

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for January 20, 2019

Lustful Living
Ephesians 5:3-6

I. The characteristics of lustful living (5:3-4)

A. Improper conduct (5:3)

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

- Description of lustful conduct
 - “Sexual immorality”
 - Greek word is *porneia* from which we have English words like “pornography”
 - Prominent and celebrated in Greco-Roman culture
 - This word refers to sexual behavior outside of marriage
 - Examples would include premarital sex (Hebrews 13:4), adultery (Matthew 19:9), prostitution (1 Corinthians 6:12-20), homosexuality (Romans 1:29), incest (1 Corinthians 5:1), etc.
 - Sexual behavior has always been designed for marriage
 - Ephesians 5:31 and Genesis 2:24 confirm this stating, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”
 - Sexual immorality begins in the heart
 - Mark 7:21 “For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,”
 - Matthew 5:27-28 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
 - “All impurity”
 - While impurity is a vague term for a defilement of the person, the most common manifestation of impurity in the New Testament is sexual impurity
 - Romans 1:24 “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,”

- 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7 “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality... For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.”
 - Thus, every kind of impurity in this context is probably referring to any and every sexual act outside of marriage
 - “Covetousness”
 - Or other translations might say “greed”
 - “the insatiable desire to acquire more and more, whatever the object”¹
 - Some have seen this as the internal attitude behind external acts of sexual immorality and impurity
 - “The opposite of moderation, it is selfishness to an extreme degree. The internal attitude is tied to the sexual immorality and impurity.”²
- Distance from lustful conduct
 - “Must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints”
 - These lustful descriptions should not be characteristic of the Christian community
 - In fact, there should not even be an occasion or reason to name the church as involved in sexual immorality, impurity, or covetousness
 - Unfortunately, it is far too often that churches have been highlighted for scandals of embezzlement or sexual immorality
 - We cannot let these moments cause us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think
 - Just like learning from the example of the Israelites, we must be humble and take heed lest we also fall

B. Improper conversation (5:4)

Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

- Description of lustful conversation
 - “Filthiness”
 - Generic term speaking of conduct that is shameful and disgraceful
 - It can be used as a compound word for “filthy speech”
 - Colossians 3:8 “But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.”

¹ Clinton E. Arnold, Ephesians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI:

² Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 652.

- Best to understand this term as referring to both conduct and speech
 - “The specific kinds of behaviors that Paul has in mind are difficult to know, but certainly could extend to lewd gestures, inappropriate touching, disgusting kinds of practical jokes, and a wide variety of other behaviors.”³
 - “Foolish talk”
 - Could also be translated silly or senseless talk
 - Not specifically limited to sexually inappropriate language
 - More likely, this is the speech that does not make the cut of Ephesians 4:29 “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”
 - “At any rate, it is at least likely to refer to futile talk that detracts from the issues of faith and edifying discussion”⁴
 - “Crude joking”
 - Also translated as “coarse jesting”
 - Rare and unique term identifying when humor has gone too far and puts down others
 - Comes from a Greek word meaning “to turn”
 - Thus, this has to do with turning a phrase in order for it to take on a sexual innuendo
 - This could also be described as double entendre
- Distance from lustful conversation
 - “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place”
 - As common as this language is in our world and culture, we are called to be different
 - The church is to be separate from such talk and joking that match the world
 - Instead the church should be identified as a group of people that have no place for such speech
- Description of loving conversation
 - “But instead let there be thanksgiving”
 - What an interesting thing to say and highlight at this point

³ Clinton E. Arnold, Ephesians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 322.

⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 655.

- I would expect Paul to say something about there being holiness or purity instead of the lustful living he has described
- Why would Paul appeal to the need for thanksgiving?
- Thanksgiving is the prevention of all such lustful habits
- Why does anyone seek, desire, practice and say the things that they say?
- Because they are looking for something more!
- They are not thankful with what they have, they need more!
 - More sexual pleasure, more relationships, more objects, more things, more money, etc.
 - American culture is a poster child for how a lack of gratitude has manifested itself in continual lust
- Romans 1:21 “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”
 - This explains so much of what we experience and see in the world around us
- Instead, believers must be a thankful people, not a people lusting for more
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:18 “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”

II. The concerns with lustful living (5:5-6)

- God does not just tell us to say “no” to lust
- God explains the reason for His ways and standard of holiness

A. No inheritance in the kingdom of God (5:5)

For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

- Lustful living has no inheritance in the kingdom of God
- Paul makes this clear by repeating every term from verse 3 (sexually immoral, impure or covetous)
- He adds that coveting is idolatry
 - Romans 1:25 “because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”
 - Coveting exchanges the truth about God being our all-sufficient provision of satisfaction for the lie that says man can be happy by seeking fulfillment in the things on earth
 - “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.” -Augustine

- Paul could not be any more clear about the destination of those who practice sexual immorality, impurity and coveting
- They will not inherit the kingdom of God!
- Notice that Paul does not say that anyone who *has ever* committed these acts has no inheritance
 - That would contradict his teaching in 1 Corinthians 6
 - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
- Rather, Paul is stating that those who are living and practicing these sins as a way of life will not inherit the kingdom of God
 - 1 John 3:9 “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.”
- The point is that you must decide who is Lord of your life
- You cannot serve both God and yourself
- You can only serve God and have assurance of inheriting the kingdom provided that you have departed from the old ways of the flesh and the enticements of the world
- If you are unwilling to turn from these sinful habits and practices, then you are not fit for the kingdom of God
- Do not fool yourself into thinking that you can have lustful living now and eternity with God

B. Invokes the wrath of God (5:6)

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

- Paul issues a warning against being deceived to walk in these habits and patterns of lustful living
- This deception can come from the world outside (1 John 2:15-17)
- This deception can come from the so-called church inside (Jude 3-4)
- Paul says that such lustful living will not only miss the kingdom
- Lustful living is the reason for God’s wrath that will come upon mankind
 - Since God is a righteous God who feels indignation everyday (Psalm 7:11)
 - And since He hates evil (Proverbs 6:16-19)
 - And since He is light and no darkness dwells in Him at all (1 John 1:5)

- He will certainly bring all wickedness, evil and lustful living to justice in His holy and righteous wrath that will be poured out for eternity in the lake of fire
- This was to motivate the Ephesians to holiness in their love for one another rather than selfishness in their lustful living