

1 Thessalonians 4:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Analysis

He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit—toigaroun ho athetōn ouk anthrōpon athetei alla ton Theon ton kai donta to pneuma autou to hagion eis hymas (τοιγαροῦν ὁ ἀθετῶν οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἀθετεῖ ἀλλὰ τὸν Θεὸν τὸν καὶ δόντα τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμᾶς). Atheteō (ἀθετέω, 'to reject/set aside/despise') indicates treating something as invalid. Those rejecting Paul's sexual ethics aren't merely disagreeing with apostolic opinion but despising God Himself who gave these commands. The phrase ton kai donta to pneuma autou to hagion eis hymas (τὸν καὶ δόντα τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμᾶς, 'who also gave his Holy Spirit to us') provides the basis: God gave His Holy Spirit for sanctification.

The Holy Spirit's presence both enables and obligates holiness. Hagion pneuma (ἅγιον πνεῦμα, 'Holy Spirit')—He who indwells believers is holy and produces holiness. Rejecting sexual purity despite possessing the Holy Spirit is despising the Giver. This teaching judges contemporary churches tolerating sexual immorality—endorsing what God condemns isn't compassion but rebellion. The Spirit given for sanctification empowers believers to 'abstain from fornication' (v. 3); those claiming powerlessness while possessing the Spirit either misunderstand sanctification or question their salvation.

Historical Context

Paul's appeal to the Holy Spirit grounds Christian ethics in pneumatology, not merely rules. The Spirit given at Pentecost (Acts 2) and received by believers at conversion (Acts 2:38; Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 12:13) transforms moral capacity. Old Covenant Israel received external law but lacked internal power for consistent obedience; New Covenant believers receive the Spirit who writes law on hearts (Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:27) and empowers obedience. Rejecting ethical instruction while claiming Spirit possession is contradictory—the Holy Spirit produces holiness, not license.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing that rejecting biblical sexual ethics means despising God (not merely disagreeing with Paul) affect your view of contemporary moral debates?
2. What role does the Holy Spirit play in enabling sexual purity, and how do you practically depend on His empowerment?
3. How do you distinguish between compassion toward struggling believers and tolerance of unrepentant immorality despising God's commands?

Interlinear Text

τοιγαροῦν	ὁ	ἀθετεῖ	οὐκ	ἄνθρωπον	ἀθετεῖ	ἀλλὰ	τὸν		
He therefore	G3588	despiseth	not	man	despiseth	but	G3588		
G5105		G114	G3756	G444	G114	G235			
θεὸν	τὸν	καὶ	δόντα	τὸ	πνεῦμα	αὐτοῦ	τὸ	ἅγιον	εἰς
God	G3588	also	given	G3588	Spirit	G846	G3588	holy	unto
G2316		G2532	G1325		G4151			G40	G1519
ἡμᾶς									
us									
G2248									

Additional Cross-References

1 John 3:24 (Spirit): And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Luke 10:16 (Parallel theme): He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

John 12:48 (Parallel theme): He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

1 Samuel 8:7 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

Proverbs 1:7 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 23:9 (Parallel theme): Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

2 Peter 1:21 (Holy): For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

