

STUDY NUMBER SEVEN - 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Have You Gotten Dirty?

Key Verse 4:3: "For this is the will of God, your being set apart; that you should keep yourselves away from fornication;"

TEXT:

v. 1 Finally therefore, brethren, we are asking and exhorting you in the Lord Jesus, in order that, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God (just as also you are walking), in order that you may abound more and more.

v. 2 For you are knowing what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

v. 3 For this is the will of God, your being set apart; that you should keep yourselves away from fornication;

v. 4 that each one of you should know that he is to take a wife for himself (or gain control over his own body) in consecration and honor,

v. 5 not in lustful passion, even as also the Gentiles who do not know God;

v. 6 that no one be overstepping and taking advantage of his brother in this matter because the Lord is the one who punishes concerning all these things, even as we also told you before and warned you.

v. 7 For God called us not for uncleanness, but in holiness.

v. 8 Therefore, the one who is rejecting [this] is not rejecting man but God who also is giving his Holy Spirit to us.

INTRODUCTION:

(As Far As You Can Go Without a Passport by Tom Bodett)

Spring has a way of bringing out the best in people and the worst in dogs. We're all suddenly afflicted with a dose of energy that requires proper channeling. People handle this with a minimum of thought and effort. We get up earlier, maybe stay up later. We clean a lot of garages. Dogs, on the other hand, can only do what dogs will do; they run around a lot. In the spring they just run farther and get there faster. This is how my problem started.

He's a year-old, one-hundred-pound, brainless mass of pure black Labrador. His marathon visits around the area are well known and mostly tolerated by the neighbors. At least until this spring speed-up began. Instead of his usual practice of meandering between his girlfriends and sniffing at the poultry he's now leaving a swath of terrorized bitches, children, and chickens in his wake. The neighbors have of course let me know about this, and I'm certain the only reason he's still alive is that they've yet to draw a bead on him.

I had to make a decision whether to forcibly restrain him with chains and shackles, or try to teach him to just stay put. The former solution seemed too cruel and unusual for a long-term remedy, and the latter is a little easier said than done.

Then there was a third remedy pointed out to me that I hadn't considered. "Why don't you have him fixed?" someone said. Even the sound of it made sense. Fixed, of course. If something isn't working right, you have it fixed. Off we went to Dr. Ralph's with fresh hope evident in our faces. Actually, I had hope; the dog just likes to ride in the truck.

I'm not exactly sure what castrating a dog is supposed to accomplish. They say it will relieve them of whatever hormones it is that make them run around from one frivolous affair to the next, acting macho and showing off with the livestock. It wasn't without conscience, however, that I dropped him at the clinic to have this done. Feelings of treason to our gender seated themselves in my lower abdomen as I left him victim to the dirty deed. I felt selfish and impetuous for not seeking a less surgical alternative, but soon justified it by the surety that life as a neuter would be much more rewarding for him than a thirty-caliber hollow point from an irate neighbor.

When they brought him back out to me at the clinic, I was stunned. The scene was reminiscent of that in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest where Jack Nicholson is wheeled into the ward sporting a fresh frontal lobotomy. I thought, "What have I done to my dog?" He stood there blankly, giving just one uncomfortable wag of the tail when he finally recognized me. The vet assured me it was only the anesthesia and that it would wear off in a few hours. I showed him all over again how to get in the truck, where he promptly threw up on my tool box and peed on the seat. With a sense of having done a terrible wrong, I drove us home. He never looked at me.

The anesthesia did wear off, and I could soon see the one-year-old canine energy surging through him. I left him chained overnight for fear he'd wander off in his delirium and get hit by a truck, or join a religious cult. In the morning as I approached him he sat quivering with anticipation, bright-eyed and ready to go. All of my previous guilt vanished as I expectantly unhooked him to see what my newly rebuilt dog could do. I couldn't believe my eyes.

He took off in a series of about five high-speed figure eights around the front yard. He had a look of manic glee about him as he dug in harder and faster on each pass. He finished off with a breakneck leap from the bank over the driveway, splaying his legs out sideways and knocking the breath out of him. He immediately began digging a hole at such a frenzied pace it would put a Case 580-D backhoe to shame. Then he sat in it and looked at me with a "What do you think of that?" look on his face.

I fell back against the doghouse in bewilderment. "Oh my God," I thought, "it's all gone wrong." He had all the same energy and drive, but no place to drive to. He's a ship without a wheel. A one-hundred-pound whirling dervish. I'd taken a perfectly normal and healthy young dog and turned him into the warmblooded equivalent of a "hot wheels" race car. I went back in the house and left him in his hole.

After some severe and effective soul-searching, I came to realize, "Well, at least he didn't leave the yard." I looked out at him and there he lay, peacefully sleeping, his empty head resting comfortably on huge paws. "Nothing wrong with that," I thought. "He'd have been halfway to Olsen Mountain by now, before yesterday." So I decided to go with it.

Of course the alleged hormones in question didn't disappear overnight. It's been a month now since I had him fixed, and he's run off a few times since then. He never goes far now, and it's usually just to check in and say hello to the old gang. I firmly believe he's a happier dog for all this. He spends less time on the chain, doesn't get disciplined much at all these days, and I take him down to the river to play a lot more. They say neutered dogs can get fat and lazy, so I'm more concerned for his health and exercise, and he likes that.

He still does his figure-eight stunt after being chained for a while, and I've even grown to enjoy that. Now when people come out to the house and say, "Hey, nice-looking dog," I just say, "Wait'll you see this." I unhook him, and as they stand there watching with a mixed look of awe and raw fear on their faces, I think, "That's my dog." pp. 131-34

WAR ON THE FAMILY: THE SEX REVOLUTION CONTINUES

Despite AIDS and other worries, the sexual liberation of society continues. USA Today, found that out of 999 college students from 104 campuses, 60% said they were unwilling to give up casual sex in spite of the AIDS threat. The church, too, is riddled with immorality. A poll among evangelical teens from eight denominations found that by age 18, 43% had experienced sexual intercourse and 65% engaged in petting. The church needs an active program of sex education for its children, equipping them (and their parents) with reasons why they should wait until marriage to have sex.

"War on the family: the sex revolution continues" by Michael Ross. Eternity, Jan 1989. Pages 30-33.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

TO VERIFY

Among Christian teenagers, only 62% agree that the Bible's guidelines for sex should apply to today. Nineteen percent say the Biblical rules don't apply, and another 19% say they don't know.

"To verify." Leadership, Spring 1991. Page 114.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

On their 50th wedding anniversary, General Eisenhower said:

I heard recently that in order to stop teenage marriage and subsequent divorce it is necessary to accept premarital sex. To me that's like killing someone in order to stop a disease. What we need to do is wake up from the apathy that is attacking all of us.

Similarly he said on Jan. 6, 1955:

At issue is the true nature of man. Either man is the creature whom the psalmist describes as a little lower than the angels crowned by glory and honor holding dominion over the works of his creator, or man is a soulless animated machine.

PERMISSIVENESS and PLEASURE are the call of today, and our moral absolutes are history. Pornographic literature fills our newsstands. It is no wonder that since we have cast aside the moral standards of the Bible that we are cast on a sea of confusion as to what really is right and wrong.

(On Asking God Why by Elisabeth Elliot)

I receive a good many letters from young people who are utterly at sea about their life's choices--college, career, marriage. They are faced with too many alternatives. The seeming limitlessness overwhelms, unsettles, often even paralyzes them. (Can I have marriage and a career? Can I have marriage and a career and babies? Can I be really feminine and be an initiator? Can I be really a man and not the head of my home?) Twenty years ago they were faced with a whole cupboard full of packaged breakfast foods and were asked by a well-meaning but unwise mother what they wanted for breakfast. They didn't know. They have been going to McDonald's ever since, gobbling up those (how many billions is it now?) hamburgers with or without onion, with or without mustard, relish, catsup, everything. They still think they can have it all, and they still don't know what they want. Why not stop bothering about what you want, I suggest to them. Find out what your Master wants.

The three ministers think they know. They married the wrong woman. A youthful mistake. They've grown apart now. The children will not be hurt if they "handle" it properly, they say. They owe it to themselves to take this daring and creative step. God wants them to be happy. It's a leap and a risk and there's a price to pay, but look how liberating, how stretching, how redemptive. Why be threatened by traditional morality? Why be hung up? The other woman has understood and affirmed and fulfilled them as the poor wife was never equipped to do and--a line from an old song reminds them--"to waste our lives would be a sin."

Twirl those television dials. Look, for a minute, at the suffering of the world on the evening news. Twirl it off. Look at the beautiful people if you want to. There they are. You can be beautiful too. You can do what they do, go where they go. TWA will take you up, up and away. Delta is ready when you are. Become a legend. Charm a holiday party. Enhance your fragrance image. Give to thyself. Wear the Mark of Success. Try everything. Experience all the thrills.

Now it may be the flower for me
Is this beneath my nose,
But how shall I tell unless I smell
The Carthaginian rose?

So wrote Edna St. Vincent Millay (Collected Lyrics, Washington Square Press) decades ago. In the 1980s the possibilities seem even more endless and enticing, the unreached corners of the world ever more reachable, the pleasures of sin more innocuous. In fact, we suspect, they are not even luxuries. They have become, for the self-respecting man or woman, requirements.

There is plenty of room on the road that leads to that kingdom, and many go that way, but it is still true that the gate that leads to Life is small and the road is narrow and those who find it are few.
pp. 79-80

If because of the confusion during these past months your life has gotten cluttered up with involvements which are not pleasing to the Lord, you can take steps to correct the problem.

We are in the process of making a SPIRITUAL CHECKUP. Thus far we have asked the questions:

1. Have you made the right start?
2. Are you a phony?
3. Has Satan hindered you?
4. Are you discouraged by the problems?
5. Are you an encouragement to others in your walk with the Lord?
6. How is your prayer life?

And now we ask the question:

7. HAVE YOU GOTTEN DIRTY?

If we did not make the right start we are phonies, and Satan has hindered us. Problems have come and driven us further and further away, and we have become selfish instead of an encouragement to others. We have no real prayer life and no moral standards.

My prayer is that God will speak to all of us through His word as we study this passage in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

Stedman says:

If we could create a drug that would remove pleasure from the act of sex we could change the whole moral climate of our country. We could reduce crime, bring an end to the scandal of divorce, eliminate teenage pregnancies, reduce the present population, stop the sale of pornography and decrease poverty. But, in doing so, we would also lose a special part of God's creation. We would forfeit some of the zest and spontaneity between the sexes and life would become drab and dreary indeed. Since we obviously cannot make that drastic change, the only thing left for us to do is to learn how to handle our sexuality properly.

Barnhouse says:

Now in chapter 4, which we consider in this present study, there are 3 questions. The first has to do with the private moral lives of the Thessalonians. The second with their everyday living and love toward each other and those without, and the third with the questions they had asked through Timothy concerning the second coming of Christ.

Ryrie adds:

We now pass from the personal and historical section of the letter to the practical and hortatory part. This follows a normal pattern in Paul's epistles. Doctrine then duty, precept then practice. Paul has already rather incidentally mentioned the deficiencies in the lives of the Thessalonians and now he exhorts them to remedy these shortcomings.

v. 1 Finally therefore, brethren, we are asking and exhorting you in the Lord Jesus, in order that, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God (just as also you are walking), in order that you may abound more and more.

The SHORTCOMINGS that Paul spoke of back in chapter 3:10 naturally lead to EXHORTATION.

We need to note that he does not club them with the law. He is exhorting them, and the exhortation is to sexual holiness in these verses we are considering together.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

"Finally," does not announce the fact that we are at the end. There are still 2 chapters. These chapters deal with what is lacking in their faith. He moved from the present condition to their next stage of spiritual development.

Paul, having made the statement that he is really joyful over the faith of the Thessalonians and that he has a concern to complete what is lacking in their faith, now enters into doing exactly that by dealing with some very practical areas as far as their lives are concerned.

He has just completed his prayer for them, and now he enters in upon this instruction in chapters 4 and 5.

Just because Paul says "FINALLY" does not mean that he is at the end of the letter. You will note that he has quite a bit of instruction from a practical point of view yet to give.

"FINALLY," therefore, simply tells us that the apostle now is going to teach them things on the basis of what he has said in the earlier part of the letter.

You will note once again that he refers to the Thessalonians as "BRETHREN."

"FINALLY THEREFORE, BRETHREN, WE ARE ASKING AND EXHORTING YOU IN THE LORD JESUS."

We find here that he is not only ASKING them but also EXHORTING them, and this asking and exhorting is in the Lord Jesus.

ASKING focuses on FAVOR.

EXHORTATION focuses on RESPONSIBILITY.

Horne says:

These exhortations are meant very seriously as is indicated by the double injunction, "we beseech and exhort you." They are given neither in an air of superiority or in an attitude of hesitancy but forthrightly and authoritatively in the Lord.

Hogg and Vine point out:

As he had prayed for their establishing in holiness, so now he exhorts them to the same end. For the only way to holiness is along the path of obedience to the revealed will of God.

Ockenga translates the word "FINALLY" as "furthermore." He says:

"Furthermore" both connects this practical exhortation with what Paul has just prayed for, namely, their perfection and holiness and marks the transition to his dealings with their practical problems.

"FINALLY THEREFORE, BRETHREN, WE ARE ASKING AND EXHORTING YOU IN THE LORD JESUS, IN ORDER THAT, JUST AS YOU RECEIVED FROM US HOW YOU OUGHT TO WALK AND TO PLEASE GOD."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Everyone lives to please someone--himself, his spouse, or whoever. Paul focused the motivation for correct living on love for God. Life can either be a set of rules or prohibitions to avoid but Paul regarded it as the outworking of a loving desire to please God who had chosen him (chapter 1:4).

Ockenga says:

His teaching was summarized in the phrase "to walk and to please God." The highest motive of human conduct is to live pleasing to God. He whose conduct is oriented around God's will has attained to perfect freedom. What Paul was now to teach them harmonized with what he had given them during his evangelistic campaign in Thessalonica: "as you have received of us."

Horne observes:

As Paul had told them at the first, a Christian must continually conduct himself in every aspect of the life in such a way as to please God. He is under a compelling obligation of love to do so. True spirituality is measured in terms of the degree to which the believer becomes less egocentric and more Christo-centric.

KEEP TO THE RIGHT!

The Christian must follow only one course of action--he should always do what's right regardless of the consequences. With this in mind, Charles Hubner has written:

"Keep to the right" is the law of the road--
 Make it a law of your own moral code;
 In whatsoe'er you determine to do,
 Follow the road of the Good and the True;
 Follow and fear not by day and by night,
 Uphill or downhill, "Just keep to the right!"
 "Keep to the right" in the journey of life,
 E'en though there's jostling and trouble and strife;
 Weaklings succumb to the bold and the strong,
 Some will go under and many go wrong;
 He will acquit himself best in the fight
 Who shirks not duty and "keeps to the right."
 "Keep to the right," and the right will keep you
 In sweet accord with the Good and the True;
 These are the best things in life, after all--
 Make it worthwhile whatsoever befall;
 Death has no terrors, when it comes in sight,
 For the man who ever "keeps to the right."

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

Someone has wisely said:

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

"TO WALK" focuses on CONDUCT,
and "TO PLEASE" focuses on COMMENDATION.

"JUST AS ALSO YOU ARE WALKING."

The Thessalonian Christians are walking in obedience, and they are characterized as ones who are doers of the word and not just hearers only.

"IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY ABOUND MORE AND MORE" in walking and pleasing God.

Paul, in the remainder of the letter, is going to be addressing some areas of concern in which they need to grow and to mature.

The Christian life was not meant to be a STANDSTILL or ARRIVED EXPERIENCE.

There is no finality to it. It is always going up or down.

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul is exhorting them to excel still more, to press on to a greater experience of the truths of scripture of which they have already laid hold.

I am pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day.
Still praying as I'm homeward bound.
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

In chapter 2:12 Paul makes the statement:

"encouraging and bearing witness to the end that you should be walking in a manner worthy of the God who is calling you into His own kingdom and glory."

1 John 2:6

the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

Colossians 2:6

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

Paul in the remainder of the book will set forth to us a walk that does please God.

William Hendricksen points out:

Both the phrase of introduction and the subject matter makes it clear that a new section begins here. This is neither defense nor an expression of joy, but exhortation to live sanctified lives with respect to all classes and at all times.

What the apostle really desires therefore is that the branches that bear fruit shall bear MORE fruit. That was necessary, not only in view of the immaturity of these recent converts from paganism and of the deficiencies of faith which has to be supplied in their particular case, but also in view of the more general consideration, namely, that the believer never attains to complete spiritual perfection in this life.

Hogg and Vine point out:

There is no finality in practical holiness. While the Christian remains on the earth, life is marked either by growth or by decay.

Lenski says:

The Thessalonians already abound. When one compares how they once walked and how they now walk, the change is great indeed, thank God. Yet there is room for still more of this blessed abundance of holiness of life. The Thessalonians are to please God in a still higher degree. Not only is perfection still unattained, there are faults that are of a kind that ought to disappear completely. The Thessalonians have for the greater part come out of rank paganism and have not at once shaken off all pagan ideas and practices. They have succeeded in varying degrees but some of them still have plain things in which they are behind, and all of them should continue their blessed advance.

Stedman says:

First he taught them that they ought to live and to please God. That is the number one subject in the curriculum of the Holy Spirit. The Christian's business is to live to please God. The word "ought" which is made up of an elision of the 2 English words "owe it" reflects that priority. We "owe it" to God to please Him. Paul tells us why here and in other passages. He died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. The great truth that every Christian must learn, says the apostle, is that you are not your own. We no longer belong to ourselves. We cannot let our own desires take priority in life. Rather, we are bought at a price. Jesus died on our behalf in our place. You deserved that death, I deserved it, but He paid the penalty Himself. Now we belong to Him. He has invaded our being by the Holy Spirit and the purpose of our lives has been dramatically transformed. We are to live no longer for ourselves but for Him who died for us and was raised again from the dead.

Ryrie says it this way:

The word "ought" denotes "moral necessity," lying in the relationship presupposed. Pleasing God is not a matter of choice for the Christian, it is a necessity which grows out of his relationship to Christ.

Walvoord says:

He was never content with past spiritual achievement. It was always the appeal to be growing, expanding, having more.

J. Vernon McGee says:

We should keep improving. We should grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him. The walk of the believer is very important. It is emphasized in many portions of scripture and it is the emphasis here. The believer cannot do as he pleases, he does as Christ pleases.

Ogilvie says:

We are all unfinished and need to pray as well as sing: "Finish then Thy new creation, pure, unselfish let us be."

To a great many of us in Christian circles, actually our Christian life is nothing but a hand-me-down sort of thing which we follow blindly without really recognizing the fact that we do need personal convictions in these matters.

E. M. Thomas, in his book If I Perish, I Perish, says:

I am convinced that there are tens of thousands of young people who profess to be Christians but whose conduct within the evangelical context conforms to certain prescribed patterns that make them acceptable within the society to which they adhere, not because they have any deep spiritual conviction in the matter but simply because they have been evangelically house-trained.

Paul was never content with past spiritual achievement.

2 Peter 3:18

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Paul is saying here in this verse that they had received instructions as to how they "OUGHT TO WALK AND TO PLEASE GOD." They were presently doing this but his encouragement was that they would "ABOUND MORE AND MORE" in that direction.

Hebrews 12:1, 2

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The thrilling thing about Paul's concept of the Christian life is that it was always moving forward. We would never arrive at the goal until we were in His presence, and then we would be made like Him for we would see Him as He is.

This sort of thing makes each day with Jesus Christ more exciting as we can see in our own lives that we are being made like our precious Savior.

It is hard to please someone when you do not know what they want. We do know that it delights the heart of God for us to walk in obedience to His word:

Micah 6:8

He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

Genesis 5:22

And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters.

Genesis 5:24

Enoch walked with God, then he was no more, because God took him away.

Hebrews 11:5

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

2 Chronicles 16:9

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. . . .

Hebrews 4:13

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Yes, we are operating under the eye of God, and what a wonderful thrill to face the end of life and to hear those words: "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joys I have prepared for thee."

v. 2 For you are knowing what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

Again Paul reminds them of what they are "KNOWING." Here he is stating the reason why they can "abound more and more" because:

They "ARE KNOWING WHAT INSTRUCTIONS [they were given] THROUGH THE LORD JESUS," that is, while Paul was there in ministry.

The word "INSTRUCTIONS" is a military word.

Ryrie says:

The word translated "commandments" is not a common one in the New Testament and signifies instruction which is given by a superior to a subordinate. It is often used in military orders, but these were no arbitrary commands of the apostle. They were given through the Lord Jesus and that is why he can exhort the believers to abound in them.

In chapter 3 we noted that he had taught them with regard to suffering and affliction in the Christian life,

now here in chapter 4 we see that he had spent some time talking with them about their Christian walk and testimony.

The instructions which had been given to the Thessalonians were not instructions which were made up by man but they were "INSTRUCTIONS . . . THROUGH THE LORD JESUS."

v. 3 For this is the will of God, your being set apart; that you should keep yourselves away from fornication;

"THE WILL OF GOD" takes us back to verse 1 where we read:

"just as you received from us how you ought to walk and [by so doing] to please God."

Walking according to "THE WILL OF GOD" will certainly please Him:

Romans 12:1, 2

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 2:15

For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

It is God's will that His people be holy.

1 Thessalonians 3:13

so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness in the presence of our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

"FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD, YOUR BEING SET APART."

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

Ryrie says:

God's will includes sanctification. And since sanctification includes holiness in body as well as spirit, fornication nullifies it. To sanctify means to set apart for God or to be holy. Since every believer is already sanctified in Christ, a common New Testament designation of all believers is "saints," or holy ones. Thus, sainthood or sanctification is not an attainment, it is the state into which God in grace calls sinful men and in which they begin their course as Christians.

Walvoord asks the question:

Just what does it mean to be sanctified? Suppose one were living in the time of Christ and wanted to make a gift to the temple. He would bring his gift of gold coins and lay them on the altar. What happened to those gold coins? The moment they were given to God they became sanctified. They were set apart for holy use. The sanctification did not change the character of the gold coins but it did change their use and the purpose for which they were directed. So every true Christian has been set apart as holy to God even though he falls short of perfection.

Horne explains it this way:

The apostle is here speaking of the present progressive experiential aspect of our sanctification, especially as it comes to expression in the realm of sexual behavior, that you abstain from fornication. Fornication covers all forms of illicit sexual intercourse. Any such behavior would be utterly incompatible with the sanctification required of the Christian. The whole question of sex relationships should be viewed in the light of the fact that the believers body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This word can mean a state of being set apart from sin to God, or the process of becoming more dedicated to God.

It is the latter meaning that is here, not the final state whereby we are separated from the PRESENCE and PENALTY and POWER of sin.

This progressive aspect of SANCTIFICATION is the process whereby we are conformed to the image of Christ in our daily experiences by proper responses to the word and the Spirit of God.

Barnhouse puts it this way:

Justification is the act of God whereby He declares an ungodly man to be perfect while he is still ungodly. It is as extraordinary a thing as if you were able to say that the caterpillar is really a beautiful butterfly. "Oh," you say, "but it isn't! It still looks like a caterpillar." Well, that is exactly what God does with us. He comes to us in our caterpillar status and declares us to be butterflies. In reality, that is what happens in nature too. That caterpillar does become a butterfly, for God has given us this remarkable picture of metamorphosis; that which goes into the cocoon as a worm, comes out as a butterfly, for it lives part of its life in one state and part in another. We call this process metamorphosis.

It is very interesting to note the Greek word used in Romans 12:2: "Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed (metamorphosed) by the renewing of your mind." Now justification is that planting of the new life of God in us. Sanctification is the rise and development of the new life. I suppose that if we charted the progress of our new life in Christ the chart would not show a steady growth, but rather, it would be like those charts on the stock market, up and down, up and down, yet always climbing and with no possibility of our ever getting out of the hand of God.

Romans 7:15-21

For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.

Ogilvie observes:

In the 4th chapter of Paul's letter he turns from thankful affirmation to urgent exhortation. The key word of the first 12 verses of this chapter is sanctification. The jugular verse is 3: "for this is the will of God, your sanctification." The Greek word for "sanctification" is hagiasmos. It has its root in hagios, "holy" and is a kindred term to holiness. The word "holy" when applied to persons means "belonging to God," "set apart," "destined to live for His glory." When we are chosen and called by Him we become holy, not because we are perfect but because we now belong to the Lord. Sanctification is the process of growing in holiness.

Sanctification is the process of becoming distinctly different. It is the miracle of a character transformation in which we become more and more like Christ. We were created for growth toward maturity in every fact of life. We can be more than we ever imagined possible. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27) would be a beautiful way of vividly describing the source and substance of sanctification.

Ellicott reveals Paul's purpose in the statement "FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD":

"This that follows, this that I am about to declare to you."

Barnes says:

Sanctification consists in 2 THINGS:

- 1.in ceasing to do evil,
- 2.in learning to do well.

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

J. Vernon McGee says:

Sanctification of the believer is a work of the Spirit of God. We need to review the 3-fold aspect of it because this is so very important. Positional sanctification means that Christ has been made unto us sanctification. We are accepted in the beloved and we will never be more saved than at the moment we put our trust in Christ. We are never accepted because of who we are but because of what Christ has done. This positional sanctification is perfection in Christ. Practical sanctification is the Holy Spirit working in our lives to produce a holiness in our walk. This practical sanctification will never be perfect so long as we are in these bodies with our old sinful flesh. Total sanctification will occur in the future when we are conformed to the image of Christ Jesus. Then, both the position and the practice of sanctification will be perfect. The literal meaning of the word "sanctification" is "to be set apart for God." The moment a lost sinner comes to Christ and accepts Christ as Savior, that person is set apart for God's use.

"FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD, YOUR BEING SET APART."

To be explicit, this is part of the will of God.

2 Corinthians 6:17, 18

Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty.

The little word "THAT" will occur 3 TIMES in these next few verses:

1. We will see the 1st one here in verse 3,
2. the 2nd in verse 4,
3. and the 3rd one in verse 6.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

These 3 "thats" are there to produce greater holiness.

"FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD, YOUR BEING SET APART; THAT YOU SHOULD KEEP YOURSELVES AWAY FROM FORNICATION."

PHRASE #1:

"THAT YOU SHOULD KEEP YOURSELVES AWAY FROM FORNICATION."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Avoid and abstain from any and every form of sexual practice that lies outside the circle of God's revealed will: adultery, premarital and extramarital intercourse, homosexuality and other perversions. Porneia includes all these practices.

1 Corinthians 6:9, 10

Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Revelation 21:8

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

1 Timothy 6:11

But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary describes the Thessalonian environment:

It was very pagan. Prostitution was a priestly prerogative and extramarital sex was sometimes an act of worship.

William Barclay says:

It may seem strange that Paul should go to such lengths to inculcate sexual purity in a Christian congregation but 2 THINGS have to be remembered:

1. The Thessalonians had only newly come into the Christian faith, and they had come out of a society in which chastity was an unknown virtue. They were still in the midst of such a society and the infection of it was playing upon them all the time. It would be exceedingly difficult for them to unlearn what they had for all their lives accepted as natural.
2. We must remember that there never was an age in history when marriage vows were so disregarded and divorce so disastrously easy.

Lange, in his commentary, says:

Men are led to fornication by luxury, wealth, levity, idleness, leisure. These occasions must be cut off.

A man may restrain himself from all outward eruptions of evil lust and yet be inwardly full of the stench of the filthiest thoughts and desires.

Barnhouse says:

A minister in Los Angeles who happened to belong to one of the super holy groups flatly stated that "marriages were made in heaven." Then he said, "I've been married and divorced and married and divorced four times, and none of these was made in heaven. So I expect to keep on until I find one that is made in heaven." Well, you see, this is lust, unbridled lust. This is a total failure to understand what holiness is in this important area.

Stedman says:

Let us put it plainly, immorality means no sexual wrongdoing. It means no making out in the back seat of the car, no premarital sex, no fornication, no messing around with someone else's husband or wife, no extramarital sex, no homosexual sex (the scripture is very clear on this issue in many places), no pornography, no standing in the newsstand at the airport and flipping through Penthouse or Playboy magazines and getting yourself turned on by looking at the pictures. That is sexual fantasy and it is wrong. To avoid sexual immorality means to have none of these things going on in your life.

One need only look and study the lives of those who disregarded this injunction to sexual purity to be motivated to obedience:

David, Samson and Amnon are 3 that come to my attention at this time.

I think it would be good for us to raise the question in our exposition at this time as to:

How do you get caught in these kinds of things?

James 1:14-15

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

The picture here is a picture of a fisherman dragging a very flashing, wobbling lure through the water to attract a fish to change his course, or to come out of his hiding and to take the bait.

Mike Rodgers, in an article that he wrote for our summer newsletter, describes it graphically:

The summer sun was beginning to warm the murky waters of the pond where the bass lived. With the onset of the Texas mid-day heat, he retired to the safe, dark shadows of the bank which jutted out over the tank. He was the big fish in the pond and as befitting the rank, claimed the choice hole as his own.

The hole in the bank camouflaged the bass. He could ambush unsuspecting prey and make a hasty retreat. Covering the bank above were grasses and weeds from which hapless insects would be blown into the water by the breezes to meet their fates with the ravenous fishes below.

It was now late summer and the grasshoppers were fat and juicy. Awakened by the warmth of the morning sun, the grasshoppers were flitting back and forth, chattering incessantly. The breeze picked up abruptly, and hoppers speckled the water's surface. Fish congregated from all over the pond to engage in a feeding frenzy that aroused the curiosity of the bass. The bass emerged from the hole and after quickly assessing the situation, sped toward a large grasshopper nervously twitching in the water's film. The commotion made by the great fish as he overwhelmed his victim and broke through the surface scattered the other fish. The bass, with the hopper safely engulfed, turned back to its hole.

Suddenly, the fish's head was jerked back toward the surface as he felt the prick of the hook's point embedding itself in his mouth. A few more jerks, a brief struggle, one last run, and the bass disappeared into the sky. Little did he know, his fate was awaiting him at the hands of the one who deceived him.

There are 4 THINGS that converge to make us vulnerable to sexual temptation:

1. THE MIND:

Mark 7:21-23

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Satan is in the mind-blinding business.

1 Peter 1:13

Therefore, gird your minds for action. . . .

2 Corinthians 10:5

. . . we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

2. POOR JUDGMENT:

Proverbs 6:32, 33

But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment;
 whoever does so destroys himself.
 Blows and disgrace are his lot,
 and his shame will never be wiped away;

It was Mark Twain who said:

Good judgment comes from experience. Experience comes from bad judgment.

A friend said:

Good judgment is what you have right after you needed it.

3. COMPROMISE:

Proverbs 6:25

Do not lust in your heart after her beauty
or let her captivate you with her eyes,

Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart,
for it is the wellspring of life.

4.FOCUS ON SELF - What I need and what I want is more important than my
fidelity and faithfulness to a commitment:

Philippians 2:3, 4

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of
you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for
your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

(True Colors by Jim Talley and Terry Benner)

Eromania is a term often used by our singles' group to describe the amazing process
in which a relatively sane person is transformed into one with the emotional and mental
stability of a love-sick aardvark. From our observation--and experience--people can
become literally "crazy in love." Thus the word eromania.

No one residing on planet earth is immune to this malady. It floats across culture,
age, and religious beliefs like the smell of hot, rich coffee on a cold frosty morning.
Eromania makes "falling" in love fun, and generates an energy and a power that defies
human understanding.

pp. 103-4

(Reliving the Passion: Meditations on the Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus As
Recorded in Mark by Walter Wangerin, Jr.)

There comes an orange snake eastward through the night. A snake of fire, a long snake of torches. Perhaps the disciples glance down from the Mount of Olives and see it and do not understand. Jesus understands. It winds the same path they themselves have followed from the city. It winks through the trees in a smooth and silent, serpentine approach. It is a fatal snake. It kills by kissing.

The binding strength of that snake is the armed guard of the Temple and the police of the Sanhedrin. Behold how the servants of God can bite!

But the head of the snake is one of the twelve, a disciple of Jesus. Behold how an intimate enemy may kiss for other reasons than affection and respect.

Suddenly Judas Iscariot appears beside the group of friends who stand outside the Garden of Gethsemane. Smiling. Judas is smiling. And claiming his accustomed place. And holding his torch aloft to shed light on the faces around him. Peering into these faces. Looking for . . . no, not for John, not James; no, not for Andrew or for Peter, though he greets them all with familiar nods. He's looking for . . . ah!

The snake coils now into a thick knot of bodies and flame before the disciples. It has scores of eyes all flashing red in torchlight. Its scales are weapons, swords and clubs [adorn] its sides. Its silence is tense, dead menace in close proximity--and it stinks of human sweat.

The disciples swallow, nervous and uncertain.

Jesus gazes and waits.

Now, the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God made. From the beginning its movement was smooth, its manner mild, its promise to elevate whom it would eat. It was a murderer even from the beginning, a liar, the father of lies, and the father, so Jesus once declared, of--

The serpent strikes!

Smiling, Judas says, "Rabbi!" and kisses Jesus. A sign of devotion. A sign, for the Temple guard, that this is the one to seize and lead away. A lie.

In a garden once the Lord God decreed enmity between the serpent and the seed of the woman, enmity to the death. In a garden again that enmity produces this pathetic assault: a kiss that can kill.

pp. 68-69

DON'T GET CAUGHT

A review of The Snare by Lois Mowday. "Lois Mowday writes frankly about connecting intimately with someone new. The possibilities sound exciting, but bring a snare when emotional entanglements outside marriage lead to sexual immorality." Her underlying philosophy: "Keep adventure in your life, but move within the boundaries of God's eternal principles, as stated and demonstrated in his Word. He who ignores the Maker's rules is, in time, snared." The book explains that compromising behavior doesn't just happen, that it results after certain processes. Temptation can be conquered; see 1 Cor. 10:13.

"Don't get caught" by Ruth Beam. Moody, Dec. 1988. Pages 49-50.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

KEEP OFF THE "GRASS"!

The dried leaf of the hemp plant, commonly known as marijuana, is also referred to as "weed," "pot," or "grass." Often smoked like a cigarette and known as a "reefer," it produces an exaggerated feeling of well-being, an increased sense of self-confidence, and a lessening of moral restraint. It distorts perception and creates a psychological dependence upon something other than God.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

THE ENTICING EMBRACE OF EVIL

During the 13th century many strange devices were created to torture and kill people. Perhaps the most deceptive of all was a life-size statue of a beautiful woman in an attractive setting. Her arms were outstretched as if to proffer a loving embrace. When the cruel men in charge of this evil invention wished to see an enemy die a horrible death, they would tell him he was among a select few who were privileged to view the carved figure. Often the superstitious victim would be so fascinated by the statue that he would draw closer and closer to inspect its beauty. But as he stood directly in front of it, the arms would suddenly move forward and clutch him, while a hundred knives simultaneously emerged to pierce his body.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

Proverbs 6:27, 28

Can a man scoop fire into his lap
without his clothes being burned?
Can a man walk on hot coals
without his feet being scorched?

Romans 13:12-14

The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

This is the KEY VERSE in our study; and the question we are raising here is:

HAVE YOU GOTTEN DIRTY?

Paul in Galatians 5, when dealing with the works of the flesh, points out the fact that uncleanness and impurity are associated with sexual violations. Then he also points out the fact that when one is involved in sexual sin, the body is involved as well.

If you have gotten involved with sin of this nature, do not make David's mistake by trying to hide it, and then having to suffer, hoping that no one knows; but rather, deal with this thing before the Lord in order that there might be a real cleansing take place.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, let us reason together,"
says the Lord.
"Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.

How easy it is to try to rationalize and defend our immoral conduct by simply saying, "Everyone is doing it!" This does not, however, change the word of the Lord. It tells us very plainly in this verse that the "WILL OF GOD" is that we should keep ourselves away from such immorality.

JOSEPH probably serves as the finest example with regard to the will of God in this matter of fornication:

Genesis 39:7-12

and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.

One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

It is better to FLEE than FIGHT because you will not win this battle.

Sex is beautiful in the bounds of marriage but outside of it, it is ugly.

If you discover that you have lowered your standard and gotten dirty as you make your SPIRITUAL CHECKUP, may God grant that you deal with this thing in your life in order that you might pursue and follow after "THE WILL OF GOD"--which is to be "SET APART" to Him.

v. 4 that each one of you should know that he is to take a wife for himself (or gain control over his own body) in consecration and honor,

This is "THAT" PHRASE #2 here in verse 4.

"THAT" PHRASE #1 was in verse 3:

"that you should keep yourselves away from fornication."

Now PHRASE #2:

"THAT EACH ONE OF YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT HE IS TO TAKE A WIFE FOR HIMSELF (OR GAIN CONTROL OVER HIS OWN BODY) IN CONSECRATION AND HONOR."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The will of God is for holiness. Sexual immorality and holiness are exclusive. There is no appeal to Christian liberty that can justify fornication. We are to avoid it by learning how to control our own bodies with its passions. Self-control and response to one's sexual desires is something that Paul taught. It could and must be learned.

Sexual desire can be controlled by the Christian through God's power.

"God's will" expressed in verse 3 is for our "being set apart" or to be made holy, even as he has prayed in chapter 3:13. Now these next clauses are going to tell us what Paul means by being set apart.

The word here in the text is translated "vessel," and, as a result, there is a difference of opinion as to what Paul really means here.

Some feel that Paul means that each person should know that he is to take a wife, a "vessel" for himself, because the word "vessel" is used of wife in other places in scripture.

There are others who feel Paul's emphasis is to gain control over his own vessel or over his own body.

Whichever meaning we take here, Paul is telling us that with regard to these matters of sex we need to recognize the fact of God's will in this matter. That is, that we would either take a wife to ourselves even as He has designed for us and to do this in consecration and honor; or, if it is not God's will for us to be married, that we have control over our bodies in this unmarried state.

I believe the evidence is heavier on the side of those who would make this to refer to a wife because of the number of other passages of scripture which make reference to the wife as being the weaker vessel.

I do not feel however that it is an either/or situation, because even in marriage one must learn that a fruitage of the Spirit is SELF-CONTROL. One of the real struggles in Christian experience as Paul has outlined in Romans 7 is the struggle of the flesh against the spirit.

The control over the appetites of the body is a constant spiritual struggle. We have to deal with:

anger,
diet,
exercise,
the tongue,
and sexual desires, just to name a few.

Romans 6:13

and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

1 Corinthians 9:27

but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 7:2

But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman

have her own husband.

Ellicott says:

The ethical element in which this was to take place--the union of man and woman--was to be in sanctification and honor, not as in the case of porneia, in sin and shame.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Paul did not specify but the Christian should choose a method that is both holy and honorable. That is, the action taken as an alternative to sexual immorality must be behavior that is set apart to the Lord in its motivation and recognized by others as intrinsically worthy of respect.

Each Christian is responsible for his own body and behavior, not his neighbor's.

Every young Christian, like the Thessalonians, should learn how to deal appropriately with sexual temptations.

v. 5 not in lustful passion, even as also the Gentiles who do not know God;

Paul has told us what we are supposed to do as far as "the will of God" is concerned:

1. we should keep ourselves apart from any illicit sexual relationships
2. we should take to ourselves a wife in consecration and honor

Now he approaches this thing from the NEGATIVE side:

"NOT IN LUSTFUL PASSION, EVEN AS ALSO THE GENTILES WHO DO NOT KNOW GOD."

There is a difference in the way that the saved and the unsaved approach these matters of sex.

This verse is just a picture of the wrong way one should come to marriage.

Horne points out on this verse:

The God-controlled man rules over his vessel, not giving in to his passions as do the Gentiles who "refuse to have God in their knowledge."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The Christian can overcome because he knows God. This makes all the difference. The heathen know about God, they don't know God personally.

KNOWING GOD will do 2 THINGS for us:

- 1.our attitudes toward sex will change
- 2.God will give the ability to act toward sexual temptation as He could not before

Knowing God is basic to living a holy life. A vital relationship with God is essential to maintaining a clean walk before God.

ABRAHAM lied to King Abimelech by telling him that Sarah was his sister. Abimelech then responded by taking Sarah into his harem:

Genesis 20:6

Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her.

In this whole realm of sexual fidelity it is necessary to learn "when to hold 'em" and "when to turn and walk away." God is available in the power of His Spirit to give you strength and grace to turn and walk away if you will just trust Him.

A man without God does not have that strength provided for him in the power of the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 4:18, 19

being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

William Barclay quotes Seneca:

As Seneca said:

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

Lenski says:

It is God's will that every Christian is to know to act in the matter of sex so as to be pleasing to God. He is to know that God instituted marriage, that each man is to have his own wife, each woman her own husband, monogamy. That every type of fornication is excluded as being contrary to God's will. This is what pagans do not know. They do not even know God and thus run wild in all matter of sexual excess.

Ogilvie describes it this way:

The pagan temples throughout the city kept a large staff of prostitutes. Worship and fornication went hand-in-hand. Women were considered things for pleasure. Demosthenes expressed the belief of many: "We keep prostitutes for pleasure. We keep mistresses for the day-to-day needs of the body. We keep wives for the begetting of children and for the faithful guardianship of our home." Most men had several wives throughout a lifetime and extramarital sex was not only accepted but expected.

A DISGRACE THAT SPAWNS DANGER

In 1975 Paul Harvey, now nationally known for his commentary on the news, compiled the following statistics. "Although there are over 116 million churchgoers in the United States--an increase of 30 percent in 10 years--illegitimacy has gone up 300 percent, and pornography has become a 500-million-dollar-a-year business. Venereal disease has jumped 72 percent. Our annual crime bill is over 20 billion dollars and is increasing four times faster than our population. What we expend on gambling is more than all the money spent on churches, education, medicine, and cars. Our divorce rate is one in three, and our nation has 5 million alcoholics and 3.5 million problem drinkers. Ours is the most civilized nation on earth, yet 37 million of our children receive absolutely no religious instruction!"

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

DEALING WITH THE ABOMINABLE

Recently a TV personality pleaded for more compassion for certain people. He said that homosexuals should have the right to teach in our schools, women should have a right to choose an abortion, and publishers of pornography should have a right to distribute their materials. Carry Nation, famous enemy of the liquor traffic in the late 19th century, when asked for biblical support for her crusade, cited Revelation 21:8 and said, "It comes under abominable."

The word abominable means "worthy of or causing loathing or hatred." In Revelation 21:8, it refers to people rather than to degrading things. This verse says that some people, because of their immorality, are detestable in God's sight. This fact should shape our attitude toward those who are cruel, immoral, and deceitful. God loves them. So must we. But God hates their wicked deeds, and so must we.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

(NAM by Mark Baker)

This eighteen-year-old kid was celebrating one night, because the next morning was going to be his first time through there. He was going to do it up big, get drunk and get himself a prostitute and spend the night doing whatever it is they do.

She was a sweet little thing. She brought a satchel charge into his APC with her. They did their thing. She went home, and shortly thereafter the charge blew up. Of course, being in a confined area, he not only got the shrapnel, he got the full load. He came in with no arms and his legs were gone below the knee. All he had was a head and a trunk.

I was the lucky one. I got to take care of him. He was so bad, he got a "special": one nurse just for him.

He had these huge gaping holes and he had lost so much blood. You give somebody a lot of blood and they have problems coagulating. They couldn't stop this kid from bleeding. So he's got these big dressings on his stumps that are bleeding and his arms are bleeding. He's recovering from the anesthesia. Yet, you don't want him to recover, because he's going to freak out when he sees what's left of him.

Plus, there were some other guys on the ward who knew him and they are waking up. They see him and they're going nuts. There's nothing you can do for them. All you can say is, "If you don't like it, man, you can just look the other way. I'm sorry, but there's just nothing that we can do about it."

Every time the kid tried to open his eyes or even lift his head to see how he was, we just gave him a blast of morphine. It took him two days to die. What an awful price to pay for a one-night stand.
pp. 216-17

Dr. F. B. Meyer says:

Sometimes it seems rather terrible that a life should be blasted by one unholy act. You may be disposed to pity the man and say that it is hard for him to be judged and crippled for the rest of his life by the passionate act of a few moments. But remember that an act is never alone. It sums up trains of unholy thought in which the man has been indulging, and you do not judge him for one act but for the process of which it is the result. The tree was eaten through before it crashed to the ground.

Paul is telling us here that our entering into marriage is not to be satisfying animal appetites but is to be cultivation of real love which only God can give to 2 people.

v. 6 that no one be overstepping and taking advantage of his brother in this matter because the Lord is the one who punishes concerning all these things, even as we also told you before and warned you.

This is the 3rd and final "THAT" PHRASE.

Back in verse 3 we learned that it is "the will of God" our being "set apart." Part of that process is seen in:

"THAT" PHRASE #1:

"THAT you should keep yourselves away from fornication."

"THAT" PHRASE #2 is in verse 4:

"THAT each one of you should know that he is to take a wife for himself (or gain control over his own body) in consecration and honor."

"THAT" PHRASE #3 is here in verse 6:

"THAT NO ONE BE OVERSTEPPING AND TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS BROTHER IN THIS MATTER."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

"Brother" here is another human being. It wrongs the partner in the act or it wrongs the other person in the marriage relationship. This behavior is contrary to God's will and therefore under His judgment.

Hebrews 13:4

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Ryrie says:

A sexual sin is a fraud against a brother because it takes what is rightly his. 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.

Barnes, in talking about the word we have translated "OVERSTEPPING," says:

This word means "to make to go over a wall or mountain," then "to overpass," to wit, "certain limits," "to transgress," and then "to go too far," "to go beyond right," hence, "to cheat or defraud." It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. The idea of overreaching is that which is implied in its use here.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The initiator of the act takes advantage of his partner in sin by fanning the fire of passion till self-control is lost.

Ockenga says:

Relations with the opposite sex based upon gratification or selfishness always defrauds, hurts and wounds another. It is a repudiation of the dignity of men and women as the children of God. It treats them as things rather than persons. As the result of such practices there are millions of people who have been seriously hurt.

(Think Big: Unleashing Your Potential for Excellence
by Ben Carson, M.D. with Cecil Murphey)

"You're asking me to hop into bed with you? And you're a minister?" I was so naive that such an idea had not occurred to me. Naive, yes, but I wasn't stupid, and I told him so. "You get yourself another bird because this bird don't fly that way."

"That's no way to talk," he said as he stepped toward me.

"If you move any closer to me, I'm going to yell that you're bothering me. If I start yelling, they'll hear me screaming for two city blocks."

Obviously he had not expected that kind of response. He stepped backward and stared at me, a confused look on his face. "Okay, okay," he said. "Don't yell. Look, it won't go any further; just act like it did not happen, and you needn't come back any more. Just don't let anybody know this happened."

I picked up my pad and walked out of the room.

p. 36

(To Love Mercy: Becoming a Person of Compassion, Acceptance, and Forgiveness by C. Samuel Storms)

Mary Ann wants her story told. So do I. Here is why. Her soul, as well as her body, has been raped. Every human emotion has been trampled. She was never permitted to cry as a child, never allowed to relax in the arms of a loving father or to know the thrill of his smiling approval. Putting trust in people brought betrayal, enjoying life produced shame. She never experienced the satisfaction of personal achievement or the warmth of family affection.

She never felt enjoyed, only exploited; never needed, only used; never cherished, only rejected for failing to live up to impossible expectations. Her opinions never mattered, her choices were ignored, her desires went unfulfilled.

What would you have me say to her? Something like, "That's just terrible, Mary Ann. What you need to do is . . . pray about it . . . just obey God . . . forgive and forget. After all, it's in the past." Would you have me tell her that anything beyond this panders to human need to the detriment of divine glory? You may not like this, but my opinion is that such "counsel" is hardly less abusive than much of what she experienced as a child.

p. 64

WHY SEX SINS ARE WORSE THAN OTHERS

Jack Hayford discusses 10 reasons sex sins are worse than other kinds of sin: 1) They stain the deepest part of a person's identity. 2) They exploit the deepest aspects of our emotionality. 3) They pollute the fountainhead of our highest creativity. 4) They produce guilt that cripples our confidence in God's forgiveness. 5) They expose us to the risk of begetting and conceiving an unsupported child. 6) They compromise the foundation of life's deepest human relationship. 7) They increase the probability of multiplying the spread of disease. 8) They give place to appetites that can only beget further unnatural behavior. 9) They break trust with the whole body of Christ. 10) They assault the pure lordship of Jesus in our lives.

"Why sex sins are worse than others" by Jack W. Hayford. Charisma & Christian Life. Oct 1989. Pages 68-75.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

Paul now tells us why he has spoken the way he has with regard to these matters.

Even as Joseph in Potiphar's house would not go beyond the authority which was his and take advantage of his employer in this matter, so Paul says essentially the same thing here.

(Lewis & Me & Skipper Makes Three by Ludlow Porch)

The romance that had started on a hayride when they were both thirteen ended in a divorce court when they were both twenty-two. It was a day that has never been far from Skip's mind. I have never discussed the marriage or divorce with Nancy, but have spent many sad hours talking about it with Skip.

In the years since their divorce, Skip has married two lovely women and has been involved to one degree or another with many, many others. When you asked what happened to his other marriages and the other relationships, you get answers running from Skip's partying to his roving eye. I don't know all the answers, but let me give you one fact that you can take to the bank. Skip loves Nancy as much today as he did on their wedding day. Every woman to pass through his adult life has been compared to Nancy. I'm not saying he didn't love both of his other wives. Only Skip can handle that one. I do know in my own heart that Nancy was the Big Love of his life, maybe so big that there has been little room left over for the others.

In a quiet moment recently, Skip and I were having dinner together in a restaurant. The subject of Nancy came up, and Skip said, "If God would allow me to do one thing over, you know what it would be?"

"What?" I asked.

"I would have treated Nancy better. I would be so good to her that we would never be anything except happy." Looking up from the tablecloth where he had been staring, he added, "Ya see, Lud, I'll always be in love with her."

I believe him, I really do. It just didn't always seem that way at the time.
pp. 50-51

The 3 "THAT" phrases that we have considered now are followed with 3 REASONS why those things are true:

1. the 1st one is here in verse 6,
2. the 2nd in verse 7,
3. and the 3rd in verse 8.

Those 3 REASONS are:

REASON #1:

God is the avenger concerning these things.

REASON #2:

He called us to be holy.

REASON #3:

The man who rejects this becomes a personal opponent of God.

"THAT NO ONE BE OVERSTEPPING AND TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS BROTHER IN THIS MATTER BECAUSE":

REASON #1:

"THE LORD IS THE ONE WHO PUNISHES CONCERNING ALL THESE THINGS, EVEN AS WE ALSO TOLD YOU BEFORE AND WARNED YOU."

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Be happy, young man, while you are young,
and let your heart give you joy in the
days of your youth.
Follow the ways of your heart
and whatever your eyes see,
but know that for all these things
God will bring you to judgment.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out:

Sexual immorality is sin and God will judge. Sexual immorality goes against God's calling. Everyone who fears the wrath of God should abstain from immorality.

The punishment here in verse 6 either looks forward to the prospect of future punishment or back to the purpose for which God called each Christian to Himself.

God's plan for a Christian includes purifying his life. Sexual immorality frustrates the purpose of God's call. A holy life demonstrates God's supernatural power at work overcoming what is natural and it glorifies God.

Hebrews 10:31

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Paul says, "We told you and warned you about these matters."

v. 7 For God called us not for uncleanness, but in holiness.

Paul makes a NEGATIVE and a POSITIVE statement here:

"FOR GOD CALLED US [negatively] NOT FOR UNCLEANNES, BUT [positively] IN HOLINESS."

FORNICATION,

LUSTFUL PASSION,

and UNCLEANNES all go together here in this text.

In this verse we come to Paul's statement of the reason WHY it is the will of God to keep ourselves clean in these matters.

This is the 4th time "HOLINESS" occurs in these 8 verses.

(Life and Works of Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon
by Henry Davenport Northrop, D.D.)

Supposing there is this faith and prayer, we shall also need holiness of life. You know what Balaam did when he found he could not curse the people. Satanic was his advice. He bade the king of Moab seduce the men of Israel by the women of Moab that were fair to look upon. These were to fascinate them by their beauty, and then to invite them to their idolatrous rites, which rites were orgies of lust; he hoped that the lewdness of the people would grieve the Lord and cause Him to leave them, and then Moab could smite them. He sadly succeeded.

p. 285

(A Pretty Good Person: What It Takes to Live with Courage, Gratitude and Integrity by Lewis B. Smedes)

The best wisdom suggests that many of us go through three phases on our way into and out of addiction.

First phase: We freely do something that gives us pleasure. Since it gives us instant pleasure, we choose to do it again. And again. And again.

Second phase: We lose our power to say No to the desire. We are caught--maybe very quickly, maybe after years. Either way, however, we are out of control.

Third phase: We admit to ourselves that we have lost control and that we cannot get it back again on our own. We face up to the fact that we are shackled. And when we've suffered too much, we seek help in our helplessness.

The trip back to control is a long and painful journey, too long and too painful for some to finish. But the people who get there are usually the ones who surrender to the truth that they had lost their way.

Desire is a good friend; life is flat and flaccid without it. Apathy is no virtue. But desire is a friend that will take over control of our lives if we let it.
p. 98

When it comes to SANCTIFICATION or HOLINESS I see
4 different APPROACHES to dealing with the sin problem:

1. You have the DIPPERS - one dip does all.
2. Then you have the DENTISTS - they pull those sins out one at a time.
3. Then you have the DEDICATORS - they look like they have been soaked in embalming fluid.
4. Then you have the DIVINE DESIGNS - the wonderful process of an ever-deepening relationship with the Lord Jesus and the feeding upon His word that purifies the life. They are not perfect but they are beautiful people. They are in a constant struggle but they are pressing on the upward way. They are admirable, trustworthy, strong and loving. They are honest and transparent about their failures and successes.

(The Christian Salt & Light Company by Haddon W. Robinson)

William Byrd, an eighteenth-century Virginia farmer and surveyor, kept a personal diary. He recorded his struggle with lust or, as he called it, the "combustible matter." He kept putting water on the fires, but they continued to spring up. In one entry he wrote: "I neglected to say my prayers, which I should not have done, because I ought to beg pardon for the lust I had for another man's wife. . . . Endeavored to pick up a woman, but could not, thank God."
p. 144

Hogg and Vine point out:

The effect of the gospel in purity of life presented a marked contrast to the uncleanness that characterized contemporary pagan religions.

Calvin points out:

After having discoursed as to the correcting of the vices of the flesh he proves from the end of our calling that God desires this, for He sets us apart to himself as his peculiar possession.

Here Paul makes reference again to the fact that sexual sins are those that make us unclean. Oftentimes those involved say they feel so dirty. Those who listen to stories which involve this likewise call them dirty jokes. God has not called us to this sort of thing but to holiness.

(Topical Memory System: Life Issues. The Navigators)

If you have been guilty of treating 1 John 1:9 too casually (and who of us hasn't?), try substituting rebellion or defiance or despising God's Word for the word sin as you plead that verse before God. "Lord, I confess my rebellion and despising of Your Word and I plead Your promise of forgiveness and cleansing." As we do this, we will begin to view our sin as God views it and will be less likely to abuse the gracious promise of God by treating it too casually.
p. 31

At this point in our study of God's view of sin, we seem to have two incompatible truths. On the one hand, we see that God views our sin far more seriously than we do. We talk about weakness of character or immaturity; God talks about rebellion. We speak of falling before some temptation; God says we have despised His Word and His Person. We feel we have made a mistake; God says we have defied His command.

At the same time, we have seen that God removes our sin an infinite distance from us--as far as the east is from the west. He has put our sins behind His back and hurled them into the sea. He has blotted them out and will remember them no more.

How can we reconcile the seriousness of sin in God's sight with the absoluteness of His forgiveness as expressed in these wonderful Old Testament passages?
p. 33

CONSENTING ADULTS

"The nature of the covenant of grace gives you no ground, no encouragement at all, to set aside any instance or degree of obedience; any part or measure of holiness."--John Wesley

Confronted with the growing lack of moral self-discipline among Christians and the infiltration of worldliness into the church, many pastors respond by saying that we need to pray for revival in our nation. Prayer, however, should not be our only response. What the church needs is to reach a consensus about what is morally acceptable Christian behavior. In recent decades evangelicals have reached, to a considerable extent, a common understanding of Christian doctrine but still lack a similar common standard of holiness.

The doctrinal coalition is possible only because evangelicals have been willing to allow each other freedom of interpretation on controversial topics like the Second Coming and baptism. Agreement on ethics will require the same generous spirit so that our disagreements will not stand in the way of our more essential agreements, lest we get sidetracked on issues like social drinking and movie ratings. In order to forge this common understanding of Christian disciplines, we must approach the Scripture unencumbered by modern presuppositions. For instance, even though we may be thoroughly convinced in our own minds that abstaining from alcohol and tobacco is the right thing to do, we cannot impose our own moral choices of Paul's teaching that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. However, since the prohibition of fornication is a specific application of this principle that Paul himself makes, we can apply it the same way in our common ethic. We must acknowledge that other believers who endorse the same Scriptural standards may not apply them in the exact same way. It is important, also, to keep in mind that, since grace fulfilled the law but did not cancel it, antinomianism is still heretical.

It helps that most ethical issues are fairly clear cut. We may disagree about abstinence from alcohol, but there is no doubt that the Bible condemns drunkenness. The morality of divorce can be endlessly debated, but the Scriptural ideal of life-long marriage cannot be questioned. Whether or not to boycott South Africa is not a question the Bible directly answers, but it has plenty to say about our responsibility to the poor.

Christians must put aside fears of being labelled legalistic and formulate a common ethic--not a detailed rule book but something to show us where the boundaries are.

"Consenting adults" by Everett Wilson. Christianity Today, Apr 29, 1991. Pages 28-29.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

SOME PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER

The Lord will not hear our petitions if we continue to live in sin. Moody underscored this truth in his ministry. He said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart and am not willing to give it up, I need not pray, for there is no room in my life to receive the blessing I seek. You may take a bottle and cork it up tight and put it under Niagara, and yet not a drop of that mighty volume of water will ever get into the container. Therefore, if any unconfessed sin remains in my life and I am not willing to abandon it, I have blocked the channel between me and God."

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

v. 8 Therefore, the one who is rejecting [this] is not rejecting man but God who also is giving his Holy Spirit to us.

Our study begins and ends with "THEREFORE":

"THEREFORE, THE ONE WHO IS REJECTING [THIS, that is, God's will] IS
[negatively] NOT REJECTING MAN BUT [positively] GOD WHO ALSO IS
GIVING HIS HOLY SPIRIT TO US."

"THEREFORE" brings us to the summary of his argument with regard to holiness in sexual matters.

This teaching which he is presenting is not from man but from God, and the person who rejects it:

"IS NOT REJECTING MAN BUT GOD."

John 12:48

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.

Man in his immorality and wayward behavior, which is not pleasing to God, would even go so far as to make God his opponent.

We have seen 3 REASONS why we need to be obedient:

- 1.back in verse 6 - God is the avenger concerning these things
- 2.in verse 7 - He has called us to be holy
- 3.now here in verse 8 - the man who rejects this becomes a personal opponent of God

A. T. Robertson points out:

In order to justify their licentiousness they do not hesitate to set aside God.

Ellicott says:

'Wherefore then' is a logical conclusion from the preceding verse.
p. 55

Ockenga says:

Paul speaks of purity being "according to the will of God." God's plan for men and women is a sanctified relationship of monogamous marriage with procreation, love, responsibility and character development. Our bodies are to be kept in a righteous relationship to God, whether in or out of marriage. Thus man is to be sanctified body, soul and spirit and kept blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
p. 48

"THEREFORE, THE ONE WHO IS REJECTING [THIS] IS NOT REJECTING MAN BUT GOD WHO ALSO IS GIVING HIS HOLY SPIRIT TO US."

Ellicott says:

. . . who in addition to having called us [in holiness] has also been pleased to furnish us with the blessed means of realizing it.

Ryrie points out:

And it is this God who has made victory possible for the believer by giving the Holy Spirit. The participle "give" is in the present tense. Not because God repeatedly gives the Holy Spirit but because the participial form is used to describe God as in chapter 1:10 where Jesus is called the Deliverer. The Spirit was given at the time of salvation (Rom. 8:9), and He is the available inner power for victory (1 Cor. 6:19). The way to escape the avenger is to fly to the giver and accept and cherish His gift.

J. Vernon McGee says:

A child of God is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He cannot continue to live in sin because the Holy Spirit is the HOLY Spirit. The time will come when a child of God will long for holiness in his own life.

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

John Piper in his book Desiring God stated,

We are surrounded by unconverted people who think they do believe in Jesus. Drunks on the street say they believe. Unmarried couples sleeping together say they believe. Elderly people who haven't sought worship or fellowship for forty years say they believe. All kinds of lukewarm, world-loving church attenders say they believe. The world abounds with millions of unconverted people who say that they believe in Jesus.
p. 164

THE ENEMY WITHIN

In Victor Hugo's story, "Ninety-Three," a ship is caught in a storm. The frightened crew hears a terrible crashing sound below. Immediately the men know what it is: a cannon has broken loose and is crashing into the ship's side with every smashing blow of the sea! Two men, at the risk of their lives, manage to fasten it down again, for they know that the unfastened cannon is more dangerous than the raging storm. Hillery C. Price made this application: "Many people are like that ship--their greatest danger areas lie within their own lives."

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The Holy Spirit has power enough to enable any Christian to learn how to control his own body even in a pagan, immoral climate.

The EXHORTATION is avoid sexual immorality,

the ENABLEMENT is the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 3:20

Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

We spend so much time talking about learning to "just say no" to drugs. I would like to say that it would be wonderful if we could use the same slogan with regard to sexual irresponsibility: JUST SAY NO.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Paul's exhortation in this passage is to sexual holiness.

LESSON #2: The key to effective Christian living is to conduct ourselves in such a way as to please God.

LESSON #3: The Christian life was never meant to be a standstill or arrived experience.

LESSON #4: There is no finality in our Christian lives, we are either going up or down.

LESSON #5: The will of God is for us to continue to become more holy as time goes by.

LESSON #6: The ways to get snagged into irresponsible sexual behavior are:

wrong thinking,

poor judgment,

compromise,

and selfishness.

LESSON #7: It is the Spirit of God who produces the fruit of self-control in the life of the believer.

LESSON #8: There is the potential for victory in every area of our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

LESSON #9: The Lord deals severely with sexual disobedience.

LESSON #10: Learn to JUST SAY NO.

THE CURE FOR REGRET

Remorse for past failures or sins deprives many Christians of the joy that should be theirs. A man in his middle years has withdrawn from the people in his church because he feels so bad about his past infidelity--a sin that broke up his home. An elderly woman needs counseling from time to time because she can't forget an affair in which she was involved more than 50 years ago. A young lady is under the care of a psychiatrist because she can't forgive herself for having had an abortion. Each of these people is now a Christian, but each is paralyzed at times by remorse over the past.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

"WHAT WOULD HE FIND?"

An unknown poet has written, "What would He find, should He come just now;/ A faded leaf or a fruitless bough;/ A servant sleeping, an idle plow;/ What would He find should He come just now?/ What would He find should He come tonight,/ Your garment soiled or a spotless white;/ Your lamps all burning or with no light;/ What would He find should He come tonight?"

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

THE POWER OF PRAISE

Troubled at times with a coldness of heart toward the things of the Lord, Scottish pastor Robert Murray McCheyne would sing the praises of God until he felt revived in his spirit. One day, while he was trying to prepare his heart for preaching, he wrote in his journal: "Is the desire of my heart to be made altogether holy? Lord, You know all things. Felt much deadness, and much grief that I cannot grieve for this deadness. Toward evening revived. Got a calm spirit through psalmody [singing psalms] and prayer." McCheyne had been uplifted by praising God. Those in his household were often able to tell what hour he awoke because he began the day with a psalm of praise.

Perhaps you feel as if you are mired in what John Bunyan called the "slough of despond." Lift a song of praise to the Lord!

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

William T. Barker speaks with regard to Solomon in his book Kings in Shirtsleeves. He says:

Solomon's own character crumbled. In spite of his brilliant beginning his later years are reminiscent of King Farouk who ruled Egypt until 1952. Solomon deteriorated into a flabby, lazy, bored, playboy dictator. He was incapable of a real marriage relationship because all he wanted was personal pleasure. He became notorious for his affairs. By the time he finally died, Solomon was detested and unmourned.

I believe this certainly shows us the consequences of following a life of immorality and uncleanness. If this particular study has spoken to your heart, and in making your SPIRITUAL CHECKUP this is a problem which you have, may God grant that there would be an honesty about it and a willingness to come and to deal with the problem.

Alan Redpath, in his book The Making of a Man of God, points up:

Have you observed that when you excuse sin in your own life you become very critical of it in other people? The person who hides an uneasy conscience and a sense of guilt may flash out in anger against the sin of another. Is that why some of us are so merciless with a Christian who is tripped up? Is that why we have no gospel for the believer who falls? It may be, not because we are very holy but because we are so unholy, that we condemn the thing in another as we refuse to judge it in our own lives. Let us not forget the words of our Master: "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone."

Ockenga says:

Sex sin hardens, makes selfish and enslaves the victim. Thus, those who plunge into an unclean life are in great spiritual jeopardy. God has made provision for deliverance from such enslavement or even temptation by the Holy Spirit whom He has given to us. The Holy Spirit who regenerates us, indwells us and empowers us, enables us also to partake of God's holiness. Through the Spirit we therefore sanctify ourselves. Any physical sin will grieve God's Spirit, will terminate His ministry in us and will cause Him to resume His work of conviction, chastisement and rebuke.

Stedman says:

You may be thinking that moral purity in our day is impossible or that it is too late for you, you have already messed up your life. The word does not say we must never do these things. Rather, the word says, "Do them no longer." All of us have messed up in one way or another. We have destroyed the wholeness already but the glory of the gospel is that in coming to Jesus through His work on the cross in our behalf and His rising again from the dead we have been given a new start. The past is wiped out and forgiven. We are restored. "I have espoused you, I have betrothed you as a chaste virgin unto Christ," wrote Paul. Even though the Corinthians had already messed up their lives with many sexual sins, Paul assured that in Christ they were as chaste as virgins. And even if as a Christian you have fouled up, the word of God says very clearly that you can be restored. If you acknowledge that you have done wrong and accept God's forgiveness through Christ you are a chaste virgin again in Christ. What glorious good news!

(A Pretty Good Person: What It Takes to Live with Courage, Gratitude and Integrity by Lewis B. Smedes)

There are some bad chapters in everybody's story. We have all sewn ugly stitches into the fabric of our selves. Sometimes we would like to press a button and erase them the way we cleanse the memories of our computers. But life is not equipped with a delete key. And there's the rub.

Some of us take too much responsibility for the bad chapters, and shackle ourselves to guilt for everything about them. We excuse ourselves for nothing, take the blame for everything. Owning too much becomes our damnation.
p. 64

(The Solid Rock Construction Company by Haddon W. Robinson)

A cartoon in the morning newspaper pictures a psychologist listening to a patient: "Mr. Figby," the psychologist finally says, "I think I can explain your feelings of guilt. You're guilty!"
p. 43

The big question that comes to our minds at this point is:

HOW DO WE SURVIVE?

1. Stay in the word - MEDITATING AND MEMORIZING--my M & M prescription.

Psalms 119:9, 11

How can a young man keep his way pure?

By living according to your word.

I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY - find as many friends as you can and be accountable to them in every area of your life.

3. FOCUS ON SERVANTHOOD - if you are single, focus on the Savior. If you are married, focus on the Savior and your wife or husband.

4. STAY AWAY FROM SITUATIONS that could lead to TEMPTATION and COMPROMISE.

(Lives On the Mend by Florence Littauer)

In order to communicate what she had learned to other victims, Jan put her "Ten Steps to Recovery" in an acrostic outline: FREE TO CARE

Face the Problem

Recount the Incident

Experience the Feelings

Establish Responsibility

Trace Behavioral Difficulties and Symptoms

Observe Others and Evaluate Self

Confront the Aggressor

Acknowledge Forgiveness

Rebuild Self-Image and Relationships

Express Concern and Empathize with Others

pp. 155-56

Stedman says:

The following words of a great hymn eloquently express the rallying call we need to hear today:

Rise up, O men of God,
Have done with lesser things;
Give heart and soul and mind and strength
To serve the King of kings.

Lift high the cross of Christ,
Tread where His feet have trod;
As brothers of the Son of man
Rise up, O men of God!

God wants a community of beautiful people whose lives are under control and maintained by the Holy Spirit. Such a people will constitute an island of refuge and resource for the drifting multitudes who are still enslaved by their own passions and desires.

STUDY #7 - Thessalonians

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Paul's exhortation in this passage is to sexual holiness.

LESSON #2: The key to effective Christian living is to conduct ourselves in such a way as to please God.

LESSON #3: The Christian life was never meant to be a standstill or arrived experience.

LESSON #4: There is no finality in our Christian lives, we are either going up or down.

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LESSON #6: The ways to get snagged into irresponsible sexual behavior are:

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LESSON #7: It is the Spirit of God who produces the fruit of self-control in the life of the believer.

LESSON #8: There is the potential for victory in every area of our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

LESSON #9: The Lord deals severely with sexual disobedience.

LESSON #10: Learn to JUST SAY NO.