

Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 5:3-8 - No Hint of Sexual Immorality

We are back this morning and we are looking at the dangers of sexual immorality. If you missed last week, I really encourage you to go back and listen to that because I think it's helpful to have an understanding of what the Bible says about sexual morality as well as immorality.

This morning we see this sober admonition so our Big Picture: Unrepentant sexual immorality will send you to hell.

Believers are called to put off all kinds of sin, but one of the sin categories we are constantly admonished to put off is sexual sin.

And I think part of the reason this sin is so emphasized in the Bible is because the passions and desires for sexual intimacy are so strong. This is one of the strongest desires in our lives that has been hardwired into us by God.

Put a different way, most people don't desire to lie or steal or murder. That's not a internal compulsion most of us have.

The desire for intimacy is different because God gave that to us to be used in an appropriate outlet within marriage. God gave it to us, and so part of what we are to do as we follow Jesus is to harness that desire and channel it into the appropriate outlet within marriage.

When it's not channeled appropriately, it's immorality. And that immorality is very dangerous, which is what Paul talks about here. So let's take a look:

1) Extent of the Command. Read 3

Before we define the sins, notice the extent of the command. Paul says these things should not even be named among us. NIV: not even a hint of these things. KJV: Let it not be named once among you.

What does that mean? Does that mean we don't talk about them? Should I skip this section and talk about something else?

No. The idea is that these things should not be in our lives at all. The idea is that we kill these sins so thoroughly and completely that there's no trace left of them within us.

That if unbelievers were to look at our lives they wouldn't be able to pin us with any kind of sexual immorality or impurity. We don't do it, we don't talk about it or joke about, we don't share social media posts with it. It's just not there in our lives.

Have you ever seen drug dogs at work? They can smell drugs on people even if it's a trace amount. If a person has no drugs, the dog just moves on like it's no big deal. In the same way, if there was a dog that could sniff out sexual immorality on people, they should just walk right by us because it's not there - no trace.

God wants us to eliminate all sexual immorality. Not some, not most of it, not 97% of it. He wants it all gone. Gone, gone.

Paul also says that it is not proper among the saints. Sexual immorality is beneath the sons and daughters of the Kingdom. I was talking to my kids the other night as we were reading through 1 Thessalonians. 2:12: walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

And the gist is that if you are a Christian, you are royalty in God's kingdom. And there are things that are just beneath us. You think of the British monarchs of old or the royal line - there were just things they didn't do with commoners. It was beneath them. They walked like royalty because they were royalty.

In the same way we walk as royalty because we are in God's Kingdom - that's the imagery. The riff raff of sexual perversion is below us. It's not proper among the saints. It all must go.

The extent of the command.

2) Definition of Immorality. **Read 3**

What are these two words: impurity and sexual immorality. They're often used together. Sexual immorality is the Greek word pornea - which is where we get our word for porn. It can refer to all types of sexual immorality, or it can refer to specifically fornication in contrast to adultery. Fornication is when an unmarried person has sex, adultery is when a married person has sex with someone other than their spouse. Sometimes the Bible differentiates the two.

Here, I think it's a broad term to encompass all sexual sin. Sexual sin was rampant in Rome and I think it's rampant now as well. Here's a list of sins from one commentator that this word would have been addressing in Roman times: sex before marriage, adulterous relationships, men having sex with slave girls or boys, incest, prostitution, sexual acts at pagan temples, homosexuality. (Arnold, Clint. Ephesians. Note on 5:3-5). Orgies were prevalent in Rome as well.

I think by way of application for us, this also includes pornography, masturbation, living as though you are married (calling yourself married) even though you are not, the rampant divorce/remarriage culture in our society, watching movies that are sexually charged, child trafficking, molestation, reading steamy romance novels, making emotional connections with the opposite sex that are inappropriate, so on. None of these should ever be named among us.

Paul also uses the word impurity. Impurity is a word that is somewhat of a catchall for any sexual deviance. Over and over in the Bible were told that we should not be impure and the idea is sexually impure.

When we went to Israel a few years ago they told us to not drink the water. There were impurities in the water that we weren't accustomed to. We're talking little microbes that a 5 parts per million - super small. And one night I brushed my teeth in the shower not thinking about what it could do and the next 48 hours was brutal.

That little impurity absolutely destroyed my digestive system. Well, that's what sexual impurity does in our lives. Even a little bit can have devastating effects that we can't imagine.

Paul also mentions covetousness. **Read**

Why covetousness? Covetousness is desiring something that is not lawful to have. It's a violation of the 10th command: You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's what? Wife. Or his ox, donkey, servants or anything that is your neighbors.

It's okay to want a house or want a wife. But you can't desire your neighbor's. That's unlawful. And when it comes to your neighbor's wife it's sexual immorality. And actually it's a form of idolatry. **Read 6**

How is it idolatry? Because to covet something that doesn't belong to you is to say that God is not your provider, he hasn't given you what you need and you need to find satisfaction in something else. And that something else is functionally your idol.

Usually we think of covetousness in relation to money - and it can be that. But here in context the issue is desiring sexual satisfaction apart from the marital union.

Paul mentions 3 other sins here. And these 3 are more related to our words. **Read 4**

Filthiness is sometimes translated obscene. Which is where we get our word obscenity. It could be behavior, but I think in context it's speech.

Side: we all know there are bad words. Every society has them and we're not always sure why some words are considered appropriate and others not. But inappropriate words have existed in all times and languages and so

we don't get to play semantic games about whether or not some words are bad. There just are bad words, everyone knows this and if you're playing those games you're deceived.

Usually bad words are categorized into 3 types.

Profanity: using religious terms in a coarse way: Jesus, Christ, OMG, go to h-e-l-l. They take things that are sacred and making them common and coarse.

Obscenity: are usually related to body parts and actions. Think about badwords related to human anatomy, or human sexual acts used in an inappropriate way.

Insults: These are attacks on a person.

That's what these words are talking about. No filthiness. No foolishness that could be harmful or improper. Would you say it in front of Jesus? Like if he were standing right here?

There's no coarse jesting. Jokes are often crudely sexual in nature.

I remember working at a fabrication shop when we were first married and at some point I just no longer ate lunch in the lunch room because the jokes and conversation was so bad. I just didn't want to hear about it any more.

Those words have no place in our lives. And the cheap knock-off Christian swearing shouldn't happen either. You know what I'm talking about, we used to call it Mormon swearing because they'd use all these words that sounded like swear words and weren't really. But everyone knew what they meant.

Paul says not a hint of these things.

All these sins we are to put away. To put off. And I know these sins can cause a lot of guilt and shame. I know that even talking about God's good design for sex can cause a lot of guilt and shame.

Maybe you're caught up in porn. Maybe you slept with your boyfriend and still feel the shame and guilt of that. Maybe an affair has rocked your marriage. It could be a variety of things.

I just want to pause and tell you that if you are in Christ your sins are washed away. Past, present and future. I want you just to sit and bask in that a minute. Whatever you have done, or haven't done has been washed away at the cross. Jesus died for our most shameful sins. Jesus died for the sins we'll never tell anyone else about. Jesus died for the stuff we wish he would magically take from us but it's still a battle.

1689 LCF 16:3: [Believers] may fall into grievous sins and continue in them for a time, due to the temptation of Satan and the world...We can incur God's displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit...we can hurt and scandalize others and bring temporary judgments on themselves. Nevertheless, they will renew their repentance and be preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end.

Maybe that's you. Your graces are impaired. Listen, renew yourself to repentance and strive after Jesus by putting these sins off.

If it's a sinful relationship, it needs to end now. We just saw another big name Christian guy admit to an 8 year adulterous affair this week. That can't be happening.

If you've been unfaithful to your spouse, you need to confess it and begin the process of reconciliation and restoration. There's not going to be a good time, you might as well do it now.

If you're steeped in porn, you need to stop. Get software, get rid of social media, stop being alone with electronics.

Porn is so pervasive today that you have to do everything in your power to destroy it.

If you're sleeping with your boyfriend or girlfriend you need to end it. If you can't be sexually pure before the wedding, it's hard to believe you'll be so after.

The solution may be: just go get married. It might be that you need to end the relationship. But whatever the case the sin has to stop.

So we've got the extent, the definitions.

3) The warning against these sins. **Read 5-7**

So the warning here is that someone who is involved in these sins - sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness - has no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God. What does that mean? It means they're not Christians.

They're not Christians, they're not going to heaven, their sins haven't been forgiven, and the wrath of God is still on them.

A Christian is someone who has an inheritance in the Kingdom. They are looking forward to spending eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ and in the presence of the Father because they've been adopted into the family and receive the Kingdom.

To not receive the Kingdom is to not be part of the family.

This is a grave warning. And these warnings are all over the place in the NT.

Look at Matt 5:27-30. This is the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. It was probably a sermon Jesus preached many, many times. And the content of it was basically the same everywhere he went. Luke even records a version of this in a very similar fashion. **Read**

It's not just the act, is it? It's looking with lust. What's Jesus say we need to do if we're struggling with this? Cut off our hands, gouge out our eyes. I don't think he's being literal, but he is being serious.

A lot of people come to me and they're in some sin. They feel guilty about it, and then they make a half-hearted effort to get rid of it. They want to do the minimum, or just above that.

Is Jesus looking for a half-hearted effort? No. Cut stuff off. Get radical is his point. Because what's the consequence if we don't get these sins out of our lives? Your whole body will go into hell.

You can either suffer now in getting sin out of your life, or you can suffer forever if you don't. Those are the options.

Look at 1 Cor. 5. This is a section where a man was committing sexual immorality with probably his step mom. So gross even the pagans wouldn't do that. **Read 1-5.**

So Paul says there is immorality in the church that's worse than the pagans. Even pagans would never stand for this, but the Corinthians are proud of how much grace they're showing this guy. Paul says to remove him. The very next time they're gathered, hand him over to Satan. That's a way of saying excommunicate him for his sin.

Why? So that in the removal he might actually come to repentance. **Read 5**

Paul doesn't want him kicked out just because he's mean. He actually wants this guy to be saved. He knows judgment is coming. He knows the Day of the Lord will be wrath for unbelievers. So removing this guy is a way to show him how serious things are. **Read 6-8**

He's using OT language here. In the Passover, the Israelites were to cleanse out all the leaven from their homes. No leaven for a week. Why? Paul actually says that was to prefigure Jesus. Jesus is the true Passover lamb. He's the one who was sacrificed so that the destroyer would Passover us and deliver us from sin.

And how we celebrate him and honor him, is to get the leaven of sin out of our lives. **Read 9-13**

We don't even eat with people who claim to be brothers and yet are in unrepentant sin. There's no close fellowship at all.

You know one of the biggest complaints the world has about Christians is that we're all hypocrites. Have you heard that? Yes. And many times we are. We tolerate people who we know are in sin. That can't be. One of the ways we refute the charge of hypocrisy is that we remove people who are in sin and refuse to repent.

It's very much like Matthew 18. Why do we do this? Because God commands us to. Sin will infect the church if it's not purged.

Look at the stark warning Paul makes in **1 Cor. 6:9-11**. It's very similar to Ephesians. **Read**

These are called vice lists where there's just a list of sins that will keep us from heaven. They're sobering. Did you notice that about half of them deal with sexual immorality of some kind? Immorality, adultery, homosexuality - the Greek actually mentions both people in the homosexual relationship.

But did you notice these are all sins that the Corinthians had been saved from? As such were some of you. These are sins that can be forgiven and overcome and eliminated from our lives.

There were former gay people in the Corinthians church. There were former drunkards, adulterers, revilers, thieves. But they were washed and sanctified and justified.

God cleansed them. Beloved, there is hope for overcoming these sins. Repentance is the way out.

I want to show you a little more before we go back to Ephesians. The Corinthians thought that they had liberty to do whatever they wanted, even going to prostitutes. Paul says no. **Read 15-20**

This is what I was trying to get to a little earlier. There is something especially dangerous about sexual sin because it is a sin against our own bodies. Because of the nature of the sexual union - it's actually spiritual as well as physical - when we sin sexually it is especially grievous. It's an attack on one's own body because of the damage it causes.

It's like saying "I love the warmth of wood stoves so I'm going to put my hand in the fire." No. That would cause us harm - same with sexual immorality. It's a sin against our own bodies.

Turn to 1 Thess. 4:1-8. The Thessalonians church in many ways was a model for Christian conduct. They loved each other, they revered the Word of God, they were faithful despite persecution.

But one sin that Paul warns them not to fall into is sexual immorality. **Read 1-8**

These were the same instructions they heard when Paul first preached the gospel to them. And they were doing well - but Paul says to walk pleasing God more and more. There's always room to grow, room for improvement in this area.

And I love what he says in **Vs. 3. Read**

You ever wonder what the will of God is for your life? What his desire is for you personally? Well, Paul tells us here: it's to abstain from sexual immorality. If God were here right now and you asked him: "God, what's your will for me? What do you want from my life?" He'd tell you to abstain from sexual immorality.

And did you notice what this requires? **Read 4**

It requires self-control. Controlling yourself. You can control yourself. You can close the computer. You can stop texting that person. You can stop sleeping with your boyfriend. You can end the affair.

And he warns here as well: if you don't the Lord is an even get in all these things. **Read 6-7**

This is a solemn warning, isn't it? And we need to be reminded of this warning because what God wants from us is purity.

Let's **look back at Eph. 5**. So the warning here is hell. It's that we're not Christian if we continue in these sins. Paul also says it a different way here too in **Vs. 6. Read**

Let no one deceive you. There's a lot of deception out there that sexual immorality just isn't all that bad. "It's no big deal. God will forgive me. He understands. Everyone else is doing it so I can."

Those are all lies and empty words. They are not true in any way. Instead, because of these sins - the 6 we talked about - the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience.

Who's that? Those are unbelievers. He actually mentioned that earlier in the book. **Read 2:1-3**

The sons of disobedience are unbelievers. They follow after satan and their own flesh and disregard the warnings of the Bible especially when it comes to sexual sin.

If someone is living a life of sexual sin, Paul is clear: the wrath of God is on him. The displeasure of almighty God rests on that person in full strength. **Look at 5:7-8**

Not only is the wrath of God on these people, we don't even go near them. We take no part in their lives. This is how bad it is.

4) Remedy: Walk in the light. **Read 7-8**

Beloved every aspect of our lives is to be light. Pure and good and true. We are children of Light. The Bible says that God is light, it's highlighting his purity and sinlessness. That's how we should be walking all the time.

Let me just talk pastorally for a minute. I've helped men put off porn. I've helped people work through sexually immoral relationships.

Listen, these things can be put off. Your life doesn't have to be defined by them.

Immorality, impurity, filthy speech, homosexuality, you name it it can all be conquered in the name of Jesus.

Some of the issues we face are very difficult, so if that's you and you want help, please come talk and let's get this sin out of your life.

We are called to light, to holiness, to purity for our good and the glory of God.

Pray