

Ephesians Series: What is Your Life Mission? #30
“Christ Followers and Sexual Temptation”
Message Notes, July 16, 2023

Ephesians 5:3-7 (NIV) ³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an *idolater*—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them.

◆ **Today’s Issue**

- a. Ideas about sexuality today are diverse and people tend to stay quiet about them because they relate to personal issues, but sexuality impacts our lives in profound ways.
- b. In addressing the kind of life we, who are “children of God,” should live, Paul first considers the issue of “sexuality” as it is understood currently and provides concrete measures.

◆ **Current Reality**

1. Compared with the past, has the present day progressed or regressed regarding “sex?”
 - Is the Bible outdated?
 - The situation in Roman society during the first century (Barclay, Notes on Ephesians) and the Middle Ages (Tournier, “Being a Woman”).
 - The “empty words” (6): the influence on the church of the “Gnosticism” prevalent at the time
 - Modernity: Absolute relativism, “Don’t talk to me about what I do!” Intolerance in the name of diversity and tolerance
2. Current status of sexual temptation (3)
 - Sexual immorality *porneia*: the word originally meant to have sexual relations with someone other than one’s spouse, but came to be a term for immoral sexual relations
 - Impurity *akatharsia*: a level worse, that views sex as play, money-making, entertainment, etc., both within and outside of marriage. Sex is regarded as only a physical and bodily thing, not as an expression of love between husband and wife, a blessing, or the means of reproduction.
 - Greed *pleonexia*: A further deterioration, to the point where one uses any means necessary to satisfy one’s desires. **Ephesians 4:19** “Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.” This same word is used in the Ten commandments about not coveting another person’s wife.
 - The problem that began as extramarital sex degenerates into addiction to and consumption by sex, eventually becoming a person’s idol; as if the person becomes addicted to a false religion (cult). → “Idolaters” (5)

◆ **Solution**

1. Cultivate a spirit of gratitude
 - Speak words of thanksgiving, not obscenities. The opposite of vulgar language is elegant language, but not that Paul cites “thanksgiving” as its counterpoint.
 - What is the heart full of? Gratitude is evidence that the heart is focused on God. If you have not thoughts of gratitude, beware, because your heart is not directed toward God. You are seeking fulfillment elsewhere. There is no fulfillment outside of God.

- How can we keep a grateful heart? Set aside time in your day to stop and reflect on yourself and to affirm God's hand in your life.

✚ Why did Daniel pray to the Lord three times a day? Was it because he had a great deal of free time? Or was it because he could not be anything other than thankful?

➤ How can you keep your heart filled with gratitude for God's grace?

2. Abandon idols and take hold of the real thing

- The freedom we have been given is to be used for God's sake, not our own desires. Christians have been freed from condemnation of sin and are now free, but how they use their freedom is important. If we do not walk firmly toward the goal of attaining the Kingdom of God, we may be deceived by Satan.
- "Inheritance of the Kingdom of Christ and of God" (5): We must remember that we who have received the reckoning (redemption) of the past are to inherit the Kingdom, which is the greatest reward.
 - ✚ The parables of the talents and the minas teach that this earthly life is a period of preparation for the future.
 - ✚ The discomfort caused by the precious "interruption" is a vector alignment that allows us to reflect on whether we are moving toward the Kingdom of God or not.
 - ✚ When sexual desires arise, an opportunity to reflect on whether we are entertaining ourselves or living in accordance with His will.
- "The high places were not removed:" the high places were the gods brought in by exotic wives from abroad, often temple priestesses. Even the kings who actively worked to enact reforms could not thoroughly effect change.

3. Choose your friends

- "He who touches pitch will be defiled." Who do you spend time with?
1 Corinthians 15:33 "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'"
Proverbs 22:24-25 "24 Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, 25 or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared."
- The importance of supportive colleagues
Proverbs 17:17 "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity."
Proverbs 27:17 "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."
Proverbs 27:5-6 "5 Better is open rebuke than hidden love. 6 Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses."
James 5:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

➤ Our church is "not a church with small groups, but a church of small groups."

◆ Conclusion

- What can we do to live each day filled with a thankful heart?
- The Bible encourages us to live by honestly acknowledging our sexual vulnerabilities and supporting each other. How do we begin to do that?
- For what reasons do you think it is difficult for you to rid your life of the "high places?"
- To what extent have you experienced the importance of confessing these struggles with each other?