

Sermon Title: A Blueprint for Sexual Purity Part #3

Sermon Text: Ephesians 5:3-6

Getting Started: This is to help you prepare for hearing from God's Word.

- Pray
- Read Colossians 3:5-7 and Ephesians 5:1-14
- What stands out to you from this text?

The Big Idea: This will give you a basic idea of what the message was about today.

There's hardly anything more frustrating than someone telling you to stop struggling with temptations like sexual impurity or greed and then not really giving you any help on how to do that. In this message, we will discover ten very practical steps we can take to fight these sins from the apostle Paul.

Discussion Questions: This will help you think through the passage and what you heard in the message.

- What does putting to death sexual impurity and greed have to do with setting our minds on things above?
- What does the word but tell us about what Paul is about to do in Ephesians 5:3? And how does knowing that help us in our fight against sexual impurity and greed? How might this help us as we think about helping our children pursue purity? What are some particular ways our culture mentors us in selfishness? Do you have any specific examples of how we might have to work at thinking differently?
- What will it take if these sins are not going to be named among us?
- What do you think about this quote from Jonathan Edwards? How does it help you as you think about the sanctification process?
 - "There is the same corruption in the heart of a godly man as there is in the heart of an ungodly man and all the same corruption. The difference is that in the heart of the saints there is also a contrary principle that is a bitter enemy to this corruption and resists and struggles against it and makes warfare in their hearts and makes them hate it and loathe it and choose against it and reject it and renounce it and lament it and long to be rid of it and strive against it."
- We said that putting these sins to death means that "we have to commit ourselves to, on a day-to-day basis, vigilantly and vigorously opposing and destroying the sinful desires which remain in us and seek to control us." Unpack that sentence phrase by phrase. What does it tell you about how you should be fighting against temptation

- Read Romans 13:14. How would you explain this verse to someone fighting temptation?
- Why do we need to say something more than simply be sexually pure when we talk about fighting sexual temptation? What else do we need to say? Think about this command in the context of the book of Ephesians and how the temptation to sexual sin and greed is really a temptation to shrink the size of your life down to something very small.
- What does thanksgiving have to do with fighting against sexual temptation and greed?
- Is being neutral an option when it comes to the Christian life? In other words, maybe we aren't complaining but we aren't grateful either. Is that acceptable?
- We know complaining is a problem, but what do you think about the following statement: "The more discontent and whining and grumbling you are, the more likely you are going to have significant struggles with sexual temptation and greed."

Quotable: The following quotes may help you reflect on this message during the week.

- "To be rich, to be glad, to be satisfied is to be drunk on prosperity and to live the life of senseless beasts. If we are comfortably off, it is not so that we may cover ourselves with gold and silver, or boast of owning fields and meadows, like those whose goal in life is to have everything they want. Those kinds of people are as good as dead: they bury themselves in their perishable possessions and are incapable of seeing heaven above. As for us, we must take heed to ourselves lest the Son of God condemn us with his own lips: only by looking to him for continual blessing can we escape the misfortune promised here. We are taught, then, to pass through this world as strangers, convinced, as St. Paul says, that those who have should be as those who have not. No one would deny that those who have plenty to live on meet many more temptations and run more risk of falling. They need, therefore, to turn constantly to God, and to learn that his gifts are meant to draw them closer to him, to quicken their love and to encourage their obedience. The good things they receive must never bewitch them to the point that they become captives to the world. In the midst of plenty we must guard against greedy excess, lest we choke ourselves and bring this curse upon us: Woe to you who are filled. If we are to be filled, it is in a different way—by contemplating God's face, as we read in Psalm 16. We should regard material possessions simply as props to help us, until we see the Father face to face. He is our bliss and happiness. By all means let us laugh, but in the manner of those who are ready to weep should that be God's will. Our joy should be joined with sadness, and with compassion for those who suffer. No one should live apart from others, and all should rejoice whenever God's name is honored. Yes, rejoice, even when we have reason to feel sad and gloomy. Conversely, it may be that we are fine, in the best of spirits. But supposing there is some dire trouble in the church, or God's name is blasphemed, held up to shame or ridicule—that should give us cause for grief, grief deeper even than

the joy we felt. At such a time we ought to moderate the happiness which earthly blessings bring. We ought, as the proverb says, to mix water with our wine." (John Calvin)

- Every sin is serious. It seems however certain sins have a particular tendency to lead people towards eternal destruction while blinding them regarding where they are headed. Like, for example, the sins of sexual impurity and lust. In Ephesians 5:5 and 6, Paul writes, "For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure...has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." For me, two things stand out as I look at that. First the way Paul stresses that those who engage in unrepentant sexual sin will not go to heaven and will instead face the wrath of God. And then second, the fact he is concerned we will be deceived about that. Other Scriptures make this same kind of connection as well. For example, Solomon speaks of the danger of sexual immorality in Proverbs 7:22. "All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast, till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know it will cost him his life." There's a kind of stupid "animalish" blindness associated with these kinds of sins. And perhaps it's because of this that God often puts the fact he is going to judge these kinds of sins in bold print. Hebrews 13:4, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." 2 Peter 2:9,10, "The Lord knows how to...keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority." In fact, to help us understand how seriously God takes these kinds of sins he even has given us examples of his judgment all throughout history. Like Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude 4, "...just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire." And Israel, as well. 1 Corinthians 10:8, "We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty three thousand fell in a single day...These things happened to them as an example..." Unfortunately, they didn't learn from this judgment and years later, we discover this is one of the reasons they went into exile. Jeremiah 5:7,8, "How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me and have sworn by those who are no gods. When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the houses of whores. They were well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish them for these things, declares the Lord; and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?" These are exclamation points throughout biblical history. But the fact is, most of us have these kinds of exclamation points throughout our own personal histories. Who hasn't firsthand seen the way sexual sins have devastated families, sometimes for generations? And yet, even seeing all of that, for some of us, it's like those things never happened! Imagine standing with someone on the edge of a cliff, watching them

take a step and fall to their death, then moments later, forgetting what had happened and doing so yourself! Crazy? Impossible?
Not when it comes to sexual sin. It happens all the time. And in my mind, these are all good reasons for us to seriously fear sexual temptation and to develop friendships with people with whom we can share our real struggles and who will help us remember the truth. Our eternal life may depend on it!

Sermon Notes: This is a place you can record your own notes and thoughts as you listen to the message today so that you can think about them later.