

Six –  
Common  
sins of the  
ancient  
world and  
ours

• Mentioned  
but without  
loathsome  
detail

• As befits  
Holy people

• Immorality,  
covetousness  
and foolish  
talk

• A warning  
relating to the  
present  
enjoyment of  
kingdom  
blessings

Paul is dealing with some details of the call to godliness: truth <sup>¶1</sup>, anger <sup>¶2</sup>, stealing <sup>¶3</sup>, talk <sup>¶4</sup>, kindness <sup>¶5</sup>. Now <sup>¶6</sup> he brings in a string of topics that were the common sins of the ancient world – as they are of our world too!

6. **The common sins of the ancient world** <sup>¶7</sup>. *‘And immorality and every kind of uncleanness or covetousness – let them not even be named among you, as befits holy people* <sup>¶8</sup>. *And let there be no filthiness and foolish talk or levity, which are not fitting, but rather let there be thanksgiving* <sup>¶9</sup>. Paul does not give detailed attention to these things to the extent that he has had things to say about truth, anger, stealing, talking, kindness. It is as if these matters are so loathsome to him, he mentions them only to say let them not even be named!

Again his style of arguing is distinctively Christian. He does not warn about the health hazards of immorality or the damage that covetousness does to the national economy. His style of arguing is utterly different from the typical philosopher or teacher of ethics. It is not the church’s job to teach common morality in the same way that a host of religions and ideologies do. The Christian way is unique and distinctive. Its method is to appeal to us in term of our being the people of God. He reminds us of who we are and what we believe. We turn aside from these sins ‘as befits holy people’, or because ‘they are not fitting’ for people for whom God has done so much. The appeal is to what has happened to us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So he urges us to keep well away from every kind of immorality. We should not even want to think about such sins or discuss them. They are to be rejected with horror. He includes covetousness alongside sins of immorality. There are people who would never be tempted into immorality, but they are guilty of covetousness which is just as bad. And in the same breath he includes foolish talk or levity – a style of talking which is coarse, frivolous, careless. His words do not exclude humour – Jesus could be humorous at times – but they exclude the type of humour which is hurtful, self- centred, slapdash. Paul asks that our talk should instead be full of the kind of happiness and contentment that leads to thanksgiving.

Paul closes off this little unit with two warnings, one about the present time, another about the future. **First, there is a warning about the present.** *‘For you must know this: no person who is immoral or unclean or covetousness – and such a person is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ* <sup>¶1</sup>. I do not think Paul is questioning any one’s salvation. He knows that the true Christian might fall into sins such as these (otherwise why raise the matter at all?) Nor is Paul thinking of the future judgement (which is more in mind in the next verse). His tenses are present tenses, ‘No person who is **at this present time** immoral or unclean or covetousness – and is **at this present time** an idolater – has **at this present time** any inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ <sup>¶2</sup>. Obviously such a person might have been wicked in the past and yet be enjoying God’s kingdom (for forgiveness and new life is open to the wicked). Nor is he denying that Christians can fall into such sins (obviously they can). Nor is he saying that forgiveness and restoration is impossible for a ‘backslider’. And he knows that there is such a thing as being ‘saved through fire’ <sup>¶3</sup>.

¶1 4:25  
¶2 4:26-7  
¶3 4:28  
¶4 4:29-30  
¶5 4:32-5:2  
¶6 4:25-5:7  
¶7 5:3-7  
¶8 5:3  
¶9 5:4

¶1 5:5  
¶2 5:5

¶3 1 Cor  
3:15

The point of verse 5 is that **at this time** such sins are a blockage to the enjoyment of the kingdom. There is no way a person can be indulging in sins of this nature and yet be experiencing the blessings of the kingdom of God. We cannot 'dwell in God's holy hill' <sup>☞1</sup> and be sinning at the same time. 'Inheritance' has to do with reward, present or future. Here the point deals with the present. Those who do not 'sow to the Spirit' <sup>☞2</sup> do not reap from the Spirit. Instead they are reaping ruination for themselves.

☞1 Psalm 15:1  
☞2 Galatians 6:8

• **A warning relating to future judgement and the possible loss of reward**

**Verse 7 moves to a warning about the future.** 'Let no one deceive you with empty words, for on account of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the children of disobedience' <sup>☞1</sup>. Do not become partakers with them' <sup>☞2</sup>. A day of judgement is on its way. God's anger will be poured out on sin and sinners. The sins Paul has just mentioned will be purified out of God's world. The fires of God's anger will consume sin. Only he who does the will of God will abide forever. Elsewhere Paul assures the Christian that he will be saved from God's wrath when it comes <sup>☞3</sup>. There is no condemnation for the Christian <sup>☞4</sup>.

☞1 5:6  
☞2 5:7  
☞3 1 Thess. 1:10, Rom 5:10  
☞4 Romans 8:1

Yet here he has a different angle on the matter. The wrath of God only comes upon the 'children of disobedience' and the Christian is not a 'child of disobedience'. Yet at the same time it must be said that if (contrary to his new birth and his position in God's kingdom) he is a 'partaker' with the wicked in their sins, then such a person can expect to be a 'partaker' in the wrath of God in judgement. The wrath of God is coming upon the children of disobedience, but the Christian might be 'hurt by the second death' <sup>☞1</sup> and suffer loss at the judgement seat of Christ <sup>☞2</sup> and lose 'reward' in a fiery judgement <sup>☞3</sup>. The righteous who have had a share in the sins of the disobedient will experience the anger of God. There is no point in saying to Christians 'Because of these things the wrath of God is coming' if that wrath cannot touch them at all. 1 Corinthians 3:15 makes it clear that the anger of God against the sins of His people does not mean the undoing of their justification or the cancelling of their sonship or the removal of their new birth. It is justification, adoption and new birth which are eternally secure. However the hope of receiving 'inheritance' or the possibility of experiencing God's anger by forfeiting reward, are still open-ended possibilities.

☞1 Revelation 2:11  
☞2 1 Corinthians 3:15  
☞3 Hebrews 10:26-31; note 'reward' in 10:35

	<p><b>Dr Michael Eaton</b> is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
<p><i>These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below</i></p>		
<p><b>Slices for the Nations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world <b>where resources are scarce and unaffordable</b></li> <li>In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available <b>free of charge</b></li> <li>Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the <i>Slices</i> web site</li> </ul>	<p><b>Slices for Sponsors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For those in more prosperous circumstances who <b>can afford to contribute to the development</b> of this material and its distribution with a <b>small monthly donation</b></li> <li>The same material as <b>Slices for the Nations</b></li> <li>Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the <i>Slices</i> web site</li> </ul>	<p><b>Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For those who wish to <b>sample</b> the material or dip into it from time to time, a <b>proportion</b> of the PTTB series is available <b>free of charge</b></li> <li><b>Slices for Everyone</b> (as a download) or <b>Slice of the Week</b> (attached to a weekly email)</li> <li>The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive <b>Slices for the Nations</b></li> </ul>
<p>To subscribe please contact: <a href="mailto:slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk">slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk</a> stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at <a href="http://www.slices.org.uk">www.slices.org.uk</a> Details of the availability of <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> books and how they may be purchased can be found on <a href="http://www.ibtr.org.uk">www.ibtr.org.uk</a></p>		