

“Just Say No: The Mandate to Abstain from Evil”

*Ephesians 5:3-6
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May 20, 2007*

In Ephesians 5:3-6 Paul continues to exhort Christians to live obediently in light of their salvation. Christians need to “work out their salvation” practically by making holy choices in daily living. In this passage Paul reminds Christians that this process entails saying “No” to indulging in anything illicit, crude, immodest or sensual.

I. Christians Have a Responsibility to Abstain From Evil (5:3-4)

A. We must abstain from evil in our conduct (5:3)
“do not let immorality...even be named among you”

B. We must abstain from evil in our conversation (5:4)
“there must be no filthiness and silly talk or coarse jesting”

II. Christians Have Reasons to Abstain From Evil (5:5-6)

A. Evildoers will not receive an inheritance from God (5:5)
“no immoral person...has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ”

B. Evildoers do receive wrath from God (5:6)
“for these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience”

Study Notes:

5:3—“immorality” (“fornication” KJV; “sexual immorality” NIV)—This is the Greek word **porneia** from which we get “pornography”; it is at the beginning of the sentence in the Greek which means it is emphatic; this word occurs 43 times

in the LXX OT and translates the Hebrew word *zanah* and always has a connotation of deviant sexual behavior; it occurs 26 times in the NT, always with reference to aberrant sexual implications. Depending upon the context it can be translated in various ways including “fornication,” “harlotry,” “unfaithfulness,” “homosexuality,” “prostitution,” “incest,” “adultery”; it is the broadest, most inclusive Greek term for sexual immorality.

“**impurity**” (“uncleanness” KJV)—This is the Greek word *akathasia* from which we get “catharsis”; it means “morally impure,” “**dirty**, filthy, defile”; moral uncleanness that results from lust in the heart, cf. Rom 1:24.

“**greed**” (“covetousness” KJV)—*pleonexia*, from which we get “pleonasm” which means “an **excess**”; “greedy, selfishly indulgent, wanting more to an illegitimate degree”; the opposite of moderation; the opposite of selfless love just described in the previous verses; the internal attitude tied to, or at the root of, immorality and impurity above. Hence the tenth commandment that forbids “coveting thy neighbor’s wife” (Exodus 20). Immorality, impurity and greed all have in common the desire for self-love and self-indulgence in contrast to selfless love mentioned earlier in 4:31-5:2.

“**do not let...be named**” (“there must not be” NIV); — *onomazestho*, this is the main verb in the passage; it is in the present tense which means it is to be an ongoing pattern of behavior, a lifestyle; it is active voice, which means we are responsible for carrying out this command—we must comply—WE must do it. And it is an imperative. which means it is a command, a mandate from God to be obeyed...it is not an option.

“**saints**”—The Greek word *hagios* and refers to all true living Christians. It means “to be holy” or “to be set apart” “consecrated to God or for God”; it is often translated “holy” as in the “Holy Spirit”, cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19. Sinners are “**made holy**” by God positionally when they put their faith in

Jesus Christ and His work on the cross (objective holiness) and because they have the Holy Spirit living in them at all times (subjective holiness); so, every Christian is ‘a holy one’ and every Christian is a ‘saint’!

5:4—“**there must be no**” (“*nor should there be*” NIV)—This verb phrase actually does not exist in the Greek text but is supplied by those that translated the English versions of the Bible. To indicate that, the NASB and NKJV have the words in italics. The KJV is very accurate and literal here, not inserting this phrase at all in its translation even though it is understood and is the governing verb (stated in 5:3...‘do not let be named’) for the three nouns in 5:4.

“**filthiness**” (“obscenity” NIV)—*aischrotes*, a rare word, the noun form used only here. The adjective is used only 6 times in the OT, in Genesis 41 (verses 3, 4, 19, 20, 21, 27) and is translated as “ugly.” The adjective occurs only 4 times in the NT, all by Paul, and always in reference to that which is “**inappropriate**,” and translated as “disgraceful,” “shameful” or “base” (1 Corinthians 11:6; 14:35; Ephesians 5:12; Titus 1:11). This word can refer to speech or actions.

“**silly talk**” (“foolish talk” NIV)—*morologia*, a rare compound word, used only here, moron + speech, hence the NIV ‘foolish talk’; in the context it is in reference to foolish, silly talk with inappropriate sensual connotations...which is very prominent today and is the kind of talk that typifies the success of modern day TV; Howard Stern is ‘morologia’ incarnate.

“**coarse jesting**”—*eutrapelia*, another rare noun, used only here in the NT; meaning sarcastic ridicule, jesting that has gone too far, crossing the moral line in humor, inappropriate put-downs; Aristotle used this word to describe laughter typical of youth—crude teenager humor...