

1 Thessalonians 4:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

Analysis

Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God

—mē en pathei epithymias kathaper kai ta ethnē ta mē eidota ton Theon (μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν Θεόν). Pathos epithymias (πάθος ἐπιθυμίας, 'passion of lust/lustful passion') describes sexuality driven by selfish desire rather than covenant love. Pathos indicates overpowering passion; epithymia means craving or lust. Together they describe sexuality as appetite demanding satisfaction, the pagan view Paul contrasts with Christian holiness.

The Gentiles which know not God (ta ethnē ta mē eidota ton Theon, τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν Θεόν)—ignorance of God produces sexual immorality. Rejecting Creator means rejecting His design for sexuality (Rom 1:24-27). The Thessalonians were former pagans (1:9); Paul reminds them not to revert to pagan sexual ethics. Knowing God transforms sexuality from selfish gratification into holy expression of covenant love. Christian sexual ethics flow from Christian theology—God's character, humanity's creation in His image, marriage as Christ-church picture (Eph 5:32).

Historical Context

Paul writes to Gentile converts from paganism. They'd grown up in cultures where sexuality was divorced from morality—temple prostitution was worship, adultery was entertainment, sexual exploitation was normal. The phrase 'Gentiles who know not God' doesn't condemn ethnicity but ignorance of the true God. Many

Thessalonian believers were ethnically Gentiles who now knew God (1:9); they must not live like Gentiles who remain ignorant. This ethical distinction, not ethnic superiority, marks Christians: those who know God live differently from those who don't.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does knowing God transform your understanding and practice of sexuality compared to cultural perspectives driven by 'passion of lust'?
2. What evidence demonstrates that your sexual ethics flow from knowledge of God rather than conformity to contemporary culture?
3. How can churches teach countercultural sexual purity with compassion for those who've lived by lustful passions?

Interlinear Text

μὴ	ἐν	πάθει	ἐπιθυμίας	καθάπερ	καὶ	τὸν	ἔθνη
Not	in	the lust	of concupiscence	as	even	which	the Gentiles
G3361	G1722	G3806	G1939	G2509	G2532	G3588	G1484

τὸν	μὴ	εἰδότα	τὸν	θεόν
which	Not	know	which	God
G3588	G3361	G1492	G3588	G2316

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 4:8 (References God): Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 (References God): In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

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:

Romans 1:26 (References God): For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

Ephesians 2:12 (References God): That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

Romans 1:28 (References God): And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Romans 1:24 (References God): Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

1 Peter 4:3 (Parallel theme): For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: