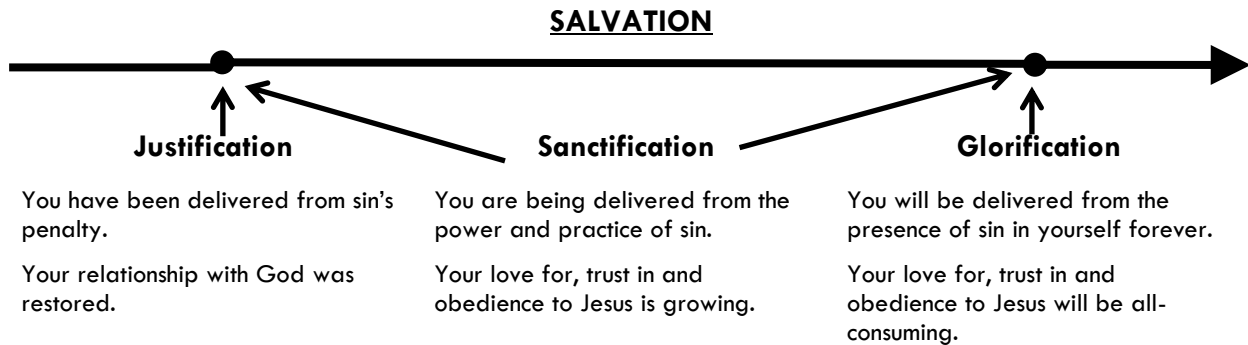


GOD'S WILL

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Having completed his defense in chapters 1-3, the Apostle Paul turned to teaching beginning with 4:1. In what follows, Paul addressed the sanctification of the Thessalonians – that they walk in sexual purity, they continue to love one another, and that they work hard.



GOD'S WILL IS THAT WE WALK IN SEXUAL PURITY (4:1-8)

Sex is a divinely given gift. God created us male and female and designed our bodies to be able to engage in and enjoy sexual intimacy. Sex is for pleasure and for bearing children. Sex is not evil. Sex is powerful and should be engaged in the manner God intends, which is in the covenant of marriage.

Walking in sexual purity means that we abstain from sexual intercourse and practices that arouse sexual desire until after we have entered into the covenant of marriage. Sex is to be enjoyed exclusively between a husband and a wife committed to each other in the covenant of marriage.

All forms of sex outside the bond of marriage of a husband and wife displeases God. All forms of sex outside the bond of marriage profanes the sacred and precious nature of sex and leads to problems emotionally, psychologically and relationally. Thus, Paul's warning that we walk in sexual purity so as not to transgress and do wrong to a brother or a sister such as in the case of adultery.

The world mocks us for our teaching on sex and teaches there are virtually no limits on sex: have sex with whomever, whenever and however. Unfortunately, this appeals to our fleshly desires and causes conflict within; to whom are we going to listen? Who are we going to trust? Who are we going to please?

To choose to walk in sexual purity is a profound step of faith. It is God's will that we walk in sexual purity and it pleases Him when we walk in sexual purity. Through the Holy Spirit Whom He has given us, He empowers us to walk in sexual purity; the Holy Spirit producing in us His fruit which includes patience, faithfulness and self-control.

God warns us that Jesus, the Lord in verse 6, will avenge the wrong done by believers who walk in sexual immorality. In his final warning in verse 8 Paul uses a very interesting word, *atheteo*. *Atheteo* means "to believe that something or someone cannot be trusted or relied on and hence to reject." If you choose to walk in sexual immorality that is what you are doing. You are saying in effect that what God tells you about sex in the Bible is not true and that you know better. It is a foolish thing to do as thousands will attest. To walk in sexual immorality is to displease your God, it is to forfeit the rich blessing of sex with a loving, committed spouse, and it is to profane the sacred, precious gift of sex God has given for our pleasure and good. Commit yourself to walk in sexual purity!

GOD'S WILL IS THAT WE WALK IN LOVE FOR EACH OTHER AND THAT WE WORK HARD (4:9-12)

As we saw in earlier sections of this letter, the Thessalonians were doing very well in the area of loving one another. Paul encourages them to love each other more and more. In addition, Paul encourages them and us to be hard workers, providing for ourselves and walking honorably before our unsaved neighbors. We are not to be busy bodies sticking our noses into other people's affairs. We should be productive and not be looking to live off the labor of others. It may be that in Timothy's report there was a whiff of some people in the church using the imminent return of Jesus as an excuse not to work. Paul will address this problem more explicitly in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12.

I am encouraged that many of you do well in loving your brothers and sisters here at Grace Church. My continuing prayer is that more and more of us embrace a life of loving and serving one another.

As far as walking in sexual purity goes, we are not doing particularly well. Grievously, we have adopted the world's approach to sex, not God's. We need to be in prayer about this....

GRACE NEWS AND NEEDS

Roger Boysel Memorial, TODAY, 2:00PM.

Junior High / High School Summer Camp Signups.

Men's Horseshoe Tournament, Sunday, March 17th, 12Noon, Signup on Patio.

Orley Neller 90th Birthday Card Collection, Drop a birthday card in basket in foyer March 17th.

Blood Drive, Friday, March 22nd, 12:30PM-6:30PM, Modular.

Membership Class, Sunday, March 24th – April 21st, 10:00AM, Modular, No signup, just come.

Good Friday Service, Friday, March 29th, 6:30PM.

VOM Needs for March: *Dental Floss*