

## INTRODUCTION

On our last study we were commanded by Paul to be imitators of God and the area that was highlighted was the area of practical love. Christ is our example here who showed us what true love is by giving himself on a cross for us (v 2). Therefore because Christian people are to walk in love then such a life will mean that we will not commit sexual immorality or indulge in impurity or in greed? I suggested last week that all those terms are referring to the abuse of sex; they are the opposite from walking in love.

Such sinful acts and attitudes are not proper for Christian people because we are God's holy people therefore our lives will reflect our holiness. Now as we take up our text again we continue this theme of sex.

### 1. A CHRISTIAN DOES NOT JOKE ABOUT SEX BUT GIVES THANKS FOR IT (v 4)

There are so called comedians like Chubby Brown who actually make a living out of what the world calls adult jokes, jokes concerning sex. It is becoming increasingly difficult in our world to listen to jokes at all because of the sexual overtones of many of them. Even the intimate sexual act between a loving married couple is often joked about in the place of work by one or both partners. When I worked in the Railway I wondered if their wives of some of my work colleagues knew how their husbands spoke about their bedroom activities. Our world is possessed with sex and it is not surprising therefore that our jokes are also based on this subject.

But as Christians who want to walk in love within our sinful world such joking has no place in our lives. As Christians we must not be sexually obscene in our speech, the word used here carries the idea of abandoning all evil even as a topic of conversation.

Christians should not talk about sex in any other way but in wholesome language. We do not need to talk about the subject at all except to our partners and to our children as we teach and train them God's way concerning this gift of sex. We must not allow ourselves to listen to such conversations and perhaps we need to be a little bolder in challenging those who do. Paul mentions the need to avoid foolish talk or flippant talk and course joking.

Again Paul has the subject of sex in his mind here. There is to be no foolish or flippant talk and no dirty jokes as far as the Christian is concerned. Now Paul is of course not saying that we should not tell jokes, a sense of humour is God's gift to us. Christians ought to be able to laugh and make others laugh for that will certainly colour life for us and others but our jokes and joking are not at the expense of such a wonderful gift as sex.

Apparently the Ephesians were well known for their course joking and Paul is telling the Christians that such humour is no longer part of the Christian's life.

Once we become saved people then every aspect of our life is changed and is changing including our sense of humour and the types of jokes we love and tell. Paul's reason for denouncing such sins in Christians is simply that such things have no place in the Christians life. They are out of place they are not what anyone expects from a Christian person. You know when something is out of place don't you. You know that in the midst of a lovely display of flowers in the garden ugly weeds are out of place.

That's not what we expect in a floral display. Well so it is with the Christian; such joking and speech is totally out of place it is not what is expected. But what is expected then? Paul says that instead the Christian should be full of thanksgiving. The sort of thing that ought to be found on

Christian's lips is a profound sense of thanksgiving to God. Yet it is odd isn't it that this is often the thing that is not found upon our lips.

Often we grumble and criticise but we are so often short on thanksgiving. Yet being a Christian means being the recipient of many, many blessing from the hand of God yet so often we do not return thanksgiving to God for those blessings. But I think and so do some of the commentators that Paul has one particular blessing in mind here.

That is the blessing of sex. It certainly fits into this whole context here doesn't it. You know our world has so perverted sex that even as Christian people we can forget that it is God gracious gift to mankind to be expressed only within the union of marriage. Whenever that happens then it is a wonderful gift from God's good hand.

We must not as Christian people give the impression that sex is dirty that sadly was the view of some within the Victoria era. We need to teach our young people that sex is a blessing within the marriage relationship; it is not sinful within that context and is in fact an immense blessing to married couples. So we ought to thank God for it; it is his gift and it gives immense pleasure and satisfaction within a loving a committed married relationship.

## 2. THE REASON WHY A CHRISTIAN MUST OBSTAIN FROM SUCH SINS (vs. 5-7)

We all need incentives and reasons for doing things as human beings. Good businesses understand the need for incentives so that they can get the best from their workforce. All kinds of inducements can be offered higher wages better working conditions holidays etc.

The best incentives are those that seek to give employees a heightened interest in their jobs, a greater loyalty to the company and a sense of pride in what they are producing or selling. Well in these verses God is moving our motivation he is giving us reasons and incentives why we should walk in love and refrain from all the sexual temptations listed.

Good preachers not only tell people what they should do but also will explain why they should do it; they will seek to motivate their listeners. After all unless we are motivated and convinced of the reasoning behind a certain action then we will not continue in it or continue to refrain from it just because some preacher says so. So what motivation or reason does Paul give for resisting the many temptations to live immoral and impure and greedy lives?

Judgement is certain on those who do indulge in such sins; that's the motivation to avoid such sins. There is something that is absolutely certain something that we can be sure off and can be relied upon. It is that although it is true that most people who are immoral seem to get away with it in our own country they will not ultimately escape detection conviction and sentence. Sinners who persist in sin are excluded from the Kingdom of Christ and of God (v 5).

Paul again lists particular sins that were rife in Ephesus sins that he has already mentioned sins like immorality, impurity and greed. He calls the greedy person an idolater. Now if we take greed as we did in our last study as being sexual greed, which fits the context, then the idea of having sex because it fulfils my natural sexual desires is actually making an idol of sex. It's as bad as bowing down to some wooden or metal god.

Such a god is taking the place of the true God in that person's life so that it excludes them from God's kingdom. Such people think more often of sex than they do of God their sexual drives and desires drive them on to sinful actions and so they are idol worshippers of the god called sex. Now I want to suggest to you that our society is full of such people today. You find them in all walks of life and in every age group as well.

Their worship of such an idol condemns them and unless they repent of such idolatry then they will not be in God's kingdom they will not receive God's glorious inheritance. You see this is how Paul is motivating the Christians at Ephesus. You might think that you are missing out young people by keeping yourself for that person that God brings into your life and one day you will marry.

The world tells us we are missing out by being faithful to our spouses, or if we are unmarried then the world encourages us to enjoy sex anyway. But Paul says people who engage in such sins habitually will not inherit God's kingdom. In other words you cannot be a Christian if you engage in this sort of activity.

Now we need to recognise the difference between a genuine Christian who falls into sexual sin and someone who habitually engages in it. There is forgiveness for every sexual sin but forgiveness can only be received once such sins are repented off.

The Christian who gets involved in such a sin can be assured that they will not lose their salvation and they will find forgiveness when they repent. This is not a blank cheque to indulge in such sins and on every occasion repent and receive forgiveness. Such thinking is anti Christian and anyone who thinks like that and there have been some who have must seriously question their profession of faith. Repentance means fleeing from the sin with a desire of never doing it again.

There is a world of difference between the Christian who falls into sexual sin and the unbeliever who actively engages in such sins without a thought that such actions are sinful. Such people will not be in God's kingdom while they continue to think and live in such a way. They can know God's forgiveness and the blessing of his inheritance but only through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus.

Now isn't this a great motivation Christian to resist the many sexual temptations that come our way on a regular basis. Such a lifestyle shows us that such people do not belong to God's kingdom; God does not rule in their lives otherwise they would start to live in accordance with the rules of God's kingdom. If we are Christians then with God's help we will be putting out of our lives anything that gives even a hint of sexual immorality or of impurity and greed.

In Christ we receive a great inheritance we have many blessings in him so if you are here and you do not know Him yet then let me encourage you to turn to him. You will find genuine forgiveness for your many sins including any sexual sins that you might have committed either in thought or deed.

Now we need to be clear that such a lifestyle will bring God's judgement for it is so easy to be deceived. I get so annoyed when I go to a funeral service of an unbeliever and the Vicar or Minister makes clear statements about the person being in heaven. Such a person is deceived and is actually deceiving others as well. Paul warns about such deception here (v 6). It is amazing but true that sinners usually seem convinced that the consequences of their sins are not really serious.

Few people today really believe that they will suffer for their sins. They might believe that others would suffer; people that they consider really bad but not them, their sins are not that bad. Christian do not be deceived by such thinking whether it comes from a family member someone in your street or from a Vicar or Minister of the church. This view is clearly held concerning sexual sin as well.

We love each other surely that is all that matters? We are only doing what is natural others might say. Surely we all have sexual drives that need to be fulfilled? Everyone is doing it anyway so it can't be wrong? I am acting responsibly for I am having safe sex? All these arguments are a

deception to try and cover up the real truth that God punishes sin, sometimes in temporary judgements in this world but ultimately in eternity.

We can kid ourselves and others that in the end everything will be all right for us but the truth is that such thinking and words are empty they are deceptive. As Christians we ought to know better. Sin is serious it brings upon us the wrath of God therefore do not be deceived into thinking that sin does not matter. It certainly does matter. God's judgement upon sin ought to be the Christian's motivation for living holy pure and committed lives for God.

God is angry with all sin, sinners will be judged by God all sinners will experience the wrath of God and the reason for this is that they live in constant disobedience towards God (v 6). You cannot live without God and then expect his acceptance of you. You cannot ignore his laws and then somehow think that God will overlook your sin. Yes God is forgiving of those who seek him but of those who remain disobedient then he is wrathful towards such people.

Their ultimate end must be eternal judgement. This is why those who say I will be all right in the end are deceived. It does not even make sense. If you have no time for God in this world why should God have time for us in the next? If heaven is perfect then how can he let unforgiven sinners in? However the good news is that on that cross the Lord Jesus Christ gave his life and took upon himself God's wrath so that those who repent and turn to him can be forgiven and cleansed by the blood of Christ.

That is good news. The cross tells us that God takes sin very seriously; he will not overlook it or compromise with it. But it also tells us that God loves sinners very much and longs to grant them forgiveness and make us right with God. If you don't know those experiences then come to Jesus. If you have been forgiven then thank God afresh because you and I deserved God's wrath because of our sin.

Paul rounds of this little section with an appeal to his readers to make sure they escape the fate he has been outlining (v 7). Because judgement for sin is true because God is wrathful do not be partners with those who are disobedient. Paul is saying do not be in partnership with sinners; flee from such sins mentioned; have nothing to do with the lifestyle outlined. Do not do what the world does. Do not be immoral or impure or greedy. Do not be obscene or foolish or coarse in your speech and in your jokes.

Do not be partners with the world in sin and we will not be partners with the world in judgement. But instead my dear brothers and sisters in Christ let us be thankful to God and let us live moral pure and selfless lives because we are God's holy people.

Amen