

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

"FORNICATION"

When one begins to examine the New Testament to learn what the new man in Christ must put away, he discovers the sin of fornication heading the list (Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:3, Col. 3:5, Rev. 21:8). Such persistent condemnation implies its prevalent practice among first century people. Every foundation block on which any society could exist was riddled with fornication's crumbling influence. The extent to which fornication had permeated through society is clearly demonstrated by pagan writers contemporary with New Testament times:

1. **MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONS:** 'Demosthenes writes..."We keep mistresses for pleasure, concubines for the day to day needs of the body, but we have wives in order to produce children legitimately and to have a trustworthy guardian of our homes." (Against NEAERA, quoted Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 573 B) - Barclay, *FLESH AND SPIRIT*, page 24).

2. **GOVERNMENT:** 'The day was to come when Alexander Severus, one of the great and good Emperors, was to supply a man when he entered upon a provincial governorship with "twenty pounds of silver, six she-mules, a pair of mules, a pair of horses, two garments for us in the forum, two for use at home, one for the bath, one hundred gold pieces, one cook, one muleteer, and one concubine in the case of a man who had no wife and could not live without a woman." (Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Alexander Severus 42).'

3. **RELIGION:** Idolatry, the pagan religious practice, was closely associated with fornication in the form of prostitution. (Example: Corinth where 1,000 prostitutes serve in the temple of Aphrodite - the goddess of love). (I Cor. 10:8, Rev. 2:14, Num. 25).

4. **COMMON THOUGHT:** Many regarded fornication and food alike: both were necessity of nature. Such fallacious reasoning Paul exposes in I Cor. 6:12-20.

I. WHAT "FORNICATION" MEANS

A. How the word or form of the word occurs:

1. **PORNEIA** - Noun, occurs 26 times in the N.T. and means "illicit sexual intercourse" (I Cor. 6:13).
2. **PORNEUO** - Verb, occurs 8 times in the N.T. and means "to prostitute ones' body to the lust of another" (I Cor. 6:18, Rev. 2:14)
3. **EXPORNEUO** - Verb; occurs 1 time in the N.T. and means "to give oneself up to fornication implying excessive indulgence" (Jude 7).
4. **PORNE** - Noun; occurs 12 times in the N.T. and refers "to a woman who sells her body for sexual uses". A harlot (Lk. 15:30)

5. PORNOS - Noun; Occurs 10 times in the N.T. and refers "to a man who indulges in fornication". Whoremonger; (I Cor. 5:11, Eph. 5:5).
- B. Fornication is a general term to refer to all sexual immorality or illicit sexual intercourse. (Matt. 5:32, 19:9, I Cor. 5:1). It includes therefore, adultery, incest, homosexuality, prostitution, bestiality, etc.
- C. Fornication comes from the word "pernemi" meaning "to sell". Such reflects its underlying degrading characteristic. It reduces people to things. A person becomes simply an object to use in satisfying one's lust. One is also used up not lifted up (Lk. 15:30, Prov. 6:26).
- D. Although the term denotes an illicit sexual act, it also is used to refer to a way of life. It is a sin you can live in because of continual practice (Col. 3:5).
- E. Fornication refers metaphorically to spiritual apostasy from God (Rev. 14:8, 17:2, 19:2, etc.)
- F. Fornication is against everything good and pure.
 1. In a special sense is a sin against one's body (I Cor. 6:18). "...not an effect on the body from participation of things without but a contradiction of the truth of the body wrought within itself." (Alford) - PULPIT COMMENTARY Vol. 44 page 213.
 2. Against God and Christ (I Cor. 6:13, 15, 17).
 3. Against the distinguishing characteristic of purity that is to be seen in the church (Eph. 5:3, I Cor. 5).

II. FORNICATION IS A SIN THAT WE MUST ABSTAIN FROM CAREFULLY.

- A. Because it involves a strong passion in man:
 1. "Abstain (hold oneself from) fornication" (Acts 15:20).
 2. "...from which if ye keep (diatereo - intensive form of TEREON - to watch over, preserve) yourselves it shall be well with you" (Acts 15:29).
 3. "...they should keep (PHULASSO - to guard, to beware)...themselves ...from fornication (Acts 21:25).
- B. We must be careful in our thinking (Matt. 15:19).
- C. We must be careful in our dress (Matt. 5:28, I Tim. 2:9).
- D. We must abstain by "fleeing" (I Cor. 6:18, I Thess. 4:3).

DISCUSSION:

1. Has fornication permeated our 20th. century society like it did in New Testament times? If so, give similarities:
2. In what way is fornication a sin against the body UNLIKE suicide, drunkenness or gluttony?
3. What influences on our thoughts do we need to be especially careful of today in light of the work of the flesh called fornication?