

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 6, 2021 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

CATCHING CHRISTIAN: A Study of 1 Thessalonians

“Straight Talk about Moral Purity”
1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

“The truth is America is not in decline any more than at any time in its history. This is just lazy religious-speak that seeks to paint the picture of everything being terrible so it can name drop the "Last Days" and leverage the ensuing fear such language invariably creates in suggestible God-fearing folk. Only everything isn't terrible. It's reckless for Christians to keep playing the Decay card with such regularity, and irresponsible for the Church to wring its hands and shout doom and damnation from a distance, instead of looking for the beautiful, loving, redemptive work already happening in the world, and joining in.” –Pastor John Pavlovitz, “The Christian Myth of America’s Moral Decay” *(My comment: I don’t know where this guy has been living, but he obviously has his head in the sand and doesn’t know what he is talking about. This is the height of those prophets of old who were saying “peace, peace” what everything was not okay in Micah)*

“American Christians are now experiencing overt repression and even persecution. Civility in politics and tolerance of opposing ideas has disappeared. Corruption and dishonesty in government is rampant and open. Race relations are deteriorating, earnings are declining, civic disorder is accelerating, and the national debt is beyond control. We are not in the “Age of Anything Goes” – Depravity is the root cause of America’s moral decline which includes pornography, same sex marriage, and idolatry. Human depravity is a symptom of our isolation from God, which occurred at the fall when man and woman rejected God’s Spirit and chose to follow their own desires. American is in a state of moral and spiritual decline, no doubt.”- Dr. David Jeremiah

“The remedy to our nation’s moral and spiritual woes must begin at the house of God. The process starts with personal repentance. If Christians truly want to see God’s blessing on our society, we ought to be models of genuine contrition and humility rather than merely pointing fingers of blame at the evils of secular society. The church today is in a serious state of spiritual decline. Many churches are apparently more willing to imitate the world’s fashions and opinions than to confront them with biblical truth. Meanwhile, Christians concerned about the moral evils of society often opt for all the wrong remedies — as if the only thing needed to cure the spiritual malaise of our nation were some kind of federal legislation against abortion, sexual promiscuity, pornography, or other forms of corruption. I am by no means opposed to legislative efforts to

outlaw abortion, drug abuse, and similar abominations. But political remedies to our nation's moral ills are no cure for the underlying spiritual problems. Of all people, Christians ought to know that, and the preponderance of our efforts ought to be focused on proclaiming the truth that can genuinely set people free. In other words, the majority of our energies ought to be invested in preaching the gospel and living the kind of life that gives testimony to the redeeming power of Christ. In other words, society as a whole cannot be delivered from moral bankruptcy unless individual lives are transformed by the power of Christ. If that conviction does not frame the priorities of the people of God and drive the activities of the church on earth, we can forget about God's blessing on our nation." – Dr. John MacArthur

We want to get back into our study of 1 Thessalonians this evening. We are calling this study, "Catching Christians." Let me remind you of what we have been saying, in the way of explanation and clarification of that title. As we said last time...

Clarification: *The Christian faith can't be "caught" like someone catches a cold (or COVID). Rather the Christian faith comes by placing your faith and trust in God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. However, the faith of a believer, should be one that draws other to Christ and doesn't repel or push other away. Your faith, as a Christian, should be contagious. In other words, others ought to want what you have and you should be a "Catching Christians." What will make us this way? The church at Thessalonica was full of "catching Christians" and Paul writes to them commending them for their contagious, catching on faith.*



As we said last time, emerging from ancient Macedonia was a dynamic body of people who lived in the busy, free, affluent metropolis of Thessalonica (show map). This town's citizens were influential, its economy was stable, and its location along the earliest known, "freeway" – Via Egnatia – was enviable. Goods from the east and the west poured into this city. In its heyday, when the population was around two hundred thousand, some consideration was given

to making Thessalonica, rather than Constantinople, the “capital” of the world. In the first century A.D., the evangelist and apostle Paul ventured into Thessalonica and, during a brief visit, formed a body of believers there who comprised the city’s first Christian church. And what a dynamic group they were! With determination, zeal, confidence, and a Pauline style, they proclaimed the good news of Christ like thunder rolling through a canyon. As we shall see through our study of 1 Thessalonians, these first-century saints were models of authentic Christianity. They made Christianity contagious to many in their day. As a result, the example they left us is worthy of our attention and application to our lives.

Let me remind you of some of the background information for this important letter... some important facts about the book/letter of 1 Thessalonians:

Background Review of 1 Thessalonians:

- (1) 1 Thessalonians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul and was the first letter ever written by Paul
- (2) The church of Thessalonica was established during Paul’s 2nd missionary journey *show map
- (3) The Thessalonian church was very important/strategic because Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia
- (4) 1 Thessalonians was written after hearing good news of their church from Timothy, and is the only of Paul’s letter that was not written with a problem in the church but rather for the sole purpose of commending the church
- (5) Paul only stayed in Thessalonica for a month, and that is all it took for this church to become an active, strong and vital church in the spread of the gospel.

With that brief back ground let’s look let’s get back into Paul’s letter to the believer/Christians in 1 Thessalonians.

“^dFinally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; ²for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.⁸ Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.” -1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 (NKJV)

One of the most telltale signs of a deteriorating society is its loss of moral integrity. ***What does that tell us about our day?***

5 Biblical Signs of Moral Decline: (Based on Jack Wellman’s “Biblical Signs of The Declining Morality of America and the World” taken from Micah 7:1-7)

National moral decline happens when God is neglected. Micah lists five different kinds of relationships that are affected by a nation’s refusal to follow God and they are shockingly close to what we see in society today. It’s almost as if Micah the Prophet is a contemporary of ours and

he sits with us to watch the nightly news and watches social media. It's as if he's seen the latest movies churned out at an increasingly immoral Hollywood. Each generation is exposed to more and more of the raw brutality, illicit sex, and escalating violence (in movies, video games, sports). We are desensitizing our minds to the point that we don't blush anymore, we don't turn away from violent scenes like we used to, and our children are being exposed to sexual immorality at a younger and younger age as the TV ratings change. It's like we're the proverbial frog in the pot, not knowing he's slowly cooking to death. The change is so gradual that most people don't notice it, but when you look at movies and the media 10 years ago or more, and then see what's popular today, it's obvious there is a stark contrast. Here are the 5 Biblical signs of moral decline as indicated in Micah 7:1-7:

- (1) **Godly influence disappears (Micah 7:1-2)** – *“Woe is me! For I have become as when the summer fruit has been gathered, as when the grapes have been gleaned: there is no cluster to eat, no first-ripe fig that my soul desires. The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind; they all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net.”* Micah indicates one of the first signs of a nation's moral decline is God has been pushed out of the government, the public square, the public schools, and out of mind. The law to protect religious freedom that was intended to keep the government out of the church has been twisted into keeping the church out of the government...or the public square, or anyplace else. And today it seem the government and even local leaders are trying to infringe on what churches do and don't do. It is just as if Paul just wrote this today; *“there is no fear of God before their eyes”* (Rom 3:18). Micah is using the analogy of the harvest and a declining godly influence in the nation.
- (2) **There is escalating violence (Micah 7:3)** - *“Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well; the prince and the judge ask for a bribe, and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together.”* Another indicator of a declining national morality is the escalation of violence. People don't turn away from it anymore, but actually turn to see it; in movies, television, the Internet, video games, and in music. Violence is celebrated and condoned in ways that just a decade or two ago would have never even been allowed. Jesus said that as in the days of Noah, so it would be in the days leading up to Jesus return (Matt 24:37), but what were those days like? It says, *“Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth”* (Gen 6:11-12).
- (3) **There will come business and political corruption (Micah 7:3-4)** - *“Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well; the prince and the judge ask for a bribe, and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together. The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge. The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has come; now their confusion is at hand.”* You don't have to watch the news every day to see that political and business corruption has grown. The “good ole' boy” system has the same people sitting in power, year after year, sometimes spending their entire lives in Congress. With no term limits, the politicians have few limits. Their personal pork barrel project's assures they get reelected year after year while overspending without discretion. Some get free passes (because of their wealth, their attorney, or their contacts) while the common citizen foots the bill. This is an interesting quote from the great theologian and reformer, John Calvin... he said, *“When God want to judge a nation, He give them wicked rulers.”* What does that tell you about where we are right now as a nation?



- (4) **A distrust and suspicion of others (Micah 7:5)** - *“Put no trust in a neighbor; have no confidence in a friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms”* The person who is a friend is one who will stick closer than a brother and will not bail out on you when times get tough, but sometimes tough times make us turn on our friends and they turn on us. Cynicism has never been higher. People are more skeptical these days than ever because they’ve gotten burned by someone who they thought was their friend, but their friend was not a true friend at all, but only a friend as long as it was to their advantage.
- (5) **A dishonoring of parents and those in authority (Micah 7:6)** - *“for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”* The Bible indicates that whomever honors his or her parents may live a longer life (Ex 20:12), but what we are seeing in these days of a declining national morality is the decline of honoring one’s own parents. We’re commanded to honor our parents, and I think that means when we’re at home and when we’re adults, but this doesn’t seem to be the case today, at least in many circumstances. It’s now parent against child, child insulting parents, children disobeying parents and members of their own household have now become their own enemies. Abuse of elderly parents, taking advantage of parents through intimidation, and public and private disrespect is not uncommon at all today. The only way to stop this decline and turn this around is for people to *“look to the Lord”* (Micah 7:7) before it’s too late. It’s not the generation gap that’s the problem; it’s children ruling over their parents.

Read what Paul says about those who reject the truth, *“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools”* (Rom 1:21-23). And what happened after their hearts became darkened? *“God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves”* (Rom 1:24), and *“For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error”* (Rom 1:26-27), *“And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless”* (Rom 1:28-31). These last few verses sound like they came right off the script of a television sitcom. Also notice that three times God says He *“gave them up,”* so there is a point in which God gives people up to their unrighteousness...and it is an ever downward spiral into hell.

When this foundational stone begins to crack and erode away, the effect is nothing short of disastrous. Since its inception, Christianity has stood against moral decline by upholding personal holiness. Throughout church history, Christians have remained committed to purity in spite of the ever-present currents of popular opinion and lax moral philosophies that have encouraged them to compromise their stand. A major reason for Christians to maintain such an unbending position is the clear instruction found in God’s Word concerning this area. 1

Thessalonians 4:1-8 stands out in Scripture as one of the more direct passages on moral purity. So, since God has chosen to talk so candidly about this subject, let's decide right now to hear His counsel with our defenses down and our wills geared for submission to Him.. With this approach, we can bring glory to God and experience His superabundant goodness in our lives.

THE FOG: A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF TODAY'S MORAL SCENE (Hab. 1, Jer. 6)

It's easy for many of us to think that the "moral decline" of our day is relatively a new phenomenon in human history... that its worse today than it's ever been.

But that's simply not true. Repeatedly, the Old Testament writers told of incidents, cultures, even eras, that were scarred by various kinds of immorality. Two of these authors served as prophets during the days prior to Judah's fall under the Babylonian invasion (586BC). What they recorded about ancient Judah's moral condition aptly describes the fog of immorality that has clouded our day

Two Examples from Biblical History of Periods of Moral Decline:

- (1) **The scream of Habakkuk in his day (Habakkuk 1:1-4)** – *"¹The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw. ²O LORD, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. ³Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; there is strife, and contention arises. ⁴Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds."* When Habakkuk surveyed Judah's landscape, he saw a people deserving of God's righteous judgment yet desperately in need of His merciful salvation. **Isn't that what we are praying for today?** Notice how Habakkuk the prophet described his day...

4 Ways Habakkuk Described the Moral Climate of His day:

1. **Violence characterized the day** - This ancient prophet described his country as violent in Habakkuk 1:2
2. **Iniquity and wickedness permeated the land** - The land is full of iniquity...lying, vanity, and idolatry... and full of wickedness... oppression, robbery and assault, all mentioned in Habakkuk 1:3
3. **Strife and contention was prevalent** – In Habakkuk 1:4, the prophet points out that strife and contention constantly arose among the people.
4. **Injustice and perversion of the law rules the day** - Indeed, they ignored the law and perverted justice according to Habakkuk 1:4

Sound familiar? It's no wonder that Habakkuk screamed out to God to intervene in the fog and put a halt to the moral pollution that had permeated Judah. ***Does this sound like our day? Can you cite example? What is the best way for a Christian/believer to handle times as described in Habakkuk 1 (and in our day)?***

- (2) **The sobs of Jeremiah in his day (Jeremiah 6:10-15)** – *"¹⁰To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the LORD is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it. ¹¹Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD. I am weary of holding it in. 'I will pour it out on the children outside, and on the assembly of young men together; for even the husband shall be taken with the wife, the aged with him who is full of days. ¹²And their houses shall be turned over to*

others, fields and wives together; for I will stretch out My hand against the inhabitants of the land,' says the LORD. ¹³ 'Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. ¹⁴ They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace. ¹⁵ Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down,' says the LORD." Like Habakkuk, Jeremiah lived and prophesied in Judah during its final stages of political, moral, and religious collapse. And even though he witnessed many of the same immoralities that Habakkuk had observed, it brought him to tears instead of scream and shouts of outrage. Notice some of the observations that Jeremiah made about the people of his day (the Judeans).

4 Observation Jeremiah Made of the Moral Collapse of His Day:

1. **A total disregard for God and His Word**- He said they closed their ears to God revealed Word in verse 10, "... Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them; they have not delight in it."
2. **Greed and selfishness by even the most respected in society** - They were all "greedy for gain" or as verse 13 said it, "¹³ 'Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely.'" Notice that he also says that the religious leaders were no longer protectors of the truth but proclaimers of lies, self-promoting and covetous.
3. **A corruption of religious leaders and false teaching/preaching** - Even worse, the religious officials had lost their desire to be ministers of true forgiveness and reconciliation. Instead, they were telling people that everything was all right when nothing could have been further from the truth... noting was "all right." Notice verse 14, "¹⁴ They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace."
4. **An unrepentant and unapologetic perversion of God's truth and His calling** - To top it all off, these religious leaders were not even ashamed about the corruption and pollution they were perpetuating. Verse 15 says, "¹⁵ Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down,' says the LORD." Sin no longer shocked them. They had grown so accustomed to living in a moral fog that their faces failed to turn red when they encouraged impurity

These are unmistakable, tell-tale signs of a lack of holiness and the moral drift of Jeremiah's day. *Does any of that sound like our day? What particularly stand out from that list that most sound like what you have noticed in our day? Can you think of any examples you've witnessed or heard of? Again what is the best way for a Christian/believer to handle times as described in Habakkuk and Jeremiah (and in our day)?*

THE TRUTH: GOD'S TIMELESS COUNSEL FOR CHRISTIANS

Since impurity is an enemy all human beings must face, God doesn't mince words when He addresses the subject. He speaks directly, seriously, and clearly. One such instance is lodged in the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians. There the Lord of holiness pierces through the moral fog with the penetrating light of divine truth. He conveys three basic directives that are imperative for us to heed if we are to obey God's command to be holy.

"¹Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; ²for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.⁸ Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit." -1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 (NKJV)

3 Basic Directives on Moral Purity from 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8:

- (1) **In your walk, excel still more (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2)** – *"¹Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; ²for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus."* We are not to be lazy or passive in our Christian lives. Instead, we are exhorted to actively pursue personal obedience to the divine commands given God's Word. What does that mean exactly and what does that look like.

What does it mean to actively pursue purity/holiness personally?

1. **It means that we must commit ourselves to submit rather than ignore or revolt against God's standard of holiness –**
 - Romans 6:16-18, *"¹⁶Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."* **What is God standard of holiness for us in this passage?**
 - 1 Peter 1:13-16, *"¹³Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."* **What is God standard of holiness for us in this passage?**
2. **It means that we must commit ourselves to diligently work through a process that is sometimes painful, but fruitful and rewarding –**
 - Hebrews 12:1-3, *"¹Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before*

Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” How does this passage reinforce the idea that the process of holiness is sometimes painful but is fruitful and rewarding?

- James 1:2-4, “²My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” How does this (familiar) passage reinforce the idea that the process of holiness is sometimes painful but is fruitful and rewarding?

- (2) **In your morals, abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6)** – “³For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.” If we are going to excel toward the goal of holiness, then we need to get a grip on dealing with sexual lusts. Verse 3 here make it quite plain, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality.” Part of God’s will for Christians is that they have not sexual relationship outside the bounds of marriage. This means that bigamy, polygamy, homosexuality, sodomy, prostitution... all forms of premarital, extramarital, and non-monogamous marital sex... are wrong. Such relationship are not forbidden because they are unwise, indiscreet, dangerous, unpopular, excessive, or unpleasing. Rather, God forbids them because they violate His holy nature and His holy will for His own... His children/people. Abstaining from sexual immorality includes the knowledge of how to possess our own vessels in “sanctification and honor” as Paul puts in verse 4. That is, we need to know how to control our own bodies and sexual drives in a pure and upright way. We are not to let our own control of ourselves and act “in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God” (v.5).

Some Modern Application...

Let’s bring this up-to-date for a moment. There are films, television programs, magazines, social media platforms, even music that weakens us morally because they beckon us toward an immoral lifestyle. Certain conversations carried on by certain people have the same detrimental effects. Specific types of parties, places, and seductive pastimes have a lure toward impurity that we should avoid, regardless of the pressures to attend. We are foolish to think that we can play around... that we can handle it... with these things without getting hurt. We must stop tantalizing ourselves with sin! Our abstinence and avoidance will be for our own good and God’s splendid glory.

- (3) **In your reasoning, remember why God called you (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8)** – “⁷For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.” We who are Christians should not traffic in immorality, (verse 7 says) “⁷For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.” In other words, when God saved us, it was so that we might begin to grow up spiritually. He wants us to progressively move out of the fog of impurity and into the bright light of holiness. As John says in 1 John 1:5-7, “⁵This is the message which we have heard

from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” What does this passage say concerning what God has called us to as believer, and what our lives ought to look like?

Our Lord never intended to give us everlasting life so that we could continue to live as if we were still headed toward everlasting death. Yet many of us are living just that way. And when we remain engaged in an immoral lifestyle, we are not *“reject(ing) man, but God, who has given us His Holy Spirit”* (v.8). That’s serious business!

THE CHOICE: A DECISION ONLY YOU CAN MAKE

There are only two options to choose from: to live horizontally in the weakness of the flesh, or to live vertically in the power of the Spirit. Both are diametrically opposed to each other, and both have certain consequences. You must decide which set of consequences you want to live with and die with. Consider them carefully. You must choose one or the other; you cannot straddle the fence that separates them. As Jesus said in *Matthew 6:24, “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”*

OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM HOW YOU WILL LIVE AND THEIR CORRESPONDING CONSEQUENCES:

- (1) **If you choose to operate horizontally you will drift in a fog of moral uncertainty and decay** – You will end up playing religious games while your real life becomes increasingly polluted by the moral impurity and general godlessness surrounding you.
- (2) **If you choose to operate horizontally your disobedience will result in increasing guilt and grief** – God will not permit His children to traffic in sin without their experiencing the pain and anguish that eventually accompanies it. And this He does “for our good, that we may share in His holiness.” As the writer of Hebrews said it in speaking of the Lord’s discipline of His children, in *Hebrews 12:10, “For they (our earthly fathers) indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.”*
- (3) **If you choose to operate vertically you will honor the God of moral absolutes** – Your submission to the Lord’s holy commands will bring Him glory.
- (4) **If you choose to operate vertically your obedience will result in greater confidence and habits of holiness** – In time, your obedience will increase your strength to say no to sin as you conform more to God’s perfect standard of spiritual maturity... holiness.