

AVOID INCOMPATIBLE BEHAVIORS, PT. 1; EPH. 5:3-4 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE BEGIN THE NEXT SECTION OF EPHESIANS, ~ 5:3-7, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ which helps spell out in detail the type of life that brings honor and glory to God, ~ the type of life that should result from the truth of [chapters 1-3](#).

LET'S SET THE CONTEXT.

▶▶ As we know, ~ in the previous section, ~ Paul had a series of ten exhortations for believers.

▷▷ In his last exhortation, ~ in [5:2](#), ~ he said, ~ "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

▷▷ As we noted, ~ believers are to live a life that is filled with ~ and governed by ~ Christ-like love.

↪↪ Our thinking, ~ attitudes, ~ and behavior are to be characterized by selfless, ~ sacrificial love.

→→ And Christ-like love is to become the deciding factor in our choices and the motivating power in our actions.

▶▶ In [verse 3](#), ~ with the conjunction "But," ~ Paul is setting up a contrast.

▷▷ In [verses 3-7](#), ~ he presents and discusses six contrasting behaviors to walking in love that are to be avoided.

▶▶ In this next paragraph, ~ Paul's main point is that we are to avoid behaviors that are totally incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

▷▷ Paul focuses on and discusses six behaviors that are completely alien to our new natures that God has given us ~ and to the kingdom into which we have been forever transferred.

▷▷ These behaviors are sinful and belong to "the domain of darkness" from which we have been forever rescued.

▷▷ They are not compatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love. ¶¶ 1/8

▷▷ As Paul wrote in a different context in [2 Cor. 6:14](#), ~ and applies here, ~ **NIV**, ~ **??**

↪↪ "For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

▷▷ Answer to . . . none. ~~ These six sinful behaviors have nothing in common with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

↪↪ There can be no fellowship between them. ~~ They are totally incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

↪↪ And therefore they are to be abstained from.

▶▶ Now it's important to understand that these verses do not give us an exhaustive list.

▷▷ These are to be looked at as examples of sinful behaviors that we are to abstain from. ~~ They represent all sinful behaviors.

▷▷ So we can broaden the scope of the paragraph and say this.

↪↪ In [verses 3-7](#), ~ Paul is saying that all sinful behaviors are totally incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

↪↪ There are no sinful behaviors that are compatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

↪↪ So all believers must avoid all sinful behaviors.

NOW LET'S TAKE A VERY BRIEF BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF THIS PARAGRAPH.

▶▶ In [verses 3-4](#), ~ which we'll cover today, ~ Paul lists the six sinful behaviors from which we are to abstain.

▶▶ In [verse 5](#), ~ Paul gives a further description of unbelievers. ~~ Recall that in [4:17c-19](#) he gave a description.

▷▷ And we'll see that the description in [vs. 5](#) serves the same purpose as the previous one.

▶▶ And then in [verses 6-7](#), ~ Paul says to watch out for arguments that suggest that sinful behaviors are compatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

TODAY, ~ MENTIONED, ~ WE'LL COVER VERSES 3-4, WHICH LIST THE SIX sinful behaviors. **?? 2/8**

IN VERSE 3a, ~ PAUL SUMMONS US TO ABSTAIN FROM "SEXUAL IMMORALITY."

▶▶ The word for "sexual immorality" refers to any kind of sexual activity outside of a marriage relationship.

▶▶ Marriage relationship of course being one man and one woman married to each other for life, ~ as defined by [Gen. 2:24](#) and reinforced by Jesus.

▶▶ In contrast to the loose living that prevailed in Paul's day, ~ and now in ours, ~ 77

▷▷ New Testament teaching requires unconditional obedience by believers to the prohibition against any kind of sexual activity outside of the marriage bond.

▷▷ Note Paul's warning to the Corinthians in [1 Cor. 10:8](#).

↪↪ "We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did ~ [i.e., ~ the Israelites of the Exodus generation], ~ and ~ [i.e., ~ with the result that] ~ twenty-three thousand fell in a single day."

→→ A sobering thought. ~ God takes sexual immorality very seriously and will discipline His people for it.

▷▷ And Paul exhorted the Thessalonians, ~ [1 Thess. 4:3](#), ~ "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality."

IN VERSE 3b, ~ PAUL SUMMONS US TO ABSTAIN FROM "ALL IMPURITY."

▶▶ Paul is saying that there should not be impurity of any kind among believers.

▷▷ While it includes sexual impurity, ~ the meaning is much broader. ~ It refers to any kind of impurity of thought, ~ speech, ~ or deed.

▶▶ In [1 Thess. 4:7](#), ~ Paul writes, ~ "For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ~ I.e., ~ He did not call us to live an impure life, ~ He called us to live a holy life.

▶▶ Recall, ~ in [Eph. 1:4a](#), ~ referring to God, ~ Paul said, ~ "even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him."

▷▷ God has not chosen believers for salvation in order for us to continue living a sinful lifestyle. ~ On the contrary, ~ God has done it ~ in order for us to live morally pure lives.

▶▶ So anything that is the opposite of living a holy or morally pure life is impure and must not be engaged in by believers. 77 3/8

IN VERSE 3c, ~ PAUL SUMMONS US TO ABSTAIN FROM "COVETOUSNESS", ~ OR GREED.

▶▶ "covetousness" simply refers to the insatiable desire to acquire more and more, ~ whatever the object, ~ and regardless of need.

▶▶ The covetous person is never satisfied with what he has, ~ and he is usually envious of what other people have.

▶▶ "covetousness" brings trouble along with it.

▷▷ Prov. 15:27a, "Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household."

↳↳ The greedy person brings trouble on his family. ~ ~ Achan *

* → → Greed inevitably ends up as a catastrophic loss.

▷▷ And Prov. 28:25a says, ~ "A greedy man stirs up strife."

↳↳ People who always want more will inevitably stir up conflict. ~ ~ A commitment to gratify one's desires and urges will unavoidably destroy relationships in the process.

↳↳ James 4:2b, ~ "You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel."

IN VS. 3d, ~ PAUL SAYS THESE THREE SINS "MUST NOT EVEN BE NAMED AMONG YOU."

▶▶ This phrase should not be taken strictly in the sense that the subject should never arise, ~ not even to condemn these sins or to confront believers involved in them.

▷▷ That would be strange since Paul just spoke about these sins ~ and would contradict other passages that tell us to confront a sinning brother or sister.

▷▷ Rather, ~ the meaning more likely is that not even rumors about sexual immorality, ~ impurity, ~ or greed in our local church should ever circulate.

▷▷ Our conduct should be so spotless that there would not be a chance that any rumor or gossip about these kinds of sins would ever get started, ~ whether by believers within our fellowship, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ or by unbelievers observing our lives and the life of our church.

▷▷ Briefly put, ~ the point here is that no one should ever have a reason to talk about any of us ever doing such things. ¶¶ 4/8

▶▶ But there is a much larger picture here.

▷▷ Paul is pointing out that within and among the people of God, ~ a culture should prevail that is utterly different from the culture of the world, ~ where these sins are so common.

▷▷ In 1 Pet. 1:1, ~ Peter describes believers as those ~ LEB ~ "who are residing temporarily" in this world.

↪↪ The Greek word translated "who are residing temporarily" means persons who belong to some other land and people, ~ who are temporarily residing with a people to whom they do not belong.

→→ They are for the time being aliens, ~ foreigners, ~ strangers, ~ and not natives.
~~ They never expect to become natives.

↪↪ My fellow believers, ~ we live in this world, ~ but we do not belong to this world. ~~ We belong to another land, ~ another people.

→→ We are temporarily residing with a people to whom we do not belong.

→→ We are merely passing through their territory, ~ with no intention of permanent residence or of becoming natives.

▷▷ And, ~ as citizens of heaven, ~ temporarily dwelling in this world to which we do not belong, ~ we have a responsibility to live differently than the people who do belong to this world.

↪↪ I.e., ~ Since we are not natives of this world, ~ we are not to act like natives. ~~ It is not, ~ "when in Rome, ~ do as the Romans do."

▷▷ Peter points this out in 1 Pet. 1:17b. ~~ LEB ~ "conduct yourselves with fear ~ [i.e., ~ with reverence] ~ during the time of your temporary residence."

↪↪ Peter is calling believers here to live our lives with reverence for, ~ and toward, ~ God.

↪↪ Reverent living involves conducting our daily lives in a way that is pleasing and glorifying to God, ~ and constantly avoiding anything that would displease or grieve our heavenly Father.

↪↪ It also includes having a deep and abiding respect and admiration for God and His word, ~ and having a tender conscience. ↴↴ 5/8

↳↳ Furthermore, ~ reverent living means treating God with the respect and honor He deserves, ~ ¶¶

→→ and maintaining a constant awareness and acknowledgment that God is God, ~ and that we, ~ even though we are His children, ~ are His creatures.

▷▷ This is the total opposite of the way the world lives.

OK, ~ BACK TO EPH. 5:3. ~~ IN VS. 3e, ~ PAUL ADDS, ~ "AS IS PROPER AMONG SAINTS."

▶▶ The point is that such sins have no place among God's people.

▷▷ Sexual immorality, ~ impurity, ~ and greed, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ i.e., ~ the insatiable desire to acquire more and more, ~ whatever the object, ~ and regardless of need ~ are not appropriate behaviors for us.

→→ They are totally incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

IN VERSE 4a, ~ PAUL SUMMONS US TO ABSTAIN FROM "FILTHINESS."

▶▶ "filthiness" refers to obscene language and stories. ~~ Obscene language and stories should never come from the mouth of one who claims to be a follower of Jesus, ~ Paul says.

IN VERSE 4b, ~ PAUL SUMMONS US TO ABSTAIN FROM "FOOLISH TALK."

▶▶ "foolish talk" refers to talk like the talk of a heavily drunk person.

▷▷ Under the influence of alcohol, ~ a heavily drunk person says things they would never otherwise say. ~~ I.e., ~ thoughtless, ~ rash talk.

▷▷ Prov. 18:2, ~ "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.

↳↳ The fool is a person who avoids understanding and expresses their thoughts before they weigh or consider their effect.

→→ They have no desire to learn; ~~ they would much rather give their own opinions.

▷▷ And Prov. 18:13 says, ~ NIV, ~ "To answer before listening — that is folly and shame."

↳↳ I.e., ~ spouting off before listening to facts is both foolish & disgraceful. ¶¶ 6/8

▷▷ And Prov. 29:20 says, ~ "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

▶▶ On the other hand, ~ how wise the one who prays as David did in Ps. 141:3, ~ "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!"

▶▶ So in Eph. 5:4b, ~ Paul is prohibiting thoughtless, ~ rash talk.

▷▷ This kind of talk cheapens the speaker and does not edify or build up the hearers. ~~ It accomplishes no good purpose.

▶▶ Recall from our discussion of 4:29, ~ when we speak to our fellow believers, ~ we should always strive to use words that build their confidence, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that encourage them in their tasks, ~ that promote their spiritual growth, ~ and that foster goodwill in our local fellowship.

↪↪ IOW, ~ our words should be geared to accomplish good purposes in others' lives.

IN VERSE 4c, ~ PAUL SUMMONS US TO ABSTAIN FROM "CRUDE JOKING."

▶▶ "crude joking" refers to quick-witted, ~ clever humor that has gone too far, ~ thus becoming sarcastic ridicule that cuts people down and embarrasses others who are present.

▷▷ It is humor in bad taste. ~~ Believers should build up and not destroy others, ~ even in humor.

▶▶ "crude joking" may also refer to dirty jokes or humor with suggestive overtones.

▶▶ This does not mean humor cannot be used by believers. ~~ A good sense of humor is an admirable quality.

▷▷ However, ~ it does mean that we should not tell or laugh at dirty jokes or humor with suggestive overtones.

↪↪ And it should not be employed at someone's expense, ~ thus running counter to Paul's instruction that our words are to edify and build others up.

IN VERSE 4d, ~ PAUL DECLARES THAT OBSCENE LANGUAGE AND STORIES, ~ thoughtless, ~ rash talk, ~ and quick-witted, ~ clever humor that has gone too far ~ "are out of place."

▶▶ I.e., ~ involvement in these sinful behaviors is inappropriate for believers. ~~ They are totally incompatible w/ living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love. ¶¶ 7/8

IN VERSE 4e, ~ PAUL TELLS US WHAT WE ARE TO DO INSTEAD. ~~ "BUT INSTEAD LET there be thanksgiving."

▶▶Instead of obscene language and stories, ~ thoughtless, ~ rash talk, ~ and quick-witted, ~ clever humor that has gone too far, ~ ¶¶

▷▷our speech is much better employed in thanking God for what He has done for and given us.

▶▶If we are truly grateful to God and express our thanks to Him, ~ then we will make every effort to live a life that is glorifying and pleasing to Him, ~ ¶¶

▷▷which would automatically exclude these sinful behaviors.

▶▶The thankful remembrance of what God has done for and given us will provide a barrier to sinful behaviors of all kinds.

CONCLUSION

TO CONCLUDE, ~ ¶¶

▶▶sexual immorality, ~ impurity, ~ greed, ~ i.e., ~ the insatiable desire to acquire more and more, ~ whatever the object, ~ and regardless of need, ~ ¶¶

▷▷obscene language and stories, ~ thoughtless, ~ rash talk, ~ and quick-witted, ~ clever humor that has gone too far ~ ¶¶

↪↪are totally incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

▶▶Furthermore, ~ these behaviors belong to the person we used to be when we were unsaved, ~ and to "the domain of darkness," ~ from which we've been forever rescued.

▶▶My . . . ~ sinful behaviors of any kind have no place in the kingdom into which we have been forever transferred, ~ or in our lives. ~~ All of them are totally incompatible

▷▷Therefore, ~ we must abstain from them.

LET'S PRAY ~ 8/8