

# STRAIGHTWAY

*"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" Mark 1:18.*

**CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP**

The Witness Outreach of  
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## The Powers of Fornication

Dr. H. T. Spence

*As it was in the days of Noe . . .  
Likewise also as it was in the days  
of Lot.*

These are the words of our blessed Lord in Luke 17:26-27. "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:30). The days of the coming of the Son of Man will be so unique that it takes more than one historic age to describe this generation. The days of His coming will be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot. But what kind of days were they?

One characteristic that marks both the ages of Noah and Lot is *fornication*. Jude 7 states, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for

an example." Fornication (Gr., *porneia*) is a term that means any sexual uncleanness, which includes adultery, any form of sodomy (homosexuality and lesbianism), bestiality (a sexual act with an animal, Leviticus 18:23), onanism (self fornication), and any form of incest. Also included is mental fornication; the thought life of an individual is where the powers of fornication begin. Fornication (as the broad term for sexual uncleanness) has become the master sin of Western civilization crowned with the rise of power and influence of sodomy in our society. But fornication is also a fleshly power that has become a reckoning force within the institutional church and will become increasingly so as we near the coming of Christ.

## **Days of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage**

As for the days of Noah, we are told that the “sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose” (Genesis 6:2). “They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage” (Luke 17:27). In the beginning it was not so. When God created this world and man, the first relationship divinely appointed by God was marriage. This was prior to the Fall, prior to children, and prior to the revelation of the church. At the beginning, man and wife were one. She was found in him; she came from his deep sleep; she came from his bones and his flesh. She was the closest thing to him to be found in all creation. God appointed them to be together for the journey of life. They were together prior to the Fall, they fell together, and together they were to face life after the Fall. They were to face together life’s sorrows, its griefs, its agonies, and its travails. Yet God

did sprinkle earthly joys along the way of the fallen path. Adam never married another woman nor had children from another union. Polygamy appeared seven generations later in the godless line of Cain with Lamech. Amidst the prominence of marriages and polygamy in the days prefacing the Flood, Noah and his sons each only had *one* wife.

According to the historian Edward Gibbon, one of the five major reasons for the decline and fall of the Roman Empire was the increase in divorce and the undermining of the sanctity of the home. The stability of the family structure in America today is disintegrating. In recent months, the number one program theme of reality TV has been marriage: marriage to millionaires, marriage to “Joe,” marriage to a father, marriage by audience choice, or family choice, etc. These approaches have only cheapened the concept of marriage in America. “Live-in” couples are on the rise, as Western civilization’s view of marriage has been dismantled. “Till death us do part” is becoming obsolete.

Divorce and remarriage are on a spiraling rise among Christian leaders and church attendants. This is even true among the elderly. Ken Dychtwald in his book *Age Power* focuses on pressing issues among older Americans, specifically on what he calls the growing rate of “gray divorces”:

There are three reasons, for the rise in the divorce rate among older Americans. People are living longer than before and managing to

## **STRAIGHTWAY**

**O. Talmadge Spence, Founder**

H. T. Spence, Editor  
President

**Foundations Bible College**

**P. O. Box 1166**

**Dunn, NC 28335-1166**

**800-849-8761**

[www.foundations.edu](http://www.foundations.edu)

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maintain their youthfulness. We are changing the way we view commitment . . . . And there's a growing social support for a new model of maturity.

Divorce is not only a growing trend among elders, but becoming more "acceptable" as well.

No matter the view of marriage in any particular age, God's Word about marriage never changes. God's original pattern for marriage requires that one "cleave" to his partner (Genesis 2:24). To cleave means "to cling, adhere, to abide fast by, to cement together, to be welded together so that the two cannot be separated without damage to both." There is no question that God intended marriage to be a permanent, life-long bond and commitment between a man and a woman. In fact, at the point of marriage, God declares the man and woman to be permanently united together as "one flesh." This is a physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual oneness. Jesus affirmed God's plan for marriage by repeating the statement of Genesis 2:24. He further emphasized the permanence of marriage by adding, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). The apostles held to this principle of permanence of marriage. In I Corinthians 7:10 Paul states, "And unto the married I command, yet, not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband." Paul further explains that the death of one partner is the only thing that dissolves the permanent, "one flesh" relationship of marriage

in God's sight (Romans 7:2,3). Whether of sinners or Christians, "What God hath joined together," what God hath yoked together in the marriage relation, "let no man put asunder."

But found within these passages concerning marriage, there is the clause given by Christ which reads in Matthew 5:32, "But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery." The similar statement is given in 19:9. Matthew is the only Gospel writer to record this clause. Mark and Luke, in parallel accounts, make no reference to any exception permitting divorce. The Apostle Paul never speaks of such an exception in his teaching on divorce and remarriage.

May I state this very gently; there is a danger of focusing on one phrase (the exception clause) rather than on the clear message Jesus was trying to communicate. The problem arose with the question of the rabbinical schools of thought on divorce. Christ's first response in Matthew 19 was taking them back to God's intended purpose of marriage (Notice this in verses 4,5,6). It was in their response for a "loop-hole" that Christ responded with the exception clause. The Pharisees, like many believers today, were pre-occupied with establishing grounds for divorce. Jesus was concerned about the permanence of marriage. While Jesus acknowledged Moses' regulation of divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), He reminded the Pharisees

that such laws were merely concessions to the hardness of their hearts. He returned to the heart of His message by restating the intent of God when He created marriage: "From the beginning it was not so." Although some have stated this exception is only applied to the espousal period of engagement and not the actual consummated marriage (Joseph was minded to put away Mary—Matthew 1:19), it does cover both. This clause "saving for the cause of fornication" not only includes adultery but also homosexuality, lesbianism, and incest—those sexual sins committed with another in any form. However, this passage is not stating that there must be a separation and divorce if these evils take place; it simply states there are grounds for it. But again, the greater emphasis of Christ's conversation in this passage is the permanence of marriage.

### **The Perversions of the Flesh**

The days in which we live are not simply given to marital separations, divorces, and remarriages. These are days when men and women, boys and girls, are giving themselves over to *perversions* and even *inversions* of the flesh.

Jude 7 speaks of Sodom and Gomorrha, "and the cities about them in like manner," as cities that gave themselves "over to fornication, and going after strange flesh." Those were days when men gave themselves over to the obsession of the visceral. The physical, the flesh, the body, and the pleasures derived from it had become the

intense desires of man's existence. Likewise, the days surrounding the coming of Christ will be such days, with men giving themselves over to fornication in all of its forms. Even the world of Christianity has found this sin to be a formidable, controlling power. We have seen the public revelation of prominent immorality in the Roman Catholic priesthood. Such immorality has been taking place for centuries in that apostate church. Today we are only hearing of the tip of its iceberg. The Charismatic movement and its emphasis upon the body in healing, prosperity, and tangible gifts, has revealed numerous incidents of fornication. This movement's emphasis upon the beat and rhythm of the CCM has fed the visceral desires of its people and produced a premium of immorality among its preachers and its singers.

One of the reasons for these perversions both in the world and the institutional church is that our generation is filled with great misconceptions about the body. These are days when the driving influences and forces are on the visceral, the body. Rock music has entered frontiers of mutilation of the body, killings of the body. Once again the "Goth" culture has been revived among the rock youth scene, a dark youth culture that craves for symbols, colors, and all kinds of appearances of the morbidity of death interpenetrating daily existence. Even nightclubs in major cosmopolitan cities are dedicated to the promulgation of this culture. The list of tangible evidences of the

misconceptions of the body is also found in the drug culture, which is destroying the bodies as well as the minds of tens of thousands. Fornication, in all of its forms, is bringing to this planet in epidemic proportion the tokens of perdition in Sexually Transmitted Diseases and illegitimate births. Then there is abortion, man's insensibility to the frail bodies of those in the womb. These children are viewed as slabs of meat for the slaughter. Their parts are used in soaps, shampoos, creams, and cosmetics. Even at the end of life there is the sad scene of insensibility to the body as seen in a number of nursing homes and hospitals.

Romans 1:24 states that "God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves." God will hand such people over to their own lustful powers. He will withdraw His restraints, which will send men deeper into their vulgar desires. God will withdraw influences that heretofore have been restraints to the secular man. But He will leave man to work his own evil ways. This will include the dishonoring of their bodies. The tattoo and body-piercing craze that has permeated our beloved America, supposedly a civilized country, indicates that heathenism is leaving its stamp on the bodies of men and women.

We read of the days of Noah, "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that

he also is flesh" (Genesis 6:3). One hundred twenty years before the flood, the Lord stated that His Spirit was not always going to strive in instructing or judging through conscience, convicting men through conscience. Man went so deep in his sins that he truly concluded he was a universal unichotomy creature. "I'm just flesh; I have no spirit. I have no accountability of my spirit. I live, I exist, I breathe, I desire the flesh, the flesh, the flesh." In Genesis 6:12 "God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way," or the flesh had so sinned and was so perverted in its sinning that the appointment of the body, the way the body should have gone in its existence, was totally corrupt. Man had no discernment of what he was to do with his body. Man had no true concept of the purpose of the body. In 6:13, God said unto Noah that the end of all flesh had come to a consummation of sins. There was not another sin that could be committed in the body that had not been committed. Men who were living 700 to 900 years in experimental exploration of sins of the body had run the gamut; there was not another sin that could be conceived for the body. So the only thing that God could do was to destroy all flesh—the body (6:17). It had mutated with such depth in the body that the Bible tells us that violence filled the earth. This violence was to the body, performing terrible, heinous, sexual violence upon other people's bodies. Our society has arrived in such days.

## Corinth and the Sin of Fornication

The Epistle of I Corinthians, written by the Apostle Paul, dealt with carnalities found among the Christians there. Much of their carnal principles had been side effects of their past life in Corinth. This city was known for commercial prosperity, but she was also the byword for evil and immoral living. There was one source of evil in Corinth that was known all over the civilized world. It was the great Temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love; the temple stood upon the hill of the city's acropolis. To that temple there were attached thousands of priestesses who were "sacred" prostitutes; at evening time they descended from the Acropolis and plied their trade upon the streets of Corinth. It was the fornicating capital of the Roman Empire.

It is evident that these Christians of Corinth were worldly and carnal. They were endeavoring to mix the fleshly world with the spiritual world; they were trying to make their past life in the world compatible with living for God. First Corinthians deals more with the body than any other book in the Bible. It is an important subject because they had no discernment about the body. In I Corinthians 5, Paul had to tell them what to do with a fornicator. They did not know what to do. As members of the church, a stepson was living in fornication with his stepmother. Paul had to tell them to get rid of this fornicator. In I Corinthians 6:9,10, immediately after dealing with the fornicator, he gives a list of

fornicating sins and declares, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Once he acknowledges what God had done, Paul picks up the logic of Corinth. In 6:13, they were declaring "meats for the belly and the belly for meats." To them there was only one conclusion for the belly, and it was for meats. You were to fill and gorge the belly with food.

But Paul leaves the meats and the belly and comes to another common belief, a logic about the body. Why did God give a body? Was it for fornication? That is what the Corinthians believed. But Paul makes it clear: "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (6:13b). God gave the body so that by and with the body men might do the will of God.

Then in chapter 7, Paul deals with the legitimate relationship of marriage. Because some of the Christians believed that since their spouse was not a Christian, they concluded that their children were not legitimate, that the marriage was not honorable in the sight of God. But the Apostle again had to clear up the misconception: whether the person is saved or not, it is the union of marriage that legitimates the child. Promulgation of posterity is a legitimate use of the body in marriage, and the body is also for the manifestation of affection from one to another in marriage. He also reveals in that chapter that once an

individual is married, the one's body is no longer one's own: the body of the husband belongs to the wife and the body of the wife belongs to the husband. Paul calls upon all to "flee fornication" (6:18).

It is evident that God's appointment for marriage back in the garden was for companionship of a help-meet, for love, and for promulgation of posterity. But since the Fall it is evident from I Corinthians 7:1-9 that God has appointed marriage to strengthen both man and woman against the temptation of fornication. The sage of Jerusalem will tell us in Proverbs 5:15-20 that God has ordained for the wife to be the "cistern," the "well," and the "fountain" for the man and that he should not look to others for satisfaction.

*Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?*

### **The Body of the Christian**

In I Corinthians 6:14-15 Paul states, "And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise us up by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" He reveals to them that it is not just our soul; it is not just our life, but our body is part of the body of Christ. Oh Corinthians, do you discern that your physical body we have been discussing is a member of Christ? "Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot?" That is

what fornication does: it makes my body a member of harlotry rather than a member of Christ. Fornication violates the rights of Christ to my body. It violates His rights. Fornication is announcing to Jesus, "You have no right to my body. You have no right to dictate to my body, or possess my body."

*What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (I Corinthians 6:19-20).*

Why did Christ die for the body? Because when Adam fell, he was affected physically as well as spiritually. Therefore, Christ must die, not just for the glorification of the body in the future, but also He wants to save the body now from its destruction of sin.

What am I to do with my body as a Christian? In Romans 12:1,2 Paul beseeches me to voluntarily submit my body to Jesus. First Thessalonians 4:3 also tells us, "for this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know [should discern, should have knowledge] how to possess his vessel [his body] in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence." Sanctification is the work of redemption that has much to do with the body, the flesh!

The Gentiles believed that fornication was normal in life. In Acts 15:19 James declared at the end of the Jerusalem council, "Wherefore

my sentence is, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: but that we write unto them that they should abstain from pollutions of idols, *from fornication*, from things strangled and from blood." Why didn't James deal with other things? Because this was the norm of the Gentile world.

It is very important what we do in this body, for the Christian will be judged before the Bematos, according to II Corinthians 5:10, of what he has done in the body. In I Thessalonians 5:23 Paul declared, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your

whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless." What do we do with our bodies? What do we do in secret? Are we living in secret fornicating sins? Are we condoning it in our families? Have we been captured by the flirtatious powers of this fornicating age? May God deliver us both in thought and in life from the powers of fornication.

*Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh (II Corinthians 4:10-11).*

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Special Opening Services

August 20-22 – 7:00 PM

Evening of Acquaintance & Fish Fry

August 23

Founder's Day

September 28

Seventh Congress of Fundamentalists

October 1-3

Thanksgiving Day

November 27

Winter Break for the Schools

December 20

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"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Psalm 11:3

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