

## Our Call From God

I Thes. 4:1-8

Most of us have experienced what it is like to be about to begin something and have the phone ring, especially in this age of cell phones! Your house may be equipped, like ours – when the bathroom door shuts, the phone rings!

A phone call can actually be a good thing. Suppose a young person is considering doing something they should not when suddenly a call comes from a Christian friend inviting him to do something right.

Now imagine yourself facing temptation and at that very moment getting a call from God. That is what Paul is teaching in our text tonight. Vs. 7 – Our Call From God is to holiness.

Thessalonica was a city of about 200,000 people when Paul takes the gospel there. It was a Greek city that was on a major East-West trade route, so it had plenty of Roman influence. There were both Roman and Greek “entertainments” and athletic events – all emphasizing human sexuality. Sexual activity outside marriage was considered “normal.” It was common that a part of the worship of the many false gods of the Greek Pantheon involved prostitutes.

The point is, these new converts had no Biblical example of morality, and they lived in the midst of and were bombarded daily with an emphasis on immorality.

In the midst of all that, Paul reminds them that God’s call for us is to holiness, not uncleanness.

- These believers were exemplary in their conversion – I Thes. 1:1-10.
- They were exemplary in their evangelism – I Thes. 2:1-16.
- They were exemplary in their discipleship – I Thes. 2:17-3:13.

Now Paul says to them, just one more thing, “Finally.” You have already received from us how you ought to walk and please

God. I Thes. 4:2 – There were much like we are – they knew what they were supposed to do. Paul had clearly instructed them and given them commandments regarding purity. His commands were through Jesus Christ – probably based on Jesus’ teaching regarding the commandments in Matt. 5.

We already know what the will of God is for Christian morality – I Thes. 4:3. It is true God will make His people completely holy one day. But, that is not the language of this verse. This statement requires a life of holiness. How do we know that? Consider the second half of the verse. The will of God is our being set apart to holiness by abstaining from sexual immorality. We cannot separate the requirement for the condition of holiness from the requirement for human compliance for holiness. This word for sanctification is used in Rom. 6:19 (copy). Note the put off and put on in that verse – ceasing to do evil and learning to do well.

## **I The Twofold Responsibility For Holiness – vs. 4-6a**

A Our responsibility for self-control – vs. 4-5.

- 1 “Vessel” is a reference to our bodies.
- 2 Compare II Cor. 4:7a (copy)
- 3 We must go beyond just abstaining from sexual immorality (vs. 3) to using our body for holiness.
- 4 Rom. 6:13, 16 (copy).
- 5 When we use our physical being – hands, eyes, feet, lips, brain, etc for holy purposes we give “honor” to this vessel as the possession of and temple of God.
- 6 Example: What would you think if we said, in order to generate more income, we are going to use the multipurpose room for a lounge/dance hall on Friday and Saturday nights, complete with a bar, cover price, etc?
- 7 You would say, that is an inappropriate use of this building – true.
- 8 Why do so many believers not see that there are inappropriate uses of their bodies?!

- 9 This self-control goes even to our desires –vs. 5.
- 10 It is easy for us to see this in the unsaved (Gentiles) but we need to exercise self-control over our desires and fantasies.
- 11 In light of the fact that we are born into a fallen condition and still live in sinful flesh, and face temptation in sin, we must exercise self-control over our body and our desires.
- 12 The excuse “everybody is doing it” is no more valid today than it was in Thessalonica.
- 13 We will discuss some practical suggestions for self-control in this area later in the message.

#### B Our Responsibility to NOT Defraud Another – vs. 6a.

- 1 Note “in this matter” – the subject is sexual immorality.
- 2 “Defraud” means to “go beyond the line.”
- 3 This word speaks of our responsibility to be careful to not cross the line and be a temptation or a suggestion of temptation to a brother in Christ.
- 4 One of the most obvious applications of this principle is in how we dress – this is why modesty in dress is so important.
- 5 Many other applications.
- 6 If you make a suggestive remark about someone to another, you have “defrauded” that person.
- 7 If a young person writes a note or email etc., with suggestive language, you have defrauded the one you write to.
- 8 If you give someone a DVD that you know has inappropriate scenes in it, you are guilty of defrauding.
- 9 Even our sinful society sets up lines of conduct and language that are not supposed to be crossed – but then they skate as close to the line as possible with suggestive actions and language without going over the line.
- 10 For the believer, our purpose should be to avoid any action, words, dress, etc. that would “defraud” our brother.

## II The Motivation For Holiness – I Thes. 4:6b-8

### A The Lord will avenge the wrong – vs. 6b.

- 1 He is committed to the sanctity of His laws.

- 2 Thus He will respond in His own way and time to avenge sexual immorality.
- 3 Paul had forewarned them about this and now he testifies of it again.

B The Lord calls us to holiness – vs. 7.

- 1 When God saved you, He called you to a life of holiness.
- 2 Uncleaness and holiness do not mix!

C The Lord is deeply offended by sexual immorality – vs. 8a.

- 1 If we choose to reject God’s call to holiness in this regard, we do not reject man’s standard, but God and His purposes.
- 2 Think about this before you defraud another by your action or words.
- 3 Think about this before you defraud another by the way you dress.
- 4 Think about this before you engage in any use of the body outside of what God has prescribed.

D The Lord has given us His Holy Spirit – vs.8b.

- 1 This is the great encouragement and enablement of this passage.
- 2 We are not left to “muster up” holiness on our own!
- 3 We are not left to set up a bunch of rules to “make us holy.”
- 4 At the moment of our salvation (Eph. 1:13), the Holy Spirit came to dwell in us!
- 5 The more we yield to His control, the more we will become truly holy.
- 6 “The person who is not enthusiastic about practiced holiness is warming up to uncleaness.”
- 7 God calls us to purity of life; God equips us to purity of life by giving us the Holy Spirit.
- 8 Have you answered that call and yielded to that Holy Spirit in you?

I will not have time this evening to make practical application of holiness in the home and holiness in the workplace or school. We will deal with those next Sunday evening.

We must always be alert to the temptation of Satan in this area. He knows it is one of his most effective tools. He will try to destroy your spiritual life through some type of uncleanness. He literally wants to devour you – I Pet. 5:8 (copy).

It was March 1898 when a terrible scream penetrated the camp. The terrified natives shouted, “Beware brothers, the devil is coming!” but it was too late. By the time they heard the roar another man had fallen victim and would be missing from morning roll call.

John Henry Patterson, a 31 year-old engineer was in Kenya to build a railroad bridge over the Tsavo River. Soon after he arrived, two ferocious, man-eating lions began terrorizing the workers. They were so cunning the native workman came to believe they were devils in the shape of lions. By the time the lions were killed they had devoured 140 rail workers!

Patterson vowed to get rid of the lions, and pressed on with his work. He hunted them relentlessly, getting shots at them and finally killing them.

The lions of Tsavo would stalk their prey in complete silence. The horrific roar came after they had killed their victims.

Satan is also silent and persistent. He does not alert the believer of his presence until he has trapped us in sin. Then he roars with glee. Therefore, it behooves us to be alert at all times, “praying always,” “watchful to the end” (Eph. 6:18) against any uncleanness.

John Henry Patterson eventually got his lions. They are on display in the USA at the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois. They measure over 9 ft. long. But, they are dead, and even though they still look ferocious, they cannot harm you.

That is the fate of Satan also. He has already been defeated by Christ. One day He will be confined to the lake of fire for eternity.

Until that day, we have what we need to face the “lion” and be more than conquerors!