

A Light in the Valley

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Eschewing Sin

by: Kris Brewer

Repentance seems to be an evil word (or at least an evil concept) in today's religious world. One cannot talk about what practices need to be removed from the life of another without being accused of judging...and we all know that Jesus said that you should not judge! While a further discussion of Matthew 7:1-2 (the source most use to claim that Jesus said that we should not judge) would certainly be beneficial, it is beyond the scope of this particular study. However, there is much in the epistles of Paul that convey the importance of repentance. We will be considering, at least briefly, Ephesians 5:1-21.

Be imitators of God...

Paul encouraged the Ephesian brethren to imitate God, as a child would imitate his father (Ephesians 5:1). Lest the reader be left in the dark about what such a teaching could mean, Paul spent several verses addressing the specific actions that one would adopt, or that one would reject, if he were to be an

imitator of God, our Father.

Paul's instructions were not merely a suggestion for the first century Christians. These instructions were delivered so that Christians could know what God expected of them. That point was made abundantly clear by Paul in the following verses!

Eschewing sin...

Being an imitator of God means that a person has to put sinful behavior away from themselves. There are many who believe that the grace of God allows for men to continue in sinful behavior. However, Paul made it clear that sin must not be a part of the Christian's life! We are to "walk in love, as Christ has also loved us..."

Paul used several expressions throughout this context to emphasize how important it was for those who became Christians to put sinful behavior behind them, and instead walk as Christ walked.

First, he addressed “fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness...” Of these sins, Paul said that the Christian should not have these things “even named among them, as is fitting for saints...” He told them that there should not be any instances of these sinful practices among them! He then introduced the idea of identifying that which was *fitting* for the saints. This word means:

προπο (πρέπω, 4241) means “to be conspicuous among a number, to be eminent, distinguished by a thing,” hence, “to be becoming, seemly, fit.” The adornment of good works “becometh women professing godliness,” 1 Tim. 2:10. Those who minister the truth are to speak “the things which befit the sound doctrine,” Titus 2:1. Christ, as a High Priest “became us,” Heb. 7:26. In the impersonal sense, it signifies “it is fitting, it becometh,” Matt. 3:15; 1 Cor. 11:13; Eph. 5:3; Heb. 2:10. See BEFIT, COMELY¹.

Paul made it clear that there are some things that are simply not becoming of Christians. It has become more and more prevalent among those who claim to be Christians to accept and continue in sinful practices. It is not fitting for Christians to involve themselves in fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness.

Paul did not stop with identifying those practices as sin, and therefore unfitting for the Christian to participate in. He continued with a further list: “neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting...” Paul said that these things were also “not fitting” for those who are saints! Perhaps this list hits a little closer to home with most people. While one may reject the practices of fornication, or even covetousness, controlling the tongue is far more difficult! Sometimes, we as Christians try to make excuses, or at least exceptions for failures when it comes to controlling our language. The inspired writer here makes it clear that misusing our tongues is “not fitting” for Christians. That does not mean that such control is an easy thing to have. James said that the tongue is difficult to tame (James 3:1-12). Just because something is difficult does not change the fact that God intends for us to work to master it! If it is not fitting that a Christian should misuse his tongue, then we need to work diligently to control it. We cannot simply accept that it is hard to control, and therefore continue in the sinful practices!

Consequences...

If Paul’s previous statement, “...let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints;” was not a clear enough directive that Christians should eschew these evil practices from their lives, Paul addressed the consequences of continuing in these

¹ Vine, W. E., Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr. *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* 1996 : 55. Print.

sinful practices. He told the Ephesian brethren that those who would continue in these practices would have no “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” Eternal salvation is at stake for those who refuse to give up these sinful practices! Paul’s teachings in this passage do not fit with the generally accepted doctrines throughout the denominational world. Many believe that God’s grace will cover all sins if a person is saved, and they cannot do anything to lose that salvation. They believe that people *should* do what God commands, and that they will do so if they are *really saved*. However, if they are saved, they can technically do whatever they want to do, and God will still give them salvation.

Paul was writing to those who were Christians; he spoke to them as *saints* (vs. 3). Yet, their salvation was in jeopardy if they were unwilling to leave behind the sinful practices in which they had been involved in their past. This was not a new approach for Paul in his writings. When he wrote to the Corinthians, he also addressed their need to refrain from sinful practices. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul warned that those who were continuing in sinful practices “will not inherit the kingdom of God...”

How can we ignore such serious consequences? How can we think that continuing in sin will not affect our eternal state? Paul was adamant about the warnings that he gave, by inspiration, to lead people away from this eternal destruction. And yet, there are many who are continuing to teach that it is not imperative that believers turn away from their sinful practices. We must decide: will we believe and accept the teachings of the apostle Paul, or will we put their confidence in men whose teaching clearly contradicts that inspired writing?

Do not be deceived...

Paul knew that there would be those who would contradict his plain teaching on this matter. He warned the Ephesian brethren (much like he warned the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6:9) that they should not allow themselves to be deceived. The message that says that you can live however you want, involved in any kind of sin that you want to be involved in, is an appealing one. But, it is not the message that comes from God!

If you want to have an “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” then you must be willing to eschew sinful practices! You must be willing to work toward a life of holiness, rather than hedonism. You must be obedient, not rebellious. You must be intent on being a saint, not a sinner!

“They’re Too Conservative!”

by: Greg Gwin

Someone who was about to move into a new community happened to mention that they were giving consideration to attending a particular congregation in that area. Certain brethren warned, “Don’t go there, they’re too conservative!” What is meant by such an accusation?

Is it so that the brethren at that congregation have begun to teach things that are not found in the Bible? Are they binding certain traditions that are not in the Word of God? Are they insisting that others follow their own personal opinions in areas where they cannot find specific scriptural authority? If so, those brethren aren’t really “conservative” at all! They are not “abiding in the doctrine of Christ” (2 Jn. 9). In a sense, they are actually “liberal” in their approach because they have ceased to produce “book, chapter, and verse” for their practices. Let their errors be fully exposed, and let brethren be rightfully warned about attending such a congregation.

In reality, it is far more likely that the church that was described as “too conservative” is actually a congregation that stresses strict adherence to Biblical authority. They probably insist that folks “do Bible things in Bible ways.” There is most likely a strong emphasis on personal purity and morality. Constant reference is made to the Bible and its teachings, and members are encouraged to “come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17). And while the positive, “feel good” aspects of Christianity are no doubt taught, the so-called “negative” themes - the warnings of the Scripture - are also included. False doctrines and false teachers are sometimes - by necessity - called by name just as in the first century (1 Tim. 1:18-20). Such an approach is not popular in the world today. Therefore some dismiss a congregation like this with the charge that they are “too conservative.” What we are saying is that this accusation most often comes from weak, compromising Christians who themselves refuse to take a stand for the truth.

It is really impossible to be “too conservative.” The moment a church violates scriptural authority - by either failing to uphold and practice the truth, or by binding what God has not bound - they have become “liberal” in God’s eyes. Instead of throwing out prejudicial ‘labels’, give the evidence that a congregation is violating scriptural authority (Col. 3:17) and be ready to prove your allegations. Otherwise, we suggest you keep your opinions to yourself! Think!

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*“Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.”*

*“I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the LORD Almighty.” (2 Corinthians
6:17-18)*

We may be ridiculed for our stance on dressing modestly, and people may think we are strange: “In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you” (1 Peter 4:4). We should be willing to take a stand and do what is right, no matter what others think or say about us!

Many will read this article and continue to ignore what God says about covering our nakedness. You may cave in to the pressures of friends and family, of the fashion of the day, of your own desires to show off your body. You may have grown up unconcerned about what you wore, so it does not seem important to you. You may be comfortable wearing clothes that reveal most of your body. None of these things make it right. God has spoken about how we dress, and we can choose whether to study those words and apply them to our lives, or to ignore them for our own pleasure. I pray that we will take seriously what the Bible says about the way we dress!

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

Quote worth pondering...

“What we need is neither negative thinking nor positive thinking, but realistic thinking -- thinking characterized by enough pessimism to trigger concern, enough optimism to provide hope.”

--Author Unknown

Body Shaming?

Ladies

Covery.

by: Cynthia Brewer

After Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, what was the first thing they realized? “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings” (Genesis 3:7, NASB). They tried to cover themselves, then they heard God walking in the garden. Do you know what they did? They hid. “Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ He said, ‘I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself’” (Genesis 3:9-10). Even after putting on the coverings they made for themselves, they knew they were still naked! God went on to discuss their sin and the punishments and consequences for it. Then He took care of the problem of their nakedness: “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21). These garments (also called coats or robes) clearly fulfilled a role that the loin coverings did not: they clothed them. They covered their nakedness.

Should we be concerned about covering our nakedness? If the first thing that Adam and Eve realized was that they were naked, a logical conclusion to draw is that we should recognize when we are naked, too. Do today’s swimsuits and shorts cover our nakedness? If the loin coverings made by Adam and Eve did not cover them sufficiently, a logical conclusion to draw is that clothing that only covers the loin area is not sufficient for us, either. We often go back to the beginning to discuss God’s plan for marriage (Genesis 2:24), just as Jesus did in Matthew 18. Why not go back to the beginning to discuss God’s plan for covering our nakedness?

Eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil caused their eyes to be “opened” to what was good and what was evil. Doesn’t the immediate attempt to cover themselves show that they realized that being naked was evil? It has to be one or the other—good, or evil. Are we content to dabble in the area of what God deems as evil by not covering our bodies with clothing? Will we squabble over exactly how long the garments were? If nakedness equals evil and clothed equals good, I prefer to make sure that I am clothed!

But wait, now we are advocating body shaming, right? That term is used a lot in our society. Anytime a dress code is mentioned, or someone discusses dressing modestly, it seems they are accused of body shaming. Consider 1 Timothy 2:9-10 (KJV):

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with

shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

Shamefacedness, according to Strong's, comes from words that convey "...the idea of downcast eyes; bashfulness, that is, (towards men), modesty or (towards God) awe: - reverence, shamefacedness." Yes, it means exactly what it says. A sense of shame should be demonstrated about our bodies; not in the sense that we are embarrassed about how we look, or that we are not amazed and grateful for the way God designed the human body. However, God does not want us to flaunt our bodies, to expose them for the world to see, to use them to attract or seduce men. Instead, we are to "adorn" ourselves with good works. Our focus is not on our hair, jewelry, and fashion. It is on our demeanor and our actions (1 Peter 3:3-4). Our clothing should match our lifestyle, as we focus on living properly and righteously. If our clothing does not "profess godliness" then how can anything else in our lives do so?

We should adorn ourselves with, or put on, the qualities God wants us to have:

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection (Colossians 3:12-14).

Two common arguments made against modesty are: "Men should control their thoughts" and "Some men will lust no matter what I wear." These statements are absolutely true! These statements do not, however, negate the fact that Adam and Eve realized that being naked was evil. They do not negate the passages that teach us to dress ourselves in modest apparel. It is not just about lust—which is why the argument "no one will lust after me" does not negate these passages, either. It is about obeying God's expectation that we cover our nakedness.

What about how we let our children dress? Just as we teach them not to lie, not to steal, not to take God's name in vain, etc., we should teach them not to be naked. When they are around other people, they wear modest clothes. Period. We can help them develop a sense of modesty, a sense of what is appropriate at a very young age. This concept even includes how to dress appropriately for certain situations (such as a special occasion) and how to avoid putting too much focus on our appearance. Though many call it body shaming, God's way is always the best way! Yes, we will be different and our children will be different if we dress modestly. But, our dress should only be one aspect of how we are different from the world:

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Daily Bible Reading

May 2017

May 1	2 Thessalonians 1-2	May 17	Galatians 2:1-3:9
May 2	2 Thessalonians 3	May 18	Galatians 3:10-4:7
May 3	1 Timothy 1-2	May 19	Galatians 4:8-31
May 4	1 Timothy 3-4	May 22	Galatians 5
May 5	1 Timothy 5-6	May 23	Galatians 6
May 8	2 Timothy 1	May 24	Ephesians 1:1-2:10
May 9	2 Timothy 2	May 25	Ephesians 2:11-3:21
May 10	2 Timothy 3	May 26	Ephesians 4
May 11	2 Timothy 4	May 29	Ephesians 5:1-21
May 12	Titus 1-3	May 30	Ephesians 5:22-6:24
May 15	Philemon	May 31	Philemon 1:1-18
May 16	Galatians 1		

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