

Not even a mention of...

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[0 : 00] We've been looking at Ephesians 4-5, we're going to go on into chapter 6 and it's always good! to know what the aim of sermons is and I can tell you what the aim of these sermons is and we will spend a few minutes looking at what we have seen so far.

So the aim of these sermons is to end up with now in this world beautiful, useful, appreciative children of God.

And Paul is spelling that out in terms of the community of the church, in terms of the witness to the world and indeed to the heavenly beings.

He's going to spell this out in terms of marriages, husbands and wives, in terms of families, parents and children, in terms of workers, employers and employees.

And he's also going to say, if you're doing that you are actually functioning as a soldier in an ongoing spiritual battle. That's now for this life and in the world to come the church will be the spotless radiant bride of Christ.

[1 : 18] That is what this part of God's word is aiming for and that is what these sermons are aiming for. We have moved in the passages from the indicatives which tell us what God has done to the imperatives, what we should do, what God has done for us and to us and in us.

We've been chosen in Christ for example, we've been redeemed in Christ, we've been raised with Christ. And this moves on to what we must do in Christ. And you remember that we're to be putting off the old self, to be renewed in our thinking, that's in chapter 4 verse 23, and to put on new clothing.

I also reminded us that this is a lot about walking, that's word number 4043 if you want to look it up in a concordance.

And there are many references which modern translations might not say walk but the idea is indeed walking.

You used to walk such and such a way, God has prepared good works that we should walk in them, walk worthy of the calling with which you are called. Don't walk as the Gentiles walk and in what was read to us, walk in love.

[2 : 44] So it says, our translation says live a life of love but what it actually says is walk in love. And in chapter 5 verse 8, walk as children of light.

NIV says live as children of light but it's actually walk, be careful how you walk. So walking is this steady, calm, regular progress in the Christian life and that's what he's aiming at.

He's not aiming just to get us excited and then we go home and forget all about it. But he's aiming that not only Sunday but Saturday and Friday and Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday, all the days of the week we should be walking the Christian walk.

And you remember that he brings it down to this idea of how we think. So the problem before, chapter 4 verse 17, was that we used to think with futile thinking, chapter 4 verse 17, but we now have renewed thinking which is in chapter 4 verse 23, be new, be made new in the attitude of your minds.

So we are thinking about putting on and putting off. So we had the example of you were a painter and decorator, now for some obscure reason you have become a high court judge.

[4 : 10] So you used to put on your painting overalls, but now you put on, well you put off of the painting overalls, you put on your smart grey suit, your ridiculous high court judge's wig and your red robes.

So just an illustration, you put off, you put on, and he says that that's what we're to do in terms of Christian behaviour.

So he's really been saying, you've been made new in Christ, be the person that God has already made you, and behave like the person God has made you, and think about your actions and reactions with the spiritually renewed mind.

So there is a great emphasis on thinking in these chapters. So he doesn't say go with your gut, he says don't go with your gut, think through what a Christian really ought to do in these situations. Why am I doing this? Does it fit with the Christ I have learned? So for example, in chapter 4 verse 20, he says, you didn't come to know Christ that way, surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

[5 : 25] So he's thinking you've been taught things, you've learnt things, that's how you are to live. And we looked last time at how that spells out specifically in terms of truth, in terms of anger, in terms of property, in terms of words, and in terms of attitudes.

And I would suggest that if you missed that, there's quite a lot of stuff that would be worth listening to on the web. While we're here, would you like to put up your hand if you do ever listen to the sermons from the church here on the internet?

How many people do that? Because we're just puzzled whether anybody ever does. I do. When I can't sleep, I listen to my own sermons. So let's just see, hands up properly. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

10, okay. So Steve was, where's Steve? You were just wondering, weren't you, how many people listen to stuff? Yeah.

Or you and I listen to ours 20 times to boost the ratings. So just, so I wanted to point out a couple of things before we get going.

[6 : 42] This is Trinitarian. Verse 20, you did not learn Christ that way. Chapter 4, verse 30, do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

And chapter 5, verse 1, walk as imitators of God. So I'm just pointing out, this is thoroughly Trinitarian. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit are all enmeshed and embraced, and we are embraced by in the Christian life.

And also, it's shaped by the cross. So this text, be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

So he's saying, that sacrifice that Jesus made is to spread its aroma throughout the whole of the Christian life.

The whole of the Christian life is lived, as it were, in the shadow of the cross. That's another important thing. And instantly, I just point out here that when you get a list in the Bible, so here's a list of two things.

[8 : 05] He's a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God. That's not two different things. Jesus didn't make two offerings and die twice. It's just two ways of saying the same thing, isn't it?

That's true. So I just, that might come in useful at some other point, but just notice that when two things are put, they're not always two different things. They can be two ways of saying the same thing.

Right. Let's, so that was revision, really. Verse three. But among you, there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality or of any kind of impurity or of greed because these are improper for God's holy people.

Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Okay. So I'm going to look at these verses, or we're going to look at verses down to verse seven and going to ask these four questions which you can see across the top.

[9 : 16] What's his target? What's his thinking? What's his argument? And what's his instruction? So let's first of all think through what is the target that Paul has in mind on this occasion?

And as we look at this, let me say this is specifically Christian. His argument is to Christians about the way Christians should live.

He's not saying tell politicians that this is how they should frame the laws so that it becomes a criminal offense to have coarse joking or something like that.

He's not legislating for society, but he is saying this is for Christians. Now you could say he's saying what people ought to be like and all people ought to be like that.

Well that's true, but that's sort of going around about. So I've just got this is for Christian people. It's saying if you're a Christian, this is how you should live. And he is, oh, have I missed something out? [10:33] Right, well, so in chapter 5, verse 3, he's aiming at what he says, sexual immorality, any kind of impurity, or greed.

And in verse 5, he has the same three things put in terms of people. No immoral, impure, or greedy person.

So those three things again, immorality, impurity, greed. And he also mentions two of those three in chapter 4, 19.

He says that the Gentiles indulged in every kind of impurity. NIV says with a continual lust for more, but it's actually the same word as for greed.

So we've got three words, I'll give you them in Greek. Pornea, pornea, actharsis, pleonexia. So let's look at those three words and just think what they mean.

[11:40] Pornea, actharsis, pleonexia. And he's in a world where marriage could be a fairly loose arrangement, in a world where homosexuality was celebrated and certainly permitted, and arguably their religions included having sex as part of the religious celebration.

Now I tried to look this up and the scholars are not in agreement. What actually did take place in Ephesus, in the temple of Diana, Artemis?

What did take place there? Some people, some of the scholars are saying they included orgies in their celebration and other people say well actually there's no evidence for it.

So you could take that as possibly what they did then, but it's certainly true that there are societies in which that sort of thing happened.

So that's the background, that's the context. And if you think, oh, our society is terrible because we have loose ideas of marriage and celebration of homosexuality and sex is all over the place, well, that's, you know, it wasn't so different in those days.

[13:09] So let's read it in that context. So what is this pornea? Well it is the word from which we get the English word pornography pornography or porn, that's the origin of it.

And what he would have meant by pornea would be, I mean you could tweak the details of it, but pretty much would have been all sexual intercourse outside of God-given marriage between one man and one woman in lifelong commitment.

That's what he was, so within this boundary of marriage between one man and one woman in a lifelong commitment, sexuality is God's good gift, but to take sexual intercourse outside of that would be what he would call pornea.

So he would include all sorts of things that we would understand. So sexual relationships between unmarried consenting adults he would call pornea.

Sex between members of the family who were, sufficiently close, so between siblings would be pornea. Sex with animals would be pornea, sex with underage boys or girls would be pornea if they didn't have mature consent, or sex with a person of the same sex.

[14:34] So all of those things would be outside that definition of sex within marriage, and he would use that as, he would say that's pornea. and he says don't let this even be hinted at amongst you.

We'll come to that in a moment. What's the akthasis? The akthasis is a word for uncleanness. We have the English word cathartic.

Have you ever heard the word cathartic meaning to clean? It's a sort of emotional cleansing. Well this is akathasis, the a being the opposite, so uncleanness. And I think this is the bit that if he were here he'd call pornography akthasis.

It's not actually an act of sexual intercourse but an uncleanness. So my thought to define it would be say videos, photos, etc.

aimed at stirring up or celebrating sexual desire outside marriage. So it's aimed at stirring up something which doesn't result within marriage.

[15:48] I don't know, I'm sure there would be a better way of defining it than that but I think that would do as a working definition. He says we don't want that either.

And the pleonexia which is often translated covetousness or greed so the NIV translates it greed. And I just find it interesting that almost three times he links this pleonexia with akthasis with uncleanness.

So it seems to me that he's linking those two ideas. So it's not really pleonexia as wanting more money but pleonexia as a sort of wanting in a sort of flesh gratification lust.

Wanting more so I've put here thoughts unsatisfied lust for more, lust for self-satisfaction, excessiveness in sexual things and then maybe crossing boundaries where sexual things are supposed to be within certain boundaries but crossing those boundaries, going further, going more so that sex is no longer anything to do with intimacy or privacy or person to person just becomes objectification and over indulgence, that sort of thing.

Strangely enough, Maria and I lit upon a programme on that last night about Venice. We did, didn't we?

[17 : 29] Should we own up to this? And it was talking about the architecture, we was always talking about the history, the social history of Venice and at one time in the history of Venice, I hope there's nobody here from the Venice Tourist Board, this was the lifestyle that they lived and the presenter of the programme said strangely enough, in the following decades the population was riddled with syphilis disease, which is a terrible sexually transmitted disease, but had awful effects, but I think it would be, I think Paul would say, well this is my meaning of this word, of just going further and further, more and more into this realm.

The world of sexual excess and discontentment really, with what God has set as the way and the boundaries and the wholesomeness of sexual things.

He does have another target, he's mentioned those three things, he does have another target in verse four where he says, nor should there be, and he's got three things here, obscenity, foolish talk, coarse joking.

So the words here, spell them out a little bit. The obscenity word is to do with shamefulness and dishonourableness, things that we know are not noble and good and beautiful, but things that we know are ugly and shameful and dishonourable.

And the foolish talk is just made of two words like foolishness and talk, so talking in a foolish way. I don't think he means silly, Lewis Carroll's poems were sometimes silly, I don't think he's saying silly, but foolish in the sense that it deliberately is unwise, opposite of wise and good, foolish talk.

[19 : 38] And then his word which is translated coarse joking is actually a word that can be used positively, it can mean witty replies. But here he's not saying it's a good thing, he's saying this sort of wittiness and humour is not good.

So I would think this would include what people would call dirty jokes. Double entendre, which, in other words, saying something that can be taken two ways, and the second of the two ways is a dishonourable way.

That used to be the sort of humour that you'd find on the BBC in the 1960s and 70s, but now humour doesn't stop with dubler entendres, does it? It's much more explicit, so maybe dubler entendres are passé, to use two French expressions in a row.

So I think we would include unnecessary and disrespectful sexual references, and he says those things are not to be meant, those are his targets, those are his targets.

So I think we should include, he wouldn't have thought of Facebook and Twitter and the internet, but we should include that. And also just to comment that I think some Christians overreact against the Christian conservatism of their upbringing, and they say, oh, I was brought up never even to use such and such a word.

[21 : 14] Well, how ridiculous is that? I'm going to use that word and that word and that word and that word. So I think it's just an observation that sometimes Christians overreact against conservatism, and he's got a sort of balance to it, hasn't he?

But he does say Christian people, in your talk, this is his second target, in your talk, in your words, in your humour, there is not to be shameful and dishonourable talk, foolish talk, even your wittiness should be wholesome wittiness, which makes me wonder who would bother to be a Christian comedian, and the answer is of course Tim Vine, you heard of Tim Vine?

No, he's a Christian, he and his brother, his brother is Jeremy Vine, we're to understand they're both Christians, Tim Vine is the one who said, he does sort of very short jokes, everybody looks terribly blank, you've never heard of Tim Vine?

Am I saying the wrong word? Is it, what is he Vine? Tim Vine, yeah, Tim Vine, he's the one who said, crime in multi-storey car parks, that's wrong on so many different levels, that's him, that's Tim Vine, so I think he's, I think this is something that extends to what happens in the office at lunch time, what happens if you are in a work situation where on a Friday you go to the pub with your

mates, this happens in what you might talk about in the coffee break at classroom, this is his target about conversation and he raises this, so that was the first question, what's his target, now second thing is what is his thinking, and he says, so I've done a before and after, before you're a Christian you might have thought in terms of sexual behaviour that sex is part of a sort of animal nature and therefore has no spiritual significance, so some of the

Greek people in the Bible would have thought that, you find that popping up in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, so where did you park your car, did anybody come by car, hands up, anybody come by car, two of you, three of you, okay, how many people parked in the car park up at the top of the road, how many people parked in one of the parking bays around here, would you expect, oh you did, okay, would you expect me to denounce you for parking your car in a parking bay, you've got a permit, okay, see, and you would say, you know, I suppose I was to denounce somebody for parking their car in Stanley Road instead of in the car park up there, you'd say, well there's no spiritual significance to where I park my car, get real pastor, what are you talking about, and some people might say, well if it doesn't make any difference where I park my car, it makes no difference where I park the parts of my body, I mean what's that got to do with anything, but the

[24 : 44] Bible says it does matter, you might before you're a Christian have thought we're free, freedom is an important part of being human, and we are free to do what we strongly feel, if I'm to be true to myself, I need to be true to my deepest feelings, perhaps as long as it doesn't harm other people, this idea that the I, the deepest I, is the deepest desire I have, and my one loyalty must be to what I desire, now you've noticed that Paul doesn't say that, does he, he talks about deceitful desires, and he does say the thing that you should be true to is Christian thinking, so you might desire something, but as you think it, you say I shouldn't do that, we don't just give in to our desires, even if it doesn't harm people, and some people might say even if it does harm other people, I've got to be true to my desires, or you might have thought everybody else does da da da, so I'm going to, so this is the area of conforming to the world around us, and of course in the Bible it says if you're a

Christian be transformed, don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that's a little bit about the thinking part of it, when you've become a Christian, you might think well here's three ways of thinking, number one creation, human sex and sexuality is not sinful in itself, it's a joyful gift that God has invented for us, God invented human sex, but he invented it to be personal, not impersonal, personal, and joyful, and to have spiritual consequences, or spiritual connections, and in particular, to be enjoyed within the commitment of marriage, so God invents marriage right back in the first chapters of Genesis, therefore will a man leave his father and mother, cleave to his wife, and the two will become one flesh,

God invented, that's good, it's a good thing, and we would be thinking as Christians there's some goodness here that God has given to the whole world in fact, one man, one woman, leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh, or we could think in terms of salvation, how we learned Christ, and we haven't come to this bit yet, but we shall see in due course, that there is a particular Christian insight into marriage, that no other religion has, even the Old Testament doesn't have this, that Christ and his church, the deep bond and relation between Christ and his church, is the model on which marriage is copied, from which marriage is copied, God, there's a very special beauty about marriage, that we learn in salvation, so when we get to that we'll find that husbands are told to love your wives as

Christ loved the church, and wives are taught to love their husbands and submit to them as the church submits to Christ, so there's something about spiritual and personal significance, there's something about faithfulness, there's something about very high quality love, and let's bring in a third aspect of thinking, providence, you come to learn that God is your heavenly father, you come to learn that your heavenly father knows what you need, and it follows from that, that sexual problems and sexual issues are to be solved in God's way, rather than thinking, well, God isn't interested in that, God doesn't provide for that, God doesn't, that's out of his territory, I need to solve my sexual problems in whatever way seems good to me, on the contrary, God's care for us, and his provision for us, even includes the sexual issues that are in our lives, not trying to minimize and say that that doesn't mean that people might not wrestle with things and have issues that really need huge amounts of prayer and patience and can be very heartbreaking, thinking, but I'm saying that we think about it in a way that takes into account creation and salvation and providence.

So that's his thinking, and let's look at the way he argues it, because you might be thinking, okay, I understand what he's getting at, I understand what he's getting at this morning, but I just don't see why I should take this on board, because the preacher is obviously from another generation and doesn't understand the way life is nowadays.

[30 : 09] Well, let's see what Paul says to that. His argument is an argument about fittingness. Verse 3, among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity or this excessiveness because these are improper for God's holy people.

They are improper for God's holy people. So his argument is about whether it is fitting and proper. You understand?

Proper, something that fits with something else. Now, there must not be even a hint of what it literally says, this must not even be named among you.

And I think the way this works is to say, okay, we see everybody, see the people who came to the men's breakfast, we see the people who go to the women's breakfast, we see the congregation, the people in the prayer meetings, see the people in the adults group, in the CIC, and they behave in various ways.

And what name would we give to that behaviour? And we might say, oh, there's somebody, that's a caring relationship. And what those people are doing there, that's respect.

[31 : 35] And what those two young people are doing is courtship. But what they're doing is pornea. And he says, don't let any behaviour among you bear the name.

Don't even let it be mentioned in that sense. that those people, that's pornea. No, you mustn't do that, he says. And to not have such behaviour nameable in your fellowship is becoming, becoming meaning to fit, to beautify holy people.

things that are not becoming and fitting. So it would not be fitting if you had put gravy in your hair this morning before you came out.

Would you agree? John's not too sure, I can see a sort of blank look on his face. Oh, I usually put gravy on my hair, what's he on about today? I think you would say, shocking, gravy, hair, you don't do that, I'm just looking now.

It's unbecoming, it makes you look stupid, it would be just, you know, yuck, you wouldn't even think of doing that.

[33 : 01] And he says, this is how it is with these sorts of behaviour and Christians, you would no more think of putting holiness and uncleanness together than you would think of putting gravy in your hair.

He has the same argument in verse 4, nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are, what does he say?

Out of place. Again, it's the idea of something that fits and doesn't fit. fit. So, here's a thought of something that doesn't fit.

So, when we have coffee afterwards, would you expect, whoever, who's on the coffee rota today?

Right, did you bring any Brussels sprouts with you to put in the coffee?

Had you even thought of bringing Brussels sprouts to put in the coffee? would you even dream of bringing Brussels sprouts to put in the coffee? Because it's not fitting, it just doesn't go.

[34 : 16] I mean, yuck. And he's saying that that is the same thing about these forms of conversation and God's people.

He says it's just out of place. Any more, I mean, I was just trying to think of things that are unfitting. Somebody gives you a birthday card, you read it and tear it up in the presence of the person who's given you the birthday card.

You say, God, how insensitive could you be? It's just, you don't do that. And Paul uses these expressions, and as you can see, I'm struggling to put it across, but that's his take on these forms of behaviour and being a Christian.

You know, yuck, who would do that? And he has a third argument, which says God really detests this behaviour, so let's go to that slide.

God really detests this behaviour, and this is what he says, verse 5, you can be sure of this, no immoral, impure, or greedy person, such as an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

[35 : 41] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things, God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Now, notice what he's arguing, he's not saying, if you do this, you'll

go to hell, that's not what he's saying, but he's saying, the people who do this outside the Christian church, that's why God's wrath is on them.

God really detests this. So, no person who is characteristically immoral, impure, or greedy, so on that Venice thing, it gave a biography of Casanova, who made it his lifestyle to be impure, and, what's the word, immoral, and to take it to excess.

It says, no person of whom you could say that has anything to do with the kingdom. They're outside the kingdom. And, God is so provoked by this, that it is because of these things that God's wrath comes upon those who are disobedient.

So, that's what God thinks about that. That's what's landing on the world outside. So, how absolutely unthinkable for us Christians to get involved with that as Christians.

Now, arguably, the temple of Diana, greatest Diana of the Ephesians, great goddess, arguably, the people there would say, come on, guys, get real.

[37 : 22] We do this sort of thing all the time. That's what worship really is. What do you do in your worship? You sing stuff and pray and read the Bible and drink coffee and then you go home. What sort of worship is that?

We do. We have much more exciting worship in our services involving all the things that Paul has just said you shouldn't do. Well, that's deceptive talk.

Let no one deceive you, verse 6, with empty words. Let no one deceive you with empty words because of these things God's wrath comes on the disobedient. They're deceptive and empty words to say it doesn't matter.

God doesn't, God isn't that bothered. So let's go to number four. What does he instruct? Well, I'm going to bring in a bit from Jesus first.

And Jesus has these words which I think are of great wisdom, if I can put it that way, where he says, if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.

[38 : 27] If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Cut off your hand and throw it away. It's better to lose your hand than to go to hell. That's what Jesus said. And he's talking about a very radical, cut off sin at the source.

I don't, I think this is a form of words that Jesus said one thing but he didn't mean it literally. I think he, but he is saying, we need to be radical with sin, in particular the sorts of sins that we're thinking about just here.

So if the internet is the problem, then, well, at least contact your ISP to see whether you can get a filter so that the naughty, nasty websites never get through to you.

And if it's still a problem, I guess you ought to consider cutting off the internet. You think, well, how will I do my online banking? But Jesus says, here's a problem.

It needs to be dealt with seriously and if the internet is a problem for you, deal with it radically. if your boyfriend-girlfriend relationship is just leading you into sin, then you should, well, maybe break that relationship.

[40 : 13] You might think that's very costly. I think that Jesus meant us to understand that. I mean, cutting off your hand would be costly, wouldn't it? But he really is very, radical means getting to the root of things.

And he says, you really have got to be radical about this. If it's staying up late that gets you into trouble, then go to bed early and get up early.

If you're led into temptation when you get tired, be careful not to let yourself get tired. Just some thoughts about radically dealing with things that get us into sin.

So, that wasn't Paul, that was Jesus. Here's Paul saying, do not be partners with them, verse 7, do not be partners with them.

What does he mean by this? He means don't be co-partakers with them. So, he's not saying, if there's somebody in your office, and you know they have a lifestyle which is completely not compatible with being a Christian, so you don't have to move office, you know, they can be a co-worker, they can be a co-professional, they could be a colleague, but don't be a co-partaker in that sin with them.

[41 : 47] So, if they, Paul's saying to the Ephesians, if they ask you to go with them, we're having an Artemis night tonight, down at the Artemis temple, it'll be great, and you say, what exactly is involved?

