

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum

"Adultery and Fornication"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction "An Infected Heart"

Infections stem from the presence of bacteria in the body. Such infections may begin as a small, localized problem, but potentially can make the whole body sick. At first, people may be unaware of having an infection, until it affects their normal functions. A number of side-effects are associated with infections, such as pain, inflammation, vomiting, fever, and even death. Clearly, infections should be taken seriously. Like bacteria, sensual desires and fleshly lusts infect an individual's heart and cause him/her to sin. James wrote, "And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Ja. 1:15).

Key Verse

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mt. 5:28).

Lesson Summary

Satan is subtle and crafty; he knows when to tempt and how to lead into sin and error. He seeks to captivate the human mind with sensual thoughts and images. When this happens to an individual, sexual sin surely lies at the door of one's heart (Mk. 7:18-23). Amnon, the firstborn son of King David, committed fornication with his half-sister, Tamar (2 Sa. 3:2; 13:1). His disgraceful downfall began with sensual thoughts and desires for her (13:2). His sinful desires moved him to deceive her and ultimately to rape her (vv. 3-14). Clearly, Amnon surrendered his thoughts and then his heart to sexual immorality. This world is filled with sexual vulgarities and perversions. Nevertheless, these vices cannot hurt us as long as they do not enter into our hearts (Mk. 7:18-19). For this reason, Solomon warned his son, saying, "Lust not after her beauty **in thine heart**; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. **Let not thine heart** decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths" (Pr. 6:25; 7:25). Adultery and fornication do not emerge instantly, but like bacteria, sensual desires grow into filthy, sinful infections. Before committing the actual acts of adultery and fornication, these sins first infect the heart (Mt. 5:28; Mk. 7:20-23). By the time the sinful acts are publicly exposed, they are already firmly rooted in the heart of an individual. Thus, the acts of adultery and fornication substantiate the presence of sin in one's heart. Solomon instructed his son in the law and commandments of the Lord: "My son, forget not my law; but **let thine heart keep my commandments**; For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; **write them upon the table of thine heart**" (Pr. 3:1-3). Likewise, as we keep the Word of God in our hearts, we keep sin out of our lives (Ps. 119:11). Purity begins in the heart, not in external actions. We are not holy simply because our speech and actions appear holy. We are holy because our hearts are sanctified and made pure by the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, our speech and actions are holy because our hearts are pure and holy (Mt. 12:35). As saints of God, we must resist sensual temptations and keep our hearts pure, bearing in mind the promise: "blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (5:8).

Scripture Study

Infecting our hearts – Mk. 7:18-23; 2 Sa. 13:1-14; Pr. 6:25; 7:25; Mt. 5:28

Protecting our hearts – Pr. 3:1-3; Ps. 119:11; Mt. 12:35; 5:8

Conclusion

We cannot stop temptation from coming our way, but we can turn our thoughts away from sensuality and toward the Word of God. As we meditate on the Holy Scriptures, our minds and hearts are sanctified by the truth (Jn. 17:17). Through securing and protecting the desires of our hearts, we keep ourselves from sin and transgression (1 Th. 4:3-4).

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“Works of Wickedness”

Adultery and fornication are among the first-mentioned works of the flesh in the Scriptures (Mk. 7:21-23; Ro. 1:29-32; Ga. 5:19-21; Ep. 5:3-7; Co. 3:5-9). The works of the flesh arise out of a sinful heart. After sensual lusts infect the heart of an individual, the works of the flesh await an opportunity to manifest themselves in many wicked ways. In today’s lesson, we will examine the spirit of adultery and fornication as “works of wickedness.”

Key Verse

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness” (Ga. 5:19).

Lesson Summary

In Galatians 5:19-21, the apostle Paul identifies specific works of the flesh, beginning with adultery and fornication. He next mentions uncleanness and lasciviousness. This is significant. All four of these terms are related to sensuality. Adultery and fornication have interconnected meanings (see the Monthly Summary). Fornication (*porneia*) in its broad meaning includes adultery (*moicheia*). Whereas adultery and fornication refer more to the action of sexual sin, uncleanness and lasciviousness refer more to the attitude or spirit behind such wickedness. In other words, adultery and fornication arise from impure and uncontrollable desires. Thus, adultery and fornication along with uncleanness and lasciviousness comprehensively mean every imaginable work of sexual sin, without having to give a detailed list of these sins and transgressions. Paul’s brief list is therefore inclusive of all of the sexual vices we face in our world today: premarital sex, extramarital affairs (infidelity), divorce and remarriage, cohabitation, polygamy, prostitution, homosexuality and lesbianism, bisexuality and transvestism, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, and pornography. Furthermore, sexual sins are typically linked to other vile works of wickedness. Their placement at the top of Paul’s list affirms their prominence. For example, fornication is historically connected to idolatrous and pagan rituals, and even to demonic worship. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth because of fornication and idolatry (1 Co. 6:15-20; 2 Co. 6:16-17; 12:21). Reflecting on Israel’s transgressions, Paul warned the church at Corinth to forsake fornication and idolatry: “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (1 Co. 10:7-8, 14, 19-20; Ex. 32:1-7; Nu. 25:1-9; Re. 2:14). Demonic spirits, often termed “unclean” spirits in the Gospels, promote every filthy and wicked work. Concisely, sexual sins are analogous to a savage-like spirit and indicate one’s total depravity (Ro. 1:21-28).

Scripture Study

Works of wickedness – Mk. 7:21-23; Ro. 1:29-32; Ga. 5:19-21; Ep. 5:3-7; Co. 3:5-9

Fornication and idolatry – 2 Co. 6:16-17; 12:21; 1 Co. 10:7-8, 14, 19-20; Ex. 32:1-7; Nu. 25:1-9; Re. 2:14; Ro. 1:21-28

Conclusion

While adultery and fornication have become commonplace and even glamorized in western culture, God’s church must not become tolerant of such wicked practices (1 Co. 5:1, 9-13). We have an obligation to stand up and declare the truth of God’s Word, saying, “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience” (Ep. 5:6).

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“A Deceptive Spirit”

Introduction

The nature of sin is deceptive. Sexual sins do not present themselves as destructive and deadly, but rather as glamorous and beneficial in fulfilling one's personal desires and needs. These sins operate on a premise of self-fulfillment and self-justification. While a repentant sinner is justified by faith and made righteous by the blood of Christ, sinning can never be justified. Thus, adultery and fornication stem from a deceptive spirit.

Key Verse

“Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Ro. 1:25).

Lesson Summary

When Solomon instructed his son in the wisdom of the Lord, he warned him to avoid the adulteress. He portrayed her as a deceiver, whose words seem sweet and smooth, when, in fact, she is bitter and deadly (Pr. 5:1-5). Indeed, those who yield to the sins of adultery and fornication have surrendered themselves to a deceptive spirit (2 Pe. 2:12-14). The apostle Peter described such sin and corruption in the church as “spots and blemishes” (v. 13). These corrupt ones, “having eyes full of adultery,” are both deceived by sin (“cannot cease from sin”), and they themselves are deceivers, “beguiling unstable souls” (v. 14). The apostle Paul warned against them, saying, “Let no man deceive you with vain words” (Ep. 5:3-6). Sexual immorality results from embracing and promoting lies. Paul writes of those whom God turns over to sexual perversion and debauchery (Ro. 1:24-28). These are the ones who replace “the truth of God” with a lie, rejecting his truth to pursue their own will and desires (v. 25). Lies and “deceitful lusts” produce adultery and fornication, but God's truth produces “righteousness and true holiness” (Ep. 4:17-25). If adultery and fornication arise in the house of God, these sins do not readily disclose themselves as wickedness, openly nor publicly, but rather seek to hide their sinful practices under a cloak of righteousness. Jesus boldly confronted the problem of religious hypocrisy, saying, “Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Mt. 23:28). Professing believers may present themselves as people of God, when actually they are inwardly unclean (v. 27). In the story of David and Bathsheba, we see the way adultery works (2 Sa. 11:5-17, 26-27). After this sin takes root in one's heart, and an individual commits the sinful act, adultery often leads to greater wickedness through further deception, lies, and hypocrisy.

Scripture Study

Deception – Pr. 5:1-5; 2 Pe. 2:12-14; Ep. 5:3-6

Lies – Ro. 1:24-28; Ep. 4:17-25

Hypocrisy – Mt. 23:27-28; 2 Sa. 11:5-17, 26-27

Conclusion

Sexual immorality permeates the world at all levels of society. Therefore, the church must cry out against this wickedness. We must remain on guard, lest adultery and fornication infiltrate the fellowship of the church through deception, lying, and hypocrisy. As such, the church must preach and teach against sexual immorality, confronting the lies and deceptions of the enemy.

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Introduction

“God’s Judgment”

Other than the illumination of the Holy Spirit, context is the most important aspect of Biblical interpretation. Pulling individual verses, and even passages of Scripture, out of their specific context can lead us to a faulty interpretation and application of the Scriptures. However, when a verse is interpreted in its immediate context, the context itself clarifies the meaning and proper application of the Scripture. In today’s lesson, we will examine Luke 16:18 in its specific context.

Key Verse

“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (He. 13:4).

Lesson Summary

In Luke 16:18, Jesus taught the permanence of marriage between one man and one woman for a lifetime commitment. His teaching condemns the one who puts away and remarries, and also the one who marries the divorcee. Thus, it clearly condemns the divorcee for remarriage. In other words, when a marriage is dissolved by man and remarriage takes place, adultery and fornication unavoidably result. In Luke 16, the context of Jesus’ teaching against adultery and fornication explains the seriousness of God’s judgment against sexual immorality. His teaching against adultery is prefaced by the permanence of God’s Word (vv. 16-17). The Word of God does not pass away – his truth does not fail (v. 17; Mt. 5:17-19; 24:35). Moreover, the permanence of God’s Word contrasts the religious hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who seek to justify their unrighteousness (v. 15). Furthermore, self-justification is placed in the context of those who serve the god of this world (mammon), rather than the one, true God (vv. 13-14). Finally, Christ’s teaching against adultery is followed by the story of God’s eternal judgment against sin (vv. 19-25). The Lord will judge sin finally with the flames and torments of hell (vv. 23-25). Among the prevalent corruptions of humankind are adultery and fornication. These sins alone will take innumerable souls to their eternal doom. God’s Word against adultery and fornication will never change. However, many will seek to justify their sinful marriage relationships, choosing the god of this world above the one, true God. That which was spoken of the rich man is true of so many today: “remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things” (v. 25). Many professing believers choose to satisfy and comfort themselves in this life, yet do so in disobedience to the commandments of the Lord. Many religious groups seek to justify sinful marriages because of comfort and mammon, but this is an abomination in the sight of God. According to his Word, God will judge adultery and fornication with hell-fire (He. 13:4). What is the solution for those caught in sexual immorality? Repentance and turning from one’s wicked way is God’s solution (Lu. 16:27-31). The sinner may be justified by faith; but his sinning will never be justified and made righteous. Thus, one cannot continue in a relationship of adultery or fornication, yet remain justified in the sight of God. In Luke 16, Jesus’ teaching is clear: while faith and repentance lead to his mercy, self-justification results in God’s judgment against adultery and fornication. When members of the church refuse to repent of their disobedience, discipline becomes necessary for the continuing health of the church (1 Co. 5:1-13). Without discipline, adultery and fornication can infect the whole body (vv. 6-7). When firm and loving attempts at restoration fail, we must remove a rebellious member from the fellowship (membership) of the church (vv. 2, 11-13). The purpose of such discipline is the ultimate restoration and salvation of the soul (v. 5).

Scripture Study

Judgment of God – Lu. 16:13-25

Discipline of the church – 1 Co. 5:1-13

Conclusion

God will judge adultery and fornication. For this reason, discipline is so important. When the church disciplines an erring member, this action unmistakably affirms that God will judge the rebellious works of the sinner. Therefore, the church should lovingly seek to restore erring members, but discipline those who refuse to repent of their sinful ways.