6:20-35**)

The delicacy of Paul makes him refrain from plainer terms and the context makes it clear enough as in 2Cor 7:11-see [commentary](#). Note Greek uses definite article so it is "**the specific matter of business**" which in context is illicit sexual activity.

Sexual immorality defrauds more than just one party for it is a sin against God's Holy Spirit (1Co 6:19), a sin against one's own body (1Co 6:18) and is also a sin against other persons. Joseph recognized this principle when tempted by Potiphar's wife declaring to her

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?" (Ge 39:9)

Barnes comments that **the matter** means...

to the reading in the margin, this would refer to the particular matter under discussion 1Th 4:3-5 to wit, concupiscence (strong desire, especially sexual desire), and the meaning then would be, that no one should be guilty of illicit intercourse with the wife of another (Ed comment: assuming "vessel in verse 4 referred only to one's wife). --as Hammond, Whitby, Macknight, Rosenmuller, suppose that this is a prohibition of adultery, and there can be no doubt that it does include this. But there is no reason why it should be confined to it. The Greek is so general that it may prohibit all kinds of fraud, overreaching, or covetousness, and may refer to any attempts to deprive another of his rights, whether it be the right which he has in his property, or his rights as a husband, or his rights in any other respect. It is a general command not to defraud; in way to take advantage of another; in no way to deprive him of his rights (**Ed comment:** but the context speaks especially of defrauding in the area of sexual activity of any kind outside of marriage). (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

In the previous two verses Paul's appeal was based on the importance of sexual purity for the sake of the Christian himself. In this verse Paul appealed on the basis of the other person involved in the immoral act. The **brother** as noted earlier could refer to any other human, not necessarily a Christian. Sexual immorality wrongs the partner in the forbidden act by involving him or her in behavior contrary to God's will and therefore under His judgment. Two or more people practicing sex out of God's will are calling God's wrath down on themselves (Heb 13:4). The initiator of the act takes advantage of his partner in sin by fanning the fire of passion till self-control is lost.

Sexual sin disregards God, ignoring His holiness, spurning His will, defying His commands, rejecting His love, flaunting His grace and mercy and in short is disobedient and selfish. And as **Hiebert** notes

Any illegitimate sexual relationship has in it the potential for social complications that cannot be calculated in advance.

BECAUSE THE LORD IS THE AVENGER IN ALL THESE THINGS: dioti ekdikos o kurios peri panton touton kathos

- Deuteronomy 32:35; Job 31:13,14; Psalms 94:1; 140:12; Proverbs 22:22,23; Ecclesiastes 5:8; Isaiah 1:23,24; Romans 1:18; 12:19; Ephesians 5:6; 2Thessalonians 1:8

Because (1360) (**dioti** from **diá** = for + **hóti** = that) means on account of this or that, for this reason, that, simply because, for. Here Paul passes from the behavior called for in order to be sexually pure to the reason or motives for striving to be sexually pure.

Given the loose morals and sexual laxity throughout the ancient world in the first century, the readers might have been wondering "Why is this so important? After all, everybody's behaving this way, so why shouldn't we?" This sounds very modern doesn't it? -- Situation ethics. Relative values. Well, Paul anticipates such a question and proceeds to give 4 reasons we should strive to cultivate sexual purity:

- (1) the Lord is the Avenger - God satisfies justice by inflicting the due punishment upon the wrongdoer. This reason appeals to the fear of the consequences of disobedience.
- (2) God has not called us to impurity
- (3) God has called us in sanctification (holiness)
- (4) If we reject this warning we are rejecting God!

Avenger (1558) (**ekdikos** from **ek** = from, out + **díke** = justice) literally refers to one outside of that which is lawful. One who carries out what is right. It refers to one who exacts a penalty from a person, an avenger, a punisher. The **ekdikos** is the one who exacts satisfaction for a wrong by punishing the wrongdoer or by inflicting punishment in retaliation for an injury or offense. In secular Greek **ekdikos** was used for the office of an official legal representative.

The only other Biblical use of **ekdikos** is in Romans...

for it (authority) is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an **avenger** who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil. (see **note** Romans 13:4)

In this section Paul shoots his rifle over their heads as if to say, brothers I'm not kidding, this is serious business.

Marshall notes that...

It is not popular with some people who argue that if God commands Christians to return good for evil and love to their enemies, he himself ought to follow the same principles. The difficulty is probably that in contemporary English the words 'avenge' and 'vengeance' have taken on the sense of acting out of personal vindictiveness, whereas in the Bible the thought is rather that God takes the side of the victims of crime and wickedness and secures justice for them, and that he acts as the upholder of the moral order against those who think that they can break it with impunity. (I. Howard Marshall. 1 and 2 Thessalonians. The New Century Bible Commentary).

Hiebert observes that in appealing to God as avenger Paul is bringing to mind the consequences which should stimulate a godly fear, whereas he

might have appealed to the bitter physical, psychological, and social consequences of immorality. His emphasis rather is eschatological, the coming judgment day. A just God and a coming day of judgment are factors that cannot be left out of consideration when dealing with moral practices.

The Lord is the Avenger as Paul wrote in Romans...

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. (see **note** Romans 12:19)

The writer of Hebrews says...

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers **God will judge**. (see **note** Hebrews 13:4)

Jehovah says in Deuteronomy that taking vengeance is a prerogative that He retains for Himself declaring...

'Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them.' ([Deuteronomy 32:35](#))

Job asked...

"If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves When they filed a complaint against me, What then

could I do when God arises, And when He calls me to account, what will I answer Him? ([Job 31:13,14](#))

David understood that the Lord is the Avenger...

I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, And justice for the poor. (**Comment:**

David's sin of sexual immorality (adultery cp Lev 18:20, Deut 22:22, Pr 6:32, 1Cor 6:9, Hebrews 13:4-note) with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah reaped the vengeance of the Jehovah (cp Lev 20:10, 24:17). Meditate on the wages of sin in David's life in 2Samuel 12, especially the following passages...

'Why have you despised the word of the LORD (cp Nu 15:31) by doing evil in His sight (cp 1Sa 15:19)? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword (2Sa 11:15,17), have taken his wife to be your wife (2Sa 11:27), and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon.

10 'Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'

11 "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight.

12 'Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun. (see retribution wrought by Absalom 2Sa 16:21, 22)'"

13 Then David said to Nathan , "I have sinned against the LORD." (cp 1Sa 15:24, 2Sa 24:10, Ps 32:5, 51:4) And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin (Ps 32:1, 103:9, 12, Is 38:17, 43:25, Micah 7:18, 19, Zech 3:4); you shall not die. (**2Samuel 12:9-13**)

Keathley notes that ...

Sexual sin will not go unpunished. It has its immediate consequences in the personal discipline of God on the believer who transgresses and on a society which ignores the laws of God. The tremendous effect of this can be seen on the home and in the transmission of sexually-transmitted diseases so prevalent in our world today. But there is also the future aspect of loss of rewards (see 2Cor 5:9-10) for those believers who ignore God's truth. ([1Thessalonians 4:1-12](#))

John Piper spares no words in warning...

that the consequences of lust are going to be worse than the consequences of nuclear war. All that nuclear war can do is kill the body. And Jesus said, "Do not fear those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear. Fear him who after he has killed has power to cast into hell" (Luke 12:4, 5). In other word's God's vengeance is much more fearful than earthly annihilation. And according to 1 Thessalonians 4:6 God's vengeance is coming upon those who disregard the warning against lust.

(He adds) So I have learned again and again from first hand experience that there are many professing Christians who have a view of salvation that disconnects it from real life, and that nullifies the warnings of the Bible and puts the sinning person who claims to be a Christian beyond the reach of Biblical threats. And this doctrine is comforting thousands on the way to hell.

Jesus said, if you don't fight lust, you won't go to heaven.

The stakes are much higher than whether the world is blown up by a thousand bombs. If you don't fight lust, your won't go to heaven (see 1 Peter 2:11-note, Colossians 3:6-note; Gal. 5:21-note; 1Cor. 6:10; Hebrews 12:14- note).

Are we not then saved by faith—by believing in Jesus Christ? We are indeed! Those who persevere in Faith shall be saved (Matthew 24:13; 10:22; 1Cor. 15:3; Col. 1:23-note; 2Thess. 2:13). How do you lay hold on eternal life? Paul gives the answer in 1 Ti 6:12—"Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on eternal life."

That leads us to our main concern this morning—to show that the fight against lust is a battle against unbelief. And the fight for sexual purity is the fight of faith.

The great error that I am trying to explode in these messages is the error that says, faith in God is one thing and the fight for holiness is another thing. Faith gets you to heaven and holiness gets you rewards. You get your justification by faith, and you get your sanctification by works. You start the Christian life in the power of the Spirit, you press on in the efforts of the flesh. This is the great evangelical error of our day. The battle for

obedience is optional, they say, because only faith is necessary for salvation.

Our response: the battle for obedience is absolutely necessary for salvation because it IS the fight of faith. The battle against lust is absolutely necessary for salvation because it is the battle against unbelief. Faith alone delivers from hell and the faith that delivers from hell delivers from lust.

I hope you can see that this is a greater gospel than the other one. It's the gospel of God's victory over sin, not just his tolerance of sin. It is the gospel of Romans 6:14 (note) "Sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace." Almighty grace! Sovereign grace!

**He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.**

(Play [O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing](#))

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (see Mt 5:8-note). This is God's demand and this is God's gift. It is all of grace. That's why the only fight we fight is the fight of faith—the fight to rest so fully in the grace of God—to be so satisfied with the glory of God—that temptation to sin loses its power over us.
([1Thessalonians 4:1-8: Battling Unbelief of Lust](#))

Though these offenses are not generally punished in criminal courts today, the Lord is the Avenger of all such ultimately dealing out just recompense for such sins (cf. see Col 3:4; 3:5; 3:6; 3:7 **notes** Col 3:4; 3:5; 3:6; 3:7; Hebrews 13:4-note). Regular term in the papyri for legal avenger. Modern men and women need to remember that God is the avenger for sexual wrongs both in this life and the next.

God is no respecter of persons. He must deal with His children when they sin (Col 3:23; 24; 25 **notes** Col 3:23; 24; 25). A church member criticized her pastor because he was preaching against sin in the lives of Christians.

"After all," she said, "sin in the life of a believer is different from sin in the lives of unsaved people."

"Yes," replied the pastor, "it is worse."

How will God avenge sexual sin? It could be in an unfulfilling sexual life and marriage. It could be by bringing about a miserable marriage or even allowing a divorce. It could be in temporal chastening or discipline, through a sexually transmitted disease (STD). He could avenge by bringing about negative circumstances, an absence of blessing, a plethora of trials and trouble or even death. Sexual sin could and most likely will result in the loss of eternal rewards in some measure. This section of Scripture is a solemn warning indeed, given the torrid temptations in our sex sickened society and the prevalence of illicit sexual activity in the evangelical community!

While it is true that the Christian is not under condemnation (**note** Romans 8:1), it is also true that he is not free from the harvest of sorrow that comes when we sow to the flesh as Paul made clear to the believers in Galatia writing...

Do not be deceived (present imperative - stop being deceived), God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7,8)

When King David committed adultery, he tried to cover his sin, but God chastened him severely. Read Psalm 32:1, 2ff and Psalm 51:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 to see what he lost during the time of chastening. When David confessed his sins, God forgave him; but God did not change the consequences. David reaped what he had sown, and it was a painful experience for him and his family.

JUST AS WE ALSO TOLD YOU BEFORE AND SOLEMNLY WARNED YOU: kai proeipamen (1PAAI) humin kai diemarturametha (1PAMI):

- Luke 12:5; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 4:17)

Told you before ([4277](#)) (**proepo** from **pró** = before + **épo** = tell) in reference to past (as in this verse) it means to have said before or to have already declared. In reference to the future it means to say beforehand, foretell, predict. Paul had not just told them how to be saved but how to live once they were saved, which is the essence of the great commission, where Jesus declared...

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and **make disciples** (aorist imperative = Do this now! Don't delay!) of all the nations, baptizing (present tense) them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching (present tense) them to **observe** (**tereo** = present tense = to continually keeping their eye on His commandment so as to watch or guard oneself that he or she fulfill them) all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20+)

That God would judge the sin of sexual immorality in believers was a truth that Paul had taught in his first visit to Thessalonica.

Paul knowing that the temptation to sexual sin was so strong warned the Gentile believers in Ephesus of the judgment that would befall those who lived a lifestyle of lust and sexual immorality

But do not let immorality (porneia) or any impurity (**akatharsia**) or greed (**pleonexia**) even **be named** (present imperative with a negative = stop an action already in progress) among you, as is proper among saints (hagios = holy ones! set apart ones!) and there must be no filthiness and silly talk (**contrast** Spirit filled or controlled speech - Ep 5:19-20+) , or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. **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 (parallel passages 1 Cor 6:9+, Gal 5:21+. Cp 1Ti 1:9, Heb 12:14+); Rev 21:8+). **Let no one deceive** you (present imperative with a negative = stop an action already in progress) with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience (unbelievers = see Eph 2:2+ contrast believers 1 Pe 1:14+). Therefore do not be partakers with them (see Ep 5:3-4+ Ep 5:5-6+; Ep 5:7+)

Solemnly warned (1263) (**diamarturomai** from **diá** = intensifies meaning conveying idea of "thoroughly" + **martúromai** = witness, bear witness) means to bear witness, testify earnestly or repeatedly, to charge as it if before witnesses, to exhort earnestly and with authority in matters of extraordinary importance (here the serious nature of the warning proclaimed). It carries the idea of thoroughly warning. **Diamarturomai** as a stronger form of **marturomai** was a warning intended to penetrate the conscience of the readers...

piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (see **note** Hebrews 4:12)

Calvin was probably correct when he remarked that...

Men's dullness is such that unless they are struck forcefully they have no sense of the divine judgment.

Paul used **diamarturomai** in his parting words to the Ephesian elders declaring...

I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to **testify solemnly** of the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24+)

Comment: The gospel of the grace of God tells of the new power to abstain from sexual temptation and possess our bodies in holiness and honor.

Vine comments that "Before he dismisses the subject the apostle reminds his readers that the God who loved them and called them in grace, is nonetheless the God of recompenses, who will surely requite every defection from His laws, Jeremiah 51:56, as well as reward all faithful obedience to them, for not the heathen but the Christian is in view throughout the passage. ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

John Piper has an interesting interpretation of this warning:

Paul is not speaking here of a fatherly swat on the behind. He is saying that if these professing Christians continue to act as those who do not know God or love the brothers, the Lord will condemn them along with the unbelievers. The parallel with 2Th 1:8 is clear. There Paul says that the Lord is going to come with his angels in flaming fire "inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." Paul repeatedly warns professing Christians that if they live according to the flesh they will be condemned. (Ed comment: transgress & defraud are both present tense signifying a habitual action which adds some support to Piper's interpretation) The reason I say "repeatedly" is not only because you can read it again and again in his letters, because he says right here in verse 6 that he has warned them like this before. He repeatedly warns the same church of God's vengeance. ([1Thessalonians 4:1-8 Preaching Practical Holiness](#))

1Thessalonians 4:7 For **God** has not **called** us for the purpose of **impurity**, but in **sanctification**. (**NASB: Lockman**)

Greek: [ou gar ekalesen \(3SAAI\)](#) [hemas o theos epi akatharsia all' en hagio.](#)

Amplified: For God has not called us to impurity but to consecration [to dedicate ourselves to the most thorough purity]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: God has called us to be holy, not to live impure lives. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: The calling of God is not to impurity but to the most thorough purity, ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: For God did not issue His divine summons [into salvation] to you for uncleanness but within the sphere of holiness. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

Young's Literal: for God did not call us on uncleanness, but in sanctification;

FOR GOD HAS NOT CALLED US FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMPURITY BUT IN SANCTIFICATION: ou gar ekalesen (3SAAI) hemas o theos epi akatharsia all' en hagio.

- Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; Romans 1:7; 8:29,30; 1Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:4; 2:10; 4:1; 2Thessalonians 2:13,14; 2Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 12:14; 1Peter 1:14, 15, 16; 2:9, 10, 11, 12,21,22)

Not (ou) - the first word in the Greek sentence is "not" and here Paul uses the word meaning in essence "absolutely not".

For (1063) (gar) (click for value of observing this [term of explanation](#)) indicates that the warning that Christ will judge is justified in view of what He has already done.

For also introduces another reason for the admonitions just given in the preceding 3 verses. First the negative, in which Paul notes that we are not called for impurity and then the positive in which he reminds us we are called in sanctification. Believers are not to maintain purity not merely from fear of the judgment of God, but also because we have been granted entrance into God's purpose for all His children - to be holy as He is holy (see **note** 1Peter 1:16)

Called (2564) (kaleo) (cp 2 other uses of **kaleo** in 1Thes 2:12-note and 1Thes 5:24-note, cp 2Thes 2:14) means to speak to another in order to bring them nearer, either physically or in a personal relationship. In this and many of Paul's epistles, **kaleo** refers to the **call** of God inviting individuals into the blessings of salvation. With Paul (and also Peter) the calling is more than an invitation. It is an invitation responded to and accepted. As such it is often referred to by theologians as an **effectual call** (see Romans 1:6- note where Paul uses *kletos*, the verbal adjective of *kaleo*).

The **aoist tense** of **kaleo** looks at the divine call as a past historical event, the time of their conversion. Immorality is like a decaying, putrefying body that must be avoided because it is totally inconsistent with God's call. Peter speaks of this call as "*out of darkness and into His marvelous light*" (see 1Pe 2:9-note), truth which should affect our daily conduct (see 1 Peter 2:11, 12 **see notes** 1Pe 2:11; 12)

Note also that **kaleo** in this verse is in the **active** and not the **passive voice** which emphasizes the fact that God took the initiative in calling us into union with His Son Jesus Christ. That **call**, was realized or effected by the preaching of the gospel in Thessalonica (see 1Thes 1:5-note), and resulted in the readers being transferred out of the domain of darkness and idolatry and into us to the kingdom of God's beloved Son (see 1Thes 1:9-note; Col 1:13- note).

For the purpose (epi) is used figuratively of an aim, intent or purpose. The idea is with a view to. Paul uses **epi** with a similar meaning in the following passages...

For you were called **to (epi)** = for the purpose of, with a view to) freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for (epi)** = for the purpose of, with a view to) good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (see **note** Ephesians 2:10)

In Romans 6 **Paul** explains the believers' new freedom in Christ writing...

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to **impurity (akatharsia)** and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness (**Principle** - Sin begets more sins! Do not be deceived.), so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. (see Ro 6:19-note) (**Comment:** The reception of the gospel of Christ sets one free from enslavement to **impurity** and lawlessness. **Sin** is no longer our master be it in the area of sexual sin or

any other manner of lawless behavior. We have a new calling in holiness. Our new life in Christ and His indwelling Spirit makes it possible for believers to make the daily choice to present ourselves as slaves to right behavior before God and man which results in our being set apart from the uncleanness of the unregenerate world and unto God. This verse also clearly teaches that **impurity** is the opposite of **sanctification**.)

Not called us for the purpose of impurity - To reiterate, the adverb (**ou**) **not** is emphatically placed at the beginning of the sentence to stress that it was absolutely not for impurity that God called us. To continue to live in sexual impurity is **not** why believers were called! To be sure, the pagan cults did "*call*" their devotees to partake of the impurity of immoral cultic worship ceremonies, some to vile to even describe lest the reader be defiled by the stench! (cp Ephesians 4:19-note) But such is not the case regarding the **call** on sinners who are now saints. Let this great truth marinate in your mind as you ponder our "so great a salvation".

Impurity (167) (**akatharsia** from **a** = without + **kathairo** = cleanse) is literally worthless material, refuse or waste. It was used of that which caused ceremonial uncleanness. In the present context it defines a state of moral impurity, specifically sexual impurity. **Akatharsia** is a broad term referring to moral uncleanness in thought, word, and deed.

Akatharsia medically referred to an infected, oozing wound and is the word used to describe the decaying flesh in a grave. Think of this picture next time you are tempted by the world, the flesh or the devil to commit sexual immorality by thought, word or deed! Such contemplation will fortify one's resolve to abstain or put some distance between the evil influence and your body (vessel)!

Akatharsia describes a filthiness of heart and mind that makes the person defiled. The unclean person sees dirt in everything.

In Scripture both moral and ceremonial **uncleanness** or **impurity** prevented a person from approaching God.

Paul described unbelieving Gentiles as those who...

having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality (uninhibited sexual indulgence without shame and without concern for what other think or how they are affected or infected), for the practice of every kind of **impurity** (**akatharsia**) with greediness (pleonexia {cp to verb pleonekteo in 1Thes 4:6} is a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions especially that which is forbidden).

One of the radical effects of the gospel in pagan cultures was a repentance from the uncleanness that that characterized contemporary pagan religions and a pursuit of purity of life, especially in the area of sexuality.

Akatharsia describes a filthiness of heart and mind (so it is internal as compared to anomia discussed below) that makes the person defiled. The unclean person sees dirt in everything. The word **akatharsia** suggests especially that it defiles its participants, making them unusable for sacred purpose. While **akatharsia** includes sexual sin, it comes from a wider Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew OT) usage where "unclean" could refer to anything that made a person unfit to go to the temple and appear before God. In a medical sense Hippocrates used this word to describe an infected, oozing wound with pus and crusty impurities that gather around the sore or wound. What is "impure" is filthy and repulsive, especially to God. **Akatharsia** was a general term often used of decaying matter, like the contents of a grave. In short **akatharsia** describes any excessive behavior or lack of restraint and speaks more of an internal disposition. An immoral filthiness on the inside whereas the lawless acts of "immorality" are on the outside.

Keener makes that point that...

From the standpoint of temples throughout ancient culture, intercourse generally made one ritually impure for a time. ([Keener, Craig: The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament. 1994. IVP](#))

Barton says that **akatharsia** refers to...

Moral uncleanness. Perhaps no sexual act has taken place, but the person exhibits a crudeness or insensitivity in sexual matters that offends others and leads them to false conclusions about the other person's character. An example today would be the excessive use of sexual humor (or what is supposed to be humor), where people make statements with a sexual double meaning." ([Barton, B. et al: The NIV Life Application Commentary Series: Tyndale](#))

William Barclay writes that **akatharsia** means...

everything which would unfit a man to enter into God's presence. It describes the life muddled with wallowing in the world's ways. Kipling prayed,

Teach us to rule ourselves always,

Controlled and cleanly night and day.

Akatharsia is the very opposite of that clean purity...It can be used for the pus of an unclean wound, for a tree that has never been pruned, for material which has never been sifted. In its positive form (**katharos**, an adjective meaning pure) it is commonly used in housing contracts to describe a house that is left clean and in good condition. But its most suggestive use is that **katharos** is used of that ceremonial cleanness which entitles a man to approach his gods. **Impurity**, then, is that which makes a man unfit to come before God, the soiling of life with the things which separate us from him....Jesus used the word to describe the rottenness of decaying bodies in a tomb (Matthew 23:27). The other ten times the word is used in the New Testament it is associated with sexual sin. It refers to immoral thoughts, passions, ideas, fantasies, and every other form of sexual corruption." ([1 Thessalonians 4 Commentary](#))(Bolding added)

But (alla) is a strong adversative and identifies a striking contrast between the negative and positive aspects of God's call. Paul now states positively, believers are called **in sanctification** or in the sphere of progressive sanctification or practical holiness as explained below. (Click for value of observing [terms of contrast](#))

Moses records God's timeless words...

'Do not render yourselves detestable through any of the swarming things that swarm; and you shall not make yourselves unclean with them so that you become unclean. For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. (Leviticus 11:43-44)

Paul reiterates this same call regarding believers in the NT...

to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints (holy ones, set apart ones): Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (see **note** Romans 1:7)

to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been **sanctified** (set apart for God's possession and use - cp 1Cor 6:11, 1:30) in Christ Jesus, **saints** by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. (see **note** [1 Corinthians 1:2](#))

just as He (God) chose us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be **holy** (hagios) and blameless before Him. (see **note** Ephesians 1:4)

In sanctification - Note the change of preposition. Believers have been called into the sphere of sanctification. Envision our new "atmosphere" as holiness, the "air" in which we are now to breath and live. What a contrast with the "polluted environment" saturated with sexual immorality we formerly lived in as godless, Christless, hopeless pagans. Why would believers want to go back to such a squalid existence?

Peter states this truth regarding the believer's **call in holiness** this way...

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 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**." (see **notes** 1 Peter 1:14; 1:15; 1:16)

Hiebert explains that

In (en) marks the sphere in which the gospel call was delivered and the atmosphere in which the new life received must be developed. God called us into union with Christ as the moral atmosphere in which we are to work out a life of sanctification. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

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.

When God effectually calls us to salvation, He also calls us to holiness and therefore a life of impurity is now completely contrary to believers' high calling in Christ and our guaranteed future glory with God in paradise. It is because of our high and holy call that Paul exhorted the Ephesian believers...

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called (see **note** Ephesians 4:1)

As **Vincent** explains the preposition "in" indicates that

Sanctification is the characteristic life-element of the Christian, in which he is to live. God's purpose in salvation was to produce a holy people.

Someone might argue

But I am one of God's elect! I belong to Him, and He can never cast me out.

Election is not an **excuse** for sin but an **encouragement** for holiness, for

like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior (see **note** 1 Peter 1:15).

The privilege of election also involves responsibilities of obedience

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth....Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them. (Deut 7:6, 11).

[Rise up, O Men of God](#)

Have done with lesser things.

Give heart and mind and soul and strength

To serve the King of kings.

Lift high the cross of Christ,

Tread where his feet have trod.

As followers of the Son of man

Rise up, O men of God.

MacArthur writes that

the effectual call of salvation was a call to holiness, not unholiness. God has not called us for the purpose of impurity. It isn't grace so that sin may abound. Paul's point is that the very nature of God's calling and justification is a calling to sanctification. He called us to Himself for the purpose of sanctifying us, making us holy, making us pure, making us sinless. You have a holy, pure, and sinless God who brings salvation through His holy, pure and sinless Son, who then applies that salvation through His holy, pure and sinless Spirit in order to produce a people who are holy, sinless and pure. And thus the heart of the Apostle is to present the church without blemish and without spot, holy before God.

John Piper writes

Now let's see what we can learn from this text about the way a pastor should preach in order help his people make progress in practical holiness. I'll only mention four things briefly. These are not the only way to preach practical holiness. Nor must every sermon include them all. But in your overall ministry of the word I believe these should have a large place.

1. TEACH YOUR PEOPLE TO KNOW GOD.

Brothers and sisters, our people do not know God very well. If you asked them to talk for five minutes about the character of God most couldn't do it. Preachers shy away from the doctrine of God because it seems abstracted from what immediately moves people. But Paul implies in v5 that the key to conquering sexual temptation is to know God. "Don't give reign to your passions like Gentiles who don't know God."

If our people could only get a taste of the majesty of God it would have more practical consequences in their lives than many messages about human relationships -- and I believe in such messages. I am only pleading for a new emphasis and focus on God.

Charles Colson hit a dry spell in his Christian life a few years ago and one of his friends suggested he listen to some lectures by R. C. Sproul on the holiness of God. He said, "All I knew about Sproul was that he was a theologian, so I wasn't enthusiastic. After all, I reasoned, theology was for people who had time to study, locked in ivory towers far from the battlefields of human need. However, at my friend's urging I finally agreed ... By the end of the sixth lecture I was on my knees, deep in prayer, in awe of God's absolute holiness. It was a life-changing experience as I gained a completely new understanding of the holy God I believe in and worship."

Teach your people to know God and you will touch every area of their lives with the practical holiness of God.

2. EXHORT YOUR PEOPLE TO PRACTICAL HOLINESS

We need to be specific and earnest in urging our people to change their behavior. Practical holiness is a gift of God not a merely human achievement. That is clear from 1Th 3:12 ("may the Lord make you increase and abound in love") and from 1Th 5:23 ("May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly"). But how does God produce practical holiness in the lives of his people? He does not do it apart from the apostolic word of exhortation. Right after praying that God would make the Thessalonians abound in love (1Th 3:12), Paul himself commands them not to transgress and wrong a brother (1Th 4:6). Our word of exhortation is essential. It is the means of grace which the Lord uses to do his sanctifying work. "Father, sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth!" (Jn 17:17)

3. PUT ONE AND TWO TOGETHER AND HELP YOUR PEOPLE SEE ALL THEIR LIFE IN RELATION TO GOD

Drive home 1Th 4:8. If you reject the exhortation to sexual purity you reject God. It is amazing how many professing Christians think that their day to day choices have no bearing on their relation to God. We must tirelessly remind them that a sharp word at the breakfast table is rebellion against the Holy Spirit. Breaking the speed limit is probably a failure to trust God to take care of your schedule. Lust is an insult to the all-satisfying fellowship of God. Holding a grudge cuts one off from the forgiveness of God. And all the joys of life can either be exalted by a spirit of gratitude and worship toward God, or debased to idolatry by ignoring their relation to God.

Our great aim must be to give our people a God-saturated experience of life.

4. FINALLY WE MUST WARN THE PEOPLE OF GOD'S VENGEANCE

Thousands of pastors do not believe this because they cannot make it square with their view of eternal security. How can you warn the saints on Sunday morning of God's vengeance if their faith in Christ delivers them from the wrath to come?

Zane Hodges of Dallas Seminary says in a recent book, "It may be safely said that no man in Christian history -- with the exception of our Lord Himself -- ever motivated believers more or threatened them less than did [Paul]".

Hodges must say this because he concludes 3 pages earlier that "works have nothing to do with determining a Christian's basic relationship to God." If the way you behave -- say in your sex life -- has nothing to do with your basic relationship to God, then warnings of God's vengeance make no sense.

It makes no sense when Paul says to Christians in Rome (Ro 8:13-note), "If you live according to the flesh you will die." It makes no sense when he says to the Corinthians (1Co 10:9), "We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of the Israelites did and were destroyed by the serpents." It doesn't make sense when he says to the Galatian churches (Gal 5:21), "I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not enter the kingdom of God." And it doesn't make sense here in 1Th 4:6 when Paul says, "Let no man transgress and wrong his brother ... because God is an avenger in these things as we solemnly forewarned you."

That is, it doesn't make sense unless your premise is wrong that the behavior of man has nothing to do with his salvation. And it is surely wrong. For the tree is known by its fruit.

Therefore, I urge you all to immerse yourselves more and more in the Scriptures and learn for yourselves how to preach practical holiness. And from this one very typical passage in 1 Thessalonians I believe you will find at least that you should ([Sermon](#))

**Teach your people to know God.
Exhort your people to practical holiness.
Help your people see all their life in relation to God.
And warn the people of God's vengeance.**

F B Meyer has the following chapter **Ye Shall Be Holy** from his book **Tried by Fire** based on 1 Peter 1:13, 14, 15, 16, 17...

THE "wherefore" with which this paragraph opens gathers up the premises of the preceding verses, and uses them as a massive platform of solid masonry on which to erect the battery of appeal to which the Apostle now addresses himself. Because our destiny is what it is; because Jesus Christ is what He is; because our salvation has been the theme of prophets, apostles, martyrs, angels; therefore...And the aim of his appeal is Holiness.--

"Be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living."

The cry for **HOLINESS** rings through the Bible.

It is the keynote of **Leviticus**, from which this quotation is made (cp. 1 Peter 1:16 with Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7, 26, etc): and it is equally the supreme demand of the New Testament. In point of fact, all the wondrous machinery of redemption, from the distant choice of eternity to the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, has had this for its purpose, that we, who have been the subjects of the grace of the Persons of the Eternal Trinity, should resemble them in the holiness which is the perpetual burden of heaven's rapturous minstrelsy--that song which was heard by the evangelic prophet Isaiah from the Temple courts, in the year that King Uzziah died; but which was still unfinished when the beloved Apostle John detected it amid the break of the Aegean Sea around the lone island of his banishment; and which will never cease, world without end: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God the Almighty" (Is. 6:3; Rev. 4:8).

Holiness is the property of God alone.--It is the totality of the Divine attributes; the sum of the Eternal and Infinite Being of Godhead; the essence of Deity; the chord made by the harmonious blending of Divine qualities; the beam woven from the many colours of Divine perfections; the expression in a single term of all that goes to make up the moral nature of the great Spirit whom we call GOD. It is underived in its source; unlimited in its measure; insupportable in its naked and unveiled splendour by the eye of any creature which He has made "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Ex. 15:11). No tongue then shall dare to challenge God's right to declare Himself as the Holy One of Israel, or to say in the words before us, "I am holy."

Such holiness is evidently possible to us.--See, the holy God has "called" us to it (1Pe 1:15-note). "God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness" (1Th 4:7). He "hath called us with a holy calling" (2Ti 1:9-note). All partakers of the heavenly calling are called "holy brethren" (Heb 3:1-note). But God would not summon us to heights we could not scale, or to tasks we could not perform. His CALL involves two facts--first, that his holiness is within our reach; secondly, that He is prepared to supply all that is necessary to effect in us that to which He calls us. God is pledged to make us holy; or He will expose Himself to the mockery of his foes. But we need not fear for Him. He counted the cost before He issued his proclamation; and He is well able to finish that of which He laid the foundation in the great depths of Calvary (Luke 14:29-30).

Nor is such holiness for saints and apostles alone; or only for the special golden days which visit most lives--days of feast and song and transfiguration. The Divine ideal is more comprehensive far. "Holy in all manner of living" (1 Peter 1:15).

Zechariah foretold the time when the inscription on the high priest's mitre should be written even on the bells of the horses: "Holiness to the Lord." And it is God's will that that motto should be engraved on house bells, and office bells, and shop bells; on dinner bells and factory bells; so that in every department of our lives there may be sweet music made to life's great Lord. Holiness at every turn, and in every incident of our daily walk, like the golden tinkle which betrayed each movement of Israel's high priest (Ex. 28:33, 34, 35; Zech 14:20, 21).

There is only one way of becoming holy, as God is: and it is the obvious one of opening the entire being to the all-pervading presence of the Holy One. None of us can acquire holiness apart from God. It dwells in God alone. Holiness is only possible as the soul's possession of God; nay, better still, as God's possession of the soul. It never can be inherent, or possessed apart from the Divine fulness, any more than a river can flow on if it is cut off from its fountain head. We are holy up to the measure in which we are God-possessed. The least holy man is he who shuts God up to the strictest confinement, and to the narrowest limits of his inner being; partitioning Him off from daily life by heavy curtains of neglect and unbelief. He is holier who more carefully denies self, and who seeks a larger measure of Divine indwelling. The holiest is the man who yields himself most completely to be influenced, swayed, possessed, inspired, by that Spirit who longs to make us to the fullest extent partakers of the Divine nature.

Wouldst thou be holier?-- There is but one way. Thou must have more of God in thee. Holiness is the beauty of the Lord God of hosts. Thou canst not separate the one from the other. To have it thou must have Him. Nor will it be hard to obtain either; for He longs to enter into thy being. Thy longing is the faint response of thy heart to his call. The power that works within is matched by the grace which can do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Man never desired so much of God as God desired of man. God's holiness has revealed itself in a human form in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord; and so it is as able as it is eager to enter human lives through that blessed Spirit who is pre-eminently the channel and medium by which we are filled up unto all the fulness of God. Ask thy heavenly Father for this Spirit. He is more eager to give Him than a father to give food to his hungry child. And, having asked, dare to believe that thou hast received, and "go in this thy might" (Judges 6:14-note).

1Thessalonians 4:8 [So](#), he who [rejects](#) this is not [rejecting man](#) but the [God](#) who [gives](#) His [Holy Spirit](#) to you ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [toigaroun o atheton](#) (PAPMSN) [ouk anthropon athetei](#) (3SPA) [alla ton theon ton \[kai\] didonta](#) (PAPMSA) [to pneuma autou to agion eis umas](#)

Amplified: Therefore whoever disregards (sets aside and rejects this) disregards not man but God, Whose [very] Spirit [Whom] He gives to you is holy (chaste, pure). ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: Anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human rules but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: and anyone who makes light of the matter is not making light of man's ruling but of God's command. It is not for nothing that the Spirit God gives us is called the Holy Spirit. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: Therefore, he who rejects [this], not man is he rejecting but God who also gives His Holy Spirit to us. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

Young's Literal: he, therefore, who is despising -- doth not despise man, but God, who also did give His Holy Spirit to us

CONSEQUENTLY, HE WHO REJECTS THIS IS NOT REJECTING MAN BUT THE GOD WHO GIVES HIS HOLY SPIRIT TO YOU:
toigaroun o atheton (PAPMSN) ouk anthropon athetei (3SPA) alla ton theon ton [kai] didonta (PAPMSA) to pneuma autou to hagian eis humas:

- 1Samuel 8:7; 10:19; John 12:48
- Proverbs 1:7; 23:9; Isaiah 49:7; 53:10; Luke 10:16; Acts 13:41; Jude 1:8
- Nehemiah 9:30; Acts 5:3,4; 1 Corinthians 2:10; 7:40; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 3:24

Consequently (5105) (**toigaroun** from **toi** = consequently, this particle strengthening a statement by assuring its reliability + **gár** = therefore + **oun** = then, therefore) is a particle which strongly or emphatically introduces an emphatic logical conclusion from the preceding facts. "For that very reason then". "For on this account therefore". This triple compound is draws a conclusion of emphasis.

Toigaroun is a strong Greek expression which could be translated something like

"Mark you, for this reason, therefore he who rejects..." - Paul proceeds to give another reason why believers should flee sexual immorality.

Toigaroun strongly introducing an inference from preceding facts. As as in the only other NT use in Hebrews 12:1 (note) **toigaroun** directs attention to the conclusion which follows in a more forcible way than do simpler and more frequent words.

As **Richison** observes...

A sex life governed by God's call to holiness is the rationale for his next statements. The nature of the child of God stands in antithesis to the natural urges of the man without Christ.

He who rejects - Literally "the one who sets aside", "the rejecter".

Rejects (114) (**atheteo** from **áthetos** = not placed from **a** = without + **thetós** = placed) means to do away with what has been laid down, to set aside and thus to regard as nothing, to declare invalid, to not recognize, to annul (make ineffective, inoperative or nonexistent), to spurn or to despise. In the papyri **atheteo** was used of loans which were repaid and cancelled and for the rejection of certain officials who were described as inefficient and incapable of doing their duty. **Atheteo** was also used of grain rejected by the inspector as unfit for food.

Thayer writes that **atheteo** means...

to act toward anything as though it were annulled; hence, to deprive a law of force by opinions or acts opposed to it, to transgress... to thwart the efficacy of anything, nullify, make void, frustrate...to render prudent plans of no effect (1Cor 1:19)...to reject, refuse, slight (eg, "the grace of God" Gal 2:21)

In Classic Greek **atheteo** is used to describe setting aside of a treaty or promise.

Both uses of **atheteo** in this verse are in the **present tense** which describes an active (active voice), continual or habitual rejection of God! This individual has the character of an active, deliberate rejecter of God.

Hiebert explains that **atheteo** means nullify, make void or cancel and thus this deliberate rejecter of God...

takes God's demand for sexual purity so lightly that he makes it void by refusing to obey it... He who rejects the divine call to holiness and maintains that he can go on living in uncleanness rejects "not man, but God." ([Ibid](#))

Atheteo is used by Jesus addressing the Pharisees and the Scribes where...

He was also saying to them, "You nicely **set aside** (reject = **atheteo**) the commandment of God (the Fifth Commandment - Honor your father and your mother) in order to keep your tradition. (Mark 7:9)

Luke records that...

the Pharisees and the lawyers **rejected** God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John. (Luke 7:30) (**Comment:** Refers to the refusal of John's baptism by the scribes and Pharisees, who thus rejected, not the counsel of John but ultimately the counsel of God even as those who reject Paul's teaching on God's will regarding sexual purity are not rejecting Paul but God, here specifically God the Holy Spirit.)

(Jesus to the 70 disciples) "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who **rejects** you **rejects** Me; and he who **rejects** Me **rejects** the One who sent Me." (Luke 10:16) (**Comment:** When Christ charged His apostles and sent them forth, He told them that as He represented the Father so they represented Him, and, consequently, that anyone who refused to hear them in effect refused to hear or rejected Him and the Father)

John records Jesus stern warning that...

He who **rejects** Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. (John 12:48)

Here are the 16 uses of **atheteo** in the NT...

Mark 6:26 And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.

Mark 7:9 (see above)

Luke 7:30 (see above)

Luke 10:16 (see above)

John 12:48 (see above)

1 Corinthians 1:19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will **set aside**." (Here God sets aside, thwarts and frustrates human intelligence as a means of knowing God).

Galatians 2:21 "I do not **nullify** the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

Galatians 3:15 Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one **sets** it **aside** or adds conditions to it. (Here **atheteo** refers to a legal enactment = annul, declare invalid).

1 Thessalonians 4:8 (note) Consequently, he who **rejects** this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

1 Timothy 5:12 thus incurring condemnation, because they have **set aside** their previous pledge.

Hebrews 10:28 (note) Anyone who **has set aside** the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Jude 1:8 Yet in the same manner these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and **reject** authority, and revile angelic majesties.

There are 40 uses of **atheteo** in the Septuagint (LXX) (Ex 21:8; Deut 21:14; Jdg. 9:23; 1Sa 2:17; 13:3; 1Ki 8:50; 12:19; 2Ki 1:1; 3:5, 7; 8:20, 22; 18:7, 20; 24:1, 20; 1Chr. 2:7; 5:25; 2Chr. 10:19; 36:13, 14; Esther 2:15; Ps 15:4; 33:10; 89:34; 132:11; Is 1:2; 21:2; 24:16; 31:2; 33:1; 48:8; 63:8; Jer 3:20; 5:11; 9:2; 12:1, 6; 15:16; Lam. 1:2; Ezek. 22:26; 39:23; Da 3:28; 9:7). Here are some representative uses...

1 Samuel 2:17 Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men **despised** (Lxx =

atheteo - in the imperfect tense = over and over they despised it) the offering of the LORD.

Psalm 33:10 The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He **frustrates** (Lxx = atheteo) the plans of the peoples.

Isaiah 1:2 Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, "Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have **revolted** (Lxx = atheteo) against Me. (**Comment:** Here and in several other Lxx passages the sense is that of **rebel**).

Not rejecting man - Paul seems to be describing an individual who by his actions in essence "annuls" a general "law" of God re the impropriety of illicit sexual activity. Such a person is setting himself up in the place of God & declaring (by his behavior & actions) that what God has said is invalid, null & void. This same type of mindset is seen in both pagans Ro 1:28-note) & religious Jews (Lk 7:30).

Anyone who rejects this instruction isn't simply despising the teaching of a man, such as Paul; he is defying, disregarding, flouting, and rejecting God Himself—Who has also given us His Holy Spirit. The word Holy is emphatic here. How can one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit habitually indulge in sexual sin?

Richison explains that...

If we annul (reject) God's call upon our lives (1Thes 4:7), then we thwart the effectiveness of that call. We nullify God's purpose for us on earth. God lays down His purpose and we set it aside. In so doing, we refuse to recognize the validity of His call and claim on our lives. If we annul God's plan, we annul God in our lives. Standards about sex are God's standards. The Romans did not base their view of sexuality upon their polytheistic religion. They were essentially utilitarian in their view of sex. If it works, it's right. We can summarize their approach "Does this serve my self-interest?" At the moment of salvation, God gives His indwelling Holy Spirit to each believer. The New Testament characterizes the "Spirit" as "Holy." The Greek emphasizes the word "Holy." The indwelling Spirit inside of each believer is "Holy." The Christian cannot disconnect his life from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can work supernaturally in us to empower us to have victory in our sex lives. He enables us in this area. When Christians rationalize sexual dalliance they negate God Himself. Rationalization is just a way of kidding ourselves. God gave us the Holy Spirit to empower us to deal with any sin that might come our way. God wants us to rely on Him in these matters.

If we regard sexual sins as a minor matter, we minimize the whole nature of God. To descend to a lower level of Christian living is to belittle God. We despise God in His role as the Giver of His Holy Spirit. He is the one who makes the privilege of holiness possible. Instead of indulging in sexual gratification, we can live in the temple of the Holy Spirit.

God Who gives - is literally "God the Giver", and the **present tense** describe giving as an attribute of God. The standard of sexual morality is God's, and He gives believers the Holy Spirit to enable them to keep that norm.

His Holy Spirit - **Holy** is emphatic - literally it reads "His Spirit, the Holy" which emphasizes His holiness. God gives and gives and gives according to (proportionate to not out of or a portion of) His grace.

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. (James 1:17)

The nature of the imparted Spirit is holy. Holiness is always the mark of His work. The readers are reminded that God gave His Spirit **to you**. This Person of the Trinity is so characterized by holiness that He is called the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was given at the time of salvation to each believer as a gift from God. And since the mark of His work in us is holiness, practical outworking of holiness is demanded in the lives of those whom He indwells.

Wiersbe rightly reminds us that...

To despise God's warnings about sexual sin is to grieve the Spirit and invite chastening. Remember David, Samson, Judah, and other Bible personalities who fell into this sin and paid dearly. ([Wiersbe, W. W. Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books](#))

Hiebert rightly concludes that in light of God's gracious Gift of the Spirit, believers...

are responsible to Him whose Spirit is resident in them. The obligation to live holy lives arises out of their reception of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies and makes holy. For them to go on living in impurity is a direct insult to the divine Giver and a sin against the Holy Spirit who is the power unto holiness. He supplies not only the desire but also the ability to live a life of purity. His indwelling puts "an end to the pagan plea that man has no

power to resist impure desires." For believers to go on living in immorality is to repudiate the gracious provision of God for holiness and invites His sure judgment as the avenger of sin. "The way to escape the Avenger is to fly to the Giver and accept and cherish His gift." ([Ibid](#))

Jesus had promised His disciples

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (Parakletos - Comforter), that He may be with you forever (John 14:16)

Peter in questioning by the Jewish high priest before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem declared

we are witnesses of these things (the resurrection of Jesus Whom the Jews had put to death hanging Him on a cross Acts 5:30); and so is the Holy Spirit, Whom God has given to those who obey Him. (Acts 5:32)

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the **Spirit of God** dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the **Spirit of Christ**, he does not belong to Him. (see Romans 8:9-note) (**Comment:** This verse is clear - every believer has the Holy Spirit indwelling them - if someone does not have the Spirit, he or she is not a believer. Don't let anyone twist this truth around and tell you that you need to ask for the Spirit. The Father promised Him and Jesus asked for Him to be sent and the Father sent Him when we believed.)

Paul explained to the Ephesian believers that...

In Him (Christ), you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also **believed**, you were sealed in Him with the **Holy Spirit** of promise, Who is **given** as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (see **notes** Ephesians 1:13; 14)

This is a frightening passage in my opinion. Paul certainly seems to describe an individual who by his continual rejection of God's truth regarding sexuality shows himself to in fact be continually rejecting the Holy Spirit. It would be difficult to imagine that such a man were ever actually saved!

God gives His Spirit to all of us as His children to enable us resist temptation and sin. To choose to sin is to resist God's Spirit.

John MacArthur writes that...

The practice of sexual sin violates the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It spurns the Lord's will, disregards His purposes, defies His commands, rejects His love, and flouts and abuses His grace. Perhaps most frightening and sobering of all, those who engage in sexual immorality discount the reality of God's righteous judgment against sin. Thus the apostle's exhortation to the Thessalonians ought to prompt all believers to faithfully heed these words and diligently use the means God has given them to abstain from all forms of sexual sin (see Romans 13:13-note; Ro 13:14 note; 1 Peter 2:11-note). ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

John Piper writes

God's word and Spirit call us to holiness. If we reject this word and the promptings of the Spirit we reject God. And when God is rejected He becomes an Avenger. God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows he will also reap. If he sows to the flesh in immorality he will reap corruption. But if he sows to the Spirit in holiness he will reap eternal life (Gal 6:7-8).

A holy walk involves a right relationship with God the Father (who called us), God the Son (who died for us), and God the Spirit (who lives within us). It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that makes our body the temple of God (1Cor 6:19,20). Furthermore, it is by walking in the Spirit that we get victory over the lusts of the flesh (Gal 5:16ff-note). To despise God's commandments is to invite the judgment of God and also to grieve the Spirit of God.

How does the Spirit of God help us live a pure life ("pura vida" in Costa Rican terms), **free from sexual immorality**? In Philippians Paul emphasizes the believers' responsibility and the Spirit's enablement writing...

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out** (**present imperative** = this is to be our habitual, daily, moment by moment practice! We are to continually work out what has been worked in when we were born again.) your salvation with fear and trembling (these words speak of a healthy fear of offending and dishonoring God and a proper anxiety to do what is right in His eyes. It is not a fear of eternal doom but a reverential awe that motivates a person to righteousness. Cp Isaiah 66:5); for it is God who is at work (energeo in the present tense = the Holy Spirit in

me is continually "energizing" me the "want to") in you, both to will and to work (energeo - continually enabling me) for His good pleasure. (see notes Php 2:12; 2:13)

The Holy Spirit creates holy desires within us so that we have an appetite for God's holy Word (1 Peter 2:1; 2; 3 -see notes 1Pe 2:1; 2; 3) and not the polluted garbage of the flesh (Ro 13:12; 13; 14-see notes Ro 13:12; 13; 14). Also, He teaches us the Word and helps us to recall God's promises in times of temptation (Jn 14:26; Ephesians 6:17-note). As we yield to the Spirit, He empowers us to walk in holiness and not to detour into the lusts of the world and the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit overcomes the works of the flesh (Gal 5:16-26-see notes, Romans 8:13-note).

Paul devoted a great deal of space to this theme of sexual purity because it was a critical problem in the church of that day. It is also a critical problem in the church today. For many people, marriage vows are no longer considered sacred, and divorce (even among believers) is no longer governed by the Word of God. There are "gay churches" where homosexuals and lesbians "love one another" and claim to be Christians. Premarital sex and "Christian pornography" are accepted parts of the religious landscape in many places. Yet God has said with utmost clarity that His will for us is to "Walk in holiness" by abstaining from sexual immorality!

John MacArthur offers the following prayer we might all do well to ponder and pray...

Father, we thank You again this morning for the Word and the reminder of this call to sexual purity. Lord, help us to know what should be obvious to all of us that if we are obedient You will bless us, You will bless our marriages, You will bless our physical relationships with all the goodness that You intend. Father, we would pray that if there are young people here who are sinning in this area... and they're engaging in fornication, Lord, please may they come to grips this morning with the seriousness of that sin, may they receive the solemn warning of this scripture, may they know what they're doing and may they be separated from it.

If there are couples that are engaged anticipating marriage and feeling because the commitment is set in place and the marriage is to come that they are free to commit fornication, Lord, may they know that is not true, may they immediately cease from this sin.

If there are married people committing adultery, Lord God, may they repent immediately.

We know You have every right to bring chastening, to enact Your vengeance and retribution for they have literally rejected You, they have spurned the grace of salvation which leads to holiness. They have quenched and grieved the Holy Spirit who is in them. You have every right to chasten.

And, Lord, we would ask that You be merciful in such and that having led them to holiness through the chastening you would grant them grace.

For those here who have committed these sins in the past, Lord, may they enjoy the forgiveness that is theirs in Christ knowing full well that what has been forgiven has been removed as far as the east is from the west, buried in the depths of the sea and is remembered no more. And may they rejoice in such abounding grace.

O God, give us pure relationships that we might know the fullness of blessing and that we might be the kind of people that You want us to be who in the power of the Word and the Spirit control our bodies, who do not act like the godless pagans act, who do not take advantage of other people for selfish pleasure, who do not put ourselves in a place to receive retribution from a vengeful God, but, O God, may we be the faithful and the obedient people who know the fullness of Your blessing. To that end we do pray for Jesus' sake. Amen.