

**Ephesians 5: 3-8; “Walking as Children of Light”, Message # 40 in a series
entitled – “The Greatness of His Power”, a Bible Study prepared by
Pastor Paul Rendall for September 7th, 2022.**

We saw, the last time that we were together, that as children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, we are dear to Him. He would have us to walk in love as Christ also has loved us and has given Himself for us. Right on the heels of this wonderful statement about Christ’s giving Himself for us as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God at the cross, we find Paul giving God’s saints a stern warning here. He says – You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Don’t go back to sin. The Lord would have each of us to walk as children of Light.

And so tonight I would like to open up this truth showing the stark contrast between what we once were, in our darkness, and what we are now, which is light in the Lord. I want to give you this exhortation, that as a Christian, if you want to show forth the glory of Christ’s grace, you should not go back to the sins that you once practiced, but you should press on in your faith and walk as children of light. By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ you must go on to become all that God and Christ would have you to be, that will please Him. If you love the Lord and are light in the Lord you will do the following things.

1st of all – You will be satisfied with cultivating sexual purity of mind and heart.

(verses 3 and 5)

“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints.” “For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” Fornication in the Greek is the word πορνεία and it encompasses all kinds of sexual sins and unfaithfulness to God which takes place when we do not see that He is the One who has created us, and that we should listen to Him as to what we should do with our body sexually. It was God who created man and woman and the sexual desires which are a part of our being.

Uncleanness begins with the sinful sexual thoughts that are cultivated in the mind and the heart, which are nonetheless sins, even though they do not come out into actual actions of sin. The motions of sin, the thoughts and meditations upon sexual sin are always sin as well as the actions themselves. Where did all of these sexual thoughts and sins come from? Well, we need to see that although God created Adam and Eve as persons who had righteous sexual desires related to the members of their bodies, when they ate the forbidden fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, they fell from having purity of heart.

They were originally created with hearts that were pure and righteous and holy. They thought of things in the right way in regard to sexual matters. Look at Genesis 2: 18-25 – “And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’ “Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them.” “And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.” “So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field.”

“But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.” “And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.” “Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.” “And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” Now, there are several things here which will show us why fornication

and uncleanness, sexually, are pursuits of darkness and sinfulness. It was the Lord God who created them male and female, the first man and the first woman. It was he who made the woman Eve and brought her to the man Adam. Their relationship was to be exclusive, each to the other. That was the design of marriage.

Therefore, fornication, having sex with whomever you please, your living apart from God's instruction concerning the danger of sin, and your not believing that God will punish all sin, this leaves you in the position of having to bear the guilt and the shame you bring upon yourself when commit such sins. A person who lives this way, independently of God's instruction in the Bible, that person will remain under the wrath of God, both in this life and for all eternity if they will not repent and believe in the Lord Jesus. That person is a child of wrath, and not one of God's dear children. They are saying – I will commit these sexual sins because I have my own design and my own purposes that I want to fulfill with my own body.

I will not recognize that God has made me for His good pleasure. I will not recognize His Lordship over my body. I do not need to heed what He has said about how I should use my body. This is what fornication and uncleanness are all about in their essence as sins. On the other hand, think about the fact that God in His good design ordained that Adam and Eve would have sexual relations, something that He created for them to enjoy and be delighted in; that is, in their become one flesh. His purpose was that they would honor Him in and by their sexual relations with each other.

Notice that He created them naked and unashamed. Sex was not a dirty thing. Sex for them was not fornication. It was the bodily expression of love, delight, faithfulness and commitment to each and to God. It was pleasing to God when they became one flesh. Shame is the feeling which your mind and your conscience bring to you, when you realize that you have sinfully thought about something that was wrong, or done something that was wrong. In regard to all people, they should feel shame, it should come to them if they have not thought or done what is right, sexually, or in relation to other sins such as covetousness.

When the mind and the conscience are thinking in the right way a person will feel shame in relation to having thought or committed sexual sins. Psalm 4, verses 2 and 3. "How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame?" "How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood?" "But know that the Lord has set apart for Himself him who is godly; the Lord will hear when I call to Him." So, these sexual desires and pleasures are meant to be fulfilled in a person's giving themselves exclusively to another of the opposite sex in marriage. They were not designed by God to be used by us in a purely selfish way, or in an unnatural way, which will not recognize God's way.

Fornication takes place when a person thinks that they know better than God, what they should do with their body. A sinful person will not recognize that they were created to use the sexual members of their body in accordance with how God intends that they would use them. You can see this if you will turn over to Genesis chapter 6, verses 1-3, and 5 and 6. "Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose."

"And the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be on hundred and twenty years.'" "There were giants on the earth in those days." Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." Here we see the darkness of peoples hearts in that generation.

The thoughts of God and His judgment of the world, destroying all the people on it except for Noah and his family should show us how important it is to be sexually pure of heart. Only Noah found grace, in order to be this way. The rest of the people in that day, it is to be feared, were fornicators or those who were partakers with them. The root cause of this was to be found in their hearts. Every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. The most obvious sins were the sexual sins and the violence.

It is often the case that much sexual sin is pursued by a person who does not know the Lord, in the supposed privacy of their own mind. The unbeliever thinks that since sexual activity involves tremendous personal pleasure, that it can be engaged in, personally and privately, or openly and publicly even, without any consequences. The Lord, however, who is the observer of our hearts, and all of our actions, He sees all of these sinful desires and actions. And verse in 6 Paul tells us that we should let no one deceive us with empty words, that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Verse 7 says that as Christians, we are not to be partakers with them. What is being said here is that all uncleanness is to be avoided by us in every situation of life that we are in. And what is just as important is that we learn to pray for greater and greater purity of heart, cultivating the thoughts of pure and righteous and holy love, the love of Christ, to think right thoughts about people around us. Christ's thoughts were always pure, even when around the vilest of sinners.

2nd – You will be satisfied with God and what He gives you and not be covetous.

Verse 3 says – “Or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints”. Now it may seem kind of strange to us that Paul has placed the sin of covetousness right up alongside the sins of fornication and uncleanness, and calling the person who practices that sin an idolator. But these two sins do have the same root in sin. And that is, that both the sexual sinner and covetous man are not satisfied, simply with God's design of things and what He would give to them, but they both want more and more of what God has not chosen to give to them. Both want more and more of what God would not have them to have.

Covetousness is a sinful desire because that person is always desiring what does not belong to them. Or it is something that that person does not want to work for. Deuteronomy 5, verse 21 – “You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey or anything that is your neighbors.” We might translate this commandment in more modern terms. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife, his house, anything of his property or his job. You shall not desire to have all of his possessions such as his appliances, or his car, or anything that is his.

In the case of coveting your neighbor's wife, a person may not realize that it was God who gave them their wife. You may not have a wife or a husband. But you have the Lord if you are a Christian. If you desire to have a wife and God has not brought you that person thus far, you can certainly continue to ask Him for a husband or a wife. But are you satisfied enough with God, and being spiritually united to Christ, that if God never did bring you a wife or a husband that you would be O.K. with that. 1st Corinthians 7, verse 32-35 – “But I want you to be without care.” “He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord.” “But he who is married cares for the things of the Lord – how he may please the Lord.” “But he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife.” “There is a difference between a wife and a virgin.” “The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit.” “But she who is married cares about the things of the world – how she may please her husband.”

Let us see from this that it is perfectly possible to be satisfied as a single person in serving the Lord. You may still desire to be married and there is nothing wrong with that. But God does satisfy

both; the one who marries, and the one who does not, if they are satisfied with Him. Paul says in 1st Corinthians 7: 7 – “For I wish that all men were even as I myself.” “But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.” But there is no need to be covetous of another man’s wife. God will always give what is good. And He alone can give real satisfaction and pleasure, whether you are married or not married.

Covetousness can also be found in those who are wealthy, or those who want to be wealthy. They either try to hard to obtain greater amounts of money, or they have too great a desire to hold on to their money and never spend on any good cause or attempt to help the poor. This, too, is based on greed, and it is a form of idolatry, or false worship. Money becomes the end all of everything in that person’s life. And they end up giving all of their strength and their time to serve this false god and never have enough time to serve God.

1st Timothy 6: 9 and 10. “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.” And also 1st Timothy 6: 17-19 – “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who give us richly all things to enjoy.” “Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, wiling to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. Let us remember that a covetous man has no inheritance in the kingdom of God, as our text here in Ephesians 5: 5 says.

3rd – You will be satisfied with speaking good words and in learning to give thanks instead of foolish talking and coarse jesting.

Verse 4 – “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.” And verse 6 – “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” Filthiness of the heart, in the thoughts of the heart, will produce foolish talking and coarse jesting. It would include any thought, “imagination, desire, word, or deed of which a believer who is sensitive to the demands of God’s holy law and who views himself as living constantly in His presence would be ashamed.” (William Hendricksen) Foolish talking and coarse joking about other people comes forth from foolish and unkind, unloving thinking which is taking place in the mind and heart of a person.

Being foolish is thinking and then saying things as though there is no God taking notice of them. Foolish speech is careless of the great harm or good that a person could do if they were a godly person. Matthew 12, verses 33-37 – “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.’ “Brood of vipers!” “How can you, being evil, speak good things?” “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak they will give account of it in the day of judgment.” “For by you words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Let’s close this study by thinking about how very important it is for every Christian to be storing up good things in their mind and heart. Store up things that will show reverence and respect for God and His word. Think with loving thoughtfulness about how you can do good to other people around you. Begin with the way that you think, and then continue on by showing kindness in the things that you say. Let the law of kindness be upon your tongue. May you not be careless or unthinking or unloving in your words. But rather, may you continually be giving thanks to God for the greatness of His grace and your ability to speak about the good spiritual things of His word. Speak encouraging things, things which will strengthen and help people around you. Proverbs 25: 11 – “A word fitly

spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” “Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear.”