
Christian Behavior: Be On Guard

Hebrews 13:4-6

“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

INTRODUCTION:

- **Practical Christianity Built upon the Foundation of Biblical Doctrine**
 - Paul—for the first time in Hebrews—takes the time to lay out some practical steps and actions that these Hebrew Christians should be living out
 - He didn't start out the book of Hebrews out with practical living—but rather spent the majority of the book laying out sound doctrine
 - About who Jesus is
 - How He fits into prophecies given about Him in the OT

- How He is better than the Old Covenant (Testament)
- How the Old Covenant could never bring salvation—*“making the comers thereunto perfect”*
- But Jesus—who is the mediator of the New Covenant—does provide salvation for sinners
 - Through His one sacrifice—upon the cross
 - Satisfying God's demand for the sinner's punishment
- This doctrinal thesis went through the first 10 chapters of Hebrews
- Chapter 11 & 12—Paul points out that a person enters into this New Covenant not by his own merit—but by faith
 - And by that faith—he is able to honorable do God's will—for the first time
 - And Paul lists for us a whole group of people from the OT—who stand as examples to these Hebrews on how to enter this Covenant by faith
 - And many of these OT patriarchs, by faith looked to the promises that these Hebrews were now witnessing coming to pass

- **These OT saints had entered into this covenant without ever seeing the fulfillment of it**
- **And so—in chapter 12, Paul challenges both groups of Hebrews—those that were saved but were struggling moving on—and those who had been drawn close to Christ, but had never truly believed**
 - **Those who were saved—needed to pick up their running in the race like they had at the beginning of their faith**
 - **Those who were not saved—needed to start the race**
 - **They were to remember that the hardships that they were going through—was God’s means of chastening His children—developing them to live out their faith as they should**
 - **And this covenant that they were being called to enter into—was nothing like the Old—that would certainly bring judgment**
 - **It was a covenant that brought them into the very presence of God**
 - **A covenant of joy**
 - **A covenant of life**

- **So now we come to the practical part of this New Covenant**
 - **If entering this covenant has nothing to do with merit that you have**
 - **Not based on any good works**
 - **Then the question comes up—“*How then should one who has entered this New Covenant live?*”**
 - **“*Should he just live any way he pleases, since he is not saved by good works, nor does he keep himself saved by his works?*”**
 - **“*What does living out the Christian life look like?*”**
 - **So that is what Paul answers—in Hebrews 13**
 - **And the first part that we looked at was a life of LOVE**
 - **Christians are to be characterized by love**
 - **A Love for God’s people**
 - **A Love for Strangers**
 - **A Love for the Afflicted/Persecuted**
 - **And the next characteristic that Paul deals with is**

- **Christians are to be on Guard from invading and destroying influences that so often try to creep in**
- **They are to be on Guard when it comes to their Marriages**
- **They are to be on Guard when it comes to Covetousness**

CIT: What are Christians to be Guarding Against?

I. Christians Are to Guard Against Impurity(vs. 4)—
“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

A. Marriage is to be Honored

NOTE: Paul starts off the admonition by pointing to the fact that marriage is to be Honored by all. Some Christians in the early times began to believe that marriage was a limitation to faithfulness to Christ. And that God wanted men and women to live single lives so that they could be completely devoted to Christ—and not be tied down with all the responsibilities of marriage.

In 1 Timothy, Paul points out that people who teach others to forbid marriage are teaching false doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:1-3—*“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot*

iron; 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats”

But Paul makes the point in our text that Christians are to have a high view of marriage.

1. God’s High View of Marriage

a. God created marriage

- After God created man—He said that it was NOT GOOD that man be alone
- And so God gave to the man a helper designed just for him

- A helper made from man’s rib
- Bone of his bone—and flesh of his flesh

iii. God was making it clear that marriage is to be honored

b. Jesus Christ showed His honor on marriage by performing His very first miracle at a wedding

i. Turning water into wine

c. Even Paul pointed out in Ephesians that the marriage relationship between a man and a woman points to the love

relationship that God has with man through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ
d. John describes in Revelation—

- i.** That all the saints are the **Bride of Christ**—
- ii.** And that we will all be summoned to come to his marriage supper
- iii.** And forever, we will live with Him in the city and home that He has built—the New Jerusalem
- iv.** It's all a picture of the marriage relationship between a man and a woman

e. Marriage is to be looked as honorable—by believers

- i.** Because God honors it
- ii.** It is not to be treated like the culture treats it
 - The culture has reduced marriage down to a means of political interest
 - Marriage for a tax status
 - Or refusing marriage for welfare benefits

- Or perverting marriage with this same-sex marriage

- Many people in the culture have decided to treat marriage as an inconvenience
 - *“I don’t want to be locked into some kind of relationship with someone forever.”*
 - *“I may just change my mind about them—and want someone else.”*
 - *“I’m too busy pursuing my own life to be tied down to someone else’s life.”*
 - *“If I want some kind of sexual encounter, I’ll find one—from someone of like mind.”*

iii. But God’s people are not to be influenced with the culture’s thinking—especially when it comes to marriage

2. Why did God establish Marriage?

- a. 1st—for the propagation of children
 - i. God said in the beginning that the man and the woman were to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth
 - ii. God created marriage for children
- b. 2nd—marriage was provided to prevent sexual sin

1 Corinthians 7:2—“*Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*”

- i. God created in men and women a need for sexual intimacy
 - ii. And when that need is not met—at a point of weakness it will be satisfied in a sinful way
 - iii. So God created marriage as a means to satisfy that need in a moral and godly way
- c. 3rd—God provided it as a means of companionship
 - i. Man was created as a relational being

- ii. And as already stated—God said that it is not good that man be alone

3. How can Christians Hold Marriage in an Honorable Way?

a. Teach a Holy View of Marriage

- i. Christians aren't just to hook up with anybody and everybody
- ii. Marriage for the Christian is to be the union of two believers of like faith

- How can two walk together unless they be agreed?
- We are not to yoke ourselves with unbelievers

- iii. If someone gets saved after having married someone—they might find themselves being in an unequal yoke with an unbeliever

- Are they just to dump their mate now that they are a Christian?
 - NO!
- Paul points out that we are to continue with them—and

try to win them by a holy life being put on display before them

iv. Marriage should be taught as an everlasting covenant between a man, woman, and God

- Jesus said that it is God joins a man and woman together
- And that because He has joined them together—they are no more 2, but 1
- And they are never to be ripped apart

v. So Christians should teach that marriage is a life-long commitment—and divorce should be hated and not considered an option

- Because God hates putting away

b. The Roles of Marriage should be Understood and Taught

i. Husbands take the God-given Role of Leadership in the Home

- God created the husband to be the leader of the home

1 Corinthians 11:3—“*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*”

- Too many men in our culture have taken the back seat to their responsibility as leaders of their home
- God designed you to be the spiritual leader of your home
- It’s too often that the women are doing the leading because men aren’t doing their job

ii. Wives Practice Biblical Standard of Submission to Their Husbands

Ephesians 5:22-23—“*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*”

- That means that a Christian wife needs to get out of the way—and let the husband lead as he is called to do

- Be his helper—not his hindrance
- Submit to him as the church is supposed to submit to Christ

iii. Both Husbands and Wives Practice Mutual Love and Respect

- Neither one of these roles in the marriage are to be abusive
- Husbands are to love their wives like Christ loves the church
- And wives are to practice love toward their husbands
- And if there is ever a disagreement—it is to be resolved quickly—so as to restore that love relationship

B. The Marriage Bed is to be Undefined—“and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

1. God says that the Marriage bed is to be undefiled

- a.** Christians are not to allow the mindset of the world into the marriage relationship

b. Marriage is holy—and the sexual relationship is to be holy as well

2. The World’s View on Sex

a. The world today is obsessed with sex—as never before

- i.** Sexual activity apart from marriage
- ii.** Pornography
- iii.** Extramarital affairs
- iv.** Extramarital pregnancy
- v.** Illegitimate birth
- vi.** Rape
- vii.** Homosexuality

b. And it doesn’t just go on outside the church walls—but it is allowed in Christian homes by the means of filthy entertainment

- i.** Christians will allow all sorts of filth on the TV—that they say that they wouldn’t allow physically in their homes
- ii.** Some Christians read material that is sexually explicit
- iii.** Jesus said that the physical sexual act isn’t the only type of sexual sin

- He said if you look with lust you commit adultery

c. Christians need to guard their minds, their hearts, and their lives—when it comes to their sexuality—so that the marriage bed will remain undefiled

- i. Guard the eye-gate and ear-gate
- ii. Be on guard about the kinds of relationships you have with people

3. God’s View on Sexual Sin—*“but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”*

a. God doesn’t take a light approach to sexual sin

- i. We might think that we are getting away with something before the world
- ii. But not before God

b. Paul makes a strong affirmative statement—**GOD WILL JUDGE**

- i. Not MIGHT
- ii. He WILL judge

c. So keep the marriage bed undefiled
d. Keep marriage as an honorable thing in your eyes

I. Christians Are to Guard Against Impurity

II. Christians Are to Guard Against Covetousness (vs. 5-6)—*“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”*

A. What is Covetousness?

1. Covetousness is a form of lust or desire

a. There are good forms of desire

- i. A desire to be holy
- ii. Or a desire to know God more intimately
- iii. You may ever once in a while hear a Christian say that they “**covet**” your prayers

- They mean that they desire that you be praying for them
- It’s not wrong for them to desire your prayer on their behalf

iv. There are good forms of desire
v. But Covetousness often times is referred to in the Bible from a negative perspective

b. Wrong, Sinful covetousness starts when we desire what God says is not for us

i. The Tenth Commandment deals with the issue of covetousness

Exodus 20:17—“*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.*”

- God did not say that you are not to covet
- But that you are not to covet (desire) what is not yours
- You are not to covet what belongs to your neighbor

c. Covetousness can also mean “*the inordinate desire to have more*”

- Never being satisfied with what you have
- Always wanting more
- Solomon referred to this characteristic

Ecclesiastes 5:10—“*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase*”

ILLUSTRATION:

When John D. Rockefeller was a young man, a friend reportedly asked him how much money he wanted. “A million dollars,” he replied. After he earned a million dollars, the friend asked him again how much money he wanted. The answer this time was, “Another million.”

He was demonstrating that spirit of covetousness.

2. The meaning of the word in our passage

a. *WITHOUT COVETOUSNESS* is one word in the Greek

- aphilarguros* (af-il-ar'-goo-ros)
- It means to be without a “*love for silver*”

b. Covetousness—Biblically defined—is a LOVE FOR SILVER

- But it is not limited to Silver (money)
- The love for Money in most cases is usually not a love for the money itself—but a love for what money can bring

- Possessions
- Entertainment
- Relationships
- Status

iii. A love for material riches—no matter what form it takes is covetousness

iv. And as we pointed out—a heart that is covetous—is never satisfied with what it has

- It always has its focus on what it doesn't have
- It's always longing for the next big thing
- It is never content with what it does have
- It always wants more

3. Covetousness is an attitude of the heart that is contrary to what a Christian's heart is supposed to look like

a. God's not just interested in outward behavior—but He's interested in your heart

i. How many times do we see that God expresses His desire that our hearts be right with Him

ii. And when we allow covetousness to enter our heart—it opens the door for all sorts of sinful behavior

I Timothy 6:10—“*For the love of money is **the** root of all evil*”

- Covetousness is starting point for every other sin
- It was Eve's covetous heart that led her to take of the forbidden fruit
- It's covetousness that will cause a man to
 - lie,
 - to cheat,
 - to steal,
 - to be unfaithful to God,
 - to abandon their faith,
 - to abandon their family
 - to hate
 - to kill
- And it is covetousness that will destroy someone's life

“...which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and **pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**”

B. God's Command for Christians to be Content—“*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have*”

1. Your Conversation (or manner of life—what characterizes you) should not be covetous, but rather contentedness

a. Just like with marriage—the Christian life is NOT to look like the rest of the world

- i. It is not to be characterized by an attitude of covetousness
- ii. A love for things
- iii. A dissatisfaction with what it does have
- iv. And a desire to have more than what it has

b. We are to be people of contentedness

i. Content with whatever state we find ourselves in

Philippians 4:11-13—“*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*”

ii. Being content doesn't mean getting something new or better than what you have

iii. But what it means is that the heart is not set upon the thing—over God

- Really, covetousness is a form of idolatry
- Taking God off the throne of your heart—and putting something else on it

2. How do we become content with what we have?

a. Living in the world that we live—it can be very difficult to be content

- i. We are constantly inundated with advertisements—that try to get us to be dissatisfied with what we have—**and pursue after this thing that we “must have”**
- ii. And so we constantly find ourselves longing for these things that we don't have

ILLUSTRATION:

Philip Parham tells the story of a rich industrialist who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. "Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked.

"Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman.

"Why don't you catch more fish than you need?" the rich man asked.

"What would I do with them?"

"You could earn more money," came the impatient reply, "and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me."

The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?"

"You could sit down and enjoy life," said the industrialist.

"What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied as he looked placidly out to sea.

b. Practical steps for contentedness

i. Realize God's Goodness

- The Bible says that God is working all things together for "Good" to those who are His
- And we need to remember that God is not out to harm us—but is good to us
- And when we see that God is good to us—we can be content

ii. Realize that God is Omniscient

- He knows what our needs are long before we realize that we even have need
- Jesus said that God knows what our needs are before we even ask
- So we need to trust His omniscience

iii. Realize what we Deserve

- If we are honest with ourselves—we realize that we deserve nothing good from God
- We deserve Hell
- And even the slightest good thing that we have is far more than we deserve

iv. Realize God's Supremacy and Sovereignty

- God does not have the same plan for all His children
- What He lovingly may give to one—He may lovingly withhold from another
- The Lord makes both poor and rich

v. Realize What True Riches Are

- The riches and treasures of this world are not the true riches
- They will one day burn up in God's judgment
- But true riches are that which awaits the believer in heaven
- So set your affections on those things rather than this world

vi. Practice Communion With God

- When we get our focus more on Him—and drawing close to Him—we will naturally get our eyes off of the things of this world
- Draw near to Him—and you will be content with what things you have

C. Contentedness Results in a Bold Confidence in God in the Midst of Hardship/Persecution—“*for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*”

1. When Christians learn to be Content with what God has given to them—then they can be content with what God may take away from them

- a. If we realize that our life is not to be centered on the pursuit of things—then we will be alright if God strips the things we have from us
- b. Contentedness brings boldness during times of hardship

- i. Because our lives are not tied to things
- ii. But rather to God—Who is in control of those things
- iii. And so in the times of hardship/persecution a believer—who is content with what he has—will not despair if he loses his possessions

2. It gives an incredible boldness in the face of hardship—when we learn to be content

I. Christians Are to Guard Against Impurity

II. Christians Are to Guard Against Covetousness

CONCLUSION:

The Great Wall of China is a gigantic structure which cost an immense amount of money and labor. When it was finished, it appeared impregnable. But the enemy breached it. Not by breaking it down or going around it. They did it by bribing the gatekeepers.

- Don't Open the Gates when it comes to your marriage
- Don't open the Gates and allow the world's discontentedness enter into your heart
- Fight for purity in your marriage
- Fight for contentedness in this covetous world
- You are Christians—and you're supposed to be different