

Lesson 10 – Holiness in Body (Chapter 11)

True holiness includes control over our physical bodies and appetites. If we are to pursue holiness we must recognize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and that we are to glorify God with them (I Corinthians 6:19-20). Modern Christians, especially those in the Western world, have generally been found wanting in the area of holiness of body. Gluttony and laziness, for example, were regarded by earlier Christians as sin. Today we may look on these as weaknesses of the will, but certainly not sin.

Paul emphasized the need to keep the body’s desires and natural appetites under control. He even spoke of his body as his adversary and stressed the importance of bringing it under submission (I Corinthians 9:24-27). Scripture tells us to present our bodies as living sacrifices and not to be conformed to this world (Romans 12:1-2). Quite possibly, there is no greater conformity to the world in which we, instead of presenting our bodies as holy sacrifices – pamper and indulge them in defiance of our better judgment and our Christian purpose in life.

Appetites and the body

We should all examine ourselves as to whether we eat and drink to the glory of God, recognizing that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. One reason we must govern our indulgence in food and drink, is because it represents one of the primary natural appetites, and anyone who overindulges his body at this point will find it more and more difficult to mortify other sinful deeds of the body. If we cannot say no to a continual, persistent indulgent appetite, we will be hard pressed to say no to lustful thoughts or actions, evil desires, greed or coveting. There must be an attitude of diligent obedience in every area if we are to succeed in mortifying any specific expression of sin. That is one of the reasons why *fasting* – the denying oneself of food – is a foundational, scripturally mandated Christian practice.

Materialism and the body

Paul also mentions greed – the sheer love of money, possessions and power – as a sin akin to idolatry (Colossians 3:5). We most often see greed manifest itself as materialism. Materialism affects us in two ways. First, it can make us discontented and envious of others. Second, it leads us to pamper and indulge our bodies so that we become soft and lazy. When the body is pampered and indulged, the instincts and passions of the body tend to get the upper hand and dominate our thoughts and actions. We tend to do not what we *should* do, but what we *want* to do (Romans 7). We have to learn to say no to the body instead of continually giving in to its momentary desires.

One place to start controlling the cravings of our physical appetites is to reduce our exposure to temptation. Our sinful cravings are strengthened by temptation. When a suitable temptation is presented to us, our cravings seem to get new vigor and power. Romans 13:14 tells us, “do not think about how to gratify the desires of your sinful nature.” In other words, do not plan ahead to make provision for ways to indulge your bodily pleasures. Be on guard. Proverbs 27:12 advises that “the prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer the consequences.” In other words, be vigilant to those desires and temptations that might present themselves, and determine *beforehand* how you will respond.

Holiness in Spirit/mind (Chapter 12)

Jesus Himself taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5,6,7) that God's commands are intended not only to address outward conduct, but the *inner* dispositions and motives as well. Just as we must learn to bring the appetites of the body under control, so we must also learn to bring our thought lives under obedience to Jesus Christ. The world around us constantly seeks to conform our minds to its sinful ways. Too many Christians, instead of resisting, are more and more giving ground to the world's constant pressure.

GIGO – Garbage in, garbage out

Philippians 4:8 exhorts us to think on things that are lovely, pure, right, noble, praiseworthy and excellent. There is an old computer programming motto that states that if the information going into a program is bad, then the results coming out will be bad as well. What we take in to our minds needs to be guarded, as well as what comes out.

- Eyes – what do we allow ourselves to see/watch? The eye is the portal to the heart. Jesus warned against the lustful look (Matt 5:28). Job made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1) and David pledged to set nothing wicked before his eyes (Psalm 101:3).
- Ears – what do we listen to? Whether it's music with inappropriate lyrics, television/movies with inappropriate dialogue, or un-Christ-like conversations, our minds absorb, retain and regurgitate what we listen to.
- Mouths – garbage out. James clearly tells us that the mouth is the perfect indicator of what's inside our hearts (James 3:1-12). Paul warns against foolish, coarse, suggestive or profane conversations (Ephesians 5:3-4).

Are we striving for GIGO to mean Godliness in, Godliness out?

Sins of the spirit (mind, attitude)

Since we have a tendency to focus on the do's and don'ts and the overt sins of the body, we may ignore the more "justifiable" sins of the spirit.

- **Envy** (jealousy, covetousness) – The elder brother in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15) and King Saul are examples of how envy and jealousy can consume us. God has placed each one of us in the body of Christ as it pleases Him (I Corinthians 12:18) and has assigned us a place in life (I Corinthians 7:17). But regardless of our station in life, there is always the temptation to envy someone else. The cure for envy and jealousy is to find our contentment in Christ. (Philippians 4:10-13)
- **Bitterness** – Bitterness arises in our hearts when we do not trust in the sovereign rule of God in our lives. We can feel bitterness toward God or others. Asaph (Psalm 73:10-14) and Job (Job 34:9) both felt bitterness toward God. Bitterness toward others can arise from:
 - **Unforgiving spirit** – Someone has harmed or wronged us, either apparently or actually and we refuse to forgive that person. We need to recognize that God has forgiven us in a far greater measure. (Matthew 18:21-35)

The Pursuit of Holiness*
"Be holy, because I am Holy"

- **Spirit of retaliation** – when we are wronged, the tendency is to retaliate – just as often in our minds as in our actions. Paul wrote against a spirit of revenge in Romans 12:17-21 and then went on to describe the right response.
- **Critical spirit** – One of the most difficult defilements of the spirit to deal with is a critical spirit. A critical spirit has its root in *pride*. Because of the "plank" of pride in our own eyes, we are not capable of dealing with the "speck" of need or shortcoming in someone else. We are quick to see – and speak of – the faults of others, but slow to see our own faults and needs. How sweetly we relish the opportunity to speak critically of someone else. The Pharisee in *Luke 18:11* was proud of the fact that he was not like the tax collector, but refused to see his own sin.

We must work diligently to root out these sinful attitudes from our minds. Often we are not even aware that our attitudes are indeed sinful. We cloak them under the guise of justice and righteous indignation. But we need to pray daily for humility and honesty to see these sinful attitudes for what they really are, and then the grace and discipline to root them out of our minds and replace them with thoughts and attitudes that are pleasing to God!