

# The Extraordinary in the ordinary

---

## Extraordinary Purity

How are you playing the game? Paul urges us to live a life worthy of our calling. Now, friends, you know your calling in Christ.... don't you? You have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ; you are loved, chosen, accepted, special, and precious. You were once dead in sin, but now you have been made alive in Christ. You are wonderfully forgiven – heaven threw a party the moment you came to faith in Christ, there was a banner in heaven with your name on it - and the entire heavenly host partied. You are riotously celebrated in the Kingdom of God. You are a child of the highest God. You are in his photo album – and he takes great delight in showing the photos of his children to the gathered company of angels – “look here's one of my children – isn't he great?” Everything he has he wants to share with you. You have the gift of his Holy Spirit – his incomparably great power at work in you, and you know that your eternal destiny is secure, that one day you will be eternally in his glorious presence.

“The earth will soon dissolve like snow  
The sun will forbear to shine,  
But he who called me here below  
Will be forever mine, will be forever mine  
You are forever mine!” (Chris Tomlin)

Friends ... you know your calling. The question is ... How are you playing the game? How are you playing the game of life?

Ephesians 4 v 17 -19 - “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.”

Paul here says don't play the game the way the Gentiles do. The Gentiles he said live in such a way that they are simply never satisfied, they have a continued desire for more. How much is enough? When John D Rockefeller was asked the question: “how much money would be enough?”, his answer was: ‘just a little bit more than I've got.’ Howard Hughes was a man with a desire for more. He wanted more of everything: wealth, pleasure, power, adventure, success, fame and by and large he got more. But here's how his life ended:

“He was a figure of gothic horror, ready for the grave. Emaciated, only 120 pounds stretched out over his 6'4" frame... Thin scraggly beard that reached midway onto his sunken chest, hideously long nails in grotesque yellow corkscrews.. Many of his teeth were black, rotting stumps. A tumour was beginning to

emerge from the side of his head... innumerable needle marks... Howard Hughes was an addict. A billionaire junkie.” (Quoted in Ortberg p 190)

The tragedy is that more is never enough. King Solomon – the King who literally had everything, wrote a book – Ecclesiastes. He says in his book – I tried the more thing – and it doesn’t work – it’s not “it”. What he discovered was that we were made for something earth does not have to offer, and if we play to get more, we are playing life’s game in a way it was never designed to be played. When you play for more you will never be satisfied. That’s how the Gentiles live. How are you playing the game?

Here’s a truth that we must grasp friends, if we are to live lives worthy of our calling in Christ: what we think about God, will determine the way we live. See how it begins in the mind – the futility of their thinking which in turn leads to the hardening of the heart which then determines how you live!

Friends, what you think about God and what you feed your mind with is vital. And the doorway to your mind is your eyes. What are you looking at? I would go further – what are the eyes of your mind – or the eyes of your heart – seeking? Could it be that you are playing the game of life in a way it was never designed to be played? You do realise don’t you ... that you will never be satisfied. In chapter 5 v 5 Paul calls this kind of life idolatry and we were not made to live this way, we were made for something the earth does not have to offer.

We are not just physical beings – we are spiritual beings and our deepest hunger is spiritual. We hunger for meaning, we hunger for love, we hunger for redemption and the truth is that underneath all my lusting for more, I need God. And Paul says – that is your calling – God. And God is enough. One day we will see God face to face – and our longing for glory, beauty, love and meaning will be fully realised and we restless, fallen people will be saying “enough!” and God will say “more!” That friends, is our calling. Paul insists we must live in the light of our calling. You know the truth about Jesus.

Ephesians 4 v 20-24 - “You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

When you came to faith in Christ you became a new creation. Live in the new, not in the old! And to live the new life is to live like Jesus. Friends, what really captivates the mind, will in the end control your life. What captivates your mind? How much do you live the kind of life that Jesus lived? God takes our ordinary lives and in Christ creates new extraordinary lives, lives that reflect the purity of the life that Jesus lived – an extraordinary purity.

Ephesians 4 v 25 - 5 v 4 “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. “In your anger do not sin”. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Those who have been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is

helpful in building others up according to their needs. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving."

I would like to be part of a community where people imitated God. I would like to be part of a community that was motivated, in everything, by love. I would like to be part of a community where people were prepared to lay down their lives for others, as Christ did when he went to Calvary, a community that had a 'whatever it takes' attitude to following wherever he leads. I would like to be part of a community in which people speak the truth, even when it would be more convenient for them to lie. I would like to be part of a community in which people control their temper, even when they feel angry or when they have been wronged. I would like to be part of a community in which people did their best to be honest in everything, even when it might ease their circumstances to take something that is not theirs. I would like to be part of a community in which people have learnt to zip their mouth and train their tongue to lick wounds and not inflict them, even when they have been badly bitten first.

I would like to be part of a community that:

- even when we have been badly hurt
- even when we have been framed
- even when we have been treated like doormats and others have walked all over us
- even when we have been ripped off
- even when we have been the butt of rumour or the topic of malicious gossip
- even when others have talked about us behind our backs
- even when we have seen our work or our ministry undermined

that we could find it in our hearts to:

- be kind to others
- be compassionate to others
- be forgiving to each other

I would like to be part of a community that has a high view of sex and that will avoid temptation

- even when it seems irresistible
- even when it appears consequence free
- even when it makes me feel valued and loved
- even when it gives me the pleasure I think I deserve

I would like to be part of a community that recognizes this God given gift, if mishandled, or misused or abused will only ever destroy, and I would like to be part of a community that instead of lusting for more and indulging greed is given to thanksgiving. A community that recognises that all things are given to us by a gracious and loving God, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ, and who has lavished his love upon us because he loves us because he loves us because.....

Would you like to be part of a community like that? You can!

This is the community of the new creation. This church is a new community and friends, it is not too hard, for we have the incomparably great power of the Holy Spirit in us. Just think for a minute – if we, here, in this community really lived like this – with an extraordinary purity, imagine the impact it would have:

- always telling the whole truth
- controlling our anger
- being scrupulously honest
- speaking kindly and helpfully
- being kind, compassionate, forgiving
- loving as Christ loved us.

This is being a vibrant family. But just think too – if you were to take this kind of living to work – to school; to your neighbours; your family. Imagine the impact that this extraordinary purity could have if we lived it in all the places we go.

The challenge is that this will not just happen in our lives, we will have to choose to live this way – and daily. If you want to live this kind of life – which is the only life worthy of your calling – you must grasp who you are in Christ. For who you are governs how you think, and what you think determines how you act. It is only when we have grasped clearly who we are in Christ, that the desire will grown within us to live a life worthy of our calling. So you must actively cultivate your Christian life. So, how will you play the game?

Preached in Crawley Baptist Church by Rev Ian Phillips on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2008.