

Clean Lives, Clean Speech, and a Clear Assurance

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Ephesians 5. Paul is in this section of the book where he is saying, "Okay, here is how we live." Francis Schaeffer wrote a book many many years ago. He was considered a Christian philosopher, a Christian apologetic, and he had a book entitled "How shall we then live?" He was basing it on truths in history and church history and the history of our country since we are this kind of people, now how should we then live, and that's basically what Paul is saying here. He's saying, "Based on the glorious truths of your salvation being of sovereign grace, now here is how we should live."

Now the context is important because this is a very corrupt, very vile, very impure, immoral culture these Ephesians were living in. No doubt the great majority of the church, at least the men of the church, had lived lives of wanton outward immorality and impurity, and conversion doesn't just kill all of that immediately. It changes the heart, it does change the patterns but you don't become perfect. So he's writing in that context and he begins to deal with some things and we're really dealing with practical brass tacks here.

Notice what he says Ephesians 5, beginning in verse 3.

3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them;

You know, the problems in society are all rooted in the soil of humanity or in the soil of the human heart. The soil is bad and therefore the roots are bad, the stem is bad, the branches are bad, and the fruit, it's all bad. The core of our being, the root of our life, the soil we are planted in as human beings, if you will, is corrupt. It's fallen. It's godless.

In our country today, we have the political right and the conservatives and their programs and ideas, and then we have the political left and their programs and their liberal ideas,

however, instead of solving the problems, they often just seem to create more new problems because all of it springs from bad soil. My argument to the liberals sometimes is that, do you really just believe that this collection of elitist intellectuals you want to look to, they are just inherently have better DNA than the rest of us? They are just inherently good and if we give them our money, if we give them power and control over us, they'll just do what's best for everybody? Have you ever heard of a Stalin? Have you ever heard of Mao Tse Tung? Have you ever heard of Hitler? Chavez? These were all individuals that the people said, "This is a good person. He's going to help us. He has helped us. We'll give him the power, the authority and the control." No, what we find out is whether you are on the left or whether you are on the right, we all have bad soil that we are planted in. We all have bad and fallen hearts.

It's not a Western problem either, it's an Eastern problem, it's a mankind problem. In James Montgomery Boice's commentary, John Kenneth Galbraith said this – listen now – "Under communism, man exploits man, and under capitalism, the situation is exactly the reverse." Did you get it? I mean, corrupt and ungodly capitalism, though I certainly favor that form of government, has evil on in it just like corrupt and immoral communism, but there will only be, well, there is only one and there will only be one true dictator who will rule in righteousness and his name is Jesus. So until he comes, I'm not favoring that form of government, amen? I'm going to go with a form of government with a plurality of accountability and checks and balances. That was the wisdom of our forefathers because they understood the Scriptures.

As you know, I was interviewed, some of our other church members were interviewed by a sociologist from Columbia University, a brilliant man, an educated man. I enjoyed, I really enjoyed talking to him, actually, and I don't know if I told you or not but when he came in to interview may, Brother Tim had set up a high definition video player to video the whole thing. He sat down and he looked at that thing and he said, "You're going to video tape this?" I said, "Well, yes, if you don't mind." He said, "Are you going to show it publicly?" I said, "Well, only if I have to. I want to know what you're saying about what you said I said, and I want to know that context that you quote me in because content is everything." I've never been interviewed, whether it's the Wall Street Journal or wherever I've been interviewed for anything, where they didn't mess the context up to some degree and make you look like whatever they wanted their point to be. Well, that's just another illustration of the bad soil that we all have.

Dr. Adrian Rogers used to say when he summarized this biblical truth, that the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart. That's where it all stems from. Man cannot change his heart and that's where Ephesians is so helpful, really the Bible in general, but Ephesians in specific. Man cannot change his own heart any more than a leopard can change his spots, but God can change his heart. God can make him a new man. God can make him alive spiritually. God can cause him to be born again. God can change the very heart of man from spiritually dead to spiritually alive, and that's what we've seen. And I really need to do another one of those 45 minute runs through the first two chapters to let you know again all the great foundation this is built upon. As a matter of fact, I'm going to do just about a three minute one, all right?

Back to chapter 1. He says in verse 4, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." He chose us. He did that work. Verse 5, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ." He did this. Verse 7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." Go down to verse 11, he has done this and given us "an inheritance, predestining us according to His purpose and he works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." That's verse 12. Then we can go on and on and on. He talks about us being sealed in him. He says God has done all these things and I have just fallen in love with that oft repeated classification in the New Testament, ekklesia, we translate it "church," and every time you see that word "church" it means "called out ones." God predestined us. God adopted us. God called us out. God redeemed us. God justified us. God did these things.

Now that you are one of those people, God has called and God has changed, Paul says, "Now look, you can't live like you used to live in Ephesus." You know, the Temple of Diana was there, and I believe I'm correct that anthropologists and historians tell us that at the Temple of Diana there was sometimes thousands of prostitutes and that's what they called religion in that day. The vileness and impurity of the culture was rampant, sort of like what you and I live in today. But Paul said, "Since you are one of those different ones, here's how God wants you to live."

First of all, I., and we'll just entitle this "Clean Lives, Clean Speech, and a Clear Assurance." Clean lives, clean speech, and a clear assurance. I. Let's talk about clean lives. Notice it there in verse 3, "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints." Now down in verse 6 he says, "Let no one deceive you," and it gives me the idea that these Ephesians, assume most of which are genuinely converted, some of this old vile and evil philosophy. Gnosticism was a part of the problem here because Gnosticism would say that your body is hopelessly fallen and you can't do anything for it so you can just give in to all of your bodily lusts and desires, it doesn't effect anything. If it feels good, do it. Let it go. Let go and get involved, and that's wickedness. So these kinds of things were probably gaining a little traction around the edges of the congregation and they were bringing with them some of the immoralities and impurities, perhaps, that God saved them out of and Paul is trying to say, "No, you've got to fight that back out. You can't walk in that any longer." He says there is to be no trace of adultery; there is to be no trace of fornication; no trace of prostitution; no trace of homosexuality; no trace of incest; no trace of greediness. It's not even to be named among you. Clean living.

Now, it's interesting in verse 2, Paul had stated to them about how they are to walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, but then in verse 3, he takes the perversion of love, which is when men give themselves over to base lust. You do understand that when people use the phrase "make love" and we hear this concept of love in Hollywood and in the culture today, it has nothing to do with love. It is absolutely not love, it's base animalistic lust. Now we used to say that society has gone to the dogs but you can't do that anymore out of respect for dogs. That's how low we have become. That's how base

and fallen. Isn't it amazing that man has the capacity to be more vile and more impure than the animal kingdom? Isn't that amazing? We've lost our capacity to blush. Nothing shocks anymore. I feel so sorry for our children and our babies and we've got to fight and fight and fight and keep on fighting to shield them and shepherd them away from impure images and influences, and we've got to be careful, don't make that the idol of your life but that's an important pursuit for all of us moms and dads and grandmothers and granddaddies, especially in the age of the internet where in two clicks you can be right in the middle of hell. And our children need to be kept innocent and pure as long as possible in this corrupt world.

So he says you have been saved to walk in this godly love, don't believe the world's lies and walk in impure lust. He uses a couple of words here. First of all, he uses "immorality," verse 3. Immoralities shouldn't be named among you. It's the word "porneia" and it's not used the way we use porneia in our culture for pornography. Certainly that shouldn't be a part of our lives, but porneia here doesn't mean lewd pictures or movies, it means sexual immorality in general, specifically it had the idea of sexual relations outside of marriage, whether it meant adultery or fornication. Now, when you deal with biblical sin and biblical morality, I think it's fair and balanced to say in the systematic overview of what the Bible is teaching on it, that he's talking about one who gives himself as a pattern of life to this pursuit. It marks who he is and what he's about. He's not talking about a struggle and a person that's broken and repentant about the temptations that come in his heart, it's talking about a person that gives himself over and can just walk in these sins because that's the way they were in Ephesus. That's the way they were in the ancient world. That's the way they are in our world. But he says you are not one of those. So generally speaking with the word "immorality," he says there is not to be sexual immorality of one who just endorses and walks in that lifestyle even named among you, adultery, fornication.

Then he uses the word "impurity" here. The word "impurity" is a different Greek word and it has more of the idea of a degrading or a defiling type of sinfulness. It goes further than porneia. Like the Temple of Diana, the vileness of saying you are worshiping gods by participating in relations with temple prostitutes and all the other perversions of sexuality, like prostitution and homosexuality, these type things also must not even be named among you.

Then he goes a little further and he throws in greediness because all of these things are tied into greediness. Greediness or covetousness, it's the idea of a craving or a wanting or a desiring to go after more than you need. God is saying, "I've given you the proper and blessed way to live out your sexual desires and your sexuality, and you are to keep it within those parameters, those holy parameters of the bonds of matrimony, one man with one woman." So repent of the covetousness and the greediness, that certainly includes monetary things also, but it bleeds over into the temptations of worldly sexual immoralities.

Covetousness and greediness is the opposite of the agape love that God put in us. The agape love that God put in us rises up in us and prompts us to do for others and expect

nothing in return. The agape love God puts in us desires for us to be thought less of and others to be thought more of in the church. The agape love that God puts in us causes us to get over 1,001 smaller things so we keep peace and sweet unity in God's church. And you do a wonderful job of living this agape love, but greed is right the opposite of that.

When you talk about the aspects of greed in the areas of money, Charles Hodge had this to say, "There is no cure for this destructive love of money but using it for other than selfish purposes. Riches, therefore, must ruin their possessors unless he employs them for the good of others and for the glory of God." Francis of Assisi used to say, "One is not free until he is free from praise and possessions." One is not free until he is free from praise and possessions.

Nothing wrong with praise. Nothing wrong with praise if God raises up people to praise you. Godly women, the Proverbs 31 woman, her family rises up and praises her for her wisdom and devotion to the things that God says to put first. Ladies, that's why we're doing the Titus emphasis so you can fight that fight and be a repentant and try to walk in those things, that when you get to the end of your life, your children and your husband and your grandchildren will rise up and call you blessed. Praise is good. Men, praise is good if you have earned that praise.

I'm not saying it's wrong but if you live for praise, it's a stronghold of greed. If you live for possessions, it's a stronghold of greed. Like I've said too many times, I know more poor people who have the sin or wrestle with the sin of the love of money than I know wealthy people who wrestle with the sin of the love of money. Do you know why? Because there are more poor people than there are wealthy people. Your greediness has nothing to do with what you have, it's your heart attitude toward what you have and what you don't have and how much more you've got to have. Now, this is not a teaching that says our young men and our businessmen shouldn't be initiators and go for it and invest and make lots of money, but you do it for the glory of God. You do it yielded to God. You do it trusting God to close the right doors and open the right doors. You do it with godly principles in your life and in your steps, and you do it with a heart that says, "I'm going to honor the Lord's work as God blesses my work." That's fighting the greed demon.

That's why I think tithing is such an important discipline because there are some weeks when you walk into this church and you are just spiritually sloppy. Satan made sure your silly ball team played late Saturday night and you went to bed not preparing your heart for Sunday worship but thinking about a ball game. So you're just struggling with, "I don't know if I want to get that billfold out today, and I don't know about this tithing thing." But you need to do it to shock your heart back into the right perspective that God is first place. It's a good spiritual discipline. It helps us with the greed issue.

So how does one overcome these sins? Now when I say overcome them, I don't mean you get to a point where they are never an issue in your life at all, where even the temptation of them is removed, but I mean you have overcome them in the sense of now you are gaining the victory and now they do not stand over you as final master and Lord, and now

they do not dictate what you are and who you are, God dictates that through the righteousness of his Son Jesus Christ.

Here's how you overcome it, 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 fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified," but you were justified because you quit committing all these sins. That's not what it says, is it? "You were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name," that means in the character and the merits and the work of Christ, you became a cleansed one before God. Now walk in that. Start walking that out in the reality of your everyday life.

So he says adultery, fornication, prostitution, homosexuality, incest, greed, these things that are common and acceptable in the culture of this day and in the culture of our day, in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, these are totally unacceptable. All of us who are God's predestined ones, all of us who are God's chosen ones, all of who are God's elected ones, all of who are God's called out ones, all of whom God has sealed by the Holy Spirit, these are phrases Paul uses to describe us, he says, "All of you type people must live the kind of life that these things are not even mentioned among you, not even to be named among you." When we become aware of these sins in the body of Christ, God gives us a provision. We are to humbly and lovingly and with absolute confidentiality go to that brother or sister, and remember how Paul approached Philemon with a humble and heartfelt appeal, and appeal to them to no longer walk in that sin, and you might win your brother, the Bible says. If he or she says, "You're right and, man, I don't like this, and I'm grieved about it, and I'm burdened by it, and thank you for helping me." Then it's over. You hold them accountable and love them and help them go on for God.

Listen to me: there is no church where there is no accountability and no discipline. It simply doesn't exist. I'm not saying there are not some saved people in that congregation, but if there is not accountability and discipline to some level being purposed to be applied brother to brother, sister to sister, in the body of Christ, it's not a church. It's not a church. John Dagg was the first writing theologian among Baptists in America and John Dagg used to say when discipline leaves the church, Christ goes with it.

II. He says have clean lives, now he says have clean speech. Clean speech. Look at verse 4, "and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks." Now, it's obvious when you have a culture of sexual immorality and impurity and general promiscuity, you're going to have coarse and filthy speech. So these kind of take care of themselves. The word idea of filthiness in our speech means indecent or offensive speech or revolting speech. You and I, unfortunately, live in a world that thrives on filthy speech and filthy humor, and I think we as Christians need to work harder thinking about what we're watching, what we're putting before our eyes, what we're putting on our television sets, and don't get caught in this thing of, "Well, I've checked off the boxes. I didn't watch this, this and this." Look, maybe when I was a boy there were two or three boxes, today there are 2,000-3,000 boxes. So don't in

your arrogant elitism think, "Well, I've cut this out of my life so I'm okay." No, here's what I want to ask you: have you cut it out of your heart? Have you cut it out of your heart? That's where the fight is, in your thinking and in your heart.

Filthiness in speech and then he says silly talk. How does he word it there in verse 4, "there must be no filthiness and silly talk." The word "silly talk" comes from a Greek word that has two words combined and it's the word "moron" and "logeia." "Logeia" is the word for "word, logos, word," and "moron" is the word for "moronic." It means moronic language. Don't have any moronic language. It's the speech of a moron. It's the speech of not lacking intelligence; a speech that makes light or is ignorant of high standards; a general mocking spirit about the holy pure standards of God, especially in this realm of purity and morality. Isn't our world just immersed in that spirit? I mean, so much so that people are fearful today to even in the public square, state what their convictions are about biblical morality because they'll mock and scoff and ridicule and attack you many times for saying that. I don't think it was much different in the Ephesian culture. I mean, once you let a culture give itself over to its animalistic lust, they don't want anybody to tell them to come back. That's a funnel that you don't come back up unless God pulls you back up, and it's a sign that God is turning his back on a culture when he lets the culture continually go down like that. TV, again, is a good example of this kind of moronic or this talk that makes light of high and holy things, ridicules high and holy things. It constantly makes light of and it constantly tears down those high standards that God has ordained to hold society together by.

Then he says coarse jesting. Coarse jesting is that quickness of wit in a low sense, a low humor. Now, not all humor is wrong. I mean, the God who made monkeys has a sense of humor. So not all humor is wrong and there is some context. You know, there are some times when men get together and they can talk away as men, that's okay, but it wouldn't be okay if ladies were present. Now, I grew up with four ladies and I can tell you there are times when ladies talk and it's fine, they're ladies, they talk about a lot of stuff, but it's not good for men to be present. I learned more things than I ever wanted to learn. It's just the reality, but not that my family did wicked things but I'm just saying don't be some cold, harsh legalist. There is a balance here and the heart attitude is important. I like to cut up and carry on with my friends and we get pretty rough on each other sometimes, but I don't think it comes under coarse or silly jesting, the thing Paul is talking about. This is someone who is knowingly trying to bring ridicule and scorn and mockery to the holy wisdom of God. We want always to be quick to not let anything come out of our mouths that seems to in any way deny the holy principles and truths that God has given us to live by.

So all of this, most specifically in this context, is about immorality, sexual things, and we need to be very careful that the high and holy gift of sexual love that God has given married couples should not be dragged into the ditch of filthy words, moronic speech, and low wit. And I think that's why you have the next phrase in here where he says instead of those things, "but rather giving of thanks." Now, probably that includes all types of thanksgiving. We ought to not allow this culture to work on us and get us to where we're sort of having a snide attitude and a questioning attitude and a sneering spirit about the

high and holy things of God. And if you find that happening, say, "Oh, God help me! God help me!" Have a better quiet time. Find you some Scripture to memorize. Be faithful to church on Sunday and Wednesday night. Get the truth back in you. Put the truth back in and kick the erroneous thinking out.

Give thanks instead when you are in those settings and you see this stuff and maybe you are with some guys and an attractive woman walks by and these guys make comments that are not fitting for a child of God, and you just back away from that and you say, "God, I thank you for the holiness that you have given sexuality. I thank you for the gift and that's not the way it's supposed to be portrayed. That's not the way it's supposed to be viewed." I counsel young men and I tell them one of the best ways to fight that battle of purity is for you to be thankful and praise the Lord for the gift of sexual desire. Did you hear me? Praise the Lord. Teach your sons to be thankful for the gift of sexual desire, but the same God who gave you that gift gives you governs and guards of when and how you are to express that desire. You see, God gave us wonderful and powerful things, the gift of sexuality is a wonderful and powerful thing, but it also has a powerful destructive power if we use it outside of the divinely ordained standard and precepts. He's just trying to help us.

"But rather giving of thanks." Think of some of the glories and the ways we can be thankful for the blessing of pure sexuality God has given us. Proverbs 5:18 and 19, he said, "Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love." Exhilarated means intoxicated with it. Give yourself over in full bore desire and an expectation and wonder about the gift of sexuality in your married relationship. It's a gift from God. Be thankful for it. Now remember, you're dealing with a human being, not a sex object. You're dealing with someone made in the image of God. This world wants to turn sexuality into a coarse taking environment. It's to be a sweet and loving environment in the marriage relationship.

Hebrews 13:4, let marriage "be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed be undefiled," and it is defiled when fornication or adultery enters into a relationship because God will judge those who give themselves over to that. Ephesians 5:31-32, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church." Then those are things, those are texts that give us the goodness and the glories and why we should praise God for that gift, but then there is a caution in violating God's standard about that gift. Proverbs 6:29 through 33, "So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; Whoever touches her will not go unpunished. Men do not despise a thief if he steals To satisfy himself when he is hungry; But when he is found, he must repay sevenfold; He must give all the substance of his house. The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; He who would destroy himself does it. Wounds and disgrace he will find, And his reproach will not be blotted out." Boy, those are harsh and powerful terms. I would say this: don't you take the edge off any of the sharpness and any of the power of that statement. But in grace there is a second chance. In grace, there

is forgiveness. In grace, there is a new beginning. Aren't you glad for grace? Praise God for grace.

How good it is for God to save us from a life enslaved to destructive lust and give us the delights of marital joy. We worship God by treasuring and enjoying sex that God has given us. It's God's gift and being thankful is a way to preserve the worthiness and the holiness and the blessedness that God has given us in these things.

Now, I'm saying this in the context of your speech and one of the things we have to remember is that the battleground where you must draw the line on impurity and immorality is the battleground of the mind. You must fight and win it there. There are lines you must not cross. When those thoughts come, fight them. Be a repentor. Call them to account and say, "God, that's not who I am. I will not let my mind wander off there."

III. He says, "You are a new people. You are a new society. You are God's called out ones. Your lifestyle must be different." He said, "I want you to have clean living. I want you to have clean speech, clean speaking." And thirdly, "I want you to have a clear assurance." Look at what he says there beginning in verse 5, "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person." The word "immoral" there has the idea of one who commits. It's a giving oneself over to this lifestyle. It's embracing it as okay and acceptable. "No immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." If you can give yourself over to these things and you are not troubled by it, you are not broken by it, and you find yourself justifying and excusing those things and that becomes the mark of what you are, he says you are not one of God's. The kingdom of God doesn't belong to you. You're not in the kingdom.

He says, "All right, do you have assurance? Are you marked as one who can't give himself over to those things?" He says, for you know with certainty. There is an assurance aspect here of which side you are on. If you have been changed from within by the new birth and you know there's a difference in your life, your heart is changed because of that experience, then that gives you a new certainty. I begin to love God and I begin to find a pleasure and a joy in his holiness, and I begin to find a pleasure and a joy in the doctrinal teachings on marital fidelity and faithfulness because God has changed me. There is a new sorrow over my sin and when I struggle there, or if I fail there, I can't stay there. God convicts me and I hate myself and I hate my sin for it and I repent and go again.

I told you earlier that Gnostic teaching was creeping into the churches and the Gnostics, again, taught that the body was low and it was hopeless so you could just sin and just let your body go because you can't fix it anyway. That's wrong. That's wrong. That's wrong. The body is to be considered as a holy temple unto the Lord. So we are no longer allowing ourselves to revel in these sins and that was the culture of the day. We can't walk in this. It's not who we are.

Let me give a side note here just in counseling through the years and I believe studying the balance of biblical truth. Be very careful that you draw hard, fast, simplistic lines of, "Okay, this person is a Christian because of this conduct. Well, this person must not be because of this conduct." For example, it's all too common in professing Christendom to find a brother or a sister who came out of a life of deep impurities and immoralities and God has worked in their lives, they are genuinely converted, and they have come a ways but they have failed some too. We've counseled with and loved and encouraged folks who have repented of homosexuality, and while we don't ask a lot of specifics, I know some have struggled in those areas, but what you've got to understand is how far God has brought them. You'll have another girl in the church, she was brought up in a strong family and a strong setting of morality and accountability and encouragement, and she has never given herself over to those sins. She's never been involved in those immoralities and those impurities, but do you know what? She's never been saved either. She's pure on those points but she doesn't belong to God because she didn't have far to go in that area, and she waltzes around in pride that she didn't commit those sins, and this poor girl over here who has been a repentant, has come a long way but she's still struggling. Folks, sometimes you've got to look at where has God brought them and are they humble and repenting and wanting to grow? Are they willing to get accountability? Here's what I'm telling you: in counseling with a brother or sister, every situation is unique. Can I get an amen there? There is no cookie cutter here. And the Greek wording here doesn't give you cookie-cutter stuff. It causes you to deal with the attitude of the heart and whether a person is giving themselves over to affirm and revel in and walk in this versus a person who is a repentant of these things.

How many of us couldn't go to Grace Life Church if since we've known Christ we've had a serious struggle in some area? Now, you'd better not be walking in it. Better not be marking who you are. But I just want to say this as your pastor: if you have struggled and you have repented and it's in your past, I don't want to know about it. If you need help, we'll do all we can to help you in confidentiality. But be for sure, you cannot, you cannot. Do you know the number of evangelical churches who give a wink and a nod to abortion? The number of evangelical churches who by their very actions basically tolerate if not embrace adultery? Tolerate if not embrace fornication? Tolerate if not embrace homosexuality? Paul said when you get there, you're not part of the kingdom. You've crossed way too many lines. Fight the good fight. Stay strong.

He says in verse 7 as he is talking about all of these, well, let's go to verse 6, all of the influences of the world and some who call themselves Christians come at us and want to pull down these holy standards that God has given us, he says in 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." God is against the man who gives himself over to a lifestyle of fornication. God is against the man who gives himself over to a lifestyle of adultery. God is against the man who gives himself over to a lifestyle of homosexuality. And on and on we could go. Or even greed. He says, "Don't you be deceived. They'll come to you with high sounding logic, they'll use the Bible, they'll talk about Jesus." That's my struggle with a lot of pastors today. I can support, I have sympathy for and love for and I want to help any pastor who is trying to do right, but these pastors who have decided to keep their

good salaries and their paychecks and keep a lot of numbers, they're not going to deal with these issues, I'm telling you, they are false teachers. They are hirelings. We're here to lift people out of the filth, not affirm them in the filth. Grace, grace is not a license to sin, grace is the ability to be a repentor and strive against sin and walk in some victory.

So he says, "Do you have a clear assurance? Do these kind of sins mark who you are? Is that the pattern of what you are?" Would you say, "No, I don't love those things anymore. Yeah, there's temptations but I don't love those things anymore. I don't want that to be who I am anymore. I don't want that to mark me. I don't want that to describe me. I don't want to be known as a fornicator or an adulterer or a homosexual or whatever it is. That's not who I am." He says, "Well, if that's your heart and you are striving against these sins in your own heart and in the world, then you can have an assurance. You look like, you sound like one that has a clear assurance before God that you are his and you are in his kingdom."

Now when I close, I want to say this to some of you. Some of you have been down a bad road. You've been through the nightmare of adultery or maybe some other moral failure like that, but that's not who you are. It's in your past. You've repented. You've asked God to forgive you. Here's what I want to tell you: forget it. It's under the blood. Christ has forgiven it. If you dealt with the responsibility you have in whatever small circle you're supposed to deal with it, let it go. Don't you carry this to your grave. You walk in the victory that, "My Lord has cleansed me and that's no longer who I am." Amen? Paul said to the Corinthians, such were some of you. Amen and amen and glory to God.

Now if you're a child of God and you've gotten weak, you're a child of God and you've gotten lax, I charge you tonight to get diligent again. Get diligent again. Get in the fight again. Get in the fight again. Draw the line in your mind and say, "When stuff comes in my mind, I'm going to grab it there. I'm not allowed to go to any other level, any other step. I'm not going to live in this." Be like a child of God.

I don't know about you but I need a good healthy church to help me. I need brothers and sisters who if something became known in my lifestyle, they would sit me down in loving confidence and say, "I want to help you, brother," because I believe in my heart it would be, "Please, help me." That ought to be yours.