

Help for the Race

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[0 : 00] Well, hello everybody. It's good to see you. It's Richard. You can say hello, Richard. Hello, everybody. We just finished and we said, this is the word of the Lord.

And you said, thanks be to God. I believe this is the word of the Lord and I'm so glad the Lord has spoken. I became a Christian when I was 19 and I was saved from darkness.

I've said in other contexts, if I had not become a Christian, I believe I would not be alive today. I probably would have taken my life or done something foolish enough to lose it.

But I was saved from darkness and I fell in love with a minister's daughter. And we started going out. But because I had come to know Jesus, I had such high ideals.

I used to fantasise of us sitting by a fire on some mission field, translating the Bible together. My fantasies had really grown to a form of godliness that I longed to return to.

[1 : 19] But as she was my first girlfriend, by the way, so 19, I was somewhat inexperienced, which is probably not a bad thing. But at some point I realised that I was attracted to her and she to me and holding hands and having a kiss and eventually it occurred to me, what should I do?

I have strong feelings towards this young lady and she does towards me. And so I asked one of my church fellowship leaders. And I said to him, you know, this is what I'm feeling, but I'm a Christian and I'm trying to work out what to do.

And that young leader deceived me. He did not tell me the word of the Lord. He told me what he thought was the right thing, what he practised, and what everyone else practised, but not what Jesus said.

He said, do you really love her? And I said, well, I really like her and I think I love her. Then if you really love her, whatever you do is okay. He deceived me.

He actually pointed me to a path that would lead me back into the darkness I had just been liberated from. You'd be interested to know that he was one of a number of leaders.

[2 : 54] David Short knew them as well. All of their marriages ended in divorce due to adultery. And some of it was with each other.

The fruit of darkness is obvious if you wait long enough. I thank God that he protected me from destruction.

It's interesting to talk about what is, well, I think you'll find it's interesting to talk about what is good sex and what is bad sex. I think many people today seem to measure good sex by what brings the most pleasure.

But that is a silly way of measuring good sex. My understanding is that as a rule there is pleasure involved and that's why it's so popular.

But that is a poor measure of good sex. Partly because unless it's mutual and a number of other things it is not a measure of anything.

[4 : 10] I think the measure of good sex is its fruit. How enriched is a relationship? How long is that relationship lasting?

How deeper is the love and respect? As a result, is it an expression of a deepening and growing love? Or is that it? Apparently, you can be a drop-dead gorgeous movie star and go out with a drop-dead gorgeous movie star and do everything right and pleasure is up there but it ends in disaster.

I need to speak tonight about what good sex is and isn't it great that the word of the Lord tells us what good sex is because I'd like to move into light and joy and peace rather than chaos.

Well, it's helpful, I think, therefore, to name the shame. The passage we read talks about what is shameful and I think it is helpful to address briefly what is bad sex.

Bad sex, I believe, is what God has said is bad sex. Bad sex is sex that does not result in a fruitful, loving, deepening, long relationship of mutual respect which edifies each other and glorifies God.

[5 : 43] But we have a problem. If you look in verse 3, halfway through he says, these things must not even be named among you.

Don't even mention them. Bad sex is not a good thing to talk about. Though it would appear in the generation I've grown up at least that's been the top of the list whatever you talk about it's bad.

But God says it's actually not a good thing to talk about all the time. In fact, we're told in verse 12 that it's shameful even to speak of the things that they do.

It's not a good thing. It's shameful to dwell on the subject of sex or at least what he's describing which is bad sex.

But let me read to you again from verses 3 and 4 because we are introduced to the components at least of what bad sex involves.

[6 : 45] Verse 3 says, Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among the saints.

Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking which are out of place but instead let there be thanksgiving. Now, as we consider what is bad sex the first expression sexual immorality is probably the best expression used in the Bible for us to identify.

The word sexual immorality is translating a word in the Greek. You'll notice sexual immorality is a phrase whereas the word in the Greek is a word.

The literal word that translate the Greek word is fornication. Now, you may have heard of fornication but it's no longer popular. I mean, when was the last time you used the word fornication in your average conversation?

And if you ask people what is a fornicator they might say are they someone who grows flowers? I mean, it's one of those words that you just don't know what it means. It might be helpful therefore when the new translations give you an expression that at least you can understand.

[8 : 09] Sexual immorality is a phrase that tries to capture the meaning of the Greek word. You will actually be familiar with the Greek word when you hear it. The Greek word is pornea from which we get pornography.

pornography. Porn and the list goes on. Pornea is the Greek word for what we would describe as bad sex.

Bad as opposed to good, wholesome, godly sex. It's the word that Jesus used when he described bad sex. He used the word pornea.

Sometimes when adultery is mentioned pornea is mentioned with it. So pornea is often used to describe any sex that is bad sex outside of marriage and adultery is sinful sex or bad sex within marriage.

But when it's on its own as it is here it is the term pornea fornication sexual immorality which basically is the word that says all sexual expression that is bad, unwholesome, destructive is described by this word.

[9 : 31] Well, what therefore can pornea or fornication capture? What are we talking about here? There are some people that immediately go to pedophilia and sex with children or incest and say well that's clearly wrong and rape but they're the extremes that as a rule we're not necessarily involved in but it is helpful that I need to name the shame and once I've done it we won't return to it again.

but fornication or pornea includes adultery. Adultery is to have sex with anyone that is not married to you and ideally someone who is the idea being they're married but not to you or you're married and the person you're having sex with you're not married to and God says he hates it.

even flirting even flirting with someone else's spouse fits into bad pornea the flirting is moving towards that how common is that in our culture?

I mean there's the obvious things like prostitution paying someone for sex even strip clubs internet pornography my friends is epidemic as I look at on this congregation the statistics are almost as high in some contexts that at least half the men of any group are struggling with or frequenting internet pornography it's become the epidemic that is pornea having sex with someone that you're dating is sexual immorality it's fornication it's also destructive and of course there's homosexuality which is just one of many occasionally I'm called a homophobic not that often because

I try not to have that as my party conversation but when I am challenged and accused to be homophobic I say I'm not homophobic please don't limit me to that I'm and this always makes them wonder what I mean I'm faunaphobic which begs the question what's that I'm phobic of fornication and they normally go what's that is that someone who grows flowers no and I go on to talk about how there are many sexual expressions and it's probably inappropriate even to say that I'm phobic I have no fear myself regarding other people's sexual expressions I'm afraid for them I'm afraid for them why am I afraid why do I fear for people who indulge themselves into bad sex because it's a path into darkness where I have walked it's a path that leads to despair it leads to all impurity and covetousness see verse 3 sexual immorality and impurity and covetousness my understanding of good sex is purity perfection untainted lovely good bad sex impurity stained broken the idea of covetousness you know what covetous is it's another word we tend not to use a lot it's greed it's longing for more and one of the problems of bad sex is it never satisfies and you want more and more more bizarre more extreme and it's destructive

[14 : 10] I fear for people in that respect it also leads as we see in verse 4 to lifestyle and words and jokes when I was a child just a while ago now I remember I grew up in a culture in Sydney and I assume it's similar here that was still relatively moral and I remember as a boy hearing this Jewish comedian and on a record player anyone knows what a record player is and he in the this joke was I'm from Sussex S-U-S sex and that was really really risqué you didn't even say the word sex well have we come a long way what happens with bad sex is the language the discussions the topics the material the reading the television it's just everywhere and it gets more and more it gets cruder and cruder

I long to hear a comedian that can tell plain jokes because often they're the funniest anyhow now why does bad sex lead people into darkness because the sexually immoral become addicts addicts addicted to the drug of pleasure and they can no longer control themselves it leads more and more to self destructive kinds of relationships it leads to physical trauma yes and to emotional trauma now I'm sad to say that one of the privileges or responsibilities I have had as an Anglican minister it's been how long have I been an Anglican minister Jude 20 years thank you the memory goes after 20 years 20 years and what happens when you're an

Anglican minister or any minister that tries to teach the Bible is that people come up to you afterwards and say can I talk to you and I'm sure Dan's had this I know David's had this any minister's had this and people will trust you and if you like reveal the darkness brings tears to my eyes when we left here this congregation was often full five even six hundred people mostly single the amount of couples mostly girls that would come to me and say I thought he loved me even within Christian circles when you teach the Bible people are manipulated and treated badly and I've spoken to many people over the years and when sex has been involved the pain the wounding the nightmares the psychological messed up headness that you know you have is just horrific and homosexuals there are two kinds of homosexuals those that want to be and those that don't it haunts them all sexual expression that is not good has bad consequences and adultery my friends adultery you know destroy your marriage trust destroy the trust in the other marriage see the kids faces see the friends it is it is the most unspeakable act of betrayal betrayal that is has ramifications that do not it is horrific anyhow what I'm saying is as a pastor

I'm not talking out of ignorance and as a pastor you as a brother or sister in Christ you know what the light is and you know what the darkness is and many of you have dabbled in the darkness or been saved from the darkness or been drawn back into the darkness that is why I fear for those that live in a city like Vancouver or a city like Sydney that have emblazoned across their front pages the gay Mardi Gras or the I forget what you called it but you know it doesn't matter what it is it can be that or it can be some other kind of extroverted excessive indulgent flagrant abuse of what is a beautiful gift from God and it just says everybody it's okay and whole nations are deceived well that's not the only reason though we should fear bad sex there are two far more serious consequences that you may not consider but they're in the

Bible and we need to read them the first serious consequence of bad sex is it will stop you being a Christian I've seen it happen over and over again bad sex will make you stop being a Christian in fact it stops people following the real Jesus and having genuine faith I emphasise that because they'll often say they are still following Jesus and still have faith but it's no longer the real Jesus who condemned Porneia and it's no longer genuine faith that says I will do whatever you say Lord look at verse five it's on the outline if you weren't aware of it and verse five says you may be sure of this that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetous that is an idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God if you pursue

[21 : 08] Porneia you will not receive the inheritance that Jesus promises it's there Jesus said it no inheritance your salvation is on the precipice exclusion from the kingdom of God is at stake and Paul is saying here in verse five you can be sure of this let me make it crystal clear that if that is what you pursue you're excluded now I personally take great comfort that this does not mean if any Christian ever fails because that would exclude just about all of us no it's those that actively pursue ignore the truth indulge in sin knowing it's sin he says you cannot do that you must break with the darkness and move into the light the second group of homosexuals

I mentioned and I I've met many people who have various addictions and I consider that as one form of sexual addiction pornography is another one these are Christians who say I don't want to be like this I want God to help me they are people who are trying this is describing people who say stuff that I'll just live as I wish and expect God's blessing so not only is your salvation at stake but there is an even greater and more serious consequence are you ready for this who would have thought look at verse six let no one deceive you with empty words for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience don't be deceived with empty words don't let anyone somehow say it's okay Paul is saying it's because of this kind of sin that God's wrath his anger and it's a righteous anger it's a good anger it's the kind of anger you feel if someone's hurting your child you know you should not be doing that

I want to protect my child and he's saying it is because of this God's righteous anger that he is coming and his judgment will be vented I mean this is when we pray oh Lord your kingdom come oh Lord your will be done on earth as it is in heaven deliver us from the evil that we live in that is God's wrath when it comes and that which is evil will finally be eradicated it is talking how some people as a result of their particular pursuit of this particular lifestyle are facing a judgment and condemnation to dare I say the word hell the very word that Jesus virtually invented he's the one that spoke about it and he said and I came to rescue you from it this idea of God's judgment on sin and particularly on sexual sin if you want to read another part of the Bible that will help you it's Romans 1 and it just describes almost a cyclic going down the drain descent into darkness as people pursue the darkness and turn their backs on the light their lives and the consequences of their lives are the beginning the foretaste of God's judgment well enough of speaking on such dark subjects let's return to the light

I am so glad that the Lord's word doesn't just hammer us into the ground and leave us in a pool of blood I have certainly been to some churches that seem to do that and the only one that seems to be perfect is the guy up front that gives you the impression well I never sinned and until you become like me you think oh goodness do I have to talk like that to become like you what I want to do is look at the two therefore the epistle of the Ephesians is talking about how we should change our lives because of what God has done and last week we looked at what Jesus had done and Paul says in verse 1 therefore and as he describes the destructiveness of bad sex in verse 7 he talks then again therefore this is what you should do and these two therefore I want to conclude with tonight so let me read to you first from verse 1 having talked about how

Jesus has done this wonderful act of coming into the darkness and rescuing us and bringing us into the light verse 1 says therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God therefore my friends imitate God and walk in love I actually believe that the word that's used most by the sexually immoral is love I love them I love I don't think they understand love at all in fact I don't think any of us understands what love is until we see what true love is in Jesus and we're told in verse 2 that if we walk in love what does that look like you know every young couple and any young person I say when they say they love you just say when you say love what do you mean by that

[27 : 13] Jesus said or it says in verse 2 walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice we are to walk in the same kind of love that Jesus showed Jesus said I love you so much I love you so much I'm going to go into the darkness I will suffer excruciating judgment and pain to rescue I'm going to give myself no return demanded I will give everything for you and that was pleasing to God a fragrant offering that's what true love is my friends a pleasing selfless sacrificial giving generous edifying building up at my expense any cost to edify you and that's why the therefore is there because we are to imitate our God if Jesus loved us like that we should love him have a great story of imitation there's two stories of imitation my less favourite but the funnier one is Elvis impersonators you ever seen a real

Elvis impersonator they have no qualms they don't care if they're 300 pound and squeezing in their tight jeans they don't care if they can't sing for nuts they don't care if they're not even a man they're a woman they dress up as Elvis they sing Elvis songs they've got Elvis memorabilia have you ever seen them if you haven't it's a tooth it's fun to watch but what I admire about them is they love the king and they love to sing his songs and they're not ashamed to say I love Elvis and I'll even look foolish to you but I love him now the reason I don't like that illustration is I don't want to dress up like a goof but when it says here be imitators of God I have a vivid memory when we had just arrived at our church the first church we went to after we had our twin sons and I was thinking about having sons I had sons but they were still little and the first person that came to our door was a member of the congregation and he was a builder and he had come to fix things in the house now he was the average builder with one of those belts and his hammer and his bag of nails and boots and rulers and all that sort of stuff and he's a lovely guy but the funniest cutest most wonderful thing was his little boy was standing next to him just down near somewhere he had his little plastic belt with his little plastic hammer and his little plastic pouch of plastic nails and his little plastic ruler and he was just sort of standing we're builders

I just thought oh what a joy it will be for me if my sons grow up and say I want to be just like my dad he's awesome well I want to be just like my lord he is awesome and he has promised that he will change us he will give me the love I don't have he'll give it to you too he will give you the fruit of the spirit to change you to become like him that's his promise I want to walk out of the darkness and into the light and be changed into his likeness and so we're told have a shot at imitating him and start with his love the second example of the therefore is the idea that as you walk in the light do not return to the darkness let me read and with this I'll conclude verses 7 and following having come out of the darkness my friends verse 7 says therefore do not become partners with them those that are in the darkness for at one time you were darkness but now you are light in the

Lord so walk as children of light the fruit of light is found in all this all that is good and right and true and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness but instead expose them for it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in the secret but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible for anything that becomes visible is light therefore it says awake O sleeper and arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you verse 10 what pleases the Lord nothing pleases him more than you as a little boy or a little girl in the Lord saying Lord I want to be just like you could you change me could you make me like you verse 8 says that we are to walk as children of the light we are to bear the fruit of light the things that are good and right and true only by his

Holy Spirit does he enable such a motley slobby old person like me change and become like Jesus but he promises he will do it we are in fact my friends to shine you know it says in verse 11 that we are to expose the light sorry expose the darkness I don't think that means we walk around with our cameras trying to catch people or you know in the youth group trying to catch let's forget about that it doesn't mean that it doesn't mean that we become detectives that's how the dark side works how do you expose darkness well by shining darkness cannot exist where there is light and as we shine with genuine love authentic care of integrity in our relationships we actually it's lovely one of the things that strikes me about how Jesus related to women the women often had never known a man to treat them in such a way that they didn't feel violated

[33 : 53] Jesus treated them with respect and honour he shone so that women were drawn to him he shone so that men wanted to get their acts together and start being like him noble honourable integrity strength courage humility we expose the darkness my friends by living and walking in the light there's two responses did you know when you shine like Jesus people are drawn to you and say I would like to know the source of that light how do I become a Christian but you know what the other response is don't you those that love the darkness hate the light and a bit like cockroaches when the lights they scurry under the dark or a bit more scary in real life when your life which is godly and loving and good exposes the darkness they want to punch out your lights it's nearly happened to me a few times

I'm a good runner but um and you say I didn't do anything wrong so that's the point that's the point you're being like Jesus they wanted to kill Jesus he didn't do anything wrong he was just good and loving and they hated it because it exposed their darkness you know verse 14 awake oh sleeper and arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you we actually think that that was probably part of a statement said right at the beginning when they started baptizing people arise oh sleeper from the dead and Christ will shine when we were baptized we were brought into the new kingdom we are members of the kingdom we follow the real king and he walks in the light and we are to walk in the light with him can I encourage you friends it's not easy to walk in the light it's hard so we need to encourage each other men be men of absolute impeccable unquestionable integrity treat women with faultless care respect and love and women be modest and do not flirt and do not

I don't know I never know how to talk to women I let women talk to women women you know what you should and shouldn't do we want to be people who are walking in the light who enjoy good friendships and ultimately God willing perhaps enjoy marriage and children let me pray that we might walk in the light father thank you you are just so awesome we want to be just like you no doubt in the congregation tonight there are people that have been wounded or perhaps even trapped in darkness and only you Lord can set them free I pray Lord for those of us that struggle that we might find our strength in you alone I pray for those of us that we know that might be a strength and encouragement to us that we would have the sensitivity and care to support each other help us

Lord we pray to fix our eyes on Jesus and to trust you and to walk a path of purity and love and kindness we ask that your Holy Spirit would empower us to do it because on our own we can do nothing but in you we can do all things and we pray this for your glory in Jesus name Amen thank you