Led by the Spirit - Part 3

SANCTIFIED 1Thessalonians 4:3-8

STIMULATE

** In our study together last week, the apostle Paul showed us seven characteristics of living the Spirit-filled life? Let's review that list:

1. We are careful how we walk
2. We have wisdom from God's word
3. We make the most of our opportunity
4. We understand the will of God
5. We choose what influences us
6. We sing praise to God with thankful hearts
7. We are in subjection to one another

** Hopefully we are being "**Led by the Spirit**" as we strive to apply all that we are learning together. Did any one of those seven characteristics stand out for you this past week in your walk with the Lord?

The simplicity of characteristic number five struck my heart. We make choices everyday and I was challenged to play an aggressive role in the making of those choices.

MOTIVATE

** In this series entitled "**Led by the Spirit**", we have learned that the Holy Spirit of both God and Christ will always lead us into the expressed will of God. Over the past two studies we have seen, that for Christians; God's will is for us to be **Saved** and **Spirit-filled**. While we are living each day under the control of the Holy Spirit, we are going through what the Bible calls sanctification. That introduces us to the next form of God's expressed will. Our gracious and loving God has designed our lives to be **Sanctified**. To learn what that means and to better pursue being "**Led by the Spirit**", please join me now in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, 1Thessalonians 4:3-8.

Read passage (V.3-8)

Opening Prayer

Sanctified

INVESTIGATE

V. 3 ** What is it about the opening of this fourth chapter that indicates a new direction from the apostle Paul?

He begins with "Finally then, brethren..." Paul is making a major shift in his thinking. In chapter one he focused on the strong witness of the faith which the Thessalonians held. In chapter two he spoke of the excellence of his ministry to them and their mutual love for one another. In chapter three Paul affirmed that their faith was still standing and expressed his love for them through earnest, unrelenting prayer.

** As Paul now gets to the point, what seemingly elusive subject does he introduce?

God's will for our lives! God's will is referred to repeatedly throughout Scripture, but right here in our passage for today is possibly one of the most significant examples of the direct application of God's expressed will.

** So what does Paul say is God's will for us?

Our "sanctification".

This is the present day state of our salvation and it is referring to our "setapartness" unto God.
All see - John 17:15-17 and Romans 6:22

** Specifically, what does Paul want us to be set apart from as we walk with God?

"...that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality..."

abstain - apecho "to hold back", "to be away or to be distant". We are to keep ourselves back, away or distant from fornication or illicit sexual behavior. cf. 1Peter 2:11

V. 4 ** If we are living out each day in this "**Sanctified**" manner, what will we know how to do?

We will "...know how to possess [our] own vessel in sanctification and honor..."

** What does Paul mean by "vessel"?

He is metaphorically referring to our human bodies.
cf. 2Corinthians 4:6-7, 1Peter 3:7, 2Timothy 2:21

** While this seems like a wonderful idea, how do we do it? What plans can we make in advance?

All see: Romans 6:10-13 - "...present yourselves to God and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Romans 12:2 - "...do not be conformed to this world"

Romans 13:13-14 - Avoid sin and "make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

** When we fail to do this (and we will), what is the reason?

1. We like sin! (Hebrews 11:24-25)
2. We do not believe it will hurt us. (Galatians 6:7-8)
We need to keep this in mind as we prepare our hearts to "hold back" from temptation.

V. 5 ** Back in 1Thessalonians 4:5, who does Paul use as a contrast to help us not fail?

The Gentiles!

** How do they possess their bodies?

"...in lustful passion..." cf. 2Peter 2:9-12 and Romans 1:24-27. All see - Genesis 19:1-11

** Again, back in 1Thessalonians 4:5, what is it about the Gentiles condition that leaves them wide open to the powers of lustful passion?

"...they do not know God..." That is why they can so readily produce the deeds of the flesh.
cf. Galatians 5:19-21

V. 6 ** If a person should decide to not know God and to not possess their body in honor, but rather in lustful passion, is he or she the only victim? After all, it is their body!

It will have a residual effect on "his brother".

We can actually transgress and defraud others with our decision to become involved in sinful activity.

Leon Morris - "...promiscuity before marriage represents the robbing of the other of that virginity which ought to be brought to a marriage. The future partner of such a one has been defrauded."

** What reason does Paul give for being sensitive to the impact of our own sin upon the lives of others?

"...because the Lord is the avenger..."
cf. 2Thessalonians 1:6-8 and Hebrews 13:4

** Did the Thessalonians know this prior to Paul's writing of this letter?

Yes! "...just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you."

V. 7 ** Before we get into verse seven, why would Paul write this strong warning and instruction to these same believers who "walk and please God"? (V.1)

In the first century, a typical Greek city would be very open to sexual sin. It was considered normal. Again from Leon Morris, "The pressure to conform to the easy standards accepted throughout society must have been strong on the early church".

** What about today?

The same, if not worse!

** What was the purpose behind God calling us into His kingdom according to verse seven?

That we would be "**Led by the Spirit**" each day into a "**Sanctified**" lifestyle. He did not call us for the purpose of impurity!

** If our loving Heavenly Father has called us to be set apart from sin, should we be more diligent in our efforts to keep our bodies away from it?

As far as possible! cf. James 1:13-15

V. 8 ** This is a very high standard. What if someone does not agree with this Biblical calling for a "**Sanctified**" lifestyle? What if they think, "Hey, this is a new millennium. We should just do our own thing. Don't try to tell me how to live?"

This is not man's opinion! God, who gives His Holy Spirit to us who are redeemed, has also given this very important instruction on personal purity.

** If you reject this instruction, what else might you be rejecting?

Salvation - through the conviction and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If you do not have the Holy Spirit, you cannot be “**Led by the Spirit**”! cf. Romans 8:9

EXTRICATE

** As you look back to verse one in this chapter, how would your describe the spiritual condition of the believers living there in Thessalonica?

Very good! They actually did walk and please God!

DELINEATE

** Even though they wanted to please God with their daily walk, what could they do to improve their "**Sanctified**” lifestyle?

"...abstain from sexual immorality..." by "possessing [their] own vessels in sanctification and honor."

EVALUATE

** What about us? Do we need to be aware of this instruction in the world we live in today?

Absolutely - We too need to possess our bodies in honor, by "holding back" or "keeping away" from the sin of this world so we can enjoy our "**Sanctified**” lifestlye each day.

ACTIVATE

** If we hope to be victorious in this quest, we need to be fully prepared.

Please look back with me to Romans 13:14. (Read verse)

If we wish to be “**Led by the Spirit**” each day and displaying God’s expressed will for our lives by being **Save**, **Spirit-filled** and **Sanctified**; we are going to need to prayerfully consider this marvelous reality.

** Let's commit our hearts to the application of its truth for the glory of our gracious God.

Closing prayer