

# 1 Thessalonians 4:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

## Analysis

**For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication**—touto gar estin thelēma tou Theou, ho hagiasmos hymōn, apechesthai hymas apo tēs porneias (τοῦτο γάρ ἐστὶν θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας). Thelēma tou Theou (θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ, 'the will of God')—Christians often seek God's will regarding vocation, location, relationships; Paul declares it plainly: hagiasmos (ἁγιασμός, 'sanctification/holiness'). God's will isn't mysterious but revealed: progressive conformity to Christ's image (Rom 8:29).

Porneia (πορνεία) encompasses all sexual immorality outside monogamous heterosexual marriage: fornication, adultery, prostitution, homosexual practice, bestiality. The present infinitive apechesthai (ἀπέχεσθαι, 'to abstain/keep away') indicates continuous action—ongoing separation from sexual sin, not merely initial repentance. Sexual holiness isn't optional preference but God's explicit will. This teaching contradicts contemporary culture normalizing sexual immorality, as it contradicted Greco-Roman culture. Biblical sexual ethics haven't changed; cultural permissiveness doesn't modify divine commands.

## Historical Context

Sexual purity was radically countercultural in Thessalonica. Temple prostitution at pagan shrines was considered worship; public baths facilitated adultery; slaves (male and female) were sexually exploited without legal recourse; homosexual

relationships between free men and slaves were common; pornography (in art and literature) was ubiquitous. Christian sexual ethics—chastity before marriage, fidelity within marriage, abstinence from all porneia—shocked pagans. Yet this holiness distinguished Christians and ultimately attracted converts weary of sexual chaos's relational damage.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How does understanding sanctification as 'the will of God' (not merely a good suggestion) affect your pursuit of holiness?
2. What contemporary sexual practices normalized by culture does porneia encompass, and how do you actively 'abstain' from them?
3. How can the church maintain biblical sexual ethics with compassion and clarity in an increasingly permissive culture?

## Interlinear Text

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τοῦτο	γάρ	ἐστιν	θέλημα	τοῦ	θεοῦ	ὁ	ἀγιασμός	ὑμῶν
<b>this</b>	<b>For</b>	<b>is</b>	<b>the will</b>	G3588	<b>of God</b>	G3588	<b>sanctification</b>	<b>even your</b>
G5124	G1063	G2076	G2307		G2316		G38	G5216
ἀπέχεσθαι	ὑμᾶς	ἀπὸ	τῆς	πορνείας				
<b>should abstain</b>	<b>that ye</b>	<b>from</b>	G3588	<b>fornication</b>				
G567	G5209	G575		G4202				

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Peter 4:2** (References God): That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

**1 Thessalonians 5:23** (References God): And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Romans 12:2** (References God): And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

**Hebrews 13:4** (References God): Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

**Ephesians 5:17** (Parallel theme): Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

**Colossians 3:5** (Parallel theme): Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

**1 Thessalonians 4:4** (Parallel theme): That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

**Galatians 5:19** (Parallel theme): Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

**1 John 2:17** (References God): And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

**Revelation 21:8** (Parallel theme): But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.