

Message 6: Convictions Regarding Personal Moral Purity

Romans 13:13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

2Co 7:1 ... let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Ga 5:16-17 ... Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Ga 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

2Ti 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

The Christian life is a battle zone. The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit works against the flesh. The flesh and the Spirit are contrary to each other, resulting in the fact that we often find it difficult to do what we know we should do.

Tragically, Christians are routinely guilty of moral compromise. Professing Christians are involved in all manner of moral depravity. Some of them acknowledge their sin, repent of it, fight against it, and seek to eradicate it from their lives. While, others deny it, indulge in it, make excuses for it, and make little effort to overcome it.

I've been speaking for the last few weeks on the importance of biblical convictions. Christians ought to have firm moral convictions. That is, we should have a strong sense of right and wrong. We should know the difference between proper and improper behavior, and we should choose to do what is right.

God has established absolute, unchangeable moral principles which govern all of life. He sets the standards of right and wrong, good and evil. We must maintain the conviction that God has the right to tell us how to live. Failure to submit to God's moral instruction results in judgment and ultimate destruction (1 Cor 6:9-10; Rev 21:8).

Although we will never achieve moral perfection on this side of heaven, our goal should be to live morally pure lives. That is, we should obey God's moral commands. When we fail to live up to God's moral standards, we must repent and strive to change our behavior.

Christians ought to be known for their strong, uncompromising moral convictions. We should be known as those who take God's commands seriously.

Let's consider the biblical convictions we should have regarding moral purity.

I. God established standards of moral purity.

- A. From the very beginning of human creation, God gave commands regarding human behavior.
- B. Eventually, after many centuries, God summarized his moral will within the second table of the 10 Commandments. The final six commandments tell us...
 - 1. Honor your father and mother.
 - 2. Do not commit murder.
 - 3. Do not commit adultery.
 - 4. Do not steal.
 - 5. Do not bear false witness against thy neighbor; i.e., don't lie.
 - 6. Do not covet your neighbor's property.

Most moral concepts would fit under those categories. If we would simply follow those six commandments, we would be living morally upstanding lifestyles.

- C. The main point is that God established these standards for human behavior, and we are obligated to follow these moral guidelines. God's commandments are not mere suggestions; we are required to keep them.

Without God, it is impossible to establish absolute moral principles. If human life is nothing more than an evolutionary accident, then moral standards are impossible.

But if God exists and if he has told us how to live, we are obligated to obey the commands of our creator. We must live according to God's moral standards of behavior.

- D. Generally speaking, life goes better when we follow God's commands. God blesses obedience. We can expect greater blessings and fewer problems when we operate our lives according to God's commands.

Galatians 6:7–8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

- E. If we fail to follow God's moral commands, we make ourselves liable to God's judgment, discipline, or chastisement.
1. Unbelievers face eternal punishment for their immoral behavior. God will hold every unbeliever accountable for all his immoral actions. The unbeliever will face judgment for every immoral thought, word, and act.
 2. Christians face potential discipline and chastisement—even to the point of loss of life—for their failure to obey God's moral commands. We cannot excuse ourselves from moral duties by claiming that we are saved and that God forgives us no matter what we do.
 3. Habitual, unrepentantly immoral behavior is a denial of the Christian faith (1 Cor 6:9-10; Titus 1:16). We cannot live in persistent gross immorality and still think of ourselves as Christians.
 4. And likewise, we must not endorse gross immorality as if it were acceptable. We may be tempted to accept immorality as normal and not say anything about it.

Trans: Because morality comes from God, and because God has communicated clearly to us how he wants us to live, we are responsible to God for living a moral lifestyle.

And we should have strong convictions about that. We must endorse and adopt God's viewpoint on morality and stand strongly against immoral behavior.

II. God provides the ways and means for living in moral purity.

The major obstacle to moral living is our own sinful desires, our lusts. Immorality happens when we operate according to our own feelings; living by emotion gets us into trouble. We have to live according to God's moral standards, not according to our own inner compulsions, desires, and feelings.

Rom 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

This verse, along with others like it, tell us how to avoid living “after the flesh.” I.e., indulging our appetites, lacking self-control, living immorally.

That verse teaches us a couple of important principles:

A. First, moral purity happens “through the Spirit.”

1. You have to be a believer; you have to have the Spirit within you, which every believer in Christ has.
2. And you have to yield to the power of the Spirit.

Romans 6:11–13 ... reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ... do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

We are able to live a moral life “through the Spirit.” This is not mere will-power or self-discipline. Moral living is submitting ourselves to God instead of indulging our own appetites and feelings.

B. Second, you have to “mortify the deeds of the body.”

Gal 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

1. “To mortify” means “to put to death, destroy.” As applied to the concept of sin, the word means “to take away strength, to deaden, to remove the ability or power.” We mortify sin when we deny it of power, life, vigor, and strength.

The goal is to weaken sin at its root, to hinder and interrupt it, and ultimately to overcome it.

2. Mortifying sin does not imply that believers will be completely successful in stamping out the power of indwelling sin. We won't overcome sin entirely until we get to heaven. But even though we may not be entirely successful in removing sin, we must work to do so.

3. The quality of the Christian life is largely based on how successful we are at mortifying sin. If we are constantly yielding to temptation and violating God's commandments, our experience of the Christian life will not be pleasant. But if we can avoid temptation and put sin to death, our experience of the Christian life will be much more satisfying and meaningful.

Quote: Mortify [the flesh] ... make it your daily work; be always at it while you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you. The vigor, power, and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh.¹

So the key to moral living is yielding ourselves to the Spirit and putting to death the old sinful nature, the sinful human appetites. If you are not doing that, it will be hard to live a moral lifestyle.

How do we do that?

- III. Make use of the resources God gives us to maintain moral purity.
 - A. Get saved.
 - B. Go to church.
 - C. Read your Bible regularly. We keep our life pure by taking heed to God's Word.
 - D. Pray regularly.
 - E. Confess your sins. Keep short accounts.
 - F. Get married and maintain regular, normal relations within marriage (Prov 5:15-19; 1 Cor 7:2-5).

1 Corinthians 7:9 *if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

Marriage is the God-given context for us to indulge our passions, to satisfy our natural appetites. You have to abstain before marriage, but once you get married, you can fulfill your appetites.

- G. Prevent immoral relationships with others (Prov 5:3-5, 6:24-26). The Bible instructs us to avoid those who would influence us toward immorality. Stay away from them—Ps 1:1

Proverbs 1:10 *if sinners entice you, do not consent.*

¹ John Owen.

H. Avoid/prevent exposure to temptation.

1. Immorality usually results from indulging in temptation.
2. So part of the solution is to avoid exposure to temptation. You know what tempts you into immorality, so stay away from it/them.

e.g., alcoholics should not hang around in bars; those hooked on pornography must use filters on their Internet feeds.

Trans: Moral purity is difficult, and it's virtually impossible if you are not making use of the resources God gives us to maintain biblical moral standards.

If you are constantly falling into temptation, it's probably because you are not making use of the resources God provides. Without these resources, you are weak and liable to temptation. So make use of the resources God provides.

IV. God provides means of reinforcing moral purity in the home.

What steps can we take to teach and reinforce morals in the home?

- A. Actively teach children God's moral standards; show their basis in the Bible (i.e., they are not merely family traditions; these are God's expectations).
 1. E.g., Bible stories, the 10 Commandments.
 2. Warn children regarding potential threats against them and how to respond to them (using age-appropriate language).
- B. Verbally affirm affection for all the members of the family. Everyone in the family should sense warm affection from everyone else. Sometimes, what people don't get at home they will seek to get elsewhere. Physical affection at home is very important.
- C. Inform children regarding immoral behaviors.
 1. Obviously, you don't need to be graphic or detailed when explaining what behaviors are allowed and what are prohibited.
 2. If you model appropriate behaviors at home, the children will learn by example what is right and wrong.
 3. But in our day and age, we must be rather intentional when warning our children about activities that are out of bounds.

4. Be very careful about your children's friends and activities. Even other Christian families may not share your moral standards. Your kids may be exposed to immorality through other professing Christians or through other "good" families.
- D. Refuse to participate in immoral or morally questionable pastimes.
- This is especially pertinent to forms of entertainment. Much of the moral degradation of society comes through entertainment and amusement. So teach your kids to recognize the kinds of entertainment that we do not access. "We don't watch that kind of movie; we don't listen to that kind of music; we don't read these books—and here's why." Kids should know their parents' moral expectations.
- E. Discuss the moral acceptability of various practices and behaviors seen in society.
1. When you see a man dressed up like a woman, it may be a good opportunity to discuss what is wrong with that kind of behavior.
 2. When you hear vulgar language, discuss why we don't use words like that. E.g., in restaurants, on TV, Internet
- F. Maintain reasonable moral standards.
- Families ought to have ...
1. Standards of dress and modesty—in private & in public
 2. Standards of polite behavior—teach your kids how to interact with others, how to answer the phone, how to speak to adults, how to shake hands, etc.
 3. Standards for dating and relating to the opposite sex.
- As your children reach the dating years, you need to discuss these issues with them. As they get older, you need to be more specific with them regarding the kinds of behavior that are acceptable and not acceptable.

G. Recognize that God forgives moral failure in the home.

1. Living a godly, moral, Christian life is difficult. The Christian life is a battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. So we should expect moral living to be difficult, and we should not be surprised if we fall short of moral perfection. The struggle to live morally is a life-long struggle. We all stumble occasionally.
2. Moral failure need not permanently disable one's spiritual life or ruin his family life. Genuine repentance should lead to restoration both spiritually and relationally (e.g., Gal 6:1).
3. If moral failure occurs in marriage, the couple should make every effort to restore their relationship.

Trans: We should have strong moral convictions for our homes, and we should make sure our children understand and live by these convictions.

V. God's provides instructions when moral failure happens within the church.

- A. Moral failure sometimes occurs within the church, and when it does, the church must respond to it biblically. We must follow the biblical guidelines for confronting sin within the congregation.
- B. The first responsibility is to confront the offender immediately and privately (Mt 18:15-17). If the person refuses to repent, you verify the behavior by including a couple more people. If the offender still refuses to repent, you bring the matter to the church. If the offender fails to repent after that, the church must remove him from the assembly.

The goal in every case of church discipline is to restore the offender to a right relationship with God and to fellowship with the church. Only when all efforts to restore the person fail do we contemplate excommunication.

VI. God provides general moral principles & guidelines for godly living.

- A. Dress modestly and appropriately (Ex 32:25; Prov 7:10). Women must guard against using dress, makeup, and jewelry to display their bodies (1 Tim 2:9; 1 Peter 3:3-5). Certain styles of dress are simply not appropriate for believers. You can be stylish without being worldly.
- B. Control your eyes (Mt 5:28; 1 Jn 2:16). Avoid looking lustfully (with inordinate desire) at others. Refuse to read, look at, or participate in any material or medium which will expose you to pornography or which will stir up illicit desires.

Our world is not interested in moral behavior. Many of the most influential leaders of our country are deeply immoral people. Politicians, movie stars, athletes, entertainers, business people – many of these people are notoriously immoral. Even average people in our world today are not particularly moral in their behavior.

Sadly, many Christians today are not much different from the average. We may not be quite as immoral as some, but we are far from the biblical expectation for morality. Modern Christians often follow the example of the culture, and that results in immoral behavior.

The temptation today is to tolerate immorality, go along with it, say nothing about it. But Christians cannot do that. We must maintain a biblical viewpoint regarding morality.

Christians ought to have a strong set of moral convictions. We know what the Bible teaches regarding moral behavior, and we ought to be strongly committed to following the moral standards we find in the Bible. Through the Spirit, we must mortify the deeds of the flesh. We must strive to live morally at home, at church, and in the community. We must teach our children biblical moral standards. When we fail to live up to Christian moral expectations, we must repent and change our behavior.

The Bible assures us that God is merciful, gracious, and slow to anger. He delights in forgiving our sin when we repent. The only way that we can live a moral life is to walk with God daily, confess our sins daily, read his Word frequently, and attend church regularly. If we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the deeds of the flesh.

We'll never be perfect this side of heaven, but we ought to be striving to please God in how we live. We must adopt God's moral values and strive to hold them firmly and without compromise.