
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 4:7

By: Brian A. Yeager

There have been a lot of great things taught in this letter thus far. Some things obviously have no direct application to us today (i.e. I Thessalonians 3:1-5), what we will address in this article applies to all Christians. Note: *“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness”* (I Thessalonians 4:7).

We are going to start our study with considering who is under consideration when we read the word “God” in this Scripture. There are three persons in the New Testament that are called “God.” The Father is called “God” (Romans 1:7). Jesus is called “God” (Romans 9:1-5). The Holy Ghost is called “God” (Acts 5:1-11). If you were to think that using your Greek Lexicon will give you clarification to single out the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost in this passage; you’ll see that will not be the case. The Greek term “θεός” (Strong’s # 2316), is used towards all three as the references I provided above prove. I am going to submit a thought for you which will be the reasonable conclusion when we consider our next point. The thought is this; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all three involved in our being called. When we think about how, the point should become clearer.

In the second letter to the saints in Thessalonica, Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus delivered this related point: *“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work”* (II Thessalonians 2:13-17). When you read the above you see all three persons called “θεός” [God] at work toward the Thessalonians. You see that the calling was through the Gospel.

For further thought, through whom do we have the Gospel? Is it just Jesus? Is it the Gospel of the Father? Is the Gospel through the Spirit? The fact is, we have the Gospel from all three. Jesus said His teaching was not His own (John 7:16-18, John 8:28-29, John 12:49-50, John 14:10, John 14:24, and John 17:14). Then, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, who did not teach His own doctrine through the Apostles (John 16:1-13). Then to take this one step

further, when inspired men taught they did not teach their own words. They spake as the Spirit of God gave them what to say (II Samuel 23:2, Job 32:8, Jeremiah 1:9, Matthew 10:16-20, I Corinthians 2:1-13, I Corinthians 14:37, Galatians 1:10-12, II Timothy 3:15-17, and II Peter 1:20-21). When we put all of that together, the calling through the Gospel is through God. That is, through all three persons. It is all the will of our Father.

The calling through the Gospel is not unto uncleanness. The Greek word “ἀκαθαρσία” that is translated “uncleanness” is defined by Thayer’s Greek Lexicon as: “1) uncleanness; 1a) physical; 1b) in a moral sense: the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living; of impure motives” (Strong’s # 167). The translation of that Greek term is consistent in the King James Version. It is always translated “uncleanness” as it is in the verse we are studying in this article (Matthew 23:27, Romans 1:24, Romans 6:19, II Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 4:19, Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:5, and I Thessalonians 2:3).

Before we get to talking about the calling unto holiness, let’s consider for a moment the Greek word “ἐν” that is translated “unto” here in I Thessalonians 4:7. It is not the same preposition translated “unto” in regard to uncleanness. That Greek preposition is “ἐπί.” When talking about “unto” [ἐν] holiness the definition given by Thayer is: “in, by, with etc.” (Strong’s # 1722). That preposition is said to appear 2,720 times in the Greek New Testament. The idea is the same as being called “*into the grace of Christ*” (Galatians 1:6). The same is true of saints that should “*walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:4).

The Greek term that is translated “holiness” [ἁγιασμός] is defined by Thayer’s Greek Lexicon as: “1) consecration, purification; 2) the effect of consecration; 2a) sanctification of heart and life” (Strong’s # 38). This Greek word is translated “holiness” (Romans 6:19, Romans 6:22, I Timothy 2:15, and Hebrews 12:14) and also as “sanctification” (I Corinthians 1:30, I Thessalonians 4:3-4, II Thessalonians 2:13, and I Peter 1:2). So, saints are called “into” or “in” consecration or sanctification.

Now, to the application of this verse we have been breaking down. In many words that could be said and verses that we could study, the following makes the point with the utmost clarity. Consider what the inspired Apostle Peter wrote: “*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*” (I Peter 1:13-16 and I Peter 2:9-11).