

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning

Week 42 (October 11-17, 2015)

We will continue to study God's rules for holy living, especially in the area of sins of the tongue as written by Paul in the book of Ephesians.

Sunday, October 11 (read Ephesians 5:1-2)

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:1-2)

I printed the entire passage above so that you can really meditate on this command. As a child, I measured **my** "life of holiness" by **other** people in my church; just like many, I was quick to point out the hypocrites. However, this passage does not allow anyone to use that human measuring stick. We are commanded to imitate God, the One who is made visible through Jesus Christ. Our example of love is Jesus who laid down His life for us to pay in full the debt we owed (John 10:11). Now we are commanded to lay down our lives for others since we are called to follow **His** example (John 15:13). This means that we are called to sacrifice our time and energy and assets and gifts and talents for the greater good. That will leave us very little time for criticism of others. How are you doing using this measuring stick?

Monday, October 12 (read Ephesians 5:3-7)

Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. (Ephesians 5:4)

I once believed that what people said would not hurt me as long as I knew the truth. I could not have been more wrong! As a pastor, my ministry can be damaged severely by gossip in the community. That's why we are commanded to "Refrain from the very appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22, KJV). We can never totally eliminate lies and false stories or half-truths, but we are commanded to live a life of purity in word, thought and deed so that we won't give ammunition to those who want to broadcast only bad news (v. 3). In view of this, today's printed verse challenges me because I am known for my quick wit! Some of my comebacks, though they may be funny, fall into the "out of place" category. I am being challenged to use my mouth for thanksgiving to the Lord of my life. What about you? Do you need to join me in this effort?

Tuesday, October 13 (reread Ephesians 5:3-7)

No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Ephesians 5:5)

Preachers who proclaim the "health & wealth" doctrine will rarely, if ever, on the large screens, place today's printed verse for you to read. Instead, they hide their own greed by appealing to the sinful nature of their listeners. As believers, we are commanded to be more and more like Jesus as we approach and look forward to the kingdom of God. Immorality, impurity and greed will not be a part of God's kingdom on earth or in heaven, so we are commanded to rid ourselves of them right now. God's wrath will come on all who mislead others with "empty words," causing them to excuse their sinful nature while they pursue "the good life" down here (v. 6). Do not be partners in ministry with those who teach this false doctrine (v. 7)!

Wednesday, October 14 (read Ephesians 5:8-14)

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light . . . (Ephesians 5:8a)

In today's text, Paul continues to exhort us to live in the light of the Lord, not in darkness. All of us once lived in darkness apart from God's control (v. 8-10). However, when we were born again, God placed His Spirit within us so that we can now live to please Him instead of pleasing our sinful natures. If you have absolutely no conviction of sin in your life, then you simply **joined the church** rather than joining yourself with Christ when you were baptized. Anyone who has God's Spirit living within will also have a desire to live his/her life for the glory of God. You do not have to publicly admit every sin in your life, but you do need to take an honest look in the mirror to expose your deeds of darkness (v. 11-14). You need to have an "aha" moment! (From Kyle Idleman's book AHA. The acronym stands for **Awakening, Honest** inspection, and **Action**)

Thursday, October 15 (read Ephesians 5:15-17)

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. (Ephesians 5:17)

We should take seriously the command to make the most out of every opportunity, because the days are very evil (v. 15-16). Just recently, a county clerk was arrested in Kentucky for refusing to issue a marriage license to a gay couple, because she is a born-again Christian. Five Supreme Court justices have invalidated the Word of God by their majority opinion on marriage! The persecution that the Bible promises to all who live by the scriptures has come to America (see 2 Timothy 3:12). If you do not **believe** that God's Word is infallible, or if you do not **know** that the Bible defines marriage as being between one man and one woman, then you'll never be able to **understand** the will of God in these perilous days (v. 17). Are you willing to take a stand for God? You'll be glad you did when you see Him face to face!

Friday, October 16 (read Ephesians 5:18)

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)

In today's verse, God gives you an option. You can receive permanent joy by allowing God's Spirit to fill your soul, **or** you can get momentary happiness from the feeling that strong drink gives you. You are called to make a choice! Those who get a thrill from alcohol invariably will have to deal with the shame of their out-of-control actions following a drinking binge. On the other hand, those who allow the Holy Spirit to control their lives will experience ". . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23a). I'm sure some of you are thinking, "I am only a social drinker; I never get **drunk** on wine." Ask yourself, "Why do I drink? Am I using alcohol to give me a temporary feeling of happiness instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to give me a permanent experience of peace?" Most people do not realize when they have crossed over the line from a social drinker to an alcoholic. I encourage you to add this command from Ephesians 5 to the others we have studied in this chapter.

Saturday, October 17 (read Ephesians 5:19-20)

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord . . . (Ephesians 5:19)

From the start, I have readily omitted that the sins of the tongue bring the most conviction to me. Today's text may be the one that **you** most need to heed. In today's church, the biggest divider is the music program. Each generation has dug its heels in demanding its favorite style of music. Older people demand that the hymns dominate the program while younger people demand that psalms and spiritual songs (praise courses) be used. One side prefers piano/organ with harmonies and clear vocals while the other side likes it louder, with more repetition and heavy on instruments. Neither side has much appreciation for the desires of the other. The vast majority of church splits can be traced back to this problem. What type of music does **God** prefer? He does not care as long as the song is being sung from our heart to Him (v. 19)! When we sing with thankfulness to God the Father through the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, the Lord hears our music with a grateful heart, regardless of what the beat is or how talented the singer is. Allow God to speak to you on this subject. Some people are carrying a heavy grudge because of the change in music styles. Allow God to remove this burden from your shoulders.