

Pentecost: Holy Living for Our Holy God

In 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, the apostle Paul instructed the believers, by the authority of the Lord Jesus, about “how you are to walk and to please God.” He bluntly told them it was “God’s will” for them to “avoid sexual immorality” (v. 3; NIV).

The Greek word Paul used that is translated “sexual immorality” is *porneias*, a derivation of the word *pornea*, from which we get our English word *pornography*. Men and women are plagued today by pornography and it is at the center of sexual immorality, which we are to “avoid.”

As Paul explained, either we learn to control our own bodies or our bodies will control us, in “passionate lust,” like the heathen who do not know God. He warned that “God has not called us to be impure, but to live a holy life” (1 Thess. 4:7; NIV). We are to be “sanctified” (which means “set apart”) in holiness and honor and not ensnared nor entrapped in spiritual strongholds by the evil one. (See 2 Cor. 10:3-5.)

Notice verse eight, where we are warned that anyone who rejects this instruction about holy living “does not reject man but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit.” His Holy Spirit in us empowers holy living!

Spirit-Empowered Holiness

Our Lord’s model, kingdom-oriented prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) contained a plea for deliverance “from evil” or “the evil one.” Peter’s exhortation to the enquiring crowds on the Day of Pentecost is similar: “Be saved from this perverse generation!” (2:40). In the middle of this initial, Holy Spirit enthralment at Pentecost, Peter called out for Spirit-empowered separation and sanctification!

If their generation could be considered “perverse” (crooked, wicked, unjust), what would he call ours? If we are to be “Pentecostal in practice,” we must be discerning about holy living in the middle of our own “perverse generation.” We must carefully avoid immorality and impurity, not giving place (territory, or opportunity) to the devil (Eph. 4:27; 5:8-17). And finally, we must ask the Holy Spirit to help us keep the entry points to our minds and emotions closed to the devil!

Sanctified, “set apart” living will govern what we allow to enter our visual and hearing “portals” and what we “entertain” there. If we can’t keep the birds out of our hair, we can at least keep them from staying there! “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6, NASB).

Finally, Pentecostal practice requires submission to Spirit-empowered separation from evil and the evil one. With the Holy Spirit’s help, we must keep our “vessels” pure, “in sanctification and honor” in these “perverse” days.

Spirit-Enabled Prayer

Paul taught the Ephesians (in 6:10-20) that our “struggle is not against flesh and blood” but “against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Therefore, we must “take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day,” when we must “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (v. 18).

As Paul explained to the Romans, “... the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26, ESV).

I understand this to relate to the “mysteries” we may speak to God in our prayer language, as Paul taught the Corinthians, “For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks

mysteries” (1 Cor. 14:2).

That may be why Paul later said, “I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, in the church, I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Cor. 14:18-19).

Our Lord promised to send the Holy Spirit to be our spiritual Helper (John 15:26; 16:7). Paul taught Titus that God has saved us by the “washing of regeneration and the renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:5-6).

This outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to empower and equip us to be bold witnesses for Christ (Acts 1:8) and gifted servants, ministering within the body of Christ, which is the church (1 Cor. 12 and 14). We need daily “renewing by the Holy Spirit” that “when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything, to stand” (Eph. 6:13).

If the trends and threats of our perverse times tend to overwhelm you, quiet your heart before the One Who stilled the storms and stand on Christ, the Solid Rock. In your Spirit-empowered prayer, He will be your faithful Hope and Stay!

Editor’s Note: This is part two of a two-part series. [Click here for part one.](#)

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