

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	73		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Ephesians 5:3		
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Chaste

Lords Day 41

Question 108. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

Answer: That all uncleanness is accursed of God: (a) and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same, (b) and live chastely and temperately, (c) whether in holy wedlock, or in single life.

(a) Lev.18:27 (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) Lev.18:28 That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you. (b) Jude 1:23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. (c) 1 Thess.4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 1 Thess.4:4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; 1 Thess.4:5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: (d) Heb.13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. 1 Cor.7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. 1 Cor.7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. 1 Cor.7:9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. 1 Cor.7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

Question 109. Does God forbid in this commandment, only adultery, and such like gross sins?

Answer: Since both our body and soul are temples of the holy Ghost, he commands us to preserve them pure and holy; therefore he forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, (a) thoughts, desires, (b) and whatever can entice men thereto. (c)

(a) Eph.5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Eph.5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 1 Cor.6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 1 Cor.6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 1 Cor.6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (b) Matt.5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: Matt.5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (c) Eph.5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 1 Cor.15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

“It cannot escape our attention,” observed Herman Hoekesema, “that the Heidelberg

Catechism in this forty-first Lord's Day does in its explanation of the seventh commandment not proceed from the idea of marriage at all, but rather from that of chastity."¹ Our text (Ephesians 5:3) highlights this theme. The context is critically important. Ephesians 4 deals with the practical – “walk the worthy walk” (4:1), do not “walk” according to the ways of the world (4:7ff). The worthy walk includes “walking in love” (5:2). This was Paul's admonition. He set forth the PATTERN (be like God – forgiving) and the PATH (walking in love – Christ the example). In vv. 3-7 Paul again directs his attention to a number of PROHIBITIONS; actually he deals with the world's PERVERSION of God's way. Love parallels holiness, but lust, sin and self-indulgence are diametrically opposed to love. These things are not consonant with the Christian calling; indeed regular indulgence or practice of this sort reveals that we have no such calling (cf. I John 3:8, 9).

I. THE WAYS OF THE WORLD (comp. I John 2:27)

A. The Perversion of Love

1. *Fornication*: PORNEIA, comp. with the word ENKRATEIA, “self-control” (cf. Acts 24:25 and I Corinthians 7:9). Paul's language incorporates illicit sexual activity and lack of sexual self-control (cf. I Corinthians 5:11).
2. *Uncleanness*: AKATHARSIA, comp. with 4:19. The word means “soiled” in the worst sense.
3. *Covetousness*: PLEONEXIA, greediness, to defraud, lit. “still asking for more,” again comp. with 4:19 (the expression means, lit. “ALL KINDS OF GREED.”)
4. *Paul's imperative*: “Let it not be named among you as is fitting for saints,” lit. these things are not to be even talked about or rumored among you. They are not in keeping with your calling and position in Christ.

B. The Perversion of Speech

1. *Filthiness*: lit. shameless and stupid talk – MŌROLOGIA (from the words MORON and LOGOS) and “jesting” – EUTRAPELIA, lit. “able to turn easily,” coarse jesting, wicked wit.
2. *These things are not “becoming,”* ANĒKEN – imperfect, stressing the progress action of the verb in the past tense it is used here of necessity, duty and obligation, lit. “What is (really) not proper (even though it has happened).”
3. *Paul's contrast* – “GIVING THANKS,” (note the Gk. play on words EUTRAPELIA with EUCHARISTIA). When speaking, the believer should reflect with his tongue what has happened in his life.

II. GOD'S PUNISHMENT IS CERTAIN

A. Who will be punished? “For ye know this” (an imperative, “you know for sure”) fornicators, unclean persons, covetous (who is an idolater [lit. one who follows and serves his idol]) have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. An idol is anything that occupies the focus of our lives (cf. I John 5:21).

B. Paul's warning: “do not be led astray” APATATŌ, imperative, lit. to mislead, deceive “with vain (KENOS, lit. empty, without content or foundation) words.” BECAUSE GOD'S WRATH IS COMING on the *sons of disobedience* (Hebraism refers to that which characterizes their life cf. Ephesians 2:2). There is a popular slogan that even Christians have a tendency to embrace – “Follow your heart.” Calvin aptly wrote, “For what are we by nature? What is there in us? Even from our mother's womb, we bring nothing but disorder; we are cursed; we are shapen in iniquity, and to be brief, from the crown of our head to the soles of our feet there is no part of us which is not given to evil. All our members are instruments of sin. Neither eyes, nor ears, nor mouth, nor feet, nor hands are exempted.

Since, then, we are so full of all uncleanness through sin, and yet for all that, God has now redeemed us from it, is it not reason that we should be dedicated to him, seeing he calls us to sanctification? And ought not this honourable title to restrain us from taking such licence as each one of us might find in his heart to take in following his lusts? In short, St. Paul meant to show us here how we may fight against our wicked lusts. For if we follow our own nature, it is certain that though some man is not inclined to lechery, yet he will have other vices. And indeed we have all vices in us, unless we were restrained by God's bridle. And yet every man beguiles himself on his own behalf."²

CONCLUSION: Evangelicals like to emphasize *grace* and *forgiveness*, two very important Biblical themes but does this mean that if you lie, cheat, openly and shamelessly commit adultery and the like, you can still be an evangelical Christian? Yes, but only if you believe in *cheap grace* which is what many who call themselves evangelicals really believe. It appears from recent polling data that there is a sizable number of people who identify themselves as "Evangelical" and yet remain totally indifferent to the sins like those mentioned in our text. You can live anyway you please and remain an evangelical in good standing in many Evangelical mega-churches. David F. Wells has repeatedly warned us that the forces of modernity have completely rearranged our appetites so that self-fulfillment becomes our ultimate goal in life but at a tremendous cost. Preoccupation with character (does this matter?) fades and all that remains is fascination with self-image and personal concerns.³ Like our President, many Evangelicals have lost sight of the Holiness of God and when this happens we lose sight of what the Bible means by the word *saint*. Hear Thomas Manton, "Upon all occasions, think what ever upon your hearts. Let the conscience of your dedication to God be ever upon your hearts. We that are adopted into God's family, to be children of God, and heirs of eternal life, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, cleansed and sanctified by his Holy Spirit, what a clean heart should we have within ourselves! What an holy life should we carry in the view of others! Our words should be grave and serious, our conversations such as will become the gospel; that no filthiness may be allowed in us, or drop from us in word or deed: 2 Cor. 7:1, 'Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.' We are servants of an holy God; we have holy work to do, and an holy estate to expect."⁴

¹ H. Hoekesema, *The Triple Knowledge* III (Reformed Free Publishing, 1972), p. 344.

² John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1976), p. 498.

³ D.F. Wells, *The Bleeding of the Evangelical Church* (Banner of Truth, 1995).

⁴ *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton* XIX (rpt. Maranatha, 1974), p. 199.