repent, the first step we took in trusting Christ for salvation. The wrath of God is coming upon the world because of its sin and impurity.

Romans 1:18 - 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, NASB

Ephesians 5:5-8 - 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

NASB

Colossians 3:5-7 - 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. NASB

In fact God will destroy all people who live in the practice of all such sins and willfully belittle Him by their sinful rebellion against Him. No one who lives in the practice of sin shall enter Heaven or God’s presence at any time.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. NASB

Revelation 21:8 - 8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” NASB

It is therefore “the will of God” that those whom He has called and chosen should live in a state of purity and holiness, continuing to grow in “sanctification.” Another way to state this is to say that the Christian’s life should demonstrate a pattern of decreasing frequency of sin and an increasing frequency of righteous and godly behavior accompanied by the worship and service of God.

B. that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God – Now Paul wants to make it really clear that “sexual immorality” is a grievous sin that is to be abstained from. This is because the pagan culture of the Greco Roman world was one that was steeped in “sexual immorality,” as it was not only the featured practice in many of the hundreds of pagan religions and worship of false gods there, but also a part of everyday life. Many Greco Roman men would have not only wives, but also mistresses and concubines as well. A quote from the 3rd century B.C. Greek Demosthenes states, “Mistresses we keep for our pleasure, concubines for our physical well-being, and wives to bear us legitimate children and to serve as trustworthy guardians over our households.” Note well the hardened heart toward sin and the calloused attitude that accompanied such blatant and brazen sinful behavior that permeated the culture in Thessalonica. This is not very much unlike the current culture in America which is even now in a moral freefall, becoming more and more like this ancient culture in its tolerance of sexual immorality. Despite the benefit of Christian morality that once governed our culture’s laws and practices, the public display and wanton promiscuity of our culture deepens and plunges further and further, almost exponentially, as the days go on. But the standard of God for His holy people has not changed, nor will it ever. His will is for our “sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.” This again was no foreign idea to Christians throughout the New Testament.

Ephesians 5:3-8 - 3 But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no
one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light NASB

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 - 18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. NASB

Colossians 3:5-9 - 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, NASB

Ephesians 4:17-20 - 17 This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. NASB

Hebrews 13:4 - 4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. NASB

See then that it is very clear that Christians “abstain from sexual immorality.” The word for sexual immorality in the Greek is porneia and means fornication, harlotry (including adultery and incest). The English word fornication means any kind of sex outside of marriage, which is explained as voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons. Of course, God does honor sex within the bonds of marriage, and in fact considers it an undefiled and holy thing, Hebrews 13:4. Paul’s contrast of “sexual immorality” with “sanctification and honor,” coupled with his command to “abstain,” make it very clear that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is sinful and entirely inappropriate for Christians. He therefore states that “each of you” Christians has a responsibility to “know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.” Christians do not commit the most intimate of relations with just any person, but only those to whom they have committed their life in a monogamous marriage. Unlike the Greco-Roman culture around them in which they all have participated they are no longer to have any sex outside of marriage, nor are their emotions and actions to be driven out of control. They are to be self-controlled when it comes to sexual activity, “not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.” The uncontrolled desire for sexual gratification, which is typical for unregenerate people, was not to be true for the Thessalonians or any other Christian. For the Gentiles of that culture live in “lustful passion.” Here “lustful” is with intense desire, and “passion” is overwhelming or overpowering desire. Coupled together these take on the clear idea of consuming desire for sexual gratification which reaches uncontrollable levels. This is how people live who “do not know God” for they are a God unto themselves and live for whatever drives their desires, regardless of what God says. Not so for the Christian who has surrendered their will to Christ, who commands them to live in purity and in repentance from sexual sin, which is impure in the sight of God and improper for His holy people.

C. 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you – Here Paul makes it clear that fornication, even among fellow Christians is improper. He clearly states “that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter” so that we understand that when we selfishly use another Christian and take for our own personal pleasure what does not rightfully belong to us, we transgress and defraud them. Whenever believers seek to satisfy their physical desires and gain sexual pleasure at the expense of another believer, they have violated this command, sinning against God, their own body and their fellow believer. This makes the compound nature of this sin very severe indeed, and “because the Lord is the avenger in all...
these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you,” they must understand that this behavior is certainly a violation of God’s will. Another way to state this is that it is entirely inappropriate for Christians to have sex outside of marriage for we know that this is the kind of behavior for which the wrath of God is coming upon the heathen world and we therefore know that God does not approve of such behavior. Sexual immorality by professing Christians is usually evidence that they are not truly born again, and therefore not true believers but mere professors. Those who live in the practice of continual sin show by this evidence that they do not know God.

1 John 3:6-11 - 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. NASB

This is not to say that true Christians never sin, or commit sexual immorality, surely they do. It is to say that if they do, God will certainly deal with their sin. God will see to it that there be serious consequences for believers who engage in sexual immorality. Sin always has destructive consequences for those who choose it, as “God is the avenger of these things,” and this is something the Apostle has previously warned the Thessalonians about stating “just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.”

1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 - 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. NASU

A. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification – Here then is the fundamental truth which governs our Christian lives, “God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.” We are not to violate God’s holiness or His purity by living in a way that denies His essential nature, but rather in a way that exalts and glorifies His nature. But this calling is not just one of pure actions, but pure hearts, pure thoughts and pure motives. Paul’s standard for Christian living extends beyond just abstaining from improper sexual practice, but also from improper sexual thoughts and motives. God does not only want our actions pure, but the very thoughts and intentions that drive those actions to be pure, first and foremost. This is clearly reflected from the teaching of Jesus Himself.

Matthew 5:27-31 - 27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; 28 but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. 29 ”And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 “And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell. NASB

People not only sin with their hands, but with their mouths and also with the eyes and with their hearts and minds. The Lord here clearly shows that even though the Law declared that adultery was sinful, but that even the intent of adultery was as serious as the act. Here the Lord calls Christians to pure motives and thoughts, as we are to be pure in reality in our hearts, not only in our actions. It is out of the overflow of the heart that we commit sin, because in our heart we crave it, therefore we are to have pure hearts so that we will be in reality pure people.

Matthew 15:18-20 - 18 “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20 ”These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.” NASB

How much more important is this in today’s affluent and media driven American culture. We are...
constantly bombarded with every kind of luring advertisement for all kinds of worldly goods and worldly vice. Pounded with images daily, our consciences are continually put on trial, as we must stand firm in the strong wind of worldly pleasures and vices which assault our sensitivities and desires, constantly pushing us and luring us to find our satisfaction in worldly goods and pleasures, rather than in Christ alone. This is seen most clearly in the decline of morality in the broadcast airwaves of radio, television, internet and movies. As the sense of public morality declines further and further, we are bombarded with more and more wickedness and are desensitized by the continual bombardment of immoral images and sound bites, and our innate desire for pleasure and materialism is tried to the maximum by the lure of affluence and worldly pleasures which are seemingly within our reach. Worse yet, we can live in the fantasy of these things by way of experience on the screen, and our hearts and minds are drug through the dirt of worldly vice, all while we sit in the comfort of our own home. Pornography is within the reach of every man and woman so that sexual desire can be inflamed without actually engaging in the physical sin, but the wretched sin of intent kills the inner man like cancer. Movies and television portray sin in a glorified manner that causes even the most discerning of Christians to be led astray for the moment into thoughts of wickedness, and our consciences become desensitized and numbed to the serious offense that sin should be to us. All manner of sin is portrayed in such a luring and enticing way as to entertain us with all the special effects and sound quality and drama of storyline that has been pushed to the seeming limits of emotional experience. Therefore as the decline of morality in our culture descends further and further, we must abstain ourselves from the indulgence into the world’s lusts and desires, in an effort to keep our hearts pure and our consciences sensitive to God’s purity for “God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.” Let us therefore be very careful how we live, using wisdom in the things we engage in and let us with the Psalmist long for God’s holiness in all our ways.

Psalm 101:2-4 - 2 I will give heed to the blameless way. When wilt Thou come to me? I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart. 3 I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me. 4 A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil. NASB

B. 8 So he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you - Here Paul makes it clear again that the prohibition of sexual immorality comes from God. It is “God’s will that you abstain.” Therefore if you reject that command, you are rejecting God. Here see that disobedience to God’s commands is a sin against Him, not just some Law as Paul states “he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God.” Not only this but you sin against the God who is abiding in you by His Spirit, who’s presence continues in your soul. This is a grievous matter indeed. Elsewhere in the New Testament Paul teaches us that we are one with the Lord and sexual immorality is like joining God to those with whom we engage in sexual sin with. We are to consider our bodies as the sacred temple where God’s Spirit dwells and it is therefore to be a place of purity and sanctification.

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 - 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! 16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, “The two will become one flesh.” 17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 - 9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel

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