

# (Audio) Abstain From Sexual Immorality

by Bob Jennings

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*This sermon focuses on the importance of increasing in faith, love, and sanctification as highlighted in 1 Thessalonians 4. It emphasizes the need to excel still more, abstain from sexual immorality, and possess self-control over the body. The sermon underscores the significance of knowing God's will for sanctification, radical abstaining from sin, and the consequences of sexual impurity. It also stresses the role of the Spirit of God, the Word of God, fellowship with believers, and engagement in God's work for victory over sin.*

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**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:4, Romans 8:13, Proverbs 5:8, 1 Corinthians 6:18, Romans 13:14, Proverbs 5:1, Hebrews 13:4, 1 Thessalonians 4:8

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## Description

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## Transcript

1 Thessalonians, chapter 4. The last time I spoke on the phrase in 3.12, the Lord calls you to increase, that there can be an increase. I gave many examples of men of God and of the Son of God Himself. And secondly, that there must be an increase 2 Peter 1, it says if these qualities are yours and increasing, they will render you neither useless nor unfruitful.

And the third, that there will be an increase. He who began a good work in you will perfect it. He will.

And the fourth, that the Lord is the one who gives the increase. That's what this phrase says. The Lord calls you to increase.

And then next, that the increase that is mentioned here has to do with especially faith and love. It says in the previous verse, we want to come and complete what is lacking in your faith, so obviously expect an increase in faith. And then specifically in verse 12, increase and abound in love.

And then number six, that the increase will be assessed at the coming of Christ. It says in verse 13, at the coming of our Lord Jesus. And then seventh, we talked about the means of the increase.

One is prayer. Paul prayed this for them. And we saw his prayer was answered.

Their faith was greatly enlarged and their love abounded even greater. 2 Thessalonians 1.3 Prayer is one means, and another means is the Word of God. And that's why they sent Timothy to encourage them and strengthen them that they might see an increase.

And then another means is just plain old diligence. Peter says, applying all diligence, add to your faith virtue and knowledge and self-control and perseverance and godliness and brotherly kindness and love. And so we go on then to chapter 4. Let's read the first eight verses.

Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that as you have received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and to please God, He gives them the credit, just as you actually do walk, that you excel still more. Kind of the same theme, isn't it? Increase and abound. And here he's saying, excel still more.

For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus? It was not the Ten Commandments, but rather Jesus said, the things that I have told you, by these things you teach that they may observe. 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, 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 rejects this as not rejecting man, but that God gives His Holy Spirit to you. There is a continuation, as I mentioned, He is telling them that they might excel still more, and He is praying for them that way. And now here He is talking about that again.

Another continuity is the word holiness mentioned in verse 13. And we have that in a slightly different Greek word here in this paragraph we just read. Did you notice what the repeated word was? The word sanctification is repeated.

In verse 3, this is the will of God, your sanctification. And then in verse 4, each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification. And then in verse 7, God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

That, as I say, is just a slightly different Greek word, same root as the word holiness. So there is a continuation there. We need to not worry about the chapter breaks, but just to get the flow.

What is He saying here? And I think the heart of the matter here is the sermon could be entitled, verse 3, abstain from sexual immorality. Abstain from sexual immorality. The Greek word there is pornea, from which we get the word porn or pornography.

And the best translation would really be fornication. That is sexual impurity. So, the heart of the exhortation here coming from Paul the Apostle for these Thessalonians, for us today, is that we abstain from sexual immorality, that is fornication, that is from porn, pornography, all forms of sexual impurity.

And it must be a pretty big thing. It is a very big thing in the human race. I mean, don't you know that God Himself made the sexes? And God Himself made the sex drives.

It's all of God. It's fine. Nothing to be ashamed of.

God did it. God made it. It was His idea.

The only thing that's bad about that is when it's out of control, when it's perverted. Like Nathan was mentioning in Romans 1, that downward spiral is sexual impurity. It must be, and we know it is, a very big thing in the human race.

Amongst the animals, they live to eat and reproduce. And I'm saying it's a pretty big thing. And this matter of managing our sex drives is a big chore, a big challenge.

One that unregenerate humanity can't handle. You just scan the New Testament. You scan the Bible.

Back in the beginning in Genesis 6, it says the sons of God, apparently angels, came in to the daughters of men. It seems to me that Peter and Jude comment on that. And they say these angels, they left their proper abode.

They left their natural estate. And God judged them for it, put them in hell immediately. Those angels committed fornication.

You go on a little further in Genesis 19, and we find the Sodomites. They went after strange flesh. They committed gross fornication.

And Lot was there and was grieved with their lawless, unrighteous conduct. And no sooner did he get out of Sodom, he committed gross immorality, gross fornication himself. And you go a little further in Genesis.

And Dinah goes out to see her girlfriends and she commits fornication with her. And then a little after that, Reuben commits fornication. And after that, Judah commits fornication.

And after that, Potiphar's wife tried to commit fornication. After that, you find the children of Israel. They mingled with the Moabites and they committed fornication.

And 23,000 fell in one day. A plague broke out. David committed fornication.

We're using adultery, you know, as violation of the marriage vow, the marriage covenant. But fornication is a broader word. It's a violation.

It's any sexual impurity. So David in that sense committed fornication. I don't know what to say of Solomon with his hundreds of wives and concubines.

David had a son, Absalom, who committed shameful fornication on the rooftop. He had another son, Amnon, who committed fornication with his half-sister. And Herod in the New Testament committed fornication.

It's not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. Examples could be multiplied. And then you think of the exhortations.

I've given you examples from the Bible. I'm trying to bring out the weight, the importance of this matter of sexual purity. Think of the exhortations in the Bible.

I mean, Proverbs says over and over, beware, watch out for the strange woman. Not that there's something odd about this woman. Not strange in that sense, but she is a stranger to you.

She doesn't belong to you. She's another man's woman. Or else she might be another man's woman.

And so in that regard, she is a strange woman. Over and over is this warning to beware and not get caught with her flattering words and her eyelids. And the New Testament, Matthew 5, the Lord says He looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery, fornication, already with her in His heart.

In Acts when they had the Jerusalem Council, what are we going to tell the Gentiles? One of the things they wanted to sure tell them was that they abstain from fornication. In Romans 13, He says, the night is far spent and the day is at hand. Walk like children of light, not in the deeds of darkness.

He says do not practice sexual promiscuity or sensuality. And then in Corinthians, it says put the fornicator out. And in chapter 6, it says, the body was not made for fornication but for the Lord.

Flee fornication. It says don't be deceived, the fornicator won't inherit the kingdom. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, He reminds them of that account of the Israelites with the Moabites.

Do not act immorally as some of them did. And 23,000 fell in a day. In 2 Corinthians chapter 12, He says I'm afraid that when I come, I'm going to find that some of you have not repented of your fornication.

In Timothy, He says don't put the younger widows on the list because they're liable to have essential desires in disregard of Christ and turn aside to fowl of Satan. 2 Timothy says flee youthful lusts. In Hebrews, it says watch out, see to it that there's no fornicator or godless man among you.

And in chapter 13, He reminds them that God will judge the fornicator and the adulterer. And in Revelation, outside the city are the fornicators. And so, I'm just trying to demonstrate what an important, weighty, major, big thing this is.

Gaining victory over fornication with all of its manifestations. Sexual purity. Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, all of the places where they have a disqualifying list are given.

It mentions fornication. Do not be deceived. They will not inherit the kingdom.

How are we to gain a victory? You know, I was thinking about this. How many professing Christians I know of, we know of, that have, sad to say, fallen to sexual immorality. I was amazed at how many preachers I know.

Men whom I thought were good preachers have fallen to sexual impurity. I mean, we're talking, my dear friends, we're talking about a Goliath here. A Goliath that must be subdued, that must be conquered, that is big amongst the Gentiles.

And here we are, sinners saved by grace, and God is calling us to have victory over this Goliath and to know how to manage our bodies. There's a few things here that I would like, about eight or nine things in the paragraph in our text that we could enlarge on. I realize this is not a complete treatment of victory over sin in 1 Thessalonians 4. So much more could be said, but let's just take what we've got right here.

One by one, we'll use the flow in the text as our outline. Things that will help give us victory over sexual immorality, sexual impurity, and a victory over fornication. Again, that's the Greek word, pornia.

Things that will help us gain the victory. First is in verse 3, this is the will of God, your sanctification. In verse 7, for God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

It will help us to remember that this is the will of God, our sanctification. Specifically, sexual purity. Have you ever started out on some job or studying some course or out on some journey and you begin to get confused and lose sight of the goal? And it helps you to remember again, this is where we're going, this is what it's all about, this is the purpose of this study after all, to remember this is the point of it.

And so, you want to know what the will of God is? You know, people go around, Christians go around, what is the will of God for me? And we're thinking in terms of what must I do, but here God is talking about what must we be. And so, this is the will of God. You want to know what the will of God is? Right here it is.

I know it's not everything, but it is real, it is a big thing, a main thing. This is the will of God to clean you up. Your sanctification, to set you apart from your lusts, to set you apart from the world, and to set you apart and give you sexual purity.

God, in verse 7, has not called us for the purpose of impurity. Remember, this is the list of one reason God called you, was to give you victory over lust. I mean, that helps, you know, to realize the big picture, or the main point of it, or the goal of the whole thing is to give you victory over sin, and especially this Goliath sin, that is sexual lust.

A second thing that will help us in gaining victory is the next phrase, that you abstain from sexual immorality. That word abstain. It will help you to realize that some of the New Testament teachings on victory over sin is just to quit it.

I mean, it says lay aside, put aside, put off, abstain, abstinence. It will help you to realize that some of the New Testament way of victory is just this flat footed, just this straightforward, just this simple, just bare ball, quit it. Stop sinning.

Be a man. Be a woman. Take yourself in hand and just quit it.

Abstain from it. And to be radical about it. The Lord says if your hand causes you, if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out.

What does He mean? He means to be radical. He means to spare nothing. Take care of this thing.

Radical purging. Radical dealing with sin. A radical dealing with it.

It says in Romans 13, regarding this matter of walking as children of the day, and specifically, do not go on in sexual promiscuity or sensuality. He says right after that, make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. Not just a little, but make none.

No provision. A radical dealing. You're not allowing one thing to stand.

Like one brother said, if the first domino falls, why all the other hundred go down pretty easy. You don't make an opportunity for it. You don't give an occasion for it.

You learn how to eventually possess, control, manage your body. You learn your weaknesses. You learn these weak areas, things that will make you go down, go into it, that will get you wrapped up in it.

And so you make no provision for that. You don't leave any bait out for the bear. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 13. We're talking about radical. Dealing with it radically.

Ephesians 5, it says, don't let it even be named among you as becometh the saints. Not even named. Yeah, you stay right away from it.

There's no accusation. There is no condemnation. There's no blame.

There's no opportunity for anybody to say what are you doing here. Job says, I've made a covenant with my eyes to not look on a young woman. Isn't that quite a way of putting it? I'm entering into a covenant with my eyes.

There's an agreement here with this body part. And so you're on the computer and you're looking at Fox News and here they've got these little ads pop up. And you glance at it.

You see it's there. But you're not going to take the second look. You're not going to dwell on it.

You're not going to camp there. You're not going to let it breed in your mind. But you turn your eyes away just like that and don't look anymore.

Talking about radical abstaining. It says in another place, I already quoted it, 1 Corinthians 6, it says flee immorality. You run from it.

That's what Joseph did when Potiphar's wife tried to suck him in. He didn't stay there and talk and reason and chatter with her. No, he ran.

Flee immorality. As you realize you play with fire, you're going to get burned. That thing will build.

That thing will grow. That thing will spread. It will get you.

You cannot take fire in your bosom and not get burned. And so, you run from it. Get out of there.

Don't give it a chance. A third help for victory over sexual immorality is the next phrase, verse 4, that you know how to possess his own vessel. Now, some people take this a little different.

Most of them don't. I lean with the majority. Some people take it that it's talking about acquiring your wife.

Vessel, you know. The weaker vessel. 1 Peter 3 refers to the wife.

And this word possess could be translated, matter of fact, mostly is, translated acquire. And so that you know how to acquire your woman, your wife. How to find a wife.

Not in sexual passion like the Gentiles do it, women chasing and so on. They take it that way. But I don't think it's talking about that.

I think it's talking about possessing your body. The ESV translated controlling your body. And the word vessel does sometimes obviously mean body.

Like 2 Thessalonians 2 Corinthians 4, it says, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, referring to the body. David said the men, referring to his army and their bodies, their vessels are clean. And so, I think it's talking about controlling your body.

And that seems more likely that Paul would be talking about that bigger picture rather than such a narrow thing of finding a wife. So, he says that you know how. And know how to control your body.

And I import some other verses here, some other thoughts here. And there's some know how, just like I mentioned earlier. I mean, it's a good study.

It's an imperative study that the Christian knows his body. I mean, we're all made out of the same old clay. But nevertheless, there are differences.

There are some differences. And you know, each one of us has got our strengths and our weaknesses. And what may bother one brother may not bother another brother.

And vice versa. And so, you know, we've got to know how to control our body. Know how to be kings.

Know how to rule our body. Know how to have dominion over our body. Not like the non-Christian who is just pushed around by his body, pushed around by his lusts, driven by them.

We're called to be kings. We're called to rule and reign and have dominion. And so what are some of these things that we should know how as to how to control our body? Well, one thing is we want to be around the Spirit of God.

We want to be filled with the Spirit. That will help you to control your body. It says if you through the Spirit, Romans 8, verse 13, do mortify the deeds of the flesh, you'll live.

When the tide is high, the ship doesn't catch on the rocks. Stay filled with the Spirit and things that are higher, things that are nobler, these will attract us. And we say, I don't have any time for that.

I don't have any place for that. I've got something so much better here. Filled with the Spirit.

Filled with the joy of the Lord. There's your strength. Stay filled with God.

Romans 13, make no provision for the lusts of the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Have ye just be saturated with the Lord, rejoicing in the Lord. Everything is Christ.

That's the way to victory. Another thing is to be filled with the Word of God. Not only the Spirit of God, but the Word of God.

Have you noticed that in the book of Proverbs? About three times it says, say to wisdom, you're my sister. Say to understanding, you're my intimate friend. And then the surprising next verse gives the reason.

That it may deliver you from the strange woman. About three times in Proverbs. Isn't that something? I mean, just stay in the Word of God.

Stay filled with the Word of God. We're having the Word of Christ well richly in you. Enlightened with the truths of God and with the things of God.

And then again, this lust doesn't get ahold of you. Your word, if I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against you. Sanctify them to the truth.

Your word is truth. So first, the Spirit of God. Secondly, the Word of God.

Number three, the friends of God. The people of God. Stay around the people of God.

That's one reason to come to a meeting is because God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints. I feel it. I mean, I feel when we gather together, I feel it.

I feel the pressure from you all that sin, well, I don't want any sin. God is here. Can I stand before the saints and open the Scriptures? You tremble to do it.

Because here's people that fear God. They know God. They can see right through the hypocrisy.

And so it helps to be around the saints, the holy ones of God. That's the way it ought to be. Exhorting one another, provoking one another, stimulating one another, and all the more you see the day approaching.

Don't miss the meetings if you can help it. And let me give you a fourth thing. I said the Spirit of God, the Word of God, the friends of God, the people of God, and fourth, the work of God.

I mean, don't be idle. I know there's a place for it, like David was said, for meditation and contemplation. But don't be idle when you ought to be working.

That's what happened to David, right? Why wasn't he out in the battle? What was he doing? Well, he was gawking around on the top of the apartment. That's where he got caught, sleeping in the afternoon when he should have been in the battle. Perhaps he got big, got proud, got strong, let the guy, let them do it.

And he got caught. So sad the story is. And you know, one thing that helps.

I mean, if we're messing around in pornography and just under the sway of sexual impurity, you can guarantee yourself in some way or another you are not in the work of the Lord the way you ought to be. Now, what are we doing messing around in this when souls are perishing? In some way or another, I ought to be helping get the Gospel out. I ought to be involved in the work of the Kingdom in some way or another.

Maybe it's my job downtown or whatever, but just to be an idle mind is a devil's workshop. That's what I'm saying. Alright, next one is verse 5. Not in lustful passion or passion of lust.

It will help us to remember that when it comes to these lusts, these sexual lusts, it will help us to remember that they are just lusts. It's not reality. And that's the way with lust.

It gets its satisfaction out of pursuing and not out of possessing. No, the whole thing about lust and the whole fulfillment in lust is trying to get it. If I could only have it.

Trying to reach for it. Imagining what would it be like. And then you get it and it's just a dead horse.

And that's the way the devil does it. He just holds that carrot out in front. Just keeps it coming right along.

And then at the end, there you are in the ditch, a bloody mess, and he's laughing. That's the way with lust. I mean, look at Amnon, David's son.

He just had such a crush on Tamar, he would just eat up with it, sick of it, sick to the end of it. And then he took her down and then immediately hated her. That's the way with lust.

Yet, the devil presents the bait and hides the hook. I mean, it's a mirage. Like with pornography.

What am I doing looking at this thing that I can't have? I mean, it's not even close. It's not even here. It's just a mirage.

It's something that's way out there, way off. I can't even have it. I was talking with a brother the other day.

He said even as a non-Christian, I saw how ridiculous this thing is. And this sexual lust. You know, marriage helps, but it's not the answer.

Yeah, it's not the answer. The only answer is Christ. Gaining the victory, whether single or married.

Next thing. Number six, that no man transgress and defraud his brother. You're going to hurt somebody one way or another.

Sin will always hurt somebody. It hurts you and it hurts others. Because you can't be the man, the woman, the brother, the sister that you could be that you ought to be when you're crippled, when you're paralyzed by sin.

But you just think how it hurt Uriah. What David did. He transgressed.

He hurt his brother. Maybe the woman's not married. Maybe she's going to be somebody else's woman.

You don't know. So you don't want to transgress and defraud. Here this other guy marries this woman in years to come.

And here she's got reflections of what happened to her because of you or something like that. I mean, the ripples go on out. And so, it affects others.

It does indeed affect our brothers. A man told me one time that he came home early from a trip and found the Baptist deacon in bed with his wife. Man, the damage! He said, I never could make it work again.

Next point, number 7. Because the Lord is the avenger in all these things. In other words, God judges fornication. God judged those angels.

Right away, He put those demons in hell. Most of them are still walking around. But those demons, He put them in hell right there.

2 Peter 2 tells us. In Genesis 20, old Abimelech, he came real close to fornication with Sarah. God appeared to him and said, you're a dead man.

You've got another man's wife. The Sodomites, look how God judged that. You know, it says in Proverbs, talking about adultery and fornication, He says the man who does that, he lacks sense, and he's like an ox headed to the slaughter.

He's like a fool headed for the fetters. He's like a bird headed for the snare. His reproach will not be blotted out.

And I've already mentioned all of the references in the New Testament over and over. It says God will judge the fornicator, the adulterer. They will not inherit the kingdom of God.

They are outside the city. You know, a lot of times we tend to think that God judges people. Yeah, I mean, it is right to think that God judges people for immorality.

But another way, like Nathan was pointing out in Romans 1, the immorality, it is the judgment. That's what Romans 1 teaches. It is the judgment.

In other words, the idolatry leads to the impurity. Next point is in verse 8. He who rejects this is not rejecting man, but God. We need to remember, like David said, against thee and thee only have I sinned.

Yeah, He hurt Uriah. Yeah, He hurt Bathsheba. Yes, He hurt many people, but ultimately, against you, God, you have I sinned.

And don't belittle it. It's a sin against God. Rejecting the God Who gives you the Holy Spirit.

Rejecting the God Who made us. Rejecting the God Who redeemed us. Rejecting the God Who gives us the Holy Spirit.

I mean, gives us the Holy Spirit. You might get a gift from somebody of some little thing. It's a nice gift, but it's just a little thing compared to the Holy Spirit.

The God Who gives His Holy Spirit to you, such love, so amazing, it demands my life, my soul, my all. And this sin of sexual impurity, this pornea, why, that's not suitable. That's not fitting for the saints of God.

He gives His Holy Spirit to us. You must remember, brothers and sisters, we have the Holy Spirit of God living in us. We're new creatures in Christ.

The old man, the old sinful self, it's dead. And Paul says to the Colossians, you're dead. Your life is hidden with Christ and God, so mortify or kill the members that are on earth, members of your earthly body, which are fornication and so on.

In other words, remember, you've got the Spirit of God in you. You're a brand new creature and this sin doesn't fit you anymore. It won't satisfy you anymore.

I forgot one point. It says right there, not in lustful passion like the Gentiles. You know, you're not a Gentile.

That's their business. That's their forte. But not yours anymore.

You're a saint of the Most High. So, the exhortation that you abstain from sexual immorality and know how to control your body. As I said, it seems kind of surprising that it comes up there.

You know, that Paul does such a section on it. But, you can be thankful for the help. You can be thankful for the help.

You can be thankful for the help.

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