

1 Thessalonians 4:1-7 (NASB95)

1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess ¹ his own vessel ² in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 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. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

1 Or acquire

2 I.e. body; or wife

For today's devotion, I have used the New American Standard Bible Translation. This translation is not as pleasant to read in English, but in many cases the translation gives a closer meaning to the original Greek. For this portion of God's Word, that is important, especially in verse 4. You'll see that I also included two footnotes. These will also be significant to the way that we read this passage in the English.

The Holy Spirit has created faith in the heart of each believer. That faith produces a life of sanctification or holy living. This gives us the ability to do God-pleasing works. It also produces in us a desire to do those works and a hatred of sin. So, how far does that life of sanctification go? What avenues of life does it cover?

Sanctification permeates the entire life of the Christian. Every avenue of life is covered. That includes even dating or choosing a spouse! Thessalonian society was very similar to 21st century United States. Sexual immorality was rampant. Marriage was not an honored institution. Pre-marital sex and adultery were commonplace and considered normal; not for the Christian. Notice how Paul starts out this section. He doesn't admonish or threaten the Thessalonians. They are already living as God wants them. But he asks them and urges them to do more. The life of sanctification is never complete. Because of our sinful nature, we are never going to be holy here on this earth. There is always room for improvement. In this instance, there was room for improvement when it came to sexual immorality.

Abstinence from sexual immorality! Not even a hint of it. Proper priorities in choosing a marriage partner! Not in lustful passion like the unbelievers! Doesn't that smack completely opposite of our society today! Don't interfere with another person's relationship and steal his wife with your looks or money or anything else. God will punish those who continue in sexual immorality. Instead of impurity, live in holiness; live sanctified.

What does this mean for us today? It means that we are motivated by the same love for our Savior that the Thessalonians were. In the Lord Jesus, who lived and died for you that you might live eternally, live as he has made you. Don't choose a wife or husband just based on looks and sex appeal, but choose a marriage partner in whom you can share the intimacy of faith and love for God. Don't let the world's blatant promiscuity lead to you to think it's normal! But let the marriage bed be honored by all and kept pure. Dear Christian, excel all the more in what you are already doing! Know God's Word and keep on doing what it says! For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification!