

The Dangerous Sin of Lust

Ephesians 5:3-5

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, September 6, 2020

Well, good morning and welcome to another service at Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. Before we begin, I'd like to say a few words about the resource video that you just saw. That pamphlet will be available to you on your way out the door, so we have a table full of them. Feel free to grab a copy of that. This is actually something we want to be doing more in the years ahead as a church. When the church first started, the leadership got together and said, "Okay, well how do we want to teach the Word of God to people? How do we want to get it into their hands?" And there are several ways you can teach the Scriptures. You can counsel, that's one thing you can do. You can help people with their problems. And we do that here as a church, as you know. And you can preach and teach, which we do regularly as well. We preach on Sunday mornings; we do teaching and care groups in the men's and women's studies. And you can also write it out. You can put it in writing and give it to people that way. And so what we've done is we've transcribed our sermons. So we have a company that actually every week after a sermon, they write out the sermon on the website for us. And we're taking those and putting some of them into pamphlets. And that's what the resource you just saw is. So, if you ever hear a sermon and you want to read it, that's available to you on the website. And also, we look to be taking those and making them into some form of literature in the future. And so this is the beginning of that. This is the start of it. We're also doing some things like the distinctive pamphlets that you've seen; you can get a copy of those. We've got several coming out in the weeks and months ahead, but this is one of the ministries we have here at Grace Fellowship that we want to keep growing in.

And we also have other ministries going on, as Chris said this fall. One I would like to highlight to you before the sermon is our Ladies' study. In a few weeks on September 23, our women will be meeting regularly for a time of Bible study and prayer and they're going to be in the book of Judges. So they're going to be in the fascinating book of Judges. Our ladies are going through the Bible book by book just like the men. They're going through it one book at a time, and now they're in one of the most interesting books in the Old Testament. And we could also say it's one of the most gritty books, right? If you've read the book of Judges, it's a rough book, because it says that every man did what it was right in his own eyes in there. In other words, they had no authority; they had total freedom. And that's interesting, because you're hearing a lot about that nowadays. You go to the protests in the US right now, and that's what a lot of people are protesting for. They want anarchy. They want no binds on them whatsoever, and the book of Judges says this is what that looks like. If you want to see what that type of society looks like in real life, read that book. And our ladies are going to do that starting on September 23. And so if you're interested in that, an email did go out on that. You can also see Tanya Smith and she can tell you some more about that. But that'll be on September 23.

While we're talking about that, while we're talking about the Scriptures in the Bible and how much we love to study the Bible, I want to take you to a book of the Bible this morning that we've been in for some time, and that is the book of Ephesians. So if you would, open your Bibles with me to the book of Ephesians. That's the book we're in this morning. That's where we're at today, and we're in chapter five. So if you want to open your Bibles to Ephesians, the Scriptures that we just read in the service parallel this one in 1 Corinthians 6. But here's our passage for today. Ephesians 5 says this,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 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.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says,

“Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Just to say a few words about this passage, I've told you before that the book of Ephesians has been called the greatest thing that Paul ever wrote. It's been called his greatest achievement. The apostle Paul wrote 13 letters in the Bible; he wrote 13 books that have his name on them, but some say this is the greatest one of them for several reasons. And one is because it's so practical. It's such a hands-on type of book especially for the latter part of it, the closing chapters, chapters four, five and six, they talk about so many practical things like marriage and parenting in the

home. If you're married or a parent, we've got chapters that are coming up that are going to be right in your life. It talks about labour and our jobs in the workplace.

And it talks about sin. That's the most practical thing Paul talks about in this part of the book. He talks about how to handle our sin, and how to deal with our sin problem. That's practical, isn't it? That's applicational. Does anybody in here not have a sin problem? We all have one. You came in here this week after sinning right? I don't say that to beat up on anybody; it's just a reality. And you're going to go out from church this morning and you're going to fight sin, that's what you're going to do. And Paul writes this part of the book to tell you how to do that. He tells you how to fight your sin.

If you notice chapter five starts off with the word "therefore", which points you back to all Paul said has said so far. It points you back to what he's written about in the previous chapters. And he says, "Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children." And the idea there is that this is why you need to get rid of your sin now. This is why you need to fight it, because you're a child of God. Children do what their parents do, right? Children copy their fathers. If you're a child of God, you need to copy Him.

This word "child" here, it's *teknon* in Greek, and it means child or offspring, but can also refer to someone who shares your nature. And what Paul is saying here is that when God saved you, when you were born again, this is what God did. He gave you a new nature. He gave you the same one that He has because He gave you His Son; He put the Spirit inside of you and you need to live accordingly now. You need to live like that and put your sin away. That's about as practical as it gets right?

A believer is someone who hates his sin. One author said, "The difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is that a Christian doesn't run to his sin, he runs away from it." They both sin. They both mess up, but a Christian flees in the opposite direction. That's important because I meet people who don't get this today. You meet so many people who think that they can be a Christian and sin all they want to. They can be a Christian and live like the world because they're going to heaven anyway. And that's not what this says here. This says you have a new nature now; you can't do that. Other people say it another way; they say, "Well, I might as well sin because I can't help it. I might as well sin, might as well give up because I can't find it anyway, there's nothing I can do." And that's not what Paul tells us here. He says you can fight your sin because of Christ.

And this is especially important with the next sin in the list. If you look in verse three, it's especially important with this sin. Verse three says,

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

I'll explain that to you in a moment, but all these words in here refer to one sin they refer to one evil behavior, and that's the sin of lust. The next sin that Paul mentions in this book is the sin of lust or the sin of adultery. That's the next one in here. So far, in chapter four, Paul's talked about several sins. He's mentioned several evil deeds. He's talked about the sin of lying and stealing and anger. He's talking about the sin of unwholesome words, which we all fail that, we all say things we shouldn't say. Now he comes to another one, the sixth sin in the list, and that's the sin of lust. And he mentions it because it's so prevalent, isn't it? He mentions this because this is everywhere. Lust is everywhere. It's a very, very destructive sin.

I was talking with someone this week about this particular passage, and they said, "Boy, this would be really great if someone in the church struggles with this." And I said, "Let me be honest with you. It's not a question of *if* someone struggles with this. People struggle with this." This is a very common sin. You know, while the numbers vary, the statistics are a little subjective, but some experts say that the number of adults who are currently enslaved to pornography in North America could be as high as 8%. Eight percent of all adult which means, according to this study, that they watch pornography for 12 hours a week or more. They watch it several hours a day because they're enslaved to it. It's consumed them. They don't do it a little while; they do it all the time. And I might add that it has such a grip on them that when they get caught, they don't stop. When someone finds out that they're giving into this particular sin of lust, they don't quit because they continue to do it in secret. They do it even when it destroys their marriage and their family and their home. They do it when it destroys their job and their career. I've talked to people who have gotten fired for watching pornography on the job; they've been terminated, and even after that, they still won't quit. Because this is a sin that consumes people. It eats them alive.

I might add that it's not just the lost who are doing this, but Christians are doing it too. It's not just the people out there in the world that give into this, it's the people that are here in the church, our church, the church next door, the church next to that. You know, I was studying for our passage this week, I came across a book I read 17 years ago on the subject of lust. It was written in 2003 by a Christian author, a man who was a pastor in the States. But the tragic thing about the book, the ironic thing is that since he wrote that, this man has left his wife for another woman. He's committed adultery and one of the people who endorsed the book on the back cover have come out as a lesbian. I mean, this is not just a problem for the lost, this is a problem for Christians too. It's taken the church by storm.

In fact, you can tell that Paul recognizes this because he writes this passage to a church. Think about that for a moment. He's writing Ephesians 5 to Christians. I read a passage like this one,

and I kind of want to say, “Is this in my Bible?” This is in your Bible because this is a problem for believers as well.

It's interesting. In verse one of this chapter, Paul mentions being a child of God. He talks about imitating Him and then this is the first thing he mentions next. Because it's such a struggle for many people, it's such an issue. A town like Ephesus, it was a town that was saturated in sexual sin. One ancient author, I've quoted this to you before name Herodotus, said the Ephesians were so vile, they were so sexually immoral, that they should all be drowned. He said, “Just destroy the whole city.”

And what Paul is saying in this passage is the only way you're going to get past that, the only way you're going to defeat that as an Ephesian or as a Christian or as someone in BC, is to be a child of God. Your nature has to change. And as your nature changes, as you become a new man, you get victory. But there's no other way. Taking a bunch of classes won't do it. Self-help won't do it. You need to become a child of God.

I remember when I first moved to Los Angeles for seminary, I thought I had moved to hell. I thought I moved to Perdition, it was an awful place when it comes to sex and sexual sin. It was so in your face. Vulgar billboards on the corner. There were streets that they said, “Don't go down there because prostitutes work down there.” I lived 100 yards from Van Nuys, and that was that was the pornography capital of the United States at one time, just right down the road. And yet you would go to church, you would go be with the body of Christ, and one thing you noticed is that the people there had changed. They once were that way, they once were in those sins, and now they're different now. You'd ask some of them, “Hey, tell me your testimony,” and they'd have to take you aside because some of it was so vile. But the Lord got ahold of them, and they were different. And what Paul is saying here is that that's what God wants to do with you. That's what God wants to do with all of us. He wants to change us in this department. He wants us to be different because of Jesus Christ. Which is what we're going to talk about this morning.

So if you're taking notes in Ephesians 5, we're going to look at three commands concerning sexual sin. That's our outline for today; this is what we're going to talk about. We're going to dive into this subject by looking at three commands concerning sexual sin. And we're going to follow along in the passage, we're going to look at what Paul says in some detail because this is a prevalent sin today. This is a widespread thing.

British Columbia, Canada, it's a very moral place to live in many ways. I'm from the United States, there's a lot of things you don't see here that you see in the US. It's not as violent. People seem to get along better, but I will say this sexual sin is a problem in this country. It's a problem. It's a problem in the US as well. Just because we're doing well in some departments of society, doesn't mean we're doing well on all of them. We're failing in this and the church has an answer

for that, amen? The Gospel has an answer for that. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning.

So if you're taking notes, three commands concerning sexual sin. The first one is this, it must not be named among you. The first command concerning sexual sin is that it must not be even named among you, which means that you should be so far away from this sin, you should be so distant from it, that it can't even be mentioned with your name. Several cities in the ancient world, their names were synonymous with sexual sin. Corinth would be one, some of you have heard of that; Corinth was a very promiscuous city. A Corinthian girl was another name for a prostitute. It was a very bad place. Ephesus was another one. If you said you were from Ephesus, people automatically associated you with this sin. If you would say Las Vegas, maybe some people would think of that today, or Los Angeles. And if you look in verse one, here's what Paul says, here's the significance of this. He says,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

Just to walk you through this, if you notice as you read this, verse three starts off with the word "but" to form a contrast. It forms a distinction with what was said before, because earlier in verses one through two, Paul talks about the love of God. He says this is how much God loves us, enough to give Jesus up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. And then in verse three starts off. "But immorality or impurity or greed must not be named among you." And here's what he's saying here. He's saying, "God loved you like this, so you shouldn't love others like that." That's what he's saying. God loved you enough to die for you, enough to give Christ for you on the cross, so you shouldn't love others with lust. You shouldn't use them for that. That's all lust is at the end of the day. That's all adultery is, you're just using people. And God didn't use you. God didn't treat you that way, so you shouldn't treat them that way as well.

These three words in verse three, they all refer to the same thing. They all refer to the sin of lust. Immorality is the Greek word *porneia* from which we get the word pornography or sexual sin. It's any sex outside of marriage. Impurity, it means just what it says it's an impure act, a dirty act. And the last word "greed" here, greed is what happens as a result of this. It's what happens as a result of lust. It makes you greedy. It makes you always wanting more. It's never satisfied. And that's the danger of this sin.

Paul says all of that needs to be done away with you. It should not even be named among you. It should be so far from you that when someone knows you or someone sees you, that's just not even on their mind. One Bible translation says there should not be even a hint of this, which means there shouldn't be a speck of this in your life. One historian said, "The greatest change the church brought to the ancient world was in the area of sex, because for the first time in human history, it taught people what it looked like for one man to stay faithful for one woman for a lifetime."

And if you think about it, this is quite a command, right? I mean, this is quite a tall order. It's about as countercultural as you could get in this day and age. Because even today, lust is everywhere, right? Even right now you see it all over the place. I mean, for example, just go to the grocery store, what do you see? You see lust, right? You see sexual images plastered on the magazines at the cash register by the bubblegum. What does that have to do with gum? It has nothing to do with that. That is a sin. It's put there to tempt you. Or you go to the gas station. What do you see? You see the same thing there. You see vulgar magazines. Turn on the radio. It's on the radio; people sing about this. Turn on the television, it's on the television. Even if you're watching a decent show, commercials come on right. Turn on the computer and it's even worse. Lust is everywhere today just like it was in the ancient world, to the point that you can't avoid it. It seems like you can't stay away from it, but Paul says you have to because that's what God does. You have to stay away from this sin because He stays away from it. It must not even be named among you.

And let me just say a few words about what lust actually is. Just so we understand this. Lust, adultery, sexual sin, it's a lie. Like any sin, it's a lie. It's a deception because it's a distortion of what God intended love to be. That's what Paul is saying here. It's a distortion of what he intended sex to be. He intended sex to be between one man and one woman within the bonds of marriage, and that's it. And I might even add to this, he created sex as a good thing, if you think about this for a moment, the Lord told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply before they fell, before they sinned, which means this is a good thing. Romance is good in his eyes. The Lord even inspired a book on the subject of romance, the Song of Solomon, right? There's an entire book in the Bible devoted to this topic. It's a good thing. It's a holy thing. It's part of His perfect world, but not this. That's what Paul is saying, this is not part of the perfect world.

This is bad because when you lust, this is what you do. You're out of control. You act like an animal like the people in the times of Judges. You do what's right in your own eyes. So one day you sleep with this woman the next day you sleep with this one and this one and this one. Or one day you sleep with this man and the next day you sleep with this one and this one and this one until it never ends; and then you start watching it online. Then you go to the Internet, and after that, if that doesn't work, you start turning toward homosexuality. Romans 1 talks about this when it says their women exchange the natural function for that which is unnatural. And the man

did the same thing. And if you read Romans 1, it's a progression of sin there because it's out of control. It consumes you

The word "greed" here in verse three, it's a good word for this because this sin makes you so greedy and makes you so selfish, that you don't have any boundaries anymore. You don't have any barriers. And Paul says you can't do that anymore as a Christian. You can't do that as a believer. And he says here, you have to stop this before it's too late. You have to stop this sin before it even goes down that road. The idea that it must not be named among you, is that you don't even start in this area of lust. You don't even dabble in it.

If you remember this passage, Jesus said in Matthew 5:27,

You have heard that it was said, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY"; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it's better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand causes you to some stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one part of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

And what the Lord is saying here is that if something tempts you, if something draws you into the sin of adultery, cut it off and throw it away. It's better for you to lose that than for you to lose your life. We can say it this way. If your iPhone causes you to stumble, throw it away; it's not that important. You don't need. If your computer causes you to stumble, get rid of that. When we counsel people who struggle with lust, one of the first things we talk to them about is the idea of we call it radical amputation. And then we go through their life and we say, "What are the things that tempt you to lust?" And they tell us, and we say, "Get rid of each one of them." And those are the things that usually is. It's the phone, it's the computer, it's the television. Maybe there's a video store they drive by on their way home from work, all of that gets cut out. And this is why. It's not worth your soul, Jesus says. Jesus was sinless. He never lusted a day in his life. And yet He knew the nature of man, He knew the heart of man and He says, "This is the only thing that'll work for you." Graphically, He says, "Tear your eye out."

John MacArthur says, "If you don't want to fall, don't walk where it's slippery." Don't walk where the road is slick, and it's the same idea here. You need to stay away from slippery places.

In my studies, this week, I came across a cartoon about a man who was struggling with something similar to this. He was trying to go on a diet, and he couldn't control his appetite for food. So, the cartoon went like this. He said, "I'll take a drive, but I won't go near the grocery store. I won't go down that road." And as he drove on in the car, he said, "Well, okay, I'll drive

by the grocery store, but I won't go in." See where this is going? He said, "Well, okay, I'll go in the grocery store, but I won't go down the candy aisle. I won't go near the candy aisle." Then he said "Okay, I'll go down the candy aisle, but I won't buy any." Then he said, "I'll buy some, but I won't eat it. I won't put it in my mouth." And then the next picture, he's got candy all over his face. That's what this sin does to you. One moment you're taking a simple drive, one moment you're just sort of going near the sin, and the next minute, you've got it smeared all over you. Paul says you have to stay away from it before you ever get to that.

Which leads to another point to consider this morning. It leads to another command concerning sexual sin. The first one is that it must not be named among you. Which means that you have to stay as far away from it as possible. Victory doesn't come by getting close. Some people think that. They think "I'm going to get victory by getting a tolerance for this sin. The more I watch it, the more tolerant I am. I'll get victory." That's not the way it works. Go the other way, Paul says.

It brings to us to another command concerning sexual sin, and that is that you should not even joke about it. So first he says it must not be named among you. Second, Paul takes it a step further and goes to another level. And he says you should not even joke about this sin, which means that you can't enjoy it from a distance either. Some people won't get involved in this sin. They won't get close to it, but they'll laugh at it from a distance so they'll kind of pick at it. Paul says, you can't even do that. And if you read on the passage, he writes and he says,

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

As Paul goes on in this passage, as you can see, this was such an important subject to him. It was such an important topic that he uses multiple words to explain it. He had to stretch the boundaries of human language. The Greek language had a lot of words for a sex and sexual sin; it was so common among them. One scholar said there was something like 12 different words for prostitute because it was just such a common thing. And here he gives you three more words to describe this sin.

To explain these, the word "filthiness." It's a word that means filthy words or filthy language. It's another term for cuss words, curse words. And "silly talk" is the Greek word *morologia* from where we get the word moron because that's what this word means. It means stupid talk or moronic talk that's used to describe sex. I was walking into a store the other day to get lunch, and I overheard some people walking by and they were talking about sex, and it was just stupid. That's what this word means. No reverence. It's not even appropriate to talk about that outside in the middle of the day. "Course jesting" here refers to the same thing, any kind of crude or vulgar joke. Paul says, none of this is fitting for a Christian. None of it's appropriate because it doesn't

match who you are now in Christ. You're a child of God. Now you have to act like it. God is your Father; you have to act like He does, and He doesn't joke about this, and so neither should you.

He says in the passage in verse four, "But rather there should be giving of thanks," which means that you should be thankful instead. That's how you defeat this sin. That's how you get victory. You should be thankful for the spouse the Lord has given you, or if you're single, you should be thankful for the spouse He will give you one day. Because that's what's driving your sin. That's what's causing you to lust. You're not thankful. You don't appreciate that. You think you deserve a better spouse. You think you deserve a prettier one or a more handsome one, and the Lord says you don't. You don't deserve that at all. You should be thankful. You shouldn't even joke about that.

It's amazing how something as simple as a little joke, can ruin your life if you let it. Something as simple as a thought or an image can destroy you because it plants a seed. It gets some kind of idea in your mind and before long you have to carry it out. You're hooked. Paul says avoid the very thought of this. Avoid the very idea of lust.

In other parts of the Bible Paul says there are some things you don't even talk about. You know, referring to this, talking about the danger of this sin, Solomon says in Proverbs 6:27, he says,

Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?

And that's a powerful image there, right? Solomon says this is what it's like to play around with lust. This is what it's like to laugh about it and joke about it and mess around with it. It's like scooping fire into your lap. It's like putting burning coals on top of you. You can't do that without consequences. He goes on and he says,

"Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is the one who goes into his neighbor's wife; whoever touches will not go unpunished. But when he is found he will repay seven-fold.

And Solomon says this is what the sin will do to you, if you let it. This is what will happen to you, you will repay sevenfold. You will repay seven times what you put into this. I've talked to men who have committed adultery, men who have given into this sin, and they have said that after the court fees and the lawyer fees and the child support, it ruined them, financially. It ruined them. It wasn't worth it for a one-night fling. I've talked to other ones, men and women who have said that after all this stress, and after all the worry and anxiety over this, it wasn't worth it for that. Sin made them miserable. And Paul says you have to learn a lesson from that. You don't even joke about this stuff.

Which leads to some applications here, while we're on this topic. It's a very applicational topic, so let me give you some ways to apply this. One is you've got to remember this is serious stuff. Sexual sin is serious. It's nothing to laugh about or joke about, and I mention that because there's such a tendency to be cavalier about this. There's such a tendency to be casual about this sin because it's everywhere. Like I said, you see it all over the place, and sometimes it's just ridiculous. Sometimes it's hard not to laugh at it because it's so outlandish, but Paul says you can't. You can't say, "Hey look, so and so's getting married again. Haha. I wonder how long that's going to last." That's not funny. It's not funny to God. Or you can't say look, "So and so's in a new relationship. They have a new boyfriend or girlfriend. I wonder how long before they have a child out of wedlock." You can't. That's not funny. This is a sin in the eyes of God, this is offensive to Him. It's a tragedy to Him and we have to see it the same way. The world may laugh at this sin. You turn on comedies today on the radio, on television, find one that doesn't laugh at sexual sin. Find me one. We don't do that.

Leads to another application for this, another way to apply this to our lives and that is that there are certain things that a Christian can never do. It's plain and simple. There are certain things that believers can never do. I just told you a moment ago the world doesn't have any boundaries with this; doesn't have any barriers. They talk about their freedom. They say we can do whatever we want. Oh yeah? Stop sinning. They can't do whatever they want. They're in a different kind of bondage, but the point is, that's a deception. You can't get into that. Verse three says, "You are saints now." If you look in that passage, Paul drops that word in there for a reason because it's so different from all the stuff he's talking about. He says, "This is not proper among saints," and the word "saints" means holy ones or those who have been set apart. It means you've been set apart from this sin; you've been set apart from lust, and you can't go back to it anymore.

One commentator said, "Christians are sheep. We're not pigs, and therefore we don't wallow in the mud anymore." We don't wallow in the filth of this world. We have to get out of that.

The story is told of the time a newlywed daughter called her father after a fight with her husband to say that she wanted out of the marriage. She wanted to get a divorce and come home. And as the dad was talking to her on the phone, he said, "You can't do that because you are home." He said, "You're a Christian now; you're a saint, and you're in this marriage for life. You have to stay with the spouse the Lord has given you. You can't just leave when you get into a fight." That's a lesson for all of us today. You're a Christian. You have been changed. You are different and there are certain things you can't do.

Which leads to one more point to consider this morning. One more command concerning sexual sin, and the first one is that it must not be named among you, which means that you have to avoid this and you have to stay as far away from it as possible. And second, you should not even

joke about it. Just to show you how much you should avoid it, to show you how much you should stay away from it, the second command is you can't even be entertained by this joke, by this sin. You can't watch it on the TV, can't enjoy it on the radio. It's that serious and brings us to a third command concerning sexual sin. A third point to talk about, and this is the most serious one of all because it's this. You need to stay away from this sin because it'll keep you out of heaven.

The third command concerning sexual sin and the passage is that you need to stay away from it because it will keep you out of heaven. Paul says if you don't take this seriously, it'll keep you out of heaven because it shows that you never belonged there in the first place. It shows that you have not changed. And if you read on in the passage, he says,

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 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.

As you read on in the passage, you can just feel it getting more and more serious. As Paul writes this, he's getting more and more earnest because now he's talking about heaven. Before he's talking about sin, and that's bad enough. He talked about being a saint in verse three, giving thanks in verse four, some good things. But now he ties us into eternity. And he says, "For this you know with certainty," or "For this you know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that no one who indulges in this sin. No immoral person or impure person or covetous man who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of God." This last phrase, "has an inheritance in the kingdom" means they don't have a place in it. They don't have a part in the kingdom. Later on, in the book of Revelation it mentions several sins and it says fornicators will be cast into the lake of fire. It's the same idea. Society may approve of this. The culture may say this is okay. God says it's not, and as a result, you can't come into His presence with it.

And to explain this, the sin he mentions in here, these are all the same ones, we've already looked at different ways of saying it, except for the sin of idolatry here. That's a new one in the list, but it does refer to the same thing because it refers to someone who loves this sin so much that they make an idol out of it. They love this sin so much that they make it into a god. They'll do anything for it, as we just talked about. This is someone who will give up their marriage and their family and their home for this sin. They'll give up their job and their reputation. And the way Paul says this is important because he says that no idolater will have an inheritance. He doesn't say that no one who commits idolatry or no one who struggles with it, he says, "No idolater." And that's important there. There's a difference there because this refers to someone whose life is so caught up in this sin, it's so dominated by it, that it defines them. They don't do this every once

in a while, they do it all the time. They don't get into it once and that's it. They do it every day. Paul says that kind of person has no inheritance in the kingdom of God, because it shows that they were never changed.

Paul is not teaching legalism here. He's not saying you earn your way to heaven. He's saying Heaven has been earned for you. Jesus paid at all, but if you understand that, this is what it looks like. You will repent of the sin of lust and adultery.

Warren Wiersbe said, "You don't have to be sinless to be a Christian. But if you are a Christian, you will sin less and less and less. You don't have to be perfect, but you will be perfected. If you're in Christ, you'll be sanctified." And this is what sanctification looks like. Which leads me to ask, do you understand this today? Are you being perfected in the Christian life, sanctified? Are you spending less and less in this department?

We've talked about several departments in the book of Ephesians. Several different sins, but what about this one? Are you putting off your lust? I don't mean, are you never lust? But when you do, do you run away from it? Not to it, but away from it. If you do, what Paul is saying here, is that this is good news, you should take heart because it's a sign that you're going to heaven. It's an indication that you're saved because that's what Christians do.

To say it another way, if you're not experiencing this, if you're not seeing victory in this area, let me ask you this question. What are you going to do about it? How are you going to change? Because it's one thing to read a passage like this and be convicted. It's one thing to read it and feel guilty, but it's another thing to do something about it. It's another thing to change, so what are you going to do? Paul tells you what you need to do here. He tells you how you need to respond. He says you need to go back to the Gospel. You need to go back to the fact that Jesus died for every sin, every single one of them, including the sin of lust. Some people get so discouraged by this sin, they get so down about it that they think, "Okay, well, I know Jesus died for sin, but not my sin. I know he died for all this other stuff, lying and anger, but not this. This is too bad." That's not what Paul says here. Jesus went to the cross to pay even for the sin of adultery if you will trust in Him and believe. Will you do that this morning? Will you put your hope in Him?

You know, I was reading this text this week and I was reminded of the testimony of a man named Augustine. Some of you might have heard of Augustine. He was a scholar from the fourth century who some have said is the greatest theologian the church has ever produced. Some say he was the greatest Christian mind from the time of the Apostle Paul until the time of John Calvin. Brilliant man. But what you may not know about him is that before he became a Christian, Augustine was an adulterer. He was enslaved to the sin of lust to the point that it consumed him. If you read his confessions, he tells you that. He says, "It was so bad that I can't

even tell you what my life was like, because it can't be put down in print." He was living with a prostitute; he wasn't even married to her. He had a child out of wedlock, and yet someone told him about Jesus. Someone told him about the Lord, and it took a while for him to believe it because he said, "He can't die for me. I'm too bad. I'm too evil." But in his own words, here's what happened. He said, "My eyes came across a copy of the New Testament, Romans 13:13, which says,

Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in clamoring and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh.

And Augustine write and he says, "I read no further because I didn't need to. For instantly as the sentence ended, there was infused into my heart something like the light of certainty of Christ, and the gloom of doubt vanished away." And he went on to say, "I still struggle with my sin. I still battle with it, but Jesus gave me freedom. He gave me victory."

And friends, let me ask you, have you experienced this today? Have you experienced freedom and victory in this? Because if you haven't, you can. That's the point of this passage. If you haven't experienced freedom, you can have it if you call out to Him and believe, will you do that this morning? Let me pray for you that you would if you haven't. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the words of this passage. This convicting subject of lust. We live in a world that has many wonderful qualities, but if it comes to this particular issue, it's a bad world. There's not a one of us who is not impacted by this, and yet the encouragement that we read in this text is that Christ has overcome every sin. Lord, I pray for those who are here today, for the believers in this room, if they're struggling with this sin, that they would be reminded of that. They would not go out discouraged and down about this, they would come out with a happy heart knowing that truth. You are God who gives freedom. You're a God who loves sinners, and You show that in this sin more than any other.

Lord, I pray for the unbelievers who were here today. If there's any who are lost and are giving into this sin, maybe because they think it's fun, maybe because they think it's entertaining. Lord, I pray that You would remind them of the seriousness of what they're doing. They're practicing something that will keep them out of heaven, and that's a very big deal. So Lord, I pray You would draw them to the Saviour as well. I pray that You would draw them to Christ.

We thank You for the hope that we read in this. Thank You for the hope that we read in the Gospel. Our lives have been changed in every way through what Christ has done. May we go out and live like it today. And as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, may have a special significance for us Father, as we think about how You have died to give us victory over this sin. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.