



“God’s Will Motivated”

1 Thessalonians 4:6b–8

“You really do kid only yourselves if you think you can be an orthodox Christian and be at the same time cool enough and hip enough to cut it in the wider world. . . . Maintaining biblical sexual ethics will be the equivalent in our culture of being a white supremacist.”

—Carl Trueman

CANCELLED

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter

because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.”

—1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

REVIEW

- After stating that God's will for the Thessalonians is their "sanctification" (4:3a), Paul applies that truth to the realm of sexual ethics with *three exhortations* (4:3b-6a):

1. (v. 3b) "that you abstain from sexual immorality;
2. (vv. 4–5) that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;
3. (v. 6a) and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter."

- God's will applied to sexual ethics:
 - 1. Abstain from all sexual activity outside marriage (v. 3b).**
 - 2. Cultivate dignified sexual intimacy within marriage (vv. 4–5).**
 - 3. Honor the sexual purity of other marriages (v. 6).**

3. Honor the sexual purity of other marriages (4:6a).

“that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter” (v. 6a).

- The third of three applications of God’s will.
- After a general exhortation to sexual purity (v. 3b), and then an exhortation about the believer’s own marriage (vv. 4–5), Paul then exhorts the believer regarding his responsibility to the marriages of *others* (v. 6a).

“that no man **transgress** and **defraud** his brother in the matter” (v. 6a).

- **“To transgress”** – found only here in the NT, “to step outside of assigned limits,” i.e., “to break the law.”
- **“To defraud”** – a verb used usually for commerce, “to take advantage of, exploit, cheat.”
 - “The verb conveys the notion of using trickery or deception to take advantage of another person for one’s own selfish gain” (Weima, 275-76).

“that no man transgress and defraud **his brother**
in the matter” (v. 6a).

- “**His brother**” – a man’s fellow male Christian; a member of the household of faith; one who stands in close spiritual relationship—one of *familiarity*.
- “**In the matter**” – points to a specific issue, “in *this* matter,” namely, sexual relations (see v. 3ff).
- Paul prohibits extramarital affairs, compelling the men to uphold the sanctity of each other’s marriages.

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- Men, are you careful not to cross boundaries of thought, speech, and conduct related to women in the church?
- Men, are you careful to ensure that familiarity with other women in the church never leads to impure desire?
- Men, do you respect the sanctity of other marriages?



Q. How are we to respond to such a high standard?



Two inadequate responses:

- 1) We are to be motivated by the guarantee of extraordinary marital bliss.
- 2) We are to rest in the guarantee of grace to cover inevitable failure.

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter

because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.”

—1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

- Paul not only applies God's will of sanctification to the realm of sexual ethics (4:3b–6a), he also identifies the truths which are to motivate obedience (4:6b–8).

1. (v. 6b) because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*.
2. (v. 7) For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.
3. (v. 8) So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you."

- God's will motivated:
 1. **We are to obey because Jesus is the future avenger (4:6b).**
 2. **We are to obey because the Father saved us in holiness (4:7).**
 3. **We are to obey because the Spirit is our present help (4:8).**

1. We are to obey because Jesus is the future avenger (4:6b).

“because” the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*” (v. 6b).

- “because” – introduces the first of the three motivations.
- This motivation focuses on *Jesus* and a moment in *the future*. Emphasis: *Beware!*



“because **the Lord** is **the avenger** in all these things,
just as we also told you before and solemnly warned
you” (v. 6b).

- “**the Lord**” – the title Paul commonly uses to refer to the person of *Jesus* (see 4:1-2); it emphasizes his *sovereignty*.
- “**the avenger**” – pertains to “justice being done so as to rectify wrong done to another”; “the infliction of an appropriate penalty for a wrong done.”

“O LORD, God of vengeance, God of vengeance,
shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth,
render recompense to the proud. . . .

But the LORD has been my stronghold, and my God the
rock of my refuge. He has brought back their
wickedness upon them and will destroy them in their
evil; the LORD our God will destroy them.”

—Psalm 94:1–2, 22–23

**“because the Lord is the avenger in all these things,
just as we also told you before and solemnly warned
you” (v. 6b).**

- **“in all these things”** – the issues encompassed in the prohibitions and commands of vv. 3b–6a.
- **“just as we told you and solemnly warned”** – Paul’s prior ministry in Thessalonica.
 - Even to new believers Paul addressed these issues with extraordinary emphasis and authority.

“But from the beginning of creation, *God* MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

—Mark 10:6–9

2. We are to obey because the Father saved us in holiness (4:7).

“**For** God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification” (v. 7).

- “**For**” – introduces the second of the three motivations.
- This motivation focuses on *the Father* (“God”) and a moment in *the past*.
Emphasis: *Remember!*



“For God **has not called us** for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification” (v. 7).

- “called” – a salvific term; the verb refers to the *irresistible invitation* of the sinner to God through the proclamation of the gospel.
 - Describes the moment when God’s eternal decree intersects with the sinner’s personal, historical experience (Rom 8:29-30).
 - Emphasizes *direction: out of / into* (1 Thess 2:12).
 - Emphasizes *purpose: unto* (1 Thess 5:23-24).

“For God has **not** called us **for the purpose of impurity,**
but in sanctification” (v. 7).

- Paul employs his common *not this / but that* form of instruction.
- “**not . . . for impurity**” – the purpose of God’s irresistible invitation was *not* to bring the sinner into “impurity” — i.e., *moral corruption* (the antithesis of sanctification).
- “**but in sanctification**” – the all-encompassing reality in which God’s invitation was made effective.

3. We are to obey because the Spirit is our present help (4:8).

“So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you” (v. 8).

- “So” – a rare conjunction; introduces the last of the three motivations.
- This motivation focuses on *the Spirit* and *the present moment*.
Emphasis: *Appropriate!*



THE HOLY SPIRIT:
OUR HELPER

“So, **he who rejects** *this* is **not** rejecting man **but** the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you” (v. 8).

- Paul again employs his common *not this / but that* form of instruction.
- “**rejects**” = “to believe that something or someone cannot be trusted or relied upon.”
- Paul unequivocally claims full divine authority for his exhortations (vv. 3b-6a; see Luke 10:16).

“So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God **who gives His Holy Spirit** to you” (v. 8).

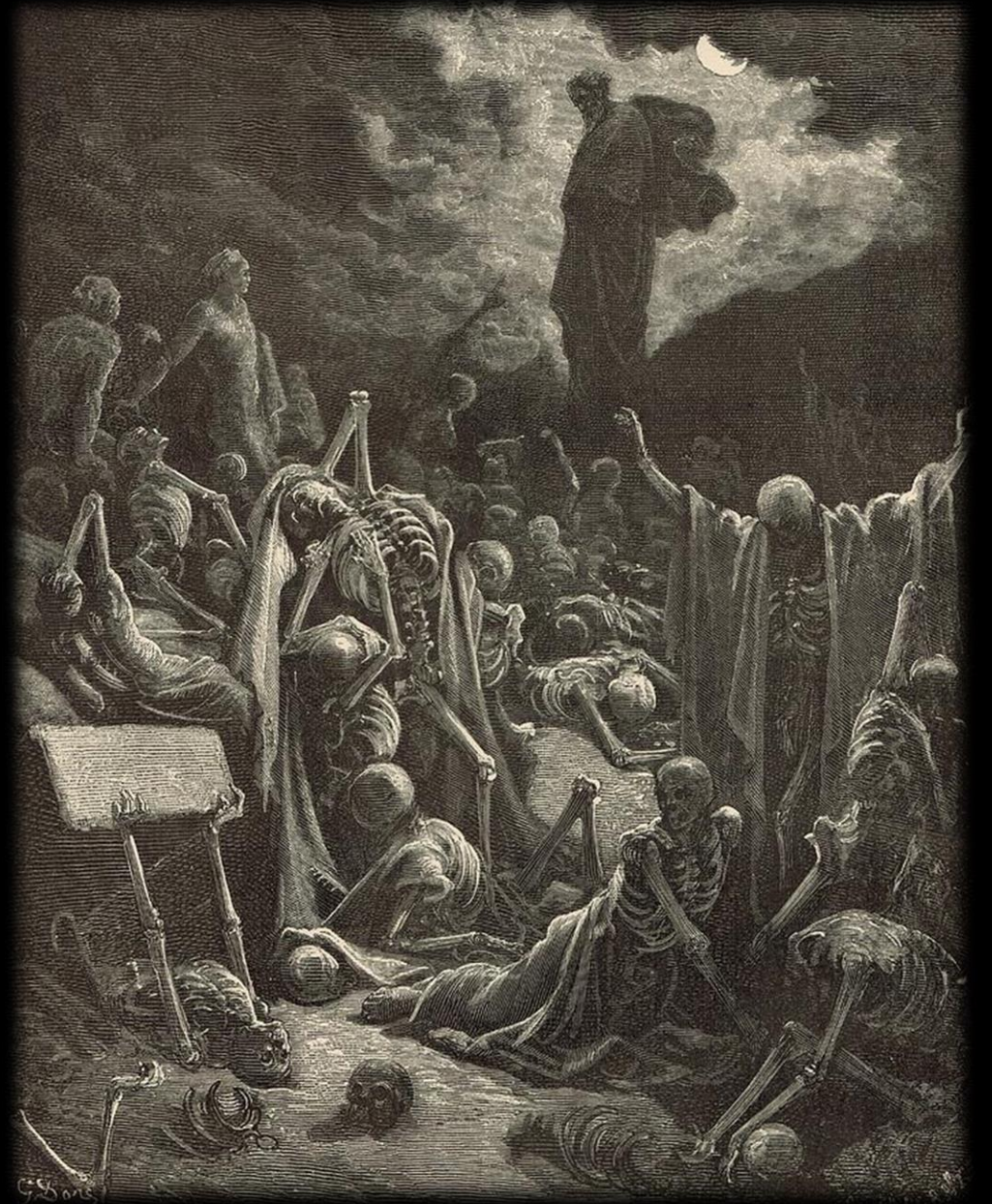
- Rejection of God as the source of these exhortations equals rejection of God as the empowerment for obedience.
 - “gives” – the present tense emphasizes the continuous, ongoing ministry of the Spirit.
- “His Holy Spirit” – *literally*, “His Spirit, the Holy One”

“So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit **to you” (v. 8).**

- **“to you” – *literally*, “into you,”** a very rare construction in Paul—but intentional.
- It appears that Paul is drawing from the Greek translation (LXX) of Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of the dry bones (see Ezekiel 37:6, 14).
- In Ezekiel 36-37, God promises that national Israel would one day experience the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

“I will put My Spirit within [*into*] you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it,’ declares the LORD.”

—Ezekiel 37:14



“This inspiration transformed their whole life; and it put an end to the pagan plea that [the believing] man has no power to resist impure desires.”

—Plummer, *First Thessalonians*, 65



“For Paul the presence of the Spirit was not simply God’s gift as *an option* against sin; nor would he have understood the Spirit as present but ineffectively so. To the contrary, the dynamic that makes Paul’s argument against sexual impurity possible is the experienced reality of the Spirit. Thus for Paul the Spirit is not only the key to becoming believers (1:6), but is the power for truly Christian behavior, and therefore makes disobedience on their part a difficult thing to argue for.”

—Fee, *First & Second Thessalonians*, 155

APPLICATIONS

- Beware of the consequences of disobedience in sexual matters; Jesus will bring retribution.
- Remember how you were drawn by God at your conversion by beauty of the gospel's holiness.
- Appropriate the ever-present help rendered by the Spirit who lives to enable holiness in you.

