

INTRODUCTION

In our study last week we talked about "God, My Heart, and Media" in our current series on "Worldliness."

And we stated the importance of guarding our hearts in our viewing and listening of media.

Because we are constantly surrounded by media, it is needful for us to be concerned about what we're putting into our minds.

The passage that has been under consideration since we began this study is 1 John 2:15-17.

It says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

In order for us to overcome the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, we have to think on the right things and examine everything carefully.

In short, we have to walk by the Spirit, as Galatians 5:16 says, and we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

This is not a one time practice but a daily activity.

It like what Psalm 1:1-2 states:

We are not to "walk in the counsel of the wicked" or "stand in the path of sinners" or "sit in the seat of scoffers."

But we're to "mediate in the Law of the Lord day and night."

Again this is not once or twice. It is all the time.

Remember Philippians 4:8 tells us what we're to think on.

We are to think on things that are
"true...honorable...right...pure...lovely...of good
repute...[excellent] and...worthy of praise."

So then, as we evaluate media, we must make sure
we're evaluating the content of the message as well as
the consequences of their influence.

And the reason is because many of us...

Watch Unwatchingly

We don't think about actively filtering our viewing
because we watch by habit or because we're bored.

Instead of viewing in this way, we need to actively
discern and watch with purpose and by doing so resist
the lifestyle of passive viewing.

That means we can't...

Watch with Immunity

We cannot reason by saying, "I don't watch a murder on TV and then go out and murder someone."

Just because we don't instantly mimic all we see doesn't mean our hearts aren't negatively affected by the programs or films we watch.

We always have to understand the "heart" is the issue.

That means what we hear is important, what we study is important and what we see is important.

"Whatever the heart loves, the ears will hear and the eyes will see" (Warren Wiesbe, Be Skillful).

So how are we to be discerning and how are we to guard our hearts?

We have to live...

Coram Deo

Coram Deo is Latin for "before the face of God."

When we understand that all aspects of our living--- from private thoughts to public words and actions---are lived out before His face this will produce a fear of God.

And if you have a fear of God you will "hate evil, pride and arrogance, and the perverted mouth" (Prov.8:13).

In other words, you will have the same attitude that God has towards evil.

Now as we continue with this subject today, I want us to look further at what Scripture says in terms of the content of media and what our response should be towards it.

To do that I want us to look at Ephesians chapter 5.

In the book of Ephesians, Paul gives in the first 3 chapters doctrine as it relates to who we are but then in chapters 4-6 he states if this is who we are then there is a particular behavior that we're to practice.

We could say that chapters 4-6 is the practical application of the doctrine found in chapters 1-3.

The section begins in chapter 4 with the first exhortation given in verse 1.

He says, "Therefore, I the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

If Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in chapter 3 is for them to "be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man" (v.16), "so that Christ may dwell in [their] hearts through faith" (v.17), so that they "being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ" (vv.17-18), "therefore" they are to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which [they] have been called" (4:1).

Their living is to be balanced with their calling.

Verse 2 tells what he means by "walk" in verse 1.

He says they are to "walk" "with all humility and gentleness, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (vv.2-3).

So in other words, they are to obedient to their calling.

Paul further highlights in chapter 4 the calling and giftedness of men in the church and their purpose in "equipping the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (v.12).

He also contrasts their former life to their life now and concludes chapter 4 by telling them to put off lying (v. 25), unrighteous anger (v.26), stealing (v.27), and corrupt communication (v.29).

In other words, they were not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (v.30) any longer with these things.

In addition to this they were also to put aside "all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander...along with all malice" (v.31) and "be kind to

one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (v.32).

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children" (5:1).

Since he uses the word "therefore" in verse 1, it actually refers back to what he has just stated in verse 32.

How are they to imitate God?

Verse 32 says by being "kind...tender-hearted [and] forgiving."

The word "imitators" is the Greek word *mimetai* where we get our English word *mimic*.

It refers to "someone who copies specific characteristics of another person" (John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 194).

Paul says we are to mimic God by copying His specific characteristics that are mentioned in 4:32.

In the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:48, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Or in the words of Peter in 1 Peter 1:15-16, "But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior, because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

So we're to imitate or mimic God in perfection and holiness and in kindness, tender-heartedness, forgiveness, and love (v.2).

But as Paul moves on to verse 3, he gives a contrast to what he has just given.

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

"Not even be named" is translated "Not even a hint" in the NIV.

It's hard to imagine a stronger statement than "not even a hint."

Not even a hint of immorality.

Not even a hint of impurity.

Not even a hint of greed.

Not even a hint filthiness or silly talk.

Craig Cabaniss says, "I wonder how our viewing habits would be adjusted if this verse was constantly scrolled across the bottom of our television screens like the CNN news headlines.

We don't have to look far to find television programs or films that feature more than a hint of sexual immorality" (Worldiness, 51).

So when it comes down to what we imitate, let's make sure it's not even a hint of evil.

That's Paul's point in verses 3-5.

Since we're not to be partakers with those who do these things or as he says in verse 11, "Do not participate in

the unfruitful deeds of darkness," we're to stay clear and expose them.

Now in verses 3-5, he gives 6 vices or 6 sins that "must not even be named among you."

The first is...

Immorality (v.3a)

He says, "But immorality."

This is translated "fornication" in the AV.

It is the Greek word *porneia* which refers to "illicit sexual activity" (Fritz Rienecker, *The Linguistic Key to the Greek NT*) "among unmarried persons" (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Ephesians*).

John MacArthur says, "In contrast to godly, unselfish, forgiving love" (that's mentioned in verse 2), the world's love is lustful and self-indulgent. It loves because the object of love is attractive, enjoyable, pleasant, satisfying, appreciative, loves in return,

produces desired feelings, or is likely to repay in some way...

Songs, novels, movies, and television serials continually exploit emotional, lustful desire as if it were genuine love...

It should not be surprising that the misguided quest for that kind of love leads inevitably to immorality and impurity, because that kind of love is selfish and destructive, a deceptive counterfeit of God's love. It is always conditional and is always self-centered. It is not concerned about commitment but only satisfaction; it is not concerned about giving but only getting. It has no basis for permanence because its purpose is to use and to exploit rather than to serve and to help. It lasts until the one loved no longer satisfies or until he or she disappears for someone else" (Ephesians).

Paul told the Thessalonians that "the will of God" was "your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not

in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God" (1 Thess.4:3-4).

He told the Corinthians to "flee immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18).

As believers we are to "consider the members of [our] earthly body as dead to immorality" (Colossians 3:5).

So when we apply Paul's exhortation of "not even a hint of immorality" to what we watch, we should ask, "Is this tempting me with sexually impure thoughts or actions?"

Before you answer, look at what he says in verse 12, "For it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret."

If sexual sin is shameful and shouldn't even be spoken with specifics, then obviously it shouldn't be broadcast---high definition and surround-sound---into our living rooms.

We take part in "the unfruitful works of darkness" when entertaining ourselves with things our holy God despises.

Paul doesn't stop there. Notice the second word in Ephesians 5:3...

Impurity (v.3b)

He includes not even a hint of "impurity."

The NASB has "any impurity."

This word is translated "uncleanness" in the AV.

It refers to "anything that is unclean or filthy."

This certainly addresses what we watch or listen to.

When Jesus used this word, He used it to describe the rottenness of decaying bodies in a tomb (Mat.23:27).

The other 10 times this word is used in the NT, it is associated with sexual sin.

It refers to "immoral thoughts, passions, ideas, fantasies, and every other form of sexual corruption" (John MacArthur, Ephesians, 200) as well as "impure pictures, obscene books, and other suggestive materials that go along with lives of indecency and that feed the fires of passion" (William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary).

William Barclay says "these shameful sins are not even to be talked about. The Persians had a rule, so Herodotus tells us, by which 'it was not even allowed to speak such things as it was not allowed to do.' To jest about a thing or to make it a frequent subject of conversation is to introduce it into the mind and to bring nearer the actual doing of it. Paul warns that some things are not safe even to talk or to jest about. It is a grim commentary on human nature that many a book and many a play and many a film has had success simply because it dealt with forbidden and ugly things" (Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians).

Paul said in Romans 6:19, "For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness,

resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification."

Going back to 1 Thessalonians 4 in regards to sexual sin, he told them in verse 7 that "God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification."

Not even a hint of immorality or impurity. Next he mentions...

Greed (v.3c)

Again the AV has "covetousness."

"While we generally think of this as meaning the lust for money, here it refers to sensual desire---the insatiable greed to satisfy one's sexual appetite outside the bonds of marriage" (William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary).

The word (pleonexia) refers to a "greedy desire to have more" (Kenneth Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek NT).

It's "always used in a bad sense" (W.E. Vine) and is translated "covetousness" or "idolatry."

In Exodus 20:7 it says, "You shall not covet...your neighbor's wife..."

That's the meaning in Ephesians 5:3.

Paul ends verse 3 by saying immorality, impurity, or greed "must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints."

William MacDonald says, "It goes without saying that they should never have to be named as having been committed by believers. They should not even be discussed in any way that might lessen their sinful and shameful character. There is always the greatest danger in speaking lightly of them, making excuses for them, or even discussing them familiarly and continually. Paul accents his exhortation with the phrase, as is fitting for saints. Believers have been separated from the corruption that is in the world; now they should live in practical separation from dark passion, both in deed

and word" (Believer's Bible Commentary: Ephesians 5:3).

They are "not to speak of doing such a thing, let it not be even so much as mentioned among you" (Kenneth Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek NT, 121).

Paul gives the remaining 3 vices in verse 4:

Filthiness (v.4a)

Gr.aischrotes, refers to "obscenity, shameless immoral conduct" (Wuest).

This is "all that is contrary to purity" (Vine).

It can also refer to "any talk that is degrading or disgraceful" (MacArthur) like "dirty stories, suggestive jokes with a sexual coloring, and all forms of obscenity and indecency" (MacDonald).

R.C.H. Lenski correctly says, "How worldliness so generally love nasty stories, throw out silly, vile remarks, crack supposed jokes of a spicy kind!" (The

Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians).

Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 7:1 to "cleanse [yourselves] from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (NKJV).

James called for his readers to put "aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls" (Jas.1:21).

Next he mentions...

Silly Talk (v.4b)

The AV has "foolish talking."

This is the Greek word morologia which means, "foolish talk."

It comes from moros, "dull or stupid" and lego, "to speak."

"It is stupid talk, talk only befitting someone who is intellectually deficient.

It is sometimes referred to as low obscenity, foolish talk that comes from the drunk or the gutter mouth.

It has no point except to give an air of dirty worldliness" (John MacArthur, Ephesians, 201).

William MacDonald adds that this is "empty conversation that is worthy of a moron."

Last he gives...

Coarse Jesting (v.4c)

Here's a word you don't hear much about. Though we understand it more by what it means.

It "carries the idea of quickly turning something that is said or done---no matter how innocent---into that which is obscene or suggestive" (MacArthur).

"Instead of being involved in immorality or filthy speaking, the believer's mouth should be involved in giving of thanks" (MacArthur).

Verse 5 says with a warning, "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."

In other words, if verses 3-4 describe your life, you have "no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

That clearly means you're not saved.

He says, "For this you know" to indicate that they have heard they are to repent of these things and never have them named among them now that they are saved.

Albert Barnes says, "Be assured of this. The object here is to deter from indulgence in those vices by the solemn assurance that no one who committed them could possibly be saved" (Barnes Notes).

What strong language!

What a strong warning!

So what's on TV tonight?

Craig Cabaniss makes a perfect conclusion to verse 4.

He says, "If we're forbidden to speak with filthiness and crude sexual humor, we're equally prohibited from listening to it when we have a choice. Just because we don't personally tell obscene jokes, we're not off the hook when we plop down our cash at the box office and hire someone to entertain us on the big screen with gratuitous immoral humor. Sometimes people will evaluate a film, saying, "There's no sex. Just some crude jokes, and that's no big deal." On the contrary, this passage says crude joking is "out of place" (5:4).

Such filthy talk or crude humor isn't limited to the programs and films we watch. It can also surface as an Internet temptation. The same biblical guidelines are to govern our speech when we participate in online

“conversations” through e-mail, blogs, or social networking web sites like MySpace or Facebook.

Filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking are “out of place”—they’re forbidden not because they’re on some arbitrary “banned words” list, but because they reflect the heart and attitude of those who disregard God and his Word. Living in a way that’s distinct from the world means speaking in a way that’s distinct from the world. Grace changes us from the inside out, and a changed heart will lead to a changed vocabulary.

Therefore, “instead” of perverse language, “let there be thanksgiving” (5:4). Thanksgiving characterizes the believer’s new vocabulary...

Our culture degrades God’s gift of sex in countless ways. This is nowhere more obvious than in sitcoms, stand-up routines, late-night talk shows, and comedy movies. In light of God’s holiness, immorality should lead to weeping, not laughing. God is not by any means a prude; he created sex to be enjoyed to the fullest in marriage. We cultivate a high view of both God and

sex when we thank him for it; we demean both God and sex when we obscenely joke about it.

Any sexual impurity fails the standard of what is “proper among saints” (5:3). A “saint” is someone set apart through the gospel. Walking in a manner worthy of the gospel means we’re to watch what we watch. We’re not only to avoid impurity in thought, speech, and action but also to steer clear of impure entertainment as well. Christ died for the impure sins of impure people so that we may live as new people testifying to the transforming power of the gospel" (Worldiness, 54-6).

CONCLUSION

Do you feel as guilty as I over the things you have allowed your eyes to see and your ears to hear?

The best place to go with that guilt is to Christ.

He died because of that sin on the cross.

If you struggle with these things, don't discard the idea of addressing it in your life.

Go back over Ephesians 5.

Purchase the book, "Worldliness: Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World" edited by C.J. Mahaney.

Then read the book and apply the heart searching principles to your viewing habits.

To have a pure heart means you must guard your heart from impurity.

You must apply discernment.

Viewing for God's glory requires responding to temptations as they arise.

This means we press the remote, click the mouse, or walk out of the theater when we discern that our entertainment displeases the Lord.

We must resist the temptation to think, “There’s nothing else to watch,” or “I’m only looking for a moment,” or “It would be stupid to waste the money I spent to see this.”

Watching coram Deo leads to acting coram Deo.

Let's pray.