

# Autism Bible Study (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

Hi there everyone,

Welcome to another article from the Autism Bible Study. On this occasion, I will take into account a very delicate but necessary topic: Sexual purity. I say it is necessary because there are many things I need to consider. So, before submitting to God and asking for any petition I may have in my mind, I must have a strong sexual purity, moreover, I always fail to be sexually pure. Nevertheless, I try to be sexually pure without God, and that wouldn't be OK for a Christian and cannot be OK as well for an invisibly disabled individual. As a theologian with autism, the major struggle that always puts me into spiritual warfare is sexual sin. I must confess all this to you given that in the past, this sin has gotten shame on me whatever be the case.

Considering all this, there is a strong New Testament passage that aims to prevent us from sexual sin: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. However, many more Bible passages talk more explicitly about sex, aiming me to the meaning that the Bible itself is in favor of purity and against lust! But how do we get purity? As autistic individuals, how we do speak to God if our testimony is weak?

As always, based upon the Exegetical Project sketch from the course on Theology and Disability I took during the spring of 2024, behold I present another article for the Neurodivergent Analysis of the Bible: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8!

What is the main idea of the text?

This is the pre-last chapter of the first letter from St. Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonian Church (see prior vv.1-2), but perhaps, imperatively the Apostle Paul directly addresses the sexual sin to be purely prepared (v.3); giving us the duty to control our bodies to live in holiness and honor without having to imitate the pagans, who do not know who God is and commit those evil sins through lustful passion (vv.4-5). In the same way, we must not cheat or harm any other brother in Christ to violate his wife, given that the Lord himself avenges all those sins, as St. Paul had solemnly warned before (v.6). And finally, the Lord Himself has called us to live in holy lives but not in impure lives, so anyone who refuses to live this beautiful life, perhaps is good at the human sight, but indeed, is an abomination to God, in which the Holy Ghost is interacting with our being (vv-7-8).

What is the meaning of this text?

“To abide in the faith of the gospel is not enough, we must abound in the work of faith. The rule according to which all ought to walk and act is the commandments given by the Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctification, in the renewal of their souls under the influences of the Holy Spirit, and attention to appointed duties, constituted the will of God respecting them. In aspiring after this renewal of the soul unto holiness, strict restraint must be put upon the appetites and senses of the body, and on the thoughts and inclinations of the will, which lead to wrong uses of them. The Lord calls none into his family to live unholy lives, but that they may be taught and enabled to walk before him in holiness. Some make light of the precepts of holiness because they hear them from men, but they are God's commands, and to break them is to despise God.” (*Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary*, n.d)

“Arguably one of Satan's most effective methods for destroying lives and ruining relationships is sexual sin. This world is sex-saturated. Every day we are exposed to a myriad of alluring enticements that make up the sexual culture. It is no accident that pornography is a fifty-billion-dollar industry. Sex sells, and a lot of people are buying it. The parallels between Paul's day and the modern era are striking. From prostitution on the streets to prostitution in the temples, if you wanted sex in Thessalonica, you could have it. And from websites to video chat rooms, if you want sex on your street, you can have it, too (...). Paul knew that sexual sin would destroy the lives and ruin the testimony of these young believers.” (Howell, 2015)

An analysis of this passage. What does it have to do with God's character, and sex and disability matters?

The following passage we are currently studying from neurodivergence is a very explicit passage that if it were interpreted literally, neurodivergent individuals would for sure abstain from such a sinful nature: Sex.

The matter is that I had chosen this passage to consider because of the following quotation:

“If we are Christians, is imperative that we live with purity and holiness amidst our Corinthian and “pornotopian” culture. We must live beyond the horrible statistics, or the Church will become more and more out of touch and impotent, and our children will abandon it. The Church cannot have any kind of power if it's not a pure church” (Hughes, 1991, p. 40)

Moreover, this is a strong passage about sexual purity. So, each time I watch something that God doesn't agree with, I always ask "What Am I doing?". Well, I do those things unconsciously. Social media nowadays is perhaps very damaging as to what the topics on sexual topics embedded. As you don't know, my major struggle is against sex! Now I approach writing down this article to get rid of it in the sense of relieving and expressing all that I have upon my heart so the Lord Himself sees the evidence that, despite doing things He doesn't agree with, may realize that he is for sure being magnified and glorified with the writing gift He had given to me, knowing that is a borrowed gift I need to count when on the Heavenly Court though.

In terms of the sexual conduct of autistic individuals, before going forward, I'm going to focus on the psychological aspects of sexual conduct under the autism spectrum as provided by Arroyo Estrada (2023):

- People with autism satisfy their sexual needs through masturbation more often than through sexual contact with others.
- Some people with autism show a strong interest and desire to establish intimate contact with other people.
- They manifest sexual desires or behaviors at inappropriate times or with inappropriate people (masturbating in public, showing interest in people who are not interested in responding to their sexual initiatives, showing themselves naked, etc.)
- Some people with autism need to use particular objects or visual stimuli to become sexually aroused, given their lack of ability to imagine sexually exciting situations.
- Some people with autism make use of other people's body parts without distinguishing between sexes or the relationship they have with that person (they may be family members or strangers).
- Some people with autism begin to stimulate themselves anally with objects.
- Attacks of rage may appear that end in self-harm due to the frustration of not knowing how to release or channel accumulated energy.

This may sound a little awkward, but I need to confess that, according to the cited article, sexual sin is somehow common among us autistics! But what if we obeyed God differently than the traditional way of obedience that our local faith communities tend to teach us? What if we, as neurodivergent individuals, could make the difference our faith leaders demand from our congregations? What if we as "abnormal" people could follow the Lord's laws? For more than a decade belonging to the Baptist Churches, I've tried my best to abstain from sexual sin but in some cases, it comes shamefully. So, now we're going to explain about sexual purity.

How could we apply the principle in this passage concerning the disability challenge of sex?

There are so many contributions to this Bible passage regarding sexual purity, from Hughes to Matthew Henry, and even from a scientific article that points out a certain sort of sin: Lust. I must confess that I follow many survivors of this horrible sin on social media and even one of them who was an amateur in this industry thanks to a conversation with a Christian man (who is now her husband) on TikTok, quit. So, what happened to her? She immediately deleted her web page on such an online lust platform. In the Roman Catholic sense, there was one that consecrated to certain Catholic devotion after having quit posting and promoting lust on such a platform as well.

I also must confess that as a disabled individual, I always face lust at a higher point. I've been trying to overcome lust with no success. And when I supposedly accomplished an obsession as an autistic individual, such a sin duplicated four times more than expected. Here in Colombia, specifically, in the Pacific Region, there is a lot of lust published on social media. I must assert there is an even worse thing: A modeling contest that for obvious reasons I won't give out the name, has caught too many young women to the sexual sin. Even worse, those of them attend Church as "devout Christians". But the fact is, who am I to judge? Who am I to judge them if I consume their products unconsciously? There is so much I have to say about the surrounding sexual sin, and I respond to questions surrounding this unique and hard Bible passage. So, we come up with the following: How could we apply the principle in this passage concerning the disability challenge on sex?

The best thing we can do on handling sex is something we can't do but God. 1 Corinthians 10:13 states:

***The temptations in your life are not different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.***

(NLT)

I see. But what could we do indeed to preserve our sexual purity? In my humble opinion, reading the Bible and praying is not enough as it will never be enough for us to serve our Lord in a narcissistic form of self-sufficiency (Something that King Saul had as we go through 1 Samuel). I advise every single person with a developmental and intellectual disability to face and battle their sins lonely, so God will know how to deal with them if you confess your sins to Him.

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