

## INNOCULATION (1)

### Lesson 7

#### VERSES TO READ:

#### 1 Thessalonians 4

1 Furthermore, brothers, we ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that even as you received from us how you ought to walk and please God, even as indeed you do walk, that you abound still more.

**3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication;**

**4 That each one of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,**

5 Not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

7 For God has not called us for uncleanness but in sanctification.

**8 Consequently, he who rejects, rejects not man but God, who also gives His Holy Spirit to you.**

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First Thessalonians certainly is a book for new believers. In this Epistle Paul takes care of the beginners in a very practical way. Because they are young, they first need something simple and practical.

#### A WORD OF WARNING

In this message we come to chapter four of 1 Thessalonians. In chapter one we have the structure and origin of a holy life for the church life; in chapter two, the fostering of such a life; and in chapter three the establishing of the three items of the basic structure of this life. After covering these matters, in chapter four Paul injects an **inoculation into the believers** concerning the most serious germ that damages the church life, the germ of fornication.

Fornication has its source in lust. People would never have a chance to indulge themselves in this lust if they did not have some form of social life. Social life is a hotbed of fornication. A person who does not have a social life is not in danger of falling into fornication. If you live alone and have little contact with others, it is very unlikely that you will commit fornication. But the church life is a meeting life, a communal life. In other words, the church life is a social life. In order to have the church life, we cannot avoid having a communal life, a social life, in which we have considerable contact with one another.

According to history, the problem of fornication has come up over and over again in one church after another. The facts prove that Christian workers in particular are

often snared by fornication because they have so much contact with others.

In 4:3 Paul says, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that you abstain from fornication.” God’s will is that His redeemed people, the believers in Christ, should live a life of holiness according to His holy nature, a life wholly separated unto Him from anything other than Him. For this He is sanctifying us thoroughly (5:23).

At Paul’s time, both in Corinth and Thessalonica sensuality and immorality were rife in the pagan religions and even fostered by their pagan worship. Man was made for expressing God (Gen. 1:26). **Nothing ruins man for this purpose more than fornication. This prevents man from being holy, separated unto God, and contaminates man to the uttermost in the fulfilling of God’s holy purpose.** Hence, the apostle strongly charges the **newly converted Gentile believers**, by sanctification unto God, to abstain from the damage and contamination of fornication, the most gross sin in the eyes of God.

Because there was so much immorality in Corinth and Thessalonica, Paul realized that along with fostering and establishing the saints in Thessalonica, it was necessary for

him to warn them about the sin of fornication. **Now we can understand why in a book to new believers Paul thought it necessary to speak about fornication.** He wanted the saints in that evil city to be aware of the danger. As the church in such a place, they needed a warning about fornication.

In 1 Corinthians 16:20 Paul says, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” Paul did not forbid the Corinthians to have contact with one another, for that would have been inhuman. However, Paul charged them to greet one another with a holy kiss. Knowing that it would be difficult for the church in that city to avoid problems with fornication, Paul issued a warning regarding it.

We also need this warning today. In the United States and Europe males and females have social contact with hardly any limitation. Because of this situation, it is easy for people to fall into fornication. In order for churches to exist in these regions, there is a need of a warning concerning fornication.

### **SANCTIFICATION VERSUS FORNICATION**

In 4:1 Paul says, “For the rest therefore, brothers, we ask and entreat you in the Lord Jesus, that even as you received from us

how you ought to walk and to please God, even as indeed you do walk, that you abound more.” In verse 3 Paul says that the will of God is our sanctification. This sanctification is versus fornication. **In order to have a walk that pleases God, we need to be sanctified.**

Nothing damages a believer as much as fornication. According to Paul’s word in 1 Corinthians 6, fornication ruins a person’s body. Other sins may not damage us subjectively, but fornication damages our body, contaminates our entire being, and makes us utterly unholy. Moreover, fornication is used by God’s enemy to spoil the man God created for the fulfillment of His purpose. Therefore, fornication must be altogether abandoned. This is the reason Paul says in 4:3, “Abstain from fornication.” **The word “abstain” is strong, and it indicates that we should run away from fornication.**

In verses 4 and 5 Paul continues, “That each one of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, even as also the nations who do not know God.” To possess one’s vessel is to keep it, to preserve it. The apostle considers man’s body here as his vessel. To keep or preserve man’s vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of

lust, is the safeguard against committing fornication.

Sanctification refers more to a holy condition before God; honor, more to a respectable standing before man. Man was created for God’s purpose with a high standing, and marriage was ordained by God for the propagation of man to fulfill God’s purpose. Hence, marriage should be held in honor (Heb. 13:4). **In order to be such persons, we must absolutely abstain from fornication and not give ground for suspicion in this matter.**

Verse 8 says, “**Consequently, he who rejects, rejects not man but God, Who also gives His Holy Spirit to you.**” Here Paul seems to be saying, “I have given you a warning. If you reject it, you are not rejecting me, but you are rejecting God, the One who gave His Holy Spirit to you.”

May we all, especially the young people, be impressed with Paul’s word of warning. The age in which we live certainly is no better than the age in which Paul lived. Therefore, we need this warning concerning sanctification versus fornication.