"Maintaining Holiness"
1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

C.I.T.—Maintain holiness by abstaining from sexual immorality.
C.I.S.—We should maintain holiness by abstaining from sexual immorality.
Purpose—I want to combat our culture's sexual ethic by promoting a Biblical sexual ethic of holiness through abstinence.
Introduction

- Holiness—set apart, used of temple utensils, figuratively of our lives and souls, set apart for God's use
- Holiness refers to being made holy upon our conversion.
- Holiness also refers to maintaining holiness in our day-to-day lives.
- One refers to holiness in our relationship with God through Jesus, and the other refers to holiness in our fellowship with God through our walk with Christ.

I. ***Holiness is Expected of Christians*** vs. 1-3a
   a. Requesting and exhorting—asking/begging/takes the form of a command
   b. Deviates with the purposes behind these coming requests, which articulate God's expectation for holiness.
   c. Holiness maintains faithfulness to God's Word.
      i. You have received from us.—Gospel message and biblical teaching.
      ii. How to walk and please God.
         1. Refers to the actual moral living that is in accord with God's Will.
         2. This would have been the Christian ethic in general.
      iii. Confidence that they are already walking.
   d. Holiness maintains faithfulness to God's Work.
      i. You might abound more and more
      ii. This refers to both spiritual and numerical growth—being a more faithful disciple and a multiplying disciple
      iii. He is at work in you through obedience to His commands.
      iv. If we fail to obey, then this thwarts the intended work of God to increase you.
   e. Holiness maintains faithfulness to God's Will.
   f. Illus.—Coordinated Universal Time—compare all clocks to this
   g. Application
      i. 1 Peter 1:16
      ii. God's Holiness serves as our standard and expectation for holiness.
      iii. If God's word, work, and will is for us to be holy, then we should strive to be holy.
      iv. We cannot attain this holiness without Jesus Christ working in our lives, but we are expected to be holy.

II. ***Holiness is Encouraged of Christians*** vs. 3b-6a
   a. We request/ask and exhort/encourage—more than just asking, given as a command when coupled with infinitives, of which we have three in apposition to one another.
   b. Keep away from sexual immorality.
      i. Porneia—root of pornography—refers to any intercourse that is outside of God's standard
         1. Marriage is God's designed standard for sexual intercourse.
         2. Any type of sexual intercourse outside of the bound of Biblical marriage
         3. Types of sexual expression that would be included in this word: pre-marital sex (fornication), prostitution, adultery, cohabitation, homosexuality, beastiality, incest

ii. Apexo—keep away/abstain
    1. This means a total prohibition from this type of behavior.
    2. **1 Cor. 6:18**—flee
iii. How far can I go without committing "porneia"?
    1. This text isn't designed to answer that specific question
    2. Lust/pornography would also be included based on **Matthew 5:28**
    3. All sexual activity is designed to get you to the final act, so you really are playing with fire when you are active even in what many would consider the small stuff.
    4. A good rule of thumb that I heard was that if you aren't willing to do that thing with your mother in the room, then maybe you shouldn't do it.
iv. Regardless, we have many clearly defined types of "porneia."

c. Know how to control your body
    i. To acquire or possess—have something under control.
    ii. Body—vessel/instrument used for a purpose—could refer to wife, body, or a specific part of the body—regardless this refers to the instrument used sexually
    iii. This control is "in" holiness and honor.
        1. Holiness refers to the standard of God.
        2. Honor refers worthy/appropriate
        3. If we make sexual decisions based on what is holy and worthy, then we will stay under control.
    iv. Not in "lustful passions"
        1. God has given us a "hunger" for sex, designed to encourage procreation, this is the pleasurable part.
        2. This "desire" or "lust" is great within the right context, but when we attempt to fulfill this "hunger" in a way other than God's way, we are in porneia.
        3. Thus if we are led simply by our lustful desire, regardless of the morality, then we will engage in whatever quenches that hunger/thirst
    v. Like the Gentiles
        1. Greco Roman statement—
        2. Temple prostitutes
        3. Rampant homosexuality, etc.
        4. No sexual morals within the Greco-Roman Culture
    vi. Why keep under control?
        1. Our God given desires prompt us to quench that hunger.
        2. 1 Corinthians 7:9—marriage is the answer to burning desire

d. Do not sin and defraud your brother
    i. Sexual sin has a negative effect against others.
    ii. Yourself—sin against your own body
    iii. Christ—drag Christ into that sin with you
    iv. Spouse—future spouse
    v. Children
    vi. The other person's spouse/future spouse

e. Illus.—**Proverbs 5**

f. Application
    i. The Christian life is to maintain holiness by maintaining sexual purity.
    ii. You cannot maintain spiritual holiness and be used of God if you do not maintain sexual purity.
    iii. Everything will be limited for you until you deal with that sexual impurity in your life.

III. ***Holiness is Enlightening of Christians***. Vs 6b-8
a. The Lord is the avenger
    i. Brings God's wrath on evil-doers
    ii. When someone does evil, regardless of that evil, then they submit themselves to the wrath of the avenger
    iii. His standard is holiness, that was what Christians are called to.
    iv. You will be judged by God for your sexual impurity.
b. Rejecting this message is not a rejection of man, but of God.
    i. If someone says they reject this word and they will continue to sin in this matter, they are rejecting God himself.
    ii. Given the Holy Spirit, how can the Holy Spirit not be at work in someone's life?
    iii. If someone has the Holy Spirit, they will have a desire to live a Holy life.
    iv. Rejecting the commands of Christ in this area reveals that you do not care about a holy life and therefore, probably don't have the Holy Spirit
    v. Christians who are sexually active outside of marriage are not backslidden; they probably aren't saved.
c. Illus.--**1 John 2:3-4; 3**—keeps on sinning
d. Application
    i. Stop engaging in sexual immorality.
    ii. Confess and Repent of previous sexual sin.
        1. He will forgive those who confess and repent of their sin.
        2. Many feel that they simply need to stop, but that sin is still on your account until you remove it through confession and repentance.
    iii. Pray for Jesus to empower you to have self-control.
    iv. Place accountability in your life.
    v. Get married—then do whatever you want to do.

Conclusion

- The only way we can be holy in this matter or anything for that matter is if we are made and kept that way by Jesus.
- Spend some time in confession and repentance and pleading with Jesus to forgive and heal.

1 Peter 1:16 for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy.

1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.

Matthew 5:28 But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart

Proverbs 5:1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom; listen closely to my understanding [2] so that you may maintain discretion and your lips safeguard knowledge. [3] Though the lips of the forbidden woman drip honey and her words are smoother than oil, [4] in the end she's as bitter as wormwood and as sharp as a

double-edged sword. [5] Her feet go down to death; her steps head straight for Sheol. [6] She doesn't consider the path of life; she doesn't know that her ways are unstable. [7] So now, sons, listen to me, and don't turn away from the words from my mouth. [8] Keep your way far from her. Don't go near the door of her house. [9] Otherwise, you will give up your vitality to others and your years to someone cruel; [10] strangers will drain your resources, and your hard-earned pay will end up in a foreigner's house. [11] At the end of your life, you will lament when your physical body has been consumed, [12] and you will say, "How I hated discipline, and how my heart despised correction. [13] I didn't obey my teachers or listen closely to my instructors. [14] I am on the verge of complete ruin before the entire community." [15] Drink water from your own cistern, water flowing from your own well. [16] Should your springs flow in the streets, streams in the public squares? [17] They should be for you alone and not for you to share with strangers. [18] Let your fountain be blessed, and take pleasure in the wife of your youth. [19] A loving deer, a graceful doe-- let her breasts always satisfy you; be lost in her love forever. [20] Why, my son, would you lose yourself with a forbidden woman or embrace a wayward woman? [21] For a man's ways are before the LORD 's eyes, and he considers all his paths. [22] A wicked man's iniquities will trap him; he will become tangled in the ropes of his own sin. [23] He will die because there is no discipline, and be lost because of his great stupidity.

1 John 2:3 This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands. [4] The one who says, "I have come to know him," and yet doesn't keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.