

“A New Walk” Part 6

The Family of God

Ephesians 5:1-21

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April 23, 2021

Sig Tragard: Pray for us, Jeff.

Jeff: Our heavenly Father, we are thankful for the day. We're thankful for the love shed abroad in our hearts by the work of Your Son, the Lord Jesus. We're thankful for the Holy Spirit who indwells us. Lord, we are thankful that we can experience joy and fullness in the land of the living. And yet we can anticipate much more in the coming days and in the coming life. We know that You love us and care for us. And we know that there is a consummation coming. Father, we're thankful that the power of sin in our lives has been dealt with. And yet there is that ongoing presence. And Father, we look forward to the day when that too will be vanquished from our lives and we would be pure and holy and without stain or blemish. And we look for that day when we will not struggle with sin and the sins with which we struggle now.

Father, we pray that Your hand of blessing would be upon us for good. And we pray, Father, that as we turn our eyes to Your word that we would recognize it as it is, a means of grace. And Father, as Your Spirit takes it up even today, we pray that He would do so to His glory, to Your glory, and to our good. Father, we pray and ask that Your hand would be upon us as we study, not just so that we can fill our heads with more knowledge, but so that our lives might be different and changed, so that we would look more like Christ Jesus our Lord.

Father, as we pause we think about our brother Bruce and are thankful for his life and for the many ways in which he has been a help to others and how he has contributed to Your kingdom. We pray now that You will bless him and strengthen him as he recovers from the surgery. We certainly pray for Becky as she seeks to handle not only a job but also caring for Bruce. And Father, we pray that You will make it a blessing to her, that she will be able to find people to sit with Bruce and to be able to care for him in her absence.

Father, we pray that Your hand will be upon us again as we study today, for we ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well if you haven't turned yet, let me have you turn to Ephesians chapter 5. And as you are turning to Ephesians chapter 5, let me simply say this. I shall not mention his name, though he does play the organ here occasionally. *(Laughter)* And I don't want to call him out. But let me just simply say that some men are braver than others. *(Laughter)* I just wanted to say that; I just felt that needed to go on record. *(Laughter)* Not that Don will ever hear that, but just to you, men. *(Laughter)*

Sig: Don't forget; he does the transcriptions.

Jeff: I know.

Brave Man: He did them.

Sig: There you go. Wow!

Jeff: What's that?

Sig: He said that he'll get a new transcriptionist.

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Jeff: Oh, he did them! Oh Don, how about that! Hey, I’ve got another thing for you. You know, I’m kind of wondering if maybe we ought to hire somebody to go over the transcriptions, because maybe he’s changing the wording. *(Laughter)* I got a first and maybe a second. I’m not going to ask for a second on that, Don. But I’m just saying. All right,--

Sig: You mean just like Luther found out one word that was different in the New Testament that changed everything?

Jeff: Oh yeah!

Sig: That same thing?

Jeff: Oh yeah! Oh, you never know!

Brave Man: No!

Jeff: Oh, I’m telling you! *(Laughter)* All right. Let’s turn to Ephesians chapter 5. And let’s go through verse 21 today and we’ll see how far we make it. But let me read to you now the word of God.

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

“But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor coarse joking, which are out of place. But instead let there be thanksgiving.”

Sig: What chapter are you in?

Jeff: Five.

Sig: Verse 21.

Jeff: No, no, no; we’ll go to verse 21.

Sig: I’m sorry; forgive me.

Jeff: That’s okay. I’ll be in verse 5 now.

“For you may be sure of this: that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

“Therefore do not become partners with them. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

*‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.’*

“Look carefully then on how you walk: not as unwise but as wise, making the best of the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery. But be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the

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Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: All right; let me begin. This is the outline. We’re going to simply look at some introductory aspects. And then we’re going to talk about *the new you*—in Christ, of course. And then we’re going to talk about *being the new you*, which is in Christ.

So let me talk about some introductory points. And I think that the first thing I want to start off with is just a refresher, and remind you what it was like to live in Ephesus. In some ways it wasn’t like any other place; it was quite different in some ways. I think it was even a little different from our current moment.

Clinton Arnold who is a scholar wrote his Ph.D. dissertation. And it’s called “Ephesians: power of Magic.” It’s quite an interesting book because he draws the parallels for us between what was going on in Ephesus and the magical cults of the day. And interestingly he talks to us about power and the flourishing magical activity that was happening in that area of the world.

And for instance he draws a distinction between the idea of power in those magical cults and the idea of power that’s found within the Christian church. And for instance let me give you a sense of this even in our own present moment.

I remember when my son was wanting to read the Harry Potter books. And one of the things that we do in our house that you may not do in yours,--and that’s okay,--but we let them read those kinds of books. But one of the things that we do is, we read them with them. So for instance when he wanted to read Harry Potter I said, “Okay; that’s fine. But I’m going to read Harry Potter with you, and we’re going to talk about it when you read it.”

And one of the things that we did was to talk about Harry Potter’s view of magic, of course, and how, for instance, it was different than, say, C. S. Lewis’s conception of magic. So for instance in C. S. Lewis’s conception of magic in *The Chronicles of Narnia* one of the things that you discover is that there is a deeper magic. There’s a magic that stands behind all that is. And that deeper magic, of course, is God, who controls not only the good magic, but also the evil is under His sovereignty.

Now C. S. Lewis had a little bit of a different conception of sovereignty and freedom than we might have. But he had a view that said that even evil is under God’s control.

For instance, when you get to Harry Potter, it’s a much different scenario. In Harry Potter you find that magic is something neutral. Magic is something that is to be used. And therefore if you are evil you tap into the magic of this neutral power, and you use it for your own ends. If you’re good you tap into the power, and you use it again for your own ends. And so the power of magic is something that is neutral. It’s something that is to be used.

And that’s a different conception of magic; it’s actually quite different. So there was quite a different view of magic in the world of Ephesus versus the world of the Christian faith. For instance, you see in Acts 19:19 that there were a number of those who practiced the magical arts. And they were converted to the faith.

Now I want you to think about this for a minute. Power from a Christian perspective is from God. It is not from the gods, nor is it from an incantation that is spoken with perfect

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care. But it is from the sovereign God who gives us His Spirit. It’s quite a different conception from the magical arts.

Now in the magical arts I said to you that the magic was not connected to a God but to gods. For instance Diana or Artemas is mentioned in Acts 19. The reason that I say it’s Diana or Artemas is because if you’re a Greek, well then it’s Artemas. If you’re a Roman, then it’s Diana.

And the point is that the Roman pantheon had a good many gods and the Greek pantheon had a good many gods. And many of them overlapped, but not all of them. And so you have these gods who were often capricious and unreliable. Exalted humans is what they are. And they are not absent of bad characteristics. And so one of the things that you discover is that these powers that people practice—the magic that people engage in—is from these folks.

And it’s not necessarily that they’re zapped, (though sometimes they are.) But sometimes they are given things like incantations to put into practice so that they can get their own way and do their own will.

Diana or Artemas was an Olympian. She was one of the twelve most important gods. She was Apollo’s sister, and this is quite a position.

But this is the interesting thing, and it demonstrates how capricious she actually was, along with other gods. She was supposed to be the protectress of dewy youth. However there is a story about her and the ships that were seeking to leave port from a particular area. And the wind was so strong against them that they couldn’t even get out of the port. And so what they do is, they sacrifice a maiden to Diana.

Now I don’t know how that can be found compatible with her being a protectress to dewy youth. But the idea of the capricious aspect of the gods just abounds in this type of literature. And so this is what you’re up against.

And she is associated with deeds of darkness and really evil magic. And so it’s not surprising to find that there’s a connection between Diana and the magical cults that are practiced in Ephesus in Acts chapter 19.

Now how would this have been helpful to the followers of Diana? Well, let me give you an example. Clinton Arnold gives evidence; it’s a really fascinating book. He gives evidence from a papyrus scroll that was found. And on that papyrus scroll was found a crude drawing. And that crude drawing is of a bulbous object. And that bulbous object is obviously Diana with large breasts. And so here is the first Playboy magazine, or something akin to that.

Sig: How would you know, Jeff?

Jeff: Clinton Arnold told me. (*Laughter*)

Sig: Oh!

Jeff: And so here’s this idea of this Diana statue, now the object of a drawing, who is portrayed in sort of a voluptuous way. And she’s the god of fertility. And so if you wanted to get pregnant you would appeal to her.

But not only that. People converted out of the Artemas cult. And here is why I think that Paul was dealing with this. People who converted out of the Diana cult were dealing with immorality and impurity. And you see that in verses 3 and 5.

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And so even though when we think about our own context and you think to yourself, Well, this is so much today’s problem. Yet it was their problem as well. And the difference between it being their problem and our problem, I think, is to some degree that use of magic.

I thought I had an illustration here for you. Maybe it’s—no, I don’t think it is. Oh, yes. No, I don’t think I do.

Let me tell you about this. As part of Arnold’s research he basically tells about another scroll. And there’s this other scroll where it’s like there’s a Love Potion No. 9 written on it. What the scroll indicates is that if you say this incantation, and you say it in exactly the way that you’re supposed to say it according to the leaders of the Diana cult, you will get this love interest to fall for you. And that’s the idea, right?

The idea is that if you would engage in the magical incantation you’d get the girl. I mean, if you think about that there are all kinds of comedies. Growing up I remember all sorts of comedies like “Happy Days.” You know, you guys remember those kinds of story lines that came out. Well, this is the kind of story line that wasn’t on a sitcom or a comedy. This is the kind of story line that comes out of real life in those days.

So when you think about it, think for a minute about how this might have affected the Christian. So the Christian is converted out of the Diana cult. And they’re already dealing with immorality and all kinds of sexual baggage, right?

Now the thing about it is that they’re walking past the Diana cult. And perhaps the presence of sin—not the power of sin but the presence of sin in them—tempts them to enter back into the Diana cult, to enter back into the building itself. What might they have thought? What might some of those people have struggled with?

Well, I wonder if some of those men would have struggled with the fact that I wonder if somebody has put a spell on me. I wonder if someone has spoken an incantation over me. And I’m being drawn back into the Diana cult; I’m being drawn back into the cult.

And that may sound strange to our ears and perhaps even unrealistic. But it wasn’t unrealistic to those people back in those days. They were being saved out of it, which is why I think that Paul is speaking to them and talking to them not about the truth of magic, but for instance how all of those magical books were burned, and how the power of God is what really matters, because the power of God is what is real.

And that’s not to discount evil in all of its machinations. I mean, think about it. When you think about how he treats Ephesians chapter 6 he talks about the demonic activity in the realm of the spiritual. And so he’s not downplaying that there are demons and activities that go on. But what he is really communicating is that if you are saved you’ve been saved out of this by the power of God. And the power of sin in your life has been broken.

And remember, this goes back to what we talked about last week: that the power of sin is broken. And because it’s broken you can put off and you can put on. You can put off sinful practices and put on godly virtues.

And so again, as you think about just coming out of that particular cult, that’s the kind of thinking that I think would have probably been in the minds of some as they made their way out of it, which is why I think that when you think of Psalm 16, that the names of idols are not even to be placed on my lips, right? There’s no inheritance with an idol.

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The inheritance we have is with God. I think that’s the kind of idea that Paul starts with in Ephesians chapter 1, right? We are the inheritance of God, and therefore we’re to follow along with David’s psalm, Psalm 16. Let no idol be named upon our lips. That’s the idea, because there is a certain sense in which it does have power, and in some ways power over us. Not real power, but there is a power over us. Matt in the corner there.

Matt Reichart: Good morning. Good to see you.

Jeff: Good to see you too.

Matt: It’s a great topic. Sexual sin has power and it can be magical. You know, the statistics say that men struggle with pornography, right? So it’s rather relevant today, even though we’re all older. I don’t see too many younger men here. But I thought I would say it and then I’ll be done. I don’t want to get into that; I’m at the age—

Brave Man: Would you care to move on? *(Laughter)*

Matt: He said that I have an imagination. I’d better move on, right? *(Laughter)* But just to start off, there’s something about it. I mean, sin is sin. But there is something about sexual sin that cripples us. So there’s a power when we walk in holiness and purity. And we have the power to be free from the lie that we’re helpless because we just can’t help it, or for whatever reason we can justify those things.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: We are to walk in obedience and truth. And when we fall we get back up and brush the dust off.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: So I don’t know if you were going to go deeper into this whole topic, but I just open the crack.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop Rodgers: It seems to me that we live in an over-sexualized culture.

Jeff: Well we do, don’t we?

Bishop: Starting way back with the rise of the tide of this movement, all men had to do was to dream of sex. Now it’s on our computers all the time, and the TV and our movies. I mean, it’s nutty; it’s so extreme.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: And you can’t help but notice.

Jeff: Well you know, it’s funny because we’ll be talking about the right order of the family once we get into 5:21.

Bishop: Yes.

Jeff: And we talk about the headship of the man and we talk about the submission of the wife. And we talk about the children and we talk about the household codes. And I think it will do us good to talk about those things. But the interesting thing to your point, Matt, is that when a man is enslaved to pornography he’s no longer the head, right? Not that he’s the head over all women, but he’s no longer functioning in his role in any real sense, because he’s really submissive to the images of these women that he’s placing himself under.

You know, it’s kind of a fascinating thing how he’s willing to submit himself to these things. And I think that sometimes—at least it has been my experience when I’ve talked

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with men,—that you almost get the sense that there is an unforgiveable sin, but that there is also an unconquerable sin. And the unconquerable sin is sexual sin.

And in my mind, because we had “Veggie Tales” for my kids growing up; (maybe you did as well and maybe you didn’t.) But there’s a Veggie Tale called “The Rumor Weed.” And the rumor weed continues to grow. And as you feed it it gets bigger and bigger and bigger. And pretty soon it looks like it’s unconquerable. Larry Boy has to conquer it, right? You’ve read this; yes, I see you smiling.

So it grows bigger and bigger and bigger. But the point is that I just say to myself that sometimes, whenever I talk to some men, I think of the rumor weed. And for them it’s the sexual weed. And the sexual weed looks so enormous. Let me say it like this. It looks as if not even grace can conquer the sexual weed.

And that’s a scary thing. Actually I think that when you look at Judas, and it says that he *metanoiaed*, that in a sense he repented, it doesn’t mean that he turned from his sin. It means that in sorrow he didn’t recognize that grace could conquer even his own sins. He thought his sins were bigger than the grace of God revealed in Christ.

And I think to myself that that’s a scary place to be, because there’s no salvation in that. It sounds very pious to act as if my sins are just so great. Oh man, he’s recognizing his sins! Yeah, but you talk to him and he’s going, “But my sins are just so big that not even God could forgive me.” Oh my goodness, that’s a real problem. That’s not pious at all. That’s an under-valuing of God’s grace.

Matt: Great; that’s awesome. You kind of illustrate that to be for men who are real. It shows how many of you guys struggle with sexual sin. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: I’m not going to ask that question. And neither should you, Matt. (*Laughter*)

Matt: But I know we don’t expect our men to be perfect people. So maybe Paul would be looking for RBG’s—repentance, purity, growth, and then service. So it’s repentance and purity. A couple of weeks ago about 25 of our adult men got together. And they were sharing. And I said “Listen, guys. I still battle with this too.”

This year we had to change my wood furnace. And I used the old catalogue in front of my daughter’s magazine. And the Holy Spirit convicted me so I got rid of it. So it just goes to show you how the Holy Spirit was piercing my heart about things that I had held back, because overall in my struggle I was being tempted all the time. So I just have to have the basics. With anything more than that there are going to be temptations. I think we have to take this to heart. When the Holy Spirit whispers to us, are we repenting? Are we seeking purity? And when we do that we’re going to grow. And then, of course, we’re going to serve. I think that part of that is being in a men’s group. Or you can use all the accountability things if nobody wants to reveal this.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: But it’s effective. And it’s powerful when you bring your sins to light and you share them with a brother. It helps him and it helps you, and you grow.

Jeff: Yeah. That’s 100% right in terms of—I mean, look. When men feel like they have to stay in secret, then what they’ll end up doing is living a double life. And you’ll end up living one way and it will be in secret. And then you’ll have this other life and it will appear good, and so on.

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And it’s a shame that people feel that way. It’s not that you have to share your particular sins with every individual. But when you meet with a man, you know, I’ve got an accountability partner that I meet with. And I know a lot of men in my congregation who have accountability partners they meet with.

And you know, when that accountability partner asks you a question point blank, you’re faced with this. Am I going to lie to him, or am I going to tell him the truth? And if you value your life in Christ then you’re going to “*put off speaking falsehood*,” and you’re going to put on speaking the truth.

And that means trusting the brother. That means being willing not only to understand how the church works, but also to submit to it, and so forth—all kinds of things. But it’s a shame when there is sort of a plastic Christianity where everybody is sort of expected to be perfect and have no struggles—that sort of thing. Anybody else? Yes, please.

Kirk Ellerbusch: You presented the Artemas thing. And it’s sort of—what is the word I’m looking for? I lost the word that I was thinking of. But it seems to me that you’re presenting the magical parts and stuff, that this is purely superstition, and that Paul is correcting certain things. You talked about that man walking by the temple and wondering if somebody cast a spell. I mean, I never really thought about that power over a person’s life. I never really thought about it in those terms. I thought that the power of these magical arts was something more substantial. But there is a whole other perception in the way you’re presenting it that Paul is correcting. In this immorality and this impurity are they being somehow deceived as well?

Jeff: Well, I do think it’s like that. I don’t think that there is necessarily a power in the incantation and in the speaking of that incantation so it has power over the Christian; I don’t believe that. You’re right. You’ve got the way I presented it as Paul saying that this is deception. And what you’re experiencing is your own temptation to go back to that sexual situation.

For instance, I think that we do experience that sort of thing in similar ways. For instance, I’ve talked to tons of guys over the last 25-27 years who’ve struggled with this. And the interesting thing is that a lot of the stuff you hear is the same, right? So for instance guys that work super hard see this as “I’m entitled to let down my guard and sort of engage in this behavior.” They almost see it as an entitlement.

I’ve talked to other men who feel obligated. This is interesting. There is a sense in which they feel obligated to look.

And that’s strange. I said to one person in particular, “If you feel enslaved, if you feel obligated to look at this stuff, you need to ask yourself whether you’ve been set free from the power of sin.” There is the presence of sin in one’s life that causes temptation; I’m not denying that. But if you feel enslaved to it, if you feel like well, I just feel obligated; I’ve just got to go, then you may have a different scenario, a different problem.

People far more equipped than I am talk about triggers that sort of set a person in motion to do things in their lives, to engage in viewing sexual images on the Internet or whatever, right? And those triggers can deal with us if they have power over us, right? And so I think those are the hedges that we talk about when we talk about putting a hedge around ourselves.

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Why? It’s not necessarily so we don’t engage in the activity. It’s so that the triggers won’t be there to entice us to engage in the activity, right? Because we’re dealing with what seems to have power over us.

You know, it’s not just sexual sin, right? It’s all sorts of sin; it really is. And probably one of the obvious ones is drug addiction.

It was incredible to me when I dealt with my brother-in-law. My brother-in-law had been in prison, in a pharmaceutical prison for three years. He had been off drugs for three years. And then he was off drugs for another two to three years once he got out. And it was in the sixth year that he started using them.

And I talked to him about it during that sixth year. I said, “What’s happening?” And he always felt pulled. He always had triggers; you know what I mean? Even these shows on TV. I think the one show is called “Intervention.”

I’ll never forget visiting him in prison, in his third year in prison. And we were sitting in the visiting room, and on the television set someone was shooting up. Do you remember how they had that intervention show? They showed real footage of people shooting up, and this is why their families were intervening.

He could not watch them. He literally started shaking. And he hadn’t been on drugs for years at that point.

So sin has a psychological hold on some people that is so powerful that we have a tendency, if we were back in those days, we would say that somebody is putting a spell on me. And it’s not a spell. It’s our own sinful desires.

Kirk: So we have the burning of those books. What do you perceive that as representing more than anything else?

Jeff: Putting off.

Kirk: Putting off?

Jeff: That’s a put-off, right? So think about this. You know, what do we sometimes do? I’ll keep them and they’ll be nostalgic. No, put them off by burning them. And put in the place of that book a good book.

You know, this is the thing I’ve found with my own children. When I would read stuff to them this is one of the things I’ve warned them about. So we were reading Harry Potter. My son loved Harry Potter; he loved that series. And I always used to tell him. I would say to him, “Son, when you love a character like you love Harry Potter, you’re finding it difficult to actually critique Harry Potter. And what I find you doing is that I always find you trying to soften it. Or I always find you trying to make this less offensive,” right? “Or to make it in some way palatable to your own system of beliefs. And that’s called *syncretism*. And you can’t do that.”

We can’t buy a piece of land in Belize in our hole up there and act like the world can’t touch us. Guess what? The world is there with us, right? But what we can do is be absolutely rigorous in our thinking about the world around us, and how to deal with it in our own lives. And that’s hard, right? That’s hard, because all of us are just as open to self-deceit as anyone else, right? Yes?

Matt: Let me add to what you were saying, Jeff, because this is important. It’s easier for our members to open the door into our lives than to experience something and then try to overcome it. So I’m trying to cover how you pray for that. Do you understand?

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Jeff: You open the door to something.

Matt: Even closed, because once you’ve experienced that it’s imprinted on your brain. And you’re going to struggle with that for the rest of your life.

Jeff: You bet.

Matt: And you know that’s true especially for young teens and in adulthood for men and women. If we can help keep our kids mature, will they become experts and experience the world? No, they will do something about it, which is abstinence and separation, and not exposing ourselves to everything. We try to keep our minds pure, because once we see that then there’s that pace that we have to pull.

Jeff: Oh, no doubt; I totally agree with you. Once you crack the door it’s almost impossible to keep it shut. And I’ll tell you what. I was just talking to somebody about something yesterday. We were talking about keeping stuff out of our heads that will be there forever.

And I’ll never forget this. And I don’t know who this person was. It’s a person who worked in a country fair when I was 17 years old. My parents went somewhere one evening. And I thought that while they were gone that I would rent a movie that I wanted to see that they would not permit me to see.

So I went down to the country fair and I got the movie, and I put it on the counter. And I started engaging in a conversation with the clerk. It was a young guy. And I said to him, “Did you ever see this movie?”

And he said, “I did.”

And I said, “Was it good?”

And he said, “Yes; a good movie.”

And I said, “Why is it rated R.?”

And he said, “Well, there’s a scene in there that won’t leave your mind.” And he said, “I wish I hadn’t watched it, frankly.” And so he said to me, “If you don’t want that scene in your head forever, you probably better not watch it. But it’s up to you.” But he was like “Whatever.”

And I said, “I don’t think I want to.” But you know what? I wasn’t a believer at the time; I wasn’t a professing believer. But I knew enough to know what it was like to have something in your head that will never leave you. And I thought, *I don’t need to keep adding to that.*

You’re right; you’re 100% right. It’s easier just to say no and to keep it out of your head than it is to fight it in.

Matt: So that’s where headship comes in. As leaders we’re called to examine ourselves first. So you take a look at your headship and say no to all those things, even in the spiritual realm. We have the power and the presence of Christ that is greater than that.

Jeff: And I think that’s important. We have to always remember that there is not a sexual weed that is greater than grace. If there is a sin that is more powerful than the grace of God, if that’s what we think then we’re in big trouble, because we think too little of God’s grace revealed in Christ Jesus. Anybody else before we go further?

I guess I want to talk about one thing. If Ted were here he’d want us to talk about this. I know he brings it to us. I even hesitate to speak about it. But if you notice, he talks in

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verse 4 about “*Let there be no filthiness or foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place. But instead let there be thanksgiving.*”

You know, I guess I want to sort of start with something general and sort of work toward something specific. And what I want to do is that I want us to think about the basic idea of the Third Commandment, of taking the Lord’s name in vain—using it uselessly.

When people use the word *God* as sort of an exclamation mark, they are obviously using the name of God uselessly, and they are violating the Third Commandment. Now that leads us into a discussion of what other things fall under a breach of the Third Commandment.

Well, for instance, there are things like “damn” or “hell.” You know, if I say, “Damn you!”, what am I saying? I’m taking an ordinance or a decree of God and applying it to you. I’m saying, “May you be consigned to hell.” That’s what I’m saying. Or if I say to somebody, “Go to hell!”, that sort of language is a breach of the Third Commandment.

So it’s those kinds of things. You know, oftentimes I think that people think that “damn” and “hell” are the innocent words. They aren’t, right? They fall under that sort of use of the Third Commandment. Go ahead.

Brave Man: Is it okay if they go to heaven?

Jeff: Yeah; I’m with you. (*Laughter*) So those are the kinds of things I think that fall under the Third Commandment. So for instance you probably know this. The Old King James Bible uses the word *piss*, right? We tend to think of that as a swear word.

So here’s what I’m saying to you. There are what we call words that are profane, profanity, a breach of the Third commandment. And then there are words that are vulgar. And words that are vulgar are words that are typical of the vernacular. And they describe, for instance, settings that we may not be in. But for instance the farmer is going to talk about horse shit, right? And that is not one of those words that fall under a breach of the Third Commandment.

Now I think that’s the kind of word that falls under what we’re dealing with here in this text—this crude talk, this idea of coarse jesting. And why is it that it falls under that and that we ought not to do it? It falls under that because anybody knows that when you’re in the presence of somebody, and they’re using a lot of vulgarity, you have this feeling that this person is not all that mature. You have the feeling that maybe this person’s vocabulary is fairly limited, and that there’s not a real maturity there.

And I think that sometimes that sort of farmer kind of language can then move into this. And this is what I told my children; I talked with my kids about this. Where this moves is in a sexual direction, because what happens is, those who are immature think that bodily functions and bodily types and bodily organs are funny. And that’s the way they have to handle it.

You know, you’re in with 13-year-old boys. And they just find out that they have a penis hanging in between their legs. And then what happens is that all of the joking begins, right? Or they find out about female parts, and all the joking begins. And that’s really when the coarse jesting begins.

And why does it begin? It’s because there are kids who have no framework to handle this kind of information. So how do they handle it? They handle it in jest.

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And I told my kid, “You know, we’ve been a family that’s been in the hospital a lot, either for my wife or for my son.” And so one of the things that we talked a lot about was body parts, and we’ve had to over the years. And one of the things about that is that it’s not funny. It’s real to us, right?

And so it’s kind of interesting. When I sent my son to school when he was in eighth grade when we sent him to a public school, I said to him, “Here’s what’s going to happen, son; here’s what you’re going to encounter. What we’ve been talking about seriously all these years—the stuff you know about already,—you’re going to find that people don’t know about it, and they’re going to think it’s the funniest thing in the world. And the reason they think it’s the funniest thing in the world is not because it’s the funniest thing in the world. It’s because they’re too immature to handle this information. And there isn’t a framework that’s been built for them.”

And I think what Paul is saying is that I think he’s really after immaturity in this particular section. And let’s face it. Well, I probably said enough, at least for us to move up the skids if you want to talk about that. If you don’t, that’s fine. But that’s my view of that particular portion of this text.

Brave Man: I’m thinking about idolatry.

Jeff: Yeah.

Brave Man: That’s the root of all this.

Jeff: Sure; yeah. When you think about the Psalms, or it can be Isaiah, one of the things that you think about is that the Psalmist or the Prophet is telling us that an idol is stupid. And it’s stupid because we make it, right? The guy goes and he cuts down a tree. And then he cuts a log out of it. And then he fashions it with his tools. And he stands it up on a pillar. And then he bows down to it and worships it. And I can’t remember the Psalm; maybe you can help me with this, Bishop. The Psalmist tells us that those who worship idols become like them. Do you remember it?

Bishop Rodgers: No.

Jeff: I can’t remember the Psalm offhand. But those who worship idols become like them. Maybe it’s Psalm 115; let me just peek. If it’s not, I won’t look for it any further. But I think that’s it.

Sig: Jeff, isn’t there a reference by Paul when he talks about idols, that they can’t hear or see?

Jeff: Yes, it is Psalm 115.

“They have mouths, but do not speak;

Eyes, but do not see.

They have ears, but do not hear;

Noses, but do not smell.

They have hands, but do not feel;

Feet, but do not walk;

And they do not make a sound in their throats.

Those who make them become like them.”

Verse 8.

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“*Those who make them become like them.*” Now I think that’s true; those who make them become like them. In what sense? They can’t hear, they can’t see, they can’t pray. There is nothing that’s of value that’s coming out of their mouths.

But there’s something else that I think that we need to realize. And that is that those who make them want to fashion some justification for their own sin, right? Because an idol will permit me to do and justify me doing the things that I want to do, right?

I mean, for instance, let’s just face it. If I set up a god and I say that this is a fertility god, what am I going to engage in?

Bishop Rodgers: Farming. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: Yeah. And that’s a great point. If I worship the Baal who controls the rain I am a farmer, and I want some rain. And so when I think about idolatry and its relationship to coveting, I can see the connection easily, because the idol gives justification for what I want. Yes?

Kirk: Yet in our culture we’re a little more sophisticated. We don’t necessarily make wooden idols. How does that play out? I mean, I don’t hear a lot about idolatry, even from the pulpit.

Jeff: Yes.

Kirk: I don’t hear much about that. I’d like to hear a little bit.

Bishop: Buy this car! Look at all these beautiful ladies!

Jeff: Yeah. Remember the commercial? Go ahead. Do you remember the car that was advertised, and it’s like “Be unique; be the only one,” even though they’ve made thousands and thousands and thousands of them? All of these commercials appeal to our uniqueness by buying their products when everyone else is buying the products, right? We want to be the person, right? So there’s an appeal to pride, right?

Or the beer commercials—the high life, right? The high life is what? A lot of women in bikinis, and a lot of drunkenness and debauchery. So the idolatry is there and we’re wooed to it. But you’re right; we don’t get a block of wood to justify ourselves.

You know, this is the thing. There’s a sense in which yes, the cultural forms have changed. But man hasn’t changed, and Calvin says that his heart is “*an idol factory.*” And he’ll make idols, but he’ll make them in his own cultural context. So you may not worship a piece of wood. But the wood that justified his sexual behavior will be justified in some other way in our own day—that sort of thing. Does that make sense?

Kirk: Yes it does, from one standpoint. That’s one thing over the course of my life where I never really thought too much on this idolatry, and being more specific about idolatry. You know, you hear people talk about sin. But idolatry is something else. Okay, I think I can put two and two together here a little bit; that’s fine. But to hear it explained and to hear what it is practically—

Jeff: Well, let me give you a practical way of looking at idolatry from this cultural perspective and from our own. I’ll be real quick about this and then I’m going to quit. There’s a subject/object problem. The subject/object problem is this. So I’ll use the tree. I am the subject and that tree is the object.

The subject/object problem is this. The rationalist starts by saying, “I can only know the structures of my own mind.” So the external world which comes into my mind is not

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really the real world. It’s only a representation of the real world. So it’s really a creation of my own mind.

On the other side of this you have not the rationalist but the empiricist. The empiricist says, “No, my mind is a blank slate, and these things write on it.” So what is out there really is in here in some way, shape or form.

Now here’s the deal. The deal is that the rationalists have won, at least for the present moment. Why do I say that? The rationalists have won because what we say today is “What I see is not real. What is real is in my head.”

So think about it this way. The guy who stands in front of the mirror and sees his male parts says, “That’s not real. What’s real is in my head, and I’m a woman.” You see?

And here’s the idolatry part. The idolatry part is that we can put a wig on a man and change his name from Richard to Rachel. And we have to call him that, right?, because he sees what’s in his own mind. And this is Romans 1: We’re forced to see him the way he sees himself in his own mind. That’s where the sin of romans 1 enters in.

Jim Hamilton: Just another thing that we can discuss at some point. And that’s how any of this applies to you and your relationship to God. And I’ve only hinted at that in a particular way, because I think a lot of this is (*unclear*)

Jeff: Yes; that’s Ephesians 5:21.

Sig: Couldn’t someone also look at it without a converted mind? He looks at the tree and he realizes that Someone greater than him grew that tree—a God or another power. So he cuts away part of the tree. And he fashions a symbol of what he thinks this higher power is, to worship and to give Him thanks for growing trees from which he gets apples or pears or whatever, to feed his family and feed the town. You know, it wouldn’t be hard to say—

Jeff: No, you’re right. That’s called the *sensus divinitatus*. That’s what Calvin teaches us. He says to us that the reason why people cut these trees down is that they have a sense of divinity in them. And they have to worship.

Sig: Yes.

Jeff: But what Calvin also says is that in worshiping that tree rather than the Creator they’re suppressing the truth in unrighteousness.

Sig: They’re not knowing who their Creator is. They don’t have a name for the Creator.

Jeff: But that’s the whole point. They suppress because of their sin. The Creator reveals Himself in general revelation.

Brave Man: It seems to me that idolatry comes up in the final analysis where people make up a version of God that’s just okay with what they do and their own sins.

Jeff: Yes. Well, I mean that’s exactly it, right? If I don’t like sovereignty and I say, “You know what? My God is a God of love and He wouldn’t do that?”, what you’ve basically said is that I have this idol.

Brave Man: Right.

Jeff: And he’s not the true God; he’s my own creation.

Brave Man: If you have no reason and no heart basis that God is really like that.

Jeff: Yeah; that’s right.

Brave Man: If there is no revelation, you have no reason.

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Jeff: Yes, Bishop?

Bishop Rodgers: It seems to me that the ultimate form of idolatry is that supreme act of idolatry, which is to put yourself in the place of God.

Jeff: Yeah; that’s right. Matt had something.

Matt: As men it’s easy to see idols getting ahead of our relationship with the Lord. It could be my relationships with my wife or with my kids. I’m fishing all the time or hunting all the time. Or think about the idols of cars or the details of lost time. I don’t have any time to spend with my wife; I don’t have any time to play with my kids. And the things that really matter and that are the most important things are to sit at home and put aside the TV. You know, we could read the Bible in three months if you took your TV time. You could read the whole Bible in three months.

Jeff: I gotta tell you. I agree with you 100%. There is this mindset, though, that can say that if you wash your car then you’re sinning; you have an idol, right?

I want to tell you this. I’m out washing my car one day. And when I first got it I washed my car probably every two weeks. And I’m washing it and my son wheels outside one day. And he comes up to me and I’m washing my car. He goes, “Dad, I want to talk to you.”

I said, “Now?”

And he said, “Yeah, I’d like to talk to you now.”

I said, “Okay.”

And he said, “I’m really concerned about you.” *(Laughter)*

And I said, “Let me sit down.” And I sat down on the stairs. And he said, “I’m really concerned that you’ve turned this car into an idol.”

Sig: How old was he?

Jeff: He was in his teens.

Sig: Wow.

Jeff: So I said to him, “Now why do you think that?”

And he said, “You are out here washing this car with regularity—about once a week or every two weeks. And I’m watching. And I’m really concerned that this has become an idol.”

And I said to him, “Son, you’re far too young to remember my previous car.” *(Laughter)* “My previous car never got washed. Let me tell you the difference between that car and this car.” I said, “I don’t own this car.”

And he looked at me and he said, “Who owns this car?”

I said, “The bank owns this car.” *(Laughter)* “And so I’m a steward of this car.” *(Groans and laughter)* “And once this car becomes mine, it will be just as neglected as the previous car.” *(Laughter)* I’m going to pray with you guys and then let you go.

Sig: He nailed you and you wouldn’t admit it.

Jeff: No! *(Laughter)*

Father in heaven, thank You for this day. And we thank You for Your love toward us that was expressed in Christ. Father, thank You for Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for the time that we have together. Thank You for the time in Your word. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.