

## DEBAUCHERY

**“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery” (Gal. 5:19).**

The Greek word translated as “debauchery” in our text is “aselgeia”. It is found 10 times in the N.T. Scriptures (Mk. 7:22; Rom. 13:13; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; I Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:7; 2 Pet. 2:18; Jude 1:4). W. E. Vine defines it as “excess licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness”.

In Ephesians 4:19 the NIV translates it as “sensuality”. **“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.”** Those who engage in “debauchery” or “sensuality” have lost all sense of shame.

This word, for example, describes the shameless absence of restraint in Sodom and Gomorrah. Peter reminded his readers that God made an example of these wicked cities showing what is going to happen to the ungodly. He then continued: **“He (God) rescued Lot, a righteous man who was distressed by the filthy (debauched) lives of lawless men” (2 Pet. 2:7).** The men of Sodom had lost all sense of shame. When two strangers came to visit Lot the men of Sodom reached a collective decision to rape those men in public (Gen. 19:5). It is bad enough to rape someone in private, but “debauchery” describes those without shame. Jeremiah described such debauchery by asking: **“Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when they are punished, says the Lord” (Jer. 8:12).** The Psalmist said something similar: **“An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin” (Ps. 36:1,2).**

Peter used this powerful word again in 2 Pet. 2:18 when he warned that evil teachers with boastful words would appeal to the lustful desires of new Christians and seduce them into debauchery. He warned that those who were just escaping from the snares of the devil could easily fall prey to his deceptive promises. These wicked men promised freedom while they themselves were enslaved to corruption. Jude had a similar warning regarding condemned godless men who secretly infiltrated believers and deliberately changed the grace of God into a license for immorality (Jude 1:4).

Alexander Pope was a famous 18<sup>th</sup> century English poet. The following quotation reveals his insight into debauchery: *“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien, As to be hated needs but to be seen; Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”* In this regard the Apostle Paul was inspired to write: **“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18).** We are not to “reason” ourselves out of debauchery, we are to “flee” from it. In this regard Joseph did precisely the right thing when he ran away from his master’s wife when she tried to seduce him (Gen. 39:6-12).

Corinth was famous for debauchery. One thousand priestesses of the goddess Aphrodite worshiped her by devoting themselves to prostitution. Sexual immorality was therefore not shameful but considered an act of worship. We should not be surprised that sexually transmitted diseases were a major source of disease and death in ancient Corinth.

Let us return to our text and complete the contrast between the acts of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit: **“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.” (Gal. 5:19-26).**

Praise God! The Holy Spirit is the cure for debauchery!

