



Ephesians

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But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; Ephesians 5:3

The verse begins with "But..." as a contrast to being imitators of God, walking in holiness, and being an acceptable offering and sacrifice to God. In contrast to those things, we are warned against "fornication and all uncleanness." Fornication is sexual intimacy which is outside of the bonds of marriage. This is connected to "all uncleanness." It is a general reference to life's impurities, and anything that a man could pursue which would otherwise defile himself. Such things are to be considered in the same light as fornication.

Along with that, he includes the words, "or covetousness." In using "or" instead of "and" he places "covetousness" in a distinct class, and yet it is closely associated with fornication and uncleanness. Covetousness indicates a desire for more and more. It demonstrates eyes that are never satisfied with what they have, and an attitude which is insatiable towards self-gratification.

The connection between the two is obvious. Fornication and uncleanness are things we are actively participating in which defile us. They are acts of self-gratification being fulfilled, but covetousness is a state of mind for more of the same. It is the mental state that what "I am being filled with is insufficient. Therefore, I will go after more in an attempt to find satisfaction."

Such things show that we do not place God in the center of our minds, but rather He is pushed out of them in order to make room for that which is in opposition to Him. Because of this, Paul

says, "...let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for the saints." Not only are we to abstain from such things, but we are not to even discuss them. The very mention of such things spurs inside of us sparks of desire which can quickly lead to action in an attempt to fulfill them.

Instead, we are to be thankful for what we have, praising the Lord for His grace, and edifying of our fellow Christians through an acknowledgment of His hand in our lives.

Life application: The admonitions of Scripture come to us from the hands of men guided by the Holy Spirit. God created us and He knows exactly what is best for us in our lives. These admonitions, exhortations, and commands are for our benefit. We have been saved through Christ. What God would have us do are those things that a caring Father knows are best for us.

...neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. Ephesians 5:4

In the previous verse, Paul gave several negatives which Christians are to refrain from in their behavior and conduct. He continues with more negatives which are certainly tied to the "all uncleanness" of the previous verse. They are:

"Filthiness" – This Greek word is found only here in the New Testament. It indicates obscenity, indecency, or baseness. Those things in a conversation which are indecent, both in speech and in gesture are included in this.

"Foolish talking" – The Greek word *morologia*, is again unique to the New Testament. It is the combination of *moros*, (think of a moron), and *lego*, indicating speaking. Thus it is moronic speech. It gives the sense of "speech flowing out of a *dull, sluggish* heart (mind) that *lost its edge* (grip) on reality. This is the 'talk of fools, involving foolishness and sinning together'" (HELPS Word Studies).

After this, he mentions "course jesting." For a third time, a unique word in the New Testament is used by Paul. It is, "From a compound of *eu* and a derivative of the base of *trope* (meaning well-turned, i.e. Ready at repartee, jocose); witticism, i.e. (in a vulgar sense) ribaldry – jesting" (Strong's). This would thus give the sense of "polished and witty speech as the instrument of sin; refinement and versatility without the flavor of Christian grace" (Vincent's Word Studies).

Paul, under inspiration of the Spirit, tells us that these things are "not fitting." Our speech and actions are to be wholesome and pure, not sensual and unclean. In today's world, where everything seen on the internet is so vulgar, and where a thousand posts a day are viewed by our eyes which are nuanced with perversion and vulgarity, it is a hard thing to distance ourselves from. And yet, it is what we are called to do.

Instead of these things, we are to rather give thanks. Jamieson-Faucett-Brown says that the word here has “a happy play on sounds in Greek, ‘eucharistia’ contrasted with ‘eutrapelia’; refined ‘jesting’ and subtle humor sometimes offend the tender feelings of grace; ‘giving of thanks’ gives that real cheerfulness of spirit to believers which the worldly try to get from ‘jesting.’”

Life application: Instead of rude, coarse talking, we should be speaking words of edification to one another, and of praises to God. Instead of fighting in the flesh with our mouths and actions against that which is upright and moral, we should be singing in the Spirit. Let us keep this thought at the forefront of our minds, doing our best to speak that which is wholesome, glorifying of God, and edifying of others.

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Ephesians 5:5

There is an emphasis here which is lacking in the translation. It says, “For knowing you recognize.” The NIV gives a good sense by saying, “For of this you can be sure.” It is at once a warning and a statement of great clarity. It is something that should be obvious on the surface to all who contemplate what will be said.

After this, we are given a direct list of personalities which concerns what will then be explained. These are fornicators, unclean people, and covetous men. The last are then explained as idolaters. The list corresponds to those just mentioned in verses 3 & 4. He first warned that such sins not even be named among us. Then he says that such people have no “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

People who live in such a manner as described here have misplaced priorities. They look to the things of the world and not to the things of God. Until they come to God through Christ, they remain apart from His forgiveness and salvation.

Having said this, a verse such as this, when taken out of context, can be used to demonstrate a loss of salvation is possible. However, Paul will show this is not the case as he continues with his words. In a similar warning which is found in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul followed up the warning with the words, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

The actions are past tense and they indicate the complete nature of the sanctification and justification of the individual. Although it will be stated differently here in Ephesians, the same thought carries through. Once one is saved they remain saved. From that moment they are granted an “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

The words here in Greek are *tou Christou kai Theou*, “the Christ and God.” There is one article applied to both “Christ” and “God” which perfectly demonstrates the oneness of the two. It is a consistent thought found throughout the New Testament that Jesus Christ is fully God. One must truly abuse Scripture to find a separation between God and Christ. They are one and the same.

Life application: Each of us has set up idols in our hearts. We have been unclean and covetous at times as well. And yet, because of applying the blood of Christ to our lives, we are now washed clean and are considered pure before God the Father. Thank God for Jesus Christ who cleanses us from all impurity!

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 5:6

The negatives which were set forth in the previous verses, to include those mentioned towards the end of Chapter 4, are being addressed here. Paul warns the Ephesians by saying, “Let no one deceive you with empty words.” The word “empty” gives the thought of that which is void or worthless. There is no substance behind what is spoken. In other words, the warning is that some will come forward to say that those things which have been warned against are actually ok to engage in.

As people come to Christ, there is almost inevitably a conflict which arises between their old walk and the new walk which they have chosen. Very few are immune to the tempting enticements which pull the old man back to the old ways. There are those who have been friends for years that don’t understand the new direction which has been taken, and they work to bring their “wayward” friend back into the fold of carnal life. They will use words which are intended to convince the young and immature believer that it is ok to indulge in those things. But such arguments are “empty words.” There is no true substance behind them.

Rather, it is “because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” Paul wrote of the wrath of God in Romans 1, explaining what brings it about. The things he mentions here in Ephesians are a part of that process. It is because of participating in these things that the world is judged. And this judgment follows two distinct lines. The first is judgment in this world through diseases, conflicts which lead to physical harm or death, and the like. The second judgment is that of being cast for all eternity away from the presence of God. The Lake of Fire is the ultimate end for all “the sons of disobedience.”

As an apostle, Paul is showing that these vain arguments are exactly that. They are empty and without any substance behind them. The warnings of Scripture, to include the apostolic warnings (which are now recorded in the Bible), are given to direct us away from that which is harmful, and which brings about the wrath of God, and toward that which is pleasing to Him.

Life application: To ignore the warnings of Scripture can only lead to a sad end. There will be trials and pains in this life, and there will be either judgment and condemnation for non-believers, or a loss of rewards for believers. Stand firm on the word, and do not be deceived by vain words which are contrary to the word of God.