

Being Holy

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[0:00] I have a rock. I don't know where it came from. And if you've been throwing them at me, there it is.

Okay, I'll get back more of that later. But we preach early. And at the end of the service, towards the end of the service, we have an open question time where you can ask the pastor questions.

If I said something that was wrong in the sermon, it's never happened. But it could. It could happen. Or if you have a question from your reading of the Scriptures this week, or if something happened and you just would like to hear the pastor, his opinion on it, that's what we're all about.

So if you've got your Bible, go ahead and open it up to 1 Thessalonians 4. And that's where we're going to start today.

But I'm going to start in 1 John 1, verse 9. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[1:33] There will be times during the sermon today where it's convicting. It's challenging. It's thus saith the Lord sort of stuff.

And that's important because thus hath said the Lord. You know, this is what God says. But we don't want to delve into that and forget also that God is gracious and filled with great love and hope. And so I want to start with that. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Having said that, it's been almost a full month since I've been up here preaching. And everybody said, make it last longer. Too bad I'm back. But while I was gone, I went to the ark.

Oh, could you kill the lights for just a little bit so that everybody can see that? That's Ken Farman, former pastor. He and I went to the ark in Kentucky. And if you've been there, you know we're having great food at the restaurant there right next to the ark.

[2:45] It was great. In fact, here's another picture. This one is taken from inside the ark and you can see way up in there. And this is very troubling.

When I went to the Cincinnati airport, that is a robot that is cleaning the floors with nobody watching over it. You know, I walked in there and I see this thing and it's going down.

You step in front of it and the eye, can you see the eyes? The eyes look at you and wait until you get out of the way. It's really disconcerting. But I had a great time at the ark.

Ken and I, you can turn them back on. Really, really encouraging me as a pastor. Pastor, at Cascade Mountain Bible Church, one of the things we say is that God's word is the pillar of truth upon which we do what we do here.

We base everything that we do on the word of God. We're about God's word. And a lot of churches don't do that. And I happened to be at one where I heard a sermon not that long ago and it was just, it was heartbreaking.

[4:00] And then I go to this conference and they're like, preach the word. It is a holy calling. It is a great calling. It is an important calling. You have a God-given chance and you've been entrusted.

And I walked away feeling very encouraged to spend the next four hours preaching the Bible. I'm going to try and cut it down, but here we go.

All right. So the key idea in today's lesson is let us be holy. And if you've got your Bible open to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, I'm going to read the first eight verses there.

Finally, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God, that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

[5:29] For God has not called us to impurity, but in holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

And so we're going to take a look at this and let's start, first of all, with this. Our choice.

There is a discussion. That's a nice word instead of argument, right? Contest. There's a conversation between those that belong to the Arminianism, I said that wrong, but I'm not going to try it again, and the Calvinist way of looking at things.

Those people who believe it's all about man's free will and those who believe it's all about God's sovereignty. And they clash when really they shouldn't, because quite honestly, God is in control, and in that control, he's given us free will, which means they're both right.

But if they try and exclude the other one, they're both wrong. And our walk with God is a choice that we have to make.

[6:52] You're not here because the deacons went out from the church and they had bludgeons and shotguns and drove you into the church, I hope. If not, we need to talk.

You came here because you wanted to. Now, for whatever reason you chose to come, you came here willingly. And really, we have a choice that God has given us.

Now, as believers, we have been set free from the Mosaic Law.

We've got freedom. We've got freedom to do whatever we want to do. When we turn to Jesus Christ, God forgives our sin.

Not the sins that we did before we got saved. God forgives our sin. Past, present, and future.

Romans 8, verse 1 and 2.

[7:58] Turn there real quick. We'll be back in 1 Thessalonians, but we're going to do some bouncing around the Bible today. In Romans 8, verse 1 and 2, it says, There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Jesus Christ from the law of sin and death.

I like to tell people that you can go out, rob a bank, run over a policeman, and live high on the hog all you want, or whatever your particular sin is.

If you're a Christian, there is no more condemnation because you've been forgiven. And a lot of people have a problem with that. And I understand.

But Jesus Christ paid the penalty for all sin. And when we turn to Him and confess our sin, He forgives us. There is therefore now no condemnation.

Before you all grab your shotguns and head down to the local bank, that doesn't mean that everything is good for us. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 23. That's an important Bible passage for us to remember.

[9:19] What does it say in verse... It says, All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but not all things build up.

Just because you have the ability to eat a full gallon of ice cream doesn't mean it's a good idea to eat a full gallon of ice cream in one sitting. Just because God has forgiven our sins doesn't mean it's right to go out there and sin all you can.

It says, Because we've been forgiven, should we live in sin? God forbid. What I'm telling you is, when we turn to Christ, we are forgiven.

You are forgiven. But that doesn't mean that there's no standards. In fact, that's what we're reading about here in 1 Thessalonians 4.

Chapter 4 in 1 Thessalonians, what does Paul say? He says, Finally, brothers, we ask and urge.

The idea is, it's the apostle chosen by God stands before the people and says, Please, please, live the way God has called us to.

[10:40] Interestingly enough, it says, verse 1, urge you in the Lord Jesus that as you receive from us how you ought to walk and please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. Things like, love your neighbor. Be kind to those who abuse you.

Tell the truth. Stop stealing. You know, live like you actually believe there is a God who is going to hold you accountable. Right? Live like there is a God who created this world and all that is in it and is established right and wrong and you are trusting in Him.

Live that way. But I, all right, this is for the the people that really like to drill down into it. That word that says instructions there in verse 2, it's translated a bunch of different places as commands. It's the same root word. Here it's called instructions and the idea is that Paul has laid out how a believer should live. In some places, they're called commands.

[12:10] In some places, they're called instructions, guidance. The point is, we have a choice. How are you going to live?

That's the whole point of this. In fact, that's the way it has been forever. If you turn back to Joshua 24, verse 15, at the end of his life, Joshua has finished leading the nation of Israel.

They've conquered the land and he stands before the people and he says, do whatever seems right to you. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Choose you this day whom you will serve. And that's the choice that every man, woman, and child faces. Who are you going to follow? You make the choice. Turn, if you will, to the first Peter, chapter 5, verse 6.

Verse 6. When we turn to God, when we yield to the Lord, when we make that choice to humble ourselves and submit to His authority, look what Peter says.

[13:32] Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time, He may exalt you. Look, being a Christian doesn't mean life on earth is going to be easy.

Let me say that again. I didn't hear any amens. Living as a Christian on this earth is not easy. Okay, at least you're not asleep.

I'm a little worried about some of you, whether or not you're living like a Christian, if you don't realize that. I'm not pointing anybody out. No, just kidding. But it's not easy.

But it holds great promise. God promises us to not only save us from the wrath that we justly deserve, but that He's gone to prepare a place for us.

That when we leave behind this life, that He has a blessed life for us, it's called glory. We talk about heaven.

[14:40] The opposite of that. By choosing not to submit to the Lord, by choosing not to humble ourselves before Him, we choose hell.

The consequences and the wages of sin. But it really, it's a choice. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul says, finally, brothers, we ask and we urge you in the Lord Jesus that as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God, that you do so more and more.

Which begs the question, why are you here? Do you accept the Word of God as authoritative? Does it have the authority to speak into your life?

Is the Word of God the standard by which you live? Even more basic, do you accept Jesus Christ as Lord? Have you taken a look at your life and realized that you're a sinner and that because of your sin, you stand in jeopardy of being judged by a holy and righteous God?

And so you've turned from your sin and you turn to Jesus and say, forgive me. Do you choose to engage in the ministry? You see, God has called us to live for Him and to be active in serving in Him.

[16:09] Are you going to meet people at the door? Welcome. Are you going to help play the music? Are you going to help clean up the grounds? Are you going to go out and talk to people about Jesus? Are you going to engage in what God has called you to do?

Most basically, will you be holy? Now, we need to talk, what does it mean to be holy? It's not Swiss cheese time.

To be holy is to be set apart, to be distinct and different. Will you be set apart for the purpose of God? That's the question.

That's our choice. So as we take a look at this passage, the first thing that comes up is our choice. The second thing that comes up is our call, our call to be holy. Take a look at verse 3. For this is the will of God, your sanctification. And we're going to full stop right there. This is the will of God, your sanctification.

[17:20] To restate it, God's will is that you are sanctified. Now, there are two aspects of this that we need to deal with.

Number one is positional sanctification. Positional sanctification occurs at salvation. Hebrews 10.10.

Let's see what Hebrews 10.10 says. It says, let's see, and by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

You have been sanctified. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He did so by taking upon Himself our guilt.

It says, He who knew not sin became sin for us and took upon Himself the full wrath of God so that when we turn to Him and ask for forgiveness, God, the judge, looks down upon us and as judge, judges us.

[18:40] when I first came across this idea, it staggered me. Do you realize that if you're a Christian you've been judged by God?

With all the legal authority, all the power and might of His position, He has declared judgment on you. and that judgment as we turn to Christ and ask for salvation and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, He declares us holy.

He declares us sanctified. He takes us and writes our name in the book of life. And once we've been judged, we will never be judged again.

That's why there's no condemnation because we have been judged by God, righteous. That is a positional reality. What that means is that when we go, when we leave this veil of tears, i.e. when you croak and you stand before God, He's going to look at you, next, because you've already been judged.

That's what salvation means. Now, if you haven't accepted Jesus Christ and you croak and you stand before God, that's when the books are opened and God judges you at that time.

[20:09] And He'll judge you not by the works of Christ, but by your own works. Personally, I'm not volunteering for that. My life isn't good enough by a long ways.

I thank the Lord every day that He offers salvation sanctification. I am so glad. And I hope that you're with me on that. Just a little worried there.

Okay? But that's positional sanctification. That's one aspect of being holy is to be declared righteous. But you know something? Everybody got a pulse?

not dead yet. Which means that you live in a fallen world with me. We live in a world that is filled with sin.

We live in a world that's filled with sinners. We live in a world filled with opportunity to sin. Yay. Yay. And sadly, too often we fall prey to that, don't we?

[21:22] Too often we see others around us choose sin. So there's an aspect of being holy that we have to live today.

We have a choice. And that is the practical aspect of sanctification. the practical aspect of sanctification. You've got the positional.

You have been declared righteous if you are a believer. And you've been declared holy and you've been set apart and God has secured a future for you and the day we die is one of the greatest moments of our life because we leave this sin-filled world and we go into the presence of our Lord and Savior for glory evermore.

Amen. But today are we going to live like it or not? And that is the practical aspect of sanctification. And that's why in verse 1 and 2 Paul asks and urges that they would continue on the instructions that he had given him.

And that's the problem that we face. And that's what I'm doing is I'm asking and urging each and every one of us to live in a way that reflects our relationship with the Lord and Savior.

[22:42] Take a look in the Gospel of Luke. Matthew, Mark, Luke. Chapter 9, verse 23.

Oh yeah. That is a great verse. I love this verse. Jesus is talking and he says to them all, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. What a word of encouragement. You realize what this means is that following Christ is hard. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. What do they call that when they offer you a weekend getaway where you go and they spend all weekend trying to get you to buy a timeshare or something? You know what I'm talking about? Or they offer you this, hey, if you come over here, we're going to give you a... all you got to do is sit through a 15 minute and, you know, enjoy the rest of your weekend.

[23:56] That high pressured sales, that's what living on earth is. Satan goes around all the time and he's just pressuring and pressuring and he's like, he's saying, sin's not that bad.

You really enjoy it and he's not wrong. At the front end, sin is a lot of fun. It's only on the back end where it really bites you in the tail. You know? What does it say?

It tastes sweet on the tongue and bitter in the belly. Christ says, if you're going to follow me, you're going to have to say no to those salesmen. You're going to have to sacrifice.

You're going to have to endure hardship. 2 Timothy 2, verse 21. Therefore, oh, this is a much better verse.

This is much more encouraging. Talking about believers. You see, remember, all believers are holy, correct? You guys remember that? Positionally, they've been judged and declared righteous by God.

[25:03] But all believers that aren't dead live in a sinful world and we have to deal with that. And we have a choice. We can either passionately pursue after God or we can just do whatever.

2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 21 says this, Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

holy. You see, as we choose to be holy, as we choose to honor God in our life, in our choices, in our decisions, in our words, we get set apart to be useful to God.

He can use us for glorious deeds. Now, you might still be a vessel. You might still be a believer. I would rather be a soup tureen than a chamber pot.

Just think about that. Just think about that. I would rather be used for honorable than dishonorable. And the difference is, do you choose to live for the Lord?

[26:32] Thank you for defining that. Exactly! Exactly! Wouldn't you rather be a tureen, something used for serving food versus the other one?

I would! And that's the choice that we face as believers. Alright. So, we've got a choice. The entire Christian life is a choice.

Will you accept God or not? And within that, are you going to live for the Lord or not? But Paul takes and he puts a spotlight.

1 Thessalonians chapter 4. Pick it up in verse 3. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.

Stop! Time out! Time out! Time out! If you are a student of the church at all, if you have participated at all in knowing what's going on within the community of faith, you know this is a real problem from promiscuity, adultery, pornography, perversion, and everything in between, this is a problem for the church because we live in a fallen world.

[28:36] And I want to remind you where we started. 1 John 1.9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now see, we've been declared righteous. We've been judged. You have been declared holy if you've turned to God.

But we have a practical daily life to live for Him and quite honestly, sometimes we have to wade through the muck and sometimes we wade through it when we don't have to.

But here's the thing. God stands ready to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But the choice is ours.

I'm going to go back into this, but I wanted, that's where we started and that's where we're going to end, but right now we've got to walk a hard road. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God, that no one transgress or wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things.

[30:06] Paul raises a specific concern which even today is one of the greatest facing believers, sexual purity. Let me put it to you this way.

If you are not facing this trouble, the person sitting not far from you is. If you're not fighting this battle, somebody in this room is.

If you're not fighting this battle, somebody in your circle of friends is battling this. And many of them throughout the church are losing, not this church, because we're godly and we're special and we're honorable, right?

Ah, poppycock. Each and every one of us faces this battle. We live in a sexually driven society. You can't turn on the television, you can't drive the road, heck, you can't even go through town without being pressured.

And there are people that face this in a very real way every day. Sexual purity. Though it may not be your battle, there are men and women within this body that are struggling with it.

[31:16] So, let's say, praise the Lord, you're not, this isn't your personal struggle. Okay? Pray for those that are facing it. Because I guarantee you, you've got other issues in your life that you're fighting.

Like when I went with Ken to the Ark and they had the all-you-can-eat buffet. I'm not going to say gluttony is an issue in my life. Man, is that good food.

All right, so this is a real problem. And I want to, I'm going to, I'm going to allow God to do something that you might not be aware of.

You see, I threw gluttony out there, right? As opposed to sexual purity. But take a look at this.

This type of sin, that is sin relating to our sexual life is a particular danger. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 6.

[32:44] Let's start in verse 12. All things are lawful for me. I thought we read that earlier, didn't we? All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything. Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other.

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never. Or do you not know that one who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her?

For as it is written, the two will become one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. Verse 18.

[33:46] Pay attention. Flee from sexual immorality. For every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

I don't draw the line. I don't turn on the spotlight. I don't make a big deal of it. God does.

Every other sin you do is outside the body. Lie, steal, cheat, drive without your seatbelt on. All that is outside.

But when we're dealing with the realm of sexual purity, we're dealing with something that is inside. And God draws a huge line of distinction between every other sin and this one.

Having said that, that line does not negate 1 John. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us.

[35:03] There's nothing in here that says that that has been, well, I'll forgive you for everything except that. No. You know, you can do this, but if you do that, you're, no.

God says that when we turn to him and ask for forgiveness, he forgives us, period. And makes us white washes us clean.

His mercy is new every morning. I'm preaching some hard things for some people and I know that there's people at times who have to cringe over this.

I live in this world too. I have had to face this and I've had to fight this demon. I know that we've spent a couple months as men going through a book dealing with sexual purity. This is the reality in which we live.

And ladies, you're not free from it either. But God says that if we turn to him, he will forgive us. There is hope. There is peace.

[36:03] There is joy. But the reality is this. Not only does God say that this is a sin that impacts us differently than other sins.

But look what he says in 1 Thessalonians. If the fact that that is a sin that impacts you here instead of out here doesn't scare you, put your seatbelt on.

Pick it up in, oh, let's pick it up in verse 4 of 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. That each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.

That no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter because the Lord is an avenger in all these things as we told you before and solemnly warned!

You! You! You! You! Did that just say what I think it said? That God himself stands up and deals with this sin?

[37:26] It says that, let's see, let's see, that no one because the Lord is an avenger in all these things as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

For God has not called us for impurity but in holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man but God who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

That scares me. That scares me. it's one thing for it to impact me.

It's another thing to realize that there is a God who is avenging the wrongs I do other people in this area. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

there is a call. It's a call that God gives to every man, woman, and child.

[38:50] Be holy. Be set apart from this world. Turn to God. Escape the punishment of damnation.

Turn from your sins to God. Beg his forgiveness and live for him. Be judged righteous by God today so that instead of having to live in fear of dying, and you and I know we live in a society that's scared to death of death.

People, they'll do anything to avoid dying. They'll strap their kids in all sorts of foam and rubber before they'll let them ride a bike. They won't let them climb tall trees because they might, you know, they want to look 30 forever or 20 forever or whatever.

I'm not afraid of dying because I know that when I die, I go to glory. And that is only possible because of my salvation that God has given to me through the gift of Jesus Christ.

If you don't have that salvation, today is the day because I don't know when you're going to croak. it could be today. I'm not threatening anybody, I'm just telling you, sometimes driving home is the scariest thing you've ever done.

[40:12] If you don't know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, He offers forgiveness today. But I know most of you are here because you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. here. And the call to us is to live holy lives every day.

Let us take up our cross and follow the Lord. It's not easy. It takes effort. We're not going to be perfect at it. But He offers us forgiveness and the chance to start a new every day.

So if you're not saved, come see me. We'll take care of it today. If you are saved, let us live holy together. Amen? Father, I thank You for Your Word.