

Ephesians 14-09-07b

We pick up our study in Ephesians chapter 5, we're looking at verse 3, Fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you. This is discrimination. You must discriminate.

There are certain things that are tolerable. There are certain things that are allowed. There are things that are permissible.

There are things with which we can bear, bear with. Put up with, endure, and others not. This is a list of exclusion.

These are to be excluded. Let it not be named in your midst. This is the Apostle Paul speaking on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, stating the policy of our Heavenly Father.

It's not open to interpretation. It's not open to argument. It isn't to be amended.

You and I do not have the authority to change it. You can try. You can violate this policy.

You can disregard this standard. But there is going to be a cost, and Paul is going to give the cost coming up. Walk in love, just as Christ has loved us and given himself for us.

There is self-sacrifice. There is interposing ourselves, asking God to be gracious, to be merciful, to be long-suffering on behalf of those who have done us a wrong. Lord, do not charge this sin to their account.

Do not charge this sin to their account. We can make that request on behalf of one another. But fornication, pornia, and we talked about what pornia is.

Pornia is covenant breaking. Pornia is recognizing that there is a structure and a pattern that is of God and disregarding it. There is a standard of husband of one wife.

There is a standard of purity until that union takes place. Those who disregard that pattern, that structure, that ordained way of human relationship that comes from God, those who disregard it, those who trample it, are out, pure and simple. Pornia, it's not just the simple narrow definition of fornication.

Pornia is the faithlessness to covenant. It is structure breaking. It is line trampling.

Fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness. Uncleanness is akatharsia. Everybody picks up road dirt.

Everybody is going to get muddy. We are all going to sin. We're going to step in something, consciously or unconsciously, purpose or lack thereof.

But in the course of a day, we will be defiled. It's not talking about that. Oh, you sin? You're out.

Goodbye. I only deal and have truck with perfect people like myself. It's not what it's talking about.

What is akatharsia if we are all as an unclean thing? Well, you think about that verse. We are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. And we all do fade as a leaf.

That's a group of disobedient and faithless people. That's become a pattern. Akatharsia is refusal to take a bath.

Akatharsia is refusal to go to the well of the grace of God to find forgiveness and cleansing. This is the repudiation of the need for confession. I don't need to confess.

I don't find anything wrong in what I'm doing. I think it's fine. I think you're a bunch of puritanical, holier than thou, do-gooder, intolerant, bigoted people.

I don't hold with that. Well, bully for you, but you're akatharsia. You are unclean because you have repudiated God's standard and you have refused to avail yourself of His cleansing grace which requires acknowledgement.

I acknowledge that what I have done is wrong. I acknowledge that what this other person has done is wrong. You know, there are corporate prayers of confession in Scripture.

Lord, we as a people are corrupt. We as a nation are wayward. Akatharsia, put away, let it not even be named.

Not just pornia, not just the overt sin of the high hand as it were. I don't care what you say about marriage. I don't care what you say about family.

I don't care what you say about purity or dedication or patience or the need to put God first and put the people of God first. I don't care about that. I want to gratify myself and do what I want to do because it feels good.

That's pornia. Uncleanliness is in the areas of common sin. Well, you know, we all mess up, but I'm not going to go to God.

I have no contrition. I have no regret. I have no sense of personal guilt.

I don't feel any need for the cleansing of the blood of Jesus Christ so that I may walk in the light and have fellowship with God. 1 John 1.7, 1 John 1.8, 1 John 1.9. Psalm 51, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Don't feel the need. Don't even really think about it. Eh, it's just not pertinent.

I'm busy living my life here, you know, these little nitpicky things about did I violate a standard, did

I do something I shouldn't have done, and, you know, I'll think about that later. That's akatharsia. And in the same way, when I was little, my father used to say, by the time you realize that you need a bath, other people have known it for three days.

By the time you can detect that there's a little atmospheric distortion around you, everybody else has been aware of it for a lot longer. It's amazing how, you know how you can't smell your own bad breath, only other people can smell it? That's kind of an affliction, isn't it? Why didn't we evolve the ability to know when our breath is bad? Everybody else knows, you know. Oh, garlic for lunch, huh? How was that tuna fish sandwich? Or that two gallons of coffee you drank this morning? But, to not pay attention, to not proactively ensure that we are cleansed, that's akatharsia, and it's a pattern.

Let it not be named among you. Those who are sloppy about sin, sloppy about defilement, sloppy about what is and is not acceptable and pleasing in God's sight, purge it out, is what this passage says. Let it not be named in your group, in your midst, in your circle of friendship and fellowship.

Let it not be named. Fornication, that's pornaia, uncleanness, akatharsia, or covetousness. Now, nothing wrong with wanting a thing.

I see it in the window, I walk by it in the store, I look at it online, I think, wow, wouldn't it be cool to have one of those? Maybe I'll start saving up, maybe I can get it. Nothing wrong with wanting things. God has blessed us with the kind of prosperity where you wave a piece of plastic and it's yours.

And we think, wow, what a great age we live in. You get this little square thing, hand it to a guy, he hands it back, and suddenly I have whatever it is I want. But covetousness, notice it is a word ending in N-E-S-S.

By definition, it's a pattern of acquisitiveness. When will you have enough? When I have one more. When will you have enough money? When I've got one more dollar.

Here's a dollar, are you happy now? No, I need one more. Well, here's a dollar, are you happy now? I need one more. I've got, you know, this is hoarders.

This is people who get addicted to the shopping channel. But also in the realm of the spirit, this is dissatisfaction and the need to be self-satisfied. I want to please myself and satisfy myself, and I don't feel satisfied.

You can't be covetousness unless there's some area where you feel unfulfilled. All of us have areas where we have wishes, we have wants, we have a desire for something that we don't have. How do you know if it's covetousness or not? Where are you looking to get it filled? Are you looking to God? Are you entrusting it in His hands? Lord, I'm single, I'd love to be married.

Lord, I don't have any close friends, I wish I did. Lord, I really wish I had an opportunity to serve

or minister or to express my love for You and for Your Word in some meaningful way. I wish I had a means of self-expression.

I wish I had the means of doing this thing or that thing or the other thing. Where do you look for the fulfillment of that unfulfilled desire? If you're taking it to God and placing it in His hands and trusting that He knows the time and the place and whether or not it should be fulfilled. Paul had a desire, strong desire, and he prayed for it three times.

He had a thorn in the flesh and he wanted it removed. And he took it to the Lord. He coveted the removal of that thorn.

But where did he go with that desire? He went to God and God said, you know what? You need that thorn. It is a blessing for you to have that thorn because if you didn't have it, I couldn't use you as an apostle anymore. And Paul says, I have learned whether I am abased or whether I abound in all things to be content.

Whether I have much or whether I have little, whether I am full or whether I am hungry, I have learned to be content because I take my desires to God. It's not coveting if you take it to God and place it in His hands. It's a great check on our wallet as well.

Really, really, really want that whatever it is. Let's pick something abstract like Royal Enfield motorcycle. I really, really want that Royal Enfield motorcycle.

Well, go before the Lord and immediately I think, does God think I need a motorcycle? Probably not. Probably doing fine with the kind of transportation that preserves my body in case somebody doesn't drive correctly. I have responsibilities, you know, got a family, got a job, got things that need doing.

I have things to do before the Lord. Probably not a good idea to risk my safety for the sake of a whim. It's a good check.

We take these things to God and God's Word and God's Spirit refocus our attention, remind us of our priorities, our goals, our values, and we can quickly see in the objective light of the glory of God things that are really sort of frivolous and whimsical. I don't know about you, but I'm not a big fan of being whimsical. I don't think anybody associates that word with me or anything near me.

There are people who delight in being whimsical. You know, look at my purple hat. Not so much.

You find out what is serious, what's valuable, what partakes of reality, what partakes of the eternal future. When we take desires, nothing wrong with having desires. Let me be clear from the Word of God.

Desires are a part of our makeup. God has desires and were made in His image. These are illicit impulses to self-gratification that we can't bring legitimately before God and ask Him to fulfill.

That's what covetousness is. It's a selfish desire that we could never take before God and ask Him to fulfill. Legitimate desires, desires for companionship, for fellowship, for opportunities, for fulfillment, for being able to do what we do better than we do, we can always take those to God.

And if you're comfortable bringing it before God and asking God to bless it and grow it and fulfill it, that's not coveting, no matter how strongly you feel it. But if it is a selfish self-gratification, me, myself, and I, I'd sure feel a lot better if I had this. And as soon as you start walking into God's presence, you find that you've got to kind of turn and hide it under your cloak.

That's covetousness. Let it not be named among you. There are people who are overtly covetous, acquisitive, and it marks them.

Well, this is what I want, and I don't care what you say. Well, this is what I want, and don't bother me with all this Word of God stuff. I know what I want, and I think it's legitimate.

And what kind of a God wouldn't want me to be happy? So I'm going to do this thing and boo on anybody that says different. Covetousness. Let it not be named among you.

But notice here, these three things are listed. Pornia, akatharsia, and covetousness. This is pleonexia.

We talk about something being plenary or being plenteous. There's a lot of it. And this is just wanting a lot of a thing.

You want more. You have this desire. Let it not even be named among you as is fitting, as is prepo, proper, for hagiois.

This is your first identity. You are a sanctified one. If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are set apart.

You are marked with a special purpose and destiny. Every single one of you, regardless of your age, regardless of your circumstance, regardless of what you think your opportunities may or may not be, you are a marked out, separated, stamped with the ownership, marked with the seal of God, hagiois. You are a holy one.

You have a destiny just like any of the holy ones in heaven. You have a specific assignment. You are on the roster.

God has marked you. He knows you. And you've got obligations as one of those people not to do things that are improper, not fitting.

Neither, verse 4, filthiness. This is almost an onomopoetic word. Aiscrotes.

A-I-S-C-H-R-O-T-E-S. Aiscrotes. This has a nuance to it.

That which brings shame. It's shameful. Doing something of which you are ashamed or should be ashamed.

Aiscrotes. This is reputation damaging. People think of you and they think of this and shake their heads.

Oh, man. That's just not right. That's shameful.

It goes beyond just impropriety into greatly missing an expectation. You would expect someone to have a sense of propriety. You would expect someone to have knowledge.

You would expect someone to have manners. This is someone who relieves themselves in public. This is someone who spits in their plate at the dinner table.

This is someone who just does something that's just overtly shameful and wrong. And they do it sometimes even with a sense of pride. Aiscrotes.

This sort of willful, counter-cultural, counter-expectational, I'll do this because it makes me flamboyant. I'll do this because Madonna, the singer, used to do this with her outfits. To be outrageous and be proud of it.

To run counter to expectation and be proud of it. To think, well, I'm going to put a piercing through my ear and my nose. Just one.

I'm just going to pin them together. I'll pin my ear to my nose with some big piercing just because, look at me. That's Aiscrotes.

It's shameful. Seriously, do you want to claim the name of Christ and make yourself into a figure of ridicule? Shameful. Aiscrotes.

Nor foolish talking, it says. Moron, log on. That's the word.

Morologos. Moron logic. Moron talk.

You embrace the stupid. You embrace the indefensibly moronic. You talk like a fool.

You embrace foolish ideas. You defend foolish positions. You wave it like a flag.

You wear it like a crown. And it's morologos. Nor coarse jesting.

Eutropilia. You think, wait a minute. How can coarse jesting be bad? It starts with E-U.

E-U means good. Euphoria. That's good.

Eugenics. That's good use of the genetics. So how can it be bad? Well, think about eugenics.

That ought to give you a clue right there. Eutropilia means the well-turned phrase. The riposte.

The snappy comeback. The jest. The little bon mot that makes people laugh.

The clever little saying. It says, wait a minute. No humor.

No little funny remarks. Eutropilia is low jesting. There are people who cannot talk to you for two minutes without reference to things that are not spoken of in polite society.

References to functions and body parts. It is a distraction. It is a deflection.

Humor is great. The Lord Jesus had a great sense of humor. God has a great sense of humor.

But not in the way that most stand-up comedy now functions. Well, I can't be funny unless I'm dirty. I can't be funny unless I am.

It's a nervous laughter. People laugh because it's embarrassing and it's shameful, the things that people will talk about. And the little titter of nervous laughter that they evoke when they say things that nobody would dare to say if they weren't a stand-up comic.

Well, there are people who start to adopt this in their private conversation. Notice it says again, after naming these three things, the shameful, the moron talk, and this humor at the expense of propriety, you know, make them laugh at any cost, which is not fitting. Twice now it has said, which is not fitting.

The first time it was prepo. This time we have it translated from anecho, anecho. This is A-N-E-K-O, not echo, E-C-H-O, which is to have.

This is anecho, and you see the alpha privative at the beginning. And this has the idea of not just something that is proper, but it's really obligatory. It's what is right to do.

Paul used this word in Philemon, verse 8, talking about Onesimus and returning him to Philemon, his master, and he says, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is the right thing to do to take this guy back, I'm pleading with you based on our friendship. I could command you because this really is what you need to do, what you ought to do. There's really no question that you ought to do it, but I'm not giving you a command.

I'm suggesting and pleading with you to do it on your own rather than as a command. Anecho, what is proper. Rather, giving of thanks.

And isn't that an odd thing to contrast with? Fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, let it not be named among you as is fitting for saints, neither filthiness, foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. Giving of thanks. What does it mean? Well, very quickly you'll notice that these three things are verbal expressions.

If our conversation is seasoned with salt, people are going to realize that we are constantly aware of God and the influence and the action of God in our lives and the allusions and the references that we make. If there's something suggestive in our language, it shouldn't be suggestive in the priorient and unclean sense of the word. Wow, that's really suggestive language.

That's a suggestive scene in that movie. That's a suggestive turn of phrase there. Wink, wink.

If we are going to be suggestive in our speech, it ought to be suggestive of our relationship with God, our appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ, our thankfulness to be here and have the opportunity to love and to serve and to please God and to learn more about Him and get ready for the eternal future. If there's going to be something above and beyond in our language and in our discourse, our concourse with one another, it ought to be, if it's going to evoke and remind somebody of something, it ought to evoke and remind people of the grace of God for which we are thankful, not the same kind of slime that any unbelievers can incorporate into their conversation. That's the idea.

It's not fitting. And if you find yourself constantly being taken down that road, constantly getting into innuendo and humor and remarks about other people and these suggestive parts of conversation, that is the thing to separate from. Let it not be named among you.

It's not fitting. It's not proper. And if you tolerate it, you're a part of it.

Silence is consent. It's one of the rules of artillery. Somebody calls in fire, you check the map.

If you don't say stop, that's permission to fire the mission. Silence is consent. Your silence connotes approval.

You either get out of it and cut it out, shut the door on it, or you are complicit. You are party to it. And the cost, this you know, fornicators, unclean persons, covetous, none of them have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

That's two kingdoms. You're out during the millennial kingdom, and you're out in the eternal kingdom of God. It's a heavy price to pay for being slack and sloppy about frivolous things.

Easily cleaned up, easily separated from, easily identified. But if we're sloppy, if we don't care enough about God to pay attention to His kingdom, He's not going to care enough to bring us in. That's what it means to confess Jesus before men.

It's not so much verbal confession as it is living a life that is a reflection of Him, His presence, and His glory. And if you can't live a life that reflects the Lord Jesus and how important He is to you, it is going to have consequences in the future. Long-lasting, eternal consequences.

And we'll look at that next time. What is on the line in inheritance? Nobody that tolerates and practices these things is going to have an inheritance. Serious stuff, not to be taken lightly, not to

be overlooked.

So this is a warning, this is instruction, this is helpful information for us. We have time to observe this and ensure that we're following it carefully day by day as we live our lives before God, seeking to manifest not popularity but hope. We're not interested in cultivating shallow friendships.

We're interested in living a life that will cause people to ask us a reason for the hope that is in us before it's too late. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for how clear it is, how practical it is. It leaves us without excuse. We are told exactly what Your expectation is, what Your provision is, what the tremendous grace that is available to us to execute the instructions that You've given us.

And it is up to us. It is by choice that we can either reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus or fail Your grace. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will keep us ever mindful, provoke us to make decisions and to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Himself who, for the glory that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is now seated at Your right hand.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.