

CCH Sermon Sunday 7th July 2019

Eph 5:1-7 "Not even a hint"

√1 PRAY. A question to start us off today:

Does it matter how you live behind closed doors?

Does it matter how you live in your private life?

- ▲ A couple of weeks ago I heard three people being interviewed about Boris Johnson the day after police were called to his girlfriend's flat after reports of fighting and shouting. Now I'm not going to get political this morning, nor do we have the information to make a judgement on what happened that night. But I was shocked that all three people said that a matter like this in someone's private life shouldn't affect how we view their suitability as a leader.
 - And that's a really common view today. What happens behind closed doors, is by definition private, and should be left there. People can do what they like, so long as they don't hurt others.
 - So in this age of "privacy" does it matter how you live in your private life?
 - Paul tells us today that for Christians the answer is YES.
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- For the last couple of weeks we've been looking at this very wonderful and very challenging book of Ephesians.
 - It's **wonderful** because it tells us what God is doing in the world- bring all kinds of different people to Jesus Christ in the Church, so that they might find kindness and acceptance from him and from one another, even though we don't deserve it.
 - It's **challenging** because particularly in this second half of the book Paul insists that we need to live out who we are...
 - **We've seen**
 - We need to **put off** the old clothing of lying, stealing, anger, malice.
 - We need to **put on** the new clothing of kindness, truthfulness, helpfulness, building others up.
 - And we've seen the **reasons**: because of our new mindset. And that is we have a new identity as Christians in whom the Spirit dwells: So the series= ... "Be who you are"
 - And today Paul addresses our lives in **general** (v1-2) Perhaps a summary of where we have come to so far,
 - And then he zooms in behind closed doors to our **private** lives (v3-7)

1) IN YOUR LIFE IN GENERAL, LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE (v1-2)

- V1,2
- The therefore links us back to what's come before. Not fighting and anger, but forgiveness like God has forgiven you.
- Follow God's example.
 - Our lives are to be God like. We are to follow his example.
 - Do you realise God keeps the 10 Commandments perfectly? He is committed to there being only one God- himself, and to seeing his name honoured, and is perfectly truthful, faithful, and kind.
 - And Christians are to be like their heavenly father.
 - Actually sometimes even non-Christians talk about someone who is "godly". And that's what this is saying: we are to be like God.
- And the particular thing that we are called to imitate God on here is **love**.
 - And as v2 puts it "we are to **live a life of love...**"
- You see the greatest thing that God did was give up his only Son.
 - Abraham nearly sacrificed his son on the altar,
 - God actually did it.
- So Jesus is calling us to come and die...
- The language is sacrifice language taken from the temple where the whole animal was sacrificed to God as a burnt offering.
- And we too are to be sacrificial and loving. Giving to others.
- So for us...
 - It's the weekend and you just want to climb back into bed or do a whole load of jobs that you know need doing, but your youngest wants to play spotty dogs or read Maisy' farm AGAIN.
 - *So you choose to live a "life of love" v2 and play.*
 - It's the end of the working day and you are already behind because your clients have been so unreasonable and you just want to go home, but one of your colleagues needs a chat because they are new, and don't get how the printer works.
 - *Well live a "life of love" v2*

- Your church is doing a church plant, and you know that as a single person there will be less chance of meeting a potential marriage partner. But for the gospel you choose to
 - *live a “life of love” v2 and go for the gospel.*
- Someone in your church is moving house, and needs some practical help and a curtain rail. You’ve got some stuff that is quite nice, but you don’t really need it so you choose to *live a “life of love” v2 And give it away.*
- *Do you know I’ve seen these kind of things in our church in recent days. And it’s beautiful to watch. A LIFE OF LOVE.*
- And a life of love is not easy. But the passage gives us the reason to rewire our thinking with...
 - As you have been loved.
 - How do you say no to self, and yes to Christ?
 - The bible answer is “We love because he first loved us”
 - His love is in these verses in 2 ways.
 - First there’s parent love. “As dearly loved children”.
 - Just pause on that for a moment.
 - What an amazing thought.
 - We’ve been adopted into God’s family.
 - Any social worker will tell you that not experiencing love from one or both of your parents can be deeply scarring for any child. And none of us have or are perfect parents.
 - But God our heavenly Father is a perfect father who loves us with a perfect adopted love.
 - And as we experience that love it melts us and enables us to love others.
 - But also in the verse there’s sacrificial love. “Just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to god”.
 - Most parents give up time and money and energy for their children.
 - Jesus gave up his life. He DIED FOR US!
 - And it was (like the whole burnt offerings in the Old Testament Temple, a complete, pleasing, beautiful fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
- Do you see what Paul is saying?
 - Set your eyes on God and Jesus’ love for you.
 - And it will enable you to live a life of love.
 - Jesus’ cross is the **example**, but it’s also the **reason** why we can love. Our love tanks have been so filled up to overflowing by Jesus, that we can now share that love with others.
 - Live a life of love as Christ loved us.
- I think I’ve told some of you that I did a wedding in Cambridge a couple of years ago, and I explained that like a prism, God sends his light and love down to us, and we in marriage are to bend that love out to our spouse.
- “Live a life of Love just as Christ loved us”.
- I had forgotten that the Father of the Bride was a Professor of Physics at Cambridge university, but fortunately he reassured me that I had got my physics more or less correct!
- And In the church you see this multicoloured love (3:10) so beautifully as people love one another from different backgrounds and ages, and marital statuses.
- It’s a reason I think why we need to keep praying the prayer of Chapter 3, kneeling before the Father, and asking that we all may have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.
- Because grasping that love to us, is the key to living a life of sacrificial love to others.
- But if the Father and Son (and we can add the Holy Spirit) have loved us in such an extraordinary way, why would we love others in a distorted way in our private lives, and that’s what we come onto now.

2) IN YOUR PRIVATE LIFE LIVE A LIFE OF PURITY (v3-7)

- Do our private lives matter? Paul says yes. V3,4.
- It's a call to stop all sexual immorality, and all other forms of impurity and greed.
- What does the Bible mean by sexual immorality?
 - The bible is clear from start to finish that the place for sexual intercourse is marriage between one man and one woman.
 - Genesis 2 "a man will leave his mother and father and is united to his WIFE". Not his girlfriend, not his boyfriend, his wife.
 - Sex is the wonderful glue that joins a couple together in intimacy, and the Bible says it's for marriage.
 - Sometimes in life the culture around us goes with the Bible.
 - Today there's a strong movement against oppression of women by men, and rightly so. The Bible would agree.
 - Today there's a strong movement against human trafficking- only yesterday a big trafficking ring was convicted. The Bible would agree.
 - But today, almost anything goes sexually. Here are some of the catchphrases from yesterday's pride march:
 - Love is good
 - Love for all
 - Proud to celebrate pride
 - People say if it doesn't hurt anyone you can do what you like in the bedroom. But that's a tragic lie.
 - More people have been hurt in the bedroom than in any other area. God's ways are good and he calls us to purity.
 - An analogy I sometimes use with teenagers is that
 - A fire is great in a bonfire or a fireplace
 - But a fire in the sofa is destructive and dangerous.
 - Sex in marriage is a wonderful gift given by God.
 - God is not against sex, he made it, there's a whole book of the Bible about it (Song of Songs).
 - It's a wonderful gift and in v4 we are called to thanksgiving.
 - But because he loves us and doesn't want us to get hurt
 - I'd love to ask all the doctors, social workers, counsellors in Huntingdon
 - How many problems would disappear in Huntingdon if sexual intimacy was kept to faithfulness within marriage?
 - Teenage pregnancies, abortions
 - Divorce, unfaithfulness, prostitution, pornography
 - Guilt, regret, brokenness, mistrust, breakdown.
 - Now if any that's you, don't run away. We are all sexual sinners, and you are welcome! Everyone in this church has baggage. There is forgiveness, as we have been seeing. But Jesus' way is so good and he does call us to change.
 - Here God says there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality.
 - ▲ I chatted to a couple in a previous church who were going on holiday together. They were going to stay in the same AirBnB just the two of them, before they were married.
 - They said it's OK we'll be in different bedrooms.
 - I said, it's not OK. Even if you stay pure and remain in different rooms (which would be a miracle when you are on your own in in a dream holiday destination after a glass of wine).
 - What will the rest of the village think? What will your mates think has gone on?
 - I reminded them of this verse
 - Not even a Hint of sexual immorality.
 - Don't just **do** the right thing. **Be seen** to do the right thing.
 - Show people that sex is so precious its worth waiting for marriage. It's so good that it's worth keeping it precious.
 - Someone might say Why is Paul so strict?
 - Is he a killjoy? Is God trying to spoil our fun?
 - Why can't I get close to my girlfriend?
 - Why can't I enjoy a bit of banter with the lads?
 - Why can't I admire physical beauty when I see it?
 - Why can't I have more and more pleasure or money or stuff?
 - Why can't I live with my boyfriend if we are going to get married?
 - Why can't I look at those images on my phone?

- It's my life.
- No its not, if you are a Christian.
 - You belong to Jesus now.
 - Look v 3. "These are improper for God's holy People".
 - Look at v4 "which are out of place"
- You belong to Jesus. Your body belongs to him too.
- So that's the first reason. ...
 - As is appropriate for God's holy people.
 - God is holy, beautiful wonderful, pure and we are to reflect that.
 - Take off the old ugly jumper of sexual immorality and greed and impurity. (and that reminds us that Paul speaks far more widely than sex here: v3,4.
 - And v4 there's beautiful clothing to put on in the place of . Thanksgiving. Thanking God for our sexuality, thanking God for our bodies. Thanking God for so much.
 - We mustn't be known as only negative about sex, we want to be positive too.
- Now he could have ended this section here, but he adds a further reason or mindset in verse 5-7. He's not finished with us yet. And I think we would do well to pay attention to these, because sexual sin is so serious.
- And we need in the cold light of day to get this.
 - Because this is a key passage that shows us that turning from sexual sin isn't important. It's essential to our salvation.
- And this couldn't be further from where our culture, and even tragically some parts of our church are today.
- V5-7.
- It sounds like he's saying immorality will stop you from getting to heaven.
 - HE is!
- Well how does that work, I thought that those who get to heaven get there by Jesus' forgiveness at the cross.
 - That's true and wonderfully so.
 - We are saved by grace, by simple trust in Jesus Christ, As we'll be reminded of again next week.

- But once you put your trust in Jesus Christ, you begin to be changed.
- He gives you his Holy Spirit, and you start to have new desires.
- The old life still comes back and you make mistakes, and you may struggle with old habits for the rest of your life. And so you turn and say sorry.
- But you can't stay the same.
- You have to repent and turn from your sin, living as your new master wants.
- And v5 addresses the person who wants Jesus but without holiness.
 - You can't have both.
 - You can't have sexual sin and an inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ. that's to say heaven.
 - And he adds v6 because like today there seem to have been people then who were saying you could.
- You will know that our church is part of the Church of England. And over the next couple of years, the Bishops are bringing out a report which will consider whether there is a place for blessing homosexual partnerships.
- Now I know plenty of Christians who struggle with same sex attraction. And there may be some here today.
- And you need our support and prayers, just like our heterosexual unmarried people need prayers for purity. Everything is against us.
- And we want to say again and again that Jesus welcomes all kinds of people, and so do we. If you are gay, you are welcome to come to our church.
- But because we love you we say that gay sex is wrong, just like heterosexual sex outside marriage is wrong.
- And Jesus calls us to purity. Live a life of purity.

V6 let no-one deceive you with these empty words. Whether they have a dog collar on or not.

- So do not be partners with them.

I'd like to finish with a story from Jesus' life (John 8)

"Woman caught in adultery" brought to Jesus by pharisees. I wrote on ground. Let any of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone. All left beginning with the older ones. "Has no-one condemned you? Nor do I, Go now and leave your life of sin". **Let's pray.**