

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Identifying Lasciviousness

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Can you tell someone what “lasciviousness” means? Is it something that you should be doing? Or, should you avoid it? Is it an archaic word that has no relevance in your life?

God helps us with these questions when He reveals to us that “lasciviousness” is one of “the works of the flesh”, and offers us the sobering warning that “they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21). Any practice that keeps me from heaven is relevant to my life, and is therefore a practice that must be avoided. But, what is it?

William Barclay quotes Basil emphasizing that “lasciviousness” is “a disposition of the soul which neither possesses nor can endure the pain of discipline” (Flesh and Spirit, p. 32). So, we are looking at a spirit that is manifesting unrestraint in one’s life. This reluctance of restraint spills over in one’s relationship with others. One ceases to respect or have sympathy for the feelings of others. Lasciviousness manifests its selfishness by not caring about how one’s actions affect others. William Bar-

clay emphasizes that lasciviousness “is completely indifferent to public opinion and to public decency...He may come to a stage of sin when he is so lost to shame that he no longer cares what others see, and what they may say, or what they may think” (Ibid, p. 32).

The New Testament places lasciviousness in the context of sexual unrestraint or sin. Paul exhorts Christians in Rome to walk becomingly and therefore avoid “chambering and wantonness” (Romans 13:13). The Greek word, ASLEGIA, translated in other places in the New Testament “lasciviousness” is translated here “wantonness”. It is connected with chambering or sexual sin. Paul feared in coming to Corinth he would find the Corinthians practicing and not repenting of “fornication and lasciviousness” (2 Corinthians 12:21).

We see the element of reluctance of restraint and discipline when Jude describes the false teachers “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). The Lasciviousness person, in seeking his own freedom, does not want Jesus to be his Master. Grace does not mean

servicing the Lord, but is a license to do as one feels.

The element of this lack of personal discipline disregarding the sensibility of others is seen in Lot being “sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds) (2 Peter 2:7-8).

One practice that a Christian should clearly avoid due to knowing the character of “lasciviousness” is the indecent bodily movements of dancing before others. They incite sexual desires. Such bodily movements are manifesting a lack of restraint upon one’s sense of decency and shows little regard of effecting purity in the hearts of others.

Christians should therefore avoid cheerleading where indecent dance movements are the norm today. May the ignorance we hear today among Christians who say that a husband and wife can dance in public end. Lasciviousness no longer cares how one affects others, but a Christian always wants to promote purity.