

'Seek to be "worthy of the saints"'

Ephesians 5: 3-5

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Ephesians 5: 3-5 (PowerPoint)

Preface.

'The lewd, the unclean, and the covetous are idolaters, and none of these can inherit the kingdom of Christ and of God. Nor indecency, nor idle chatter, nor vulgar jesting.'

In the light of this verse, I have certainly been one who cannot inherit the kingdom of Christ and God.

'The lewd' here refers to sexuality.

'Unclean', in the sense of the language, is not having a relationship with the Lord God, and 'covetous' is a word that means to be greedy, to be only about oneself, hoarding and never wanting to share what one has seized.

It is simply impossible for me to have been made an inheritor of the kingdom of Christ and God without the atonement of the cross of the Lord Jesus, even though I was once, and still am, an evil person who is full of all of these things.

Since I was a little boy, lewdness, indecency and vulgar jokes have been going round and round in my head, not only going round and round, but also being spoken and acted out, and I used to say: 'People are all lewd, indecent and vulgar anyway, so I cannot believe people who look as if they are not so, and are like a lecher with a quiet exterior. They are liars and hypocrites.' I was guilty, but I did not feel too bad about it, and I tried to express the lewd thoughts, indecent words and indecent acts that welled up inside me as strangely and honestly as possible, before I became a Christian.

I was living in the filth of not knowing the true God at all, and my body still shows the fact that I am greedy, which I can't hide.

Part One.

I think it was when I was in the second or third grade of elementary school that I first came into contact with lewd and indecent things in a concrete way.

I remember that I first came to like looking at so-called adult-oriented magazines when I picked them up with my friends of elementary school from the roadside or at the edge of the park.

I was fascinated, even as a child, by the idea that such a world existed, and from then on, all I could think about was naked women and how I wanted to have sexual relations with as many women as possible, as soon as possible.

I was thinking, 'How can I become more attractive to women?' How can I have a sexual relationship with a woman as soon as possible?' I think my mind was full of these questions.

In the third year of primary school, I wrote 'May I be popular with women' on a wish list for the Tanabata bamboo decoration at school, and I still remember being severely scolded by my homeroom teacher, who gave me a double slap on the cheek.

As a sixth-grader, my mind was full of such things, and it was a great disappointment to me that I had to go to a private integrated junior and senior high school for boys, according to my father's wishes.

I was in such a hurry that I had to somehow get a girlfriend who would allow me to have sexual relations with her while I still could, that I confessed to several girls after the graduation ceremony at primary school and after I entered junior high school, asking them to go out with me. And all such requests were declined. This remains as a bitter and shameful memory that I cannot deny that I am 'a child of God's wrath by birth following the ruler, the evil spirits, with authority in air to follow the course of this world, dead in sin trying to live according to the lusts of the flesh'.

Another time, when I was in the second year of junior high school, one of my good friends told me, with a laugh, that he was having sexual intercourse with his girlfriend, with his parents' approval, by having them drive him to a hotel.

At that moment, he said, 'I'm way ahead of you guys!' I can now recall that, although he was smiling proudly, there was a hint of confusion and fear in the back of his eyes, as if he were wondering if this was really the right thing to do.

But I didn't pay any attention to that vague expression at the time, and went on with my junior high and high school life.

When I became a university student and started living on my own, I thought, 'Now I can finally experience erotic and grotesque content without any concern for my parents' eyes,' and indeed I did.

But in my third year of university, Jesus grabbed me and I became a Christian.

As I became a Christian, what came to me as the most sinful thing was that I had been bound and attracted to lewd, indecent and vulgar things, and in a way I wanted to live my life for that purpose.

It was an undeniable fact that studying and playing sports were, after all, what I ended up doing, and that was the underlying purpose.

This fact filled me with an irresistible shame in the presence of Jesus, and I was filled with feelings of being sorry, dirty, unclean and a sinner towards others.

Then I encountered certain words spoken by Jesus, and the flimsy guilt I had been feeling about my sexuality, and the feeling of 'No, it's okay, I'm not a sinner! I'm still a pretty clean, and there are many more erotic people than me' was totally smashed.

Matthew 5:27-30 (PowerPoint)

'Whoever looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery in his heart.'

In the sin of lewd, indecent and vile sins, there is not the slightest thing that can be excused before Jesus.

I was shocked that it was such a sin that it was enough to gouge out my right eye and cut off my hand, but at the same time I felt as if I had received some sort of refreshing answer.

Until then, no one had ever told me so clearly, 'It is wrong! It's a sin!' I had let myself drift along in a kind of atmosphere that said, 'Well, that's how the world goes around, to a greater or lesser extent for everyone, so why don't you just let yourself be exposed to as much sexual stimulation as possible and live the life you want?'. Perhaps that is why I felt that these words of Jesus pointed out that I was a sinner who could not hide. I felt anxious: 'Will I ever be able to live in such a way that I don't fall into these words of Jesus?' I remember falling to my knees and praying.

But praying has not made me quit looking at women without lust, nor has it made me quit. I must confess that I cannot be a Christian without repenting in the forgiveness and grace of Jesus.

I am also able to realise that I am being changed in some ways, and I think, 'How wonderful and blessed it is.

I feel that these things, which used to be a temptation, an attraction and a purpose that attracted my body and soul, are now 'disgusting', 'At the end of such things, there is nothing but emptiness and wounding', 'Oh, how empty people dance around', 'How wonderful and blessed it is to live with a woman with whom I was united with Jesus'.

I can only confess that it is the work of the Holy Spirit, God's grace and God's zeal to 'choose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, to make us holy and without blemish before Him'.

Part Two

The sexes, male and female, originally share in the truth of the Trinity, which is God the Father, Jesus the Son and God the Holy Spirit in three persons but one, and because man was created in the image of God, we human beings also share in the incomparable grace and blessing of oneness, and enjoy the supreme happiness of being one with someone else. God gave us this gift in order that we might share in the incomparable grace and blessing of oneness, and enjoy the supreme happiness of being one with someone else,

But since man has betrayed God, turned his back on God, separated himself from God and tried to live as God himself, without God, the sacred oneness of the sexes has faded or been forgotten and has become a pleasure of 'stimulation'.

This is what Genesis 6:2 says: 'The sons of man, who were originally the sons of God, began to choose their sexual partners according to the degree of stimulation that was pleasing in their eyes'.

The sexual union of a man and a woman was the blessing like the foundation of any relationship, most basic, never to be lost or shaken relationship, to remember each other as precious persons made in the unique and incomparable image of God, while savouring the truth that the one true God is the One who embodies the 'oneness' of the Trinity,

But man has made the sex of man and woman into a kind of pursuit of stimulation, with the consequence that they commit the sin of forgetting God, of ignoring God, of not knowing God, and have made it a relationship of entanglement of interests, not a relationship of love.

This is the result of Satan destroying, tearing down, complicating, troublesome, and driving not only the relationship between God and man, but also between man and man, in the pursuit of mere stimulation.

It is good when there is stimulation, but when the stimulation wears off, it goes on to the next stimulation, and the next, and the next. In this way, the important relationship of 'oneness' that one can know firsthand, that God is the One who is 'oneness', has been destroyed: the relationship between man and woman, the sexual relationship or the human relationship.

Part Three

In the Old Testament there are many faithful believers, but not a few of them are plagued by sexual lust, trapped, and even voluntarily fall into the trap, seeking stimulation and finding sweetness in the trap, and as a result are tormented by bitterness.

Not only men but also women appear.

One of the most famous people who comes to mind is probably David.

David was a man of faith who was loved by God so much that God said, 'Because of David, because of David', even when his descendants chose to live sinful lives that did not suit the sight of the Lord God, 'Because of David, I will still forgive you, still love you, still have compassion on you, still be patient with you'.

Even David, who was such a devout believer, voluntarily fell into lewd and indecent behaviour, hurt many people and himself, and through his sexual sin, he recognised deeply and profoundly that he was a sinful human being from whom there was no escape.

Let's go to Psalm 51.

(Read the title, a prayer prayed after committing the sin of sexual covetousness by cuckolding the wife of a loyal subject.)

Psalm 51:3-5 (PowerPoint).

David exposed and confessed in his life that he too was a sinner who fell into lewdness and indecency, and prayed, broken-hearted to God.

It is hard to know how many people David's naked confession has brought comfort, healing and a new phase of faith to.

He wrote in the world's bestselling Bible what he would naturally have preferred to keep secret from others, not only as a king of a nation, but also as a man who was admired by his people as a devout man of faith, and which has been read across time, nations and peoples. It has been read by countless millions of people, who have learned that faith is not measured by how many good deeds you accumulate, or how good or bad you are, or how superior or inferior you are, but by how you struggle, fight, break your heart

before the Lord, expose yourself, and not go even one millimeter without God's grace, forgiveness and mercy, and not go on without it to the point that it seeps into your bones, so that you can cleanse yourself to the marrow of your soul.

Through his way of life, his life and his image, David teaches us that we are to live our lives with a primary focus on worshipping the Triune God, offering ourselves to Him, while still holding on to the fact that we are expected, changed and made the children of God. He taught us through his way of life, his life and his figure.

Moreover, the Lord Jesus was born on earth as a descendant of David, who was not only imperfect but sinful in such a way.

In the words of the book of Hebrews, it is true that 'the Lord Jesus, our High Priest, is not a man who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but who has mercy on us and gives us grace and timely help'.

Part Four

Today's scripture, Ephesians 5:3-5, is a passage that can be used by some of us as a yardstick or a sword with which to judge and look down on others.

'How lewd, unclean and covetous is that man!' He is unworthy to be a saint of Christ. I wonder if he is even a human being'.

But no.

It is the opposite.

I think it is the Word that makes us apply it to ourselves, saying, 'How lewd, unclean and covetous I am, and how foolish talk comes out of my mouth, belittling, despising and judging others, rather than the thanks that should be spoken...'.

The man David, of whom I have just spoken, after committing the sin of adultery with a woman called Bath-Sheba, passed through and experienced many sufferings because of his lewdness.

And each time, what he continued to grasp as a believer was to be humble before the Lord God and to express his own sinnerliness as honestly as possible, even before men.

And so, what confession of faith did he come to? He confessed his sinfulness before the Lord God, even when he was betrayed by his own son, triggered by David's own sin of adultery, dragged off the throne and put in the position of being threatened with death by his son.

2 Samuel 16:10-11 (PowerPoint).

'I am suffering like this, not because "that man is bad, this man is bad", but because I myself am a sinful sinner before God. This suffering I am undergoing now is because of my sin,' David confesses.

Conclusion.

We used to be idolaters, lewd, unclean and covetous, oblivious to what was most important to us, that we should inherit the kingdom of Christ and of God.

But in due time, he has called each one of us into his presence and made us holy and blemish-free before him, with the promise that he would develop us into his children according to his will.

As I have told you several times before, a promise can only be made if both parties to the promise keep it.

That is why today's verse.

'Be worthy of the saints, and among you, worthy of the saints'.

We still fail, we still fall, but we want to live for the privilege and honour of being 'worthy of the saints', remembering that the Lord is working diligently for the promise to be 'worthy of the saints'.

Let's pray.

Benediction: Ephesians 5:3, 4c.