

BLOOD AND SEX

by Ray C. Stedman

Just before I left for a time of ministry in the Philippines we completed our study of the first half of the doctrinal teaching of Leviticus. Today we begin the second major division.

You remember that the first half is all about the provision of God for his people. God is teaching -- through shadows and types, i.e., through visual aids -- the same great truths that he seeks to impart to us through the New Testament. The Apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians that the Law was a "schoolmaster" to bring us to Christ. A schoolmaster is a teacher, a pedagogue, an instructor. So the Law -- the Ten Commandments, plus the ceremonial law that we have been looking at in this book -- was designed to bring us to an understanding of what Jesus Christ can be to us, now. That is the whole purpose of the first part of the book of Leviticus. All its beautiful imagery is given to picture the resources that we have in Jesus Christ -- God's provision of life and power for his people. Then, after this, the latter half of the book turns to the behavior which is expected on the basis of that provision.

Notice the order in which these occur: first the provision, then the standard of behavior. God never reverses that order. He never talks about behavior without first having spoken about provision. God is not a legalist, as so many believers are. Legalism, or what some call Galatianism -- the great curse that Paul deals with in Galatians -- is rampant among Christians in the world today. I have just come from a trip around the world and I have seen it everywhere. Legalism, with its heavy demand for morality upon people who do not yet understand how to meet that demand with the proper response, is a deadly thing! Yet it is widespread wherever you go in the Christian world today -- here in the United States and everywhere else.

Much of the reason for this worldwide spread of legalism is that Christians either do not understand the power available to them or they ignore it and try to respond to the demand for morality by reliance upon their own self-effort and will power. That is phony Christianity! It never works. It never will work. It has created much of the weakness of the church today. The church has gained the image in the eyes of many of being a place where morality is taught, where a high standard of life is preached, but where nobody practices it. This is why the idea has gained such wide popularity around the earth that Christians are basically hypocrites who talk of standards that they do not live.

But, in the Scriptures, God never talks about our behavior until he has first talked about his provision of the power by which we can meet his demands. Only when he has taken great care to help us to understand the basis upon which to operate, the provision that he is ready to make in Jesus Christ -- only then does he start talking about what the standards of behavior are to be, with the expectation that we will draw upon his resources in order to meet his demands. This is the order you have here in Leviticus -- power first, and then demand.

There are two areas of life which were particularly carefully regulated for Israel, the ancient people of God their behavior toward blood and their behavior toward sex. These two were undoubtedly chosen because both are mysteries to fallen humanity. We don't understand either one. And because they are mysteries they are forever fascinating enigmas to human hearts. You will recognize immediately that blood and sex, death and life, are always the two great, underlying themes of literature, of drama, of art, of Song, and of dance -- of all that is offered to the public as entertainment. You can't pick up a magazine or go to a movie without finding at least one or probably both of these themes flung at you in every conceivable way because they hold such continual enchantment and fascination for human beings everywhere.

In chapter 17 the mystery of blood is set before us and in chapter 18 the mystery of sex. In this new series of messages we will touch just upon the highlights of each chapter and will leave to your individual study the detailed investigation and application according to the principles we learned in the first series. But together here we want to discover the great thrust, the great lesson that God is trying to drive home in these chapters.

So let's examine the behavior required of the people of Israel with regard to blood. God is very interested in that, and he expends considerable effort to impart some great truth related to it. The first requirement was that all blood must be offered to the Lord:

And the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron and his sons, and to all the people of Israel, This is the thing which the Lord has commanded. If any man of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp, and does not bring it to the door of the tent of meeting, to offer it as a gift to the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man; he has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people." {Lev 17:1-4}

In Verse 13 there is a further requirement:

"Any man also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust." {Lev 17:13 RSV}

If anyone killed a domestic animal it had to be brought and offered as a peace offering to God, and the blood was to be poured out and collected in a basin. The priest had to perform certain rituals with it and then the meat of the animal could be eaten by the man's family. And even if he was out hunting, the blood of any animal he killed had to be treated with respect and poured out and covered over with dirt, lest a ceremonial defilement result.

What is God trying to impart with this kind of requirement? What is the lesson that he had for these people which still applies to us? We don't have to follow the letter of these regulations anymore, but we do have to obey the great principles that are involved. You will notice that for an Israelite to violate this requirement was a very serious offense. He was to be cut off from among his people if he did not follow it carefully. So this must be a very important principle.

Earlier in this book we have studied through the various penalties that were assessed for failures among the people of God. You will recall that the mildest form of punishment was to be declared unclean until evening. We saw that this was the equivalent of our experience of reverting from walking in the Spirit to walking in the flesh. The minute you depend upon yourself -- your personality, your background, your training, your heredity, your dedication, whatever -- to accomplish something for God's sake, you are walking in the flesh, rather than depending upon the activity of the life of Jesus Christ in you as a Christian, which is walking in the Spirit. The whole Bible labors to teach us that walking in the flesh is always unacceptable to God. It doesn't make any difference how good the results of it may appear to man; it is unacceptable to God. According to Paul in Romans, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God," {cf, Rom 8:7}. So if you do walk in the flesh it is uncleanness. And anyone who does so is unclean until he begins to depend again upon the Spirit of God. This is reflected in these Old Testament practices.

But here is something even more severe. This violator is to be cut off from among the people. This is the equivalent of the form of ostracism which is commanded in the New Testament when someone evidences a deliberate intent to continue in evil even when he knows it is wrong. You remember that there are particular instructions as to how to deal with this situation. In Matthew 18, Jesus tells us that if your brother falls into a fault of some kind you are to go to him and tell him what is wrong between you and him alone. If he will listen to you then it is all over and you can forget it. "You have gained your brother," Jesus said {Matt 18:15b}. "But if he won't hear you," if he willfully continues to offend, then you are to "take two or three with you and go to him again. If he won't hear them," and still remains unwilling to change his behavior in accordance with the Word of God, then "tell it to the church." And if he will not hear the church, then let him be to you as a Gentile or a publican, i.e., as though he were not a Christian at all {cf, Matt 18:16-17}. That is what it means to be cut off from among the people -- to be set aside and to have one's whole relationship to God in doubt. Even the question of his salvation is in jeopardy. This is the seriousness of failure to treat blood properly and to recognize that it belongs to God.

The reason for this is given in Verses 5-7:

"This is to the end that the people of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they slay in the open field, that they may bring them to the Lord, to the priest at the door of the tent of meeting, and slay them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the Lord; and the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the Lord at the door of the tent of meeting, and bum the fat for a pleasing odor to the Lord. So they shall no more slay their sacrifices for satyrs, after whom they play the harlot. This shall be a statute for ever to them throughout their generations." {Lev 17:5-7 RSV}

The object of this whole requirement is to teach that all life belongs to God and that he alone is capable of handling it rightly. Only God understands life. That is the basis for all proper behavior. If you don't understand that fact you are not going to behave properly. You can't. You must understand that your life belongs to God, and that all other life around you, even animal life, must be brought before God and related to him, with the understanding that life is a mystery which we cannot handle ourselves, in which man is incapable of properly directing his own affairs. This is the truth which God seeks to impart.

This is set against the pagan practice of offering animals to demons, called "satyrs" here. A satyr is a mythological figure, half-goat and half-man. It is really just an objectified form of demon worship. God is teaching his people that they are not to try to placate the spirits, as though man could manipulate the unseen spirit world and run life according to his own desires by some kind of abracadabra, hocus-pocus, or other form of magic. It is amazing what a grip this idea has upon people's minds! As you know, it is becoming more and more fashionable in our own day, with the rise again of interest in the occult, in astrology, and even in Satan-worship. All of this is motivated by people's desire in some way to manipulate and control the world of the spirits so that man thus handles life by himself. But that is what God wants us to get away from. We cannot handle life by ourselves. And this whole matter of bringing every bit of life and offering it to God was designed to teach people that fundamental fact.

When I was in the Philippines I had the great privilege of boarding one of the small planes operated by the Wycliffe Bible Translators and flying in to one of the remote tribes in the famous rice terrace area of northern Luzon. Perhaps you have seen pictures of the great rice terraces built in that region. They have been there for thousands of years and are sometimes called the "Eighth Wonder of the World". We dropped in to a little pocket-handkerchief airstrip carved from the side of a mountain and bumped along it until we finally stopped. They walked in to the village where Marjorie Cook, who grew up in this church, is working among these tribespeople with her helper. I stayed overnight in their guest house, and I was so entranced by my visit with these people.

But the thing that they were doing when I arrived was both saddening and fascinating. They were offering a pig to the spirits! I happened to arrive just as the sacrifice started, when they caught the pig and tied it up. Then , as I watched, the old women of the tribe gathered around and said incantations over the pig, bowed before it and waved cloths over it, and mumbled and whispered to the spirits. Then they took a knife and slit the pig's throat. They caught the blood in a basin, offered it to the spirits, and sprinkled it around as they uttered more incantations. I took pictures of the whole affair and I will show them to you when I get them developed.

What makes people do this? Why do primitive people everywhere believe that the life which is involved in that blood belongs somehow to the gods they worship? Well, it reflects a deep-seated conviction, a vestigial inheritance embedded deep in the human heart from the first days of mankind -- which is partly truth and partly error. The truth they know is that life is sacred. So primitive people believe that to placate spirits it is not enough just to offer grain or cloth or trinkets or something like that. The spirits are not so easily satisfied. It takes blood -- it takes life. But their error is to feel that somehow by this means they can manipulate the spirits, get them to work on their behalf, and that thus man can still remain in control of life. This is a reflection of the basic lie which is widespread, both in primitive cultures and in civilized nations such as ours, that man is somehow capable of handling life by himself. And in our day we are witnessing a revival of this ancient lie that, even though there are powers greater than man, man can control them, can manipulate them, and make them work for him.

God answers all that by commanding his people to cease these practices and to recognize that he alone is

sovereign in life, that he runs the world, and that he controls our lives. We live in his universe, and we cannot handle life ourselves. Therefore, the fundamental truth underlying all behavior everywhere is that we must first recognize that life belongs to God -- our own life and every other person's life -- and that God is sovereign in these affairs.

The second requirement regarding blood was that no one was permitted to eat it. Verses 10-14:

"If any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood. Any man also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust.

"For the life of every creature is the blood of it; therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off." {Lev 17:11-14 RSV}

As plainly as he possibly can God is teaching his people by means of this visual aid that blood has something mysterious and sacred about it, since it is the bearer of life itself. It is only recently that modern medical science has ever understood this great fact. For centuries people regarded blood as not vital to life, and even in relatively recent times blood-letting in the attempt to cure diseases was a common medical practice. Some historians feel that George Washington was practically murdered by his physicians when they kept bleeding him and thus made him too weak to recover from a simple cold. But it is blood that bears life and God has sought to teach this fact by restricting his people from eating it.

Now, if you are of Swedish or German background and grew up eating blood pudding, I don't want you to be disturbed. These restrictions are only shadows which have now passed away, since the reality has come. I am not inveighing against the practice of eating blood pudding. I don't like it, so please don't serve it to me! But if you like it, go ahead and eat it. The New Testament teaches everywhere that these ancient restrictions forbidding certain foods and certain ways of cooking things, and so on, have all been done away with. We are not subject to the shadows of the Old Testament anymore, except as to the reality toward which they point.

So, what is the reality here? It is declared plainly in the words of Jesus recorded in the sixth chapter of John. These words were spoken as our Lord taught in the synagogue at Capernaum. When I was in Israel on my way to the Philippines I drove one beautiful Sunday morning to the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. There I sat on the side of the hill where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount and, overlooking the site of ancient Capernaum, I read these words again, with great blessing to my own heart. Jesus is referring to himself here as the bread of life, the food sent down by God from heaven. And, beginning with Verse 52, John says,

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." {John 6:52-56 RSV}

There is the great reality!

Again, "the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," {Gal 3:24 KJV}. These ancient requirements in the Old Testament were but preparatory devices, visual aids, designed by God to prepare people for the proclamation of the truth from the lips of Jesus. And if they had understood this, as God had so carefully and patiently instructed them through the centuries, they would have received these words of Jesus with gladness and joy. But they didn't understand this principle at all. So you can imagine, in the face of this teaching in

Leviticus, how offensive these words were to Jews who had been taught all their lives that it was an abomination to eat blood. And now here comes Jesus who says, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you. You are dead. But if you do, you abide in me and I in you." Even his disciples were offended at this. In Verses 60-63 we read:

Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? ["Are you offended by this?" he said, "You ought to know better."] Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." {John 6:60-63 RSV}

What does this all mean? Well, you see, blood is life, this passage in Leviticus tells us, and our Lord was now teaching them the great truth toward which all these restrictions point -- that God has provided a new life from which to live, and that to eat the life of a fallen creation is no proper food for God's people. If you eat the blood of an animal, God is saying, you are partaking of the life of a fallen creation. You are, in a sense, by a figure, feeding upon the life of an animal which is part of a fallen creation. Remember that not only did man fall in the Garden, but all of nature fell with him. The whole natural world is tied to man. Since man is intended to have dominion over it, the natural world fell when man fell. In his letter to the Romans Paul argues that nature is subject to wrath because of man and that it is now travailing and groaning in anguish, waiting for the curse to be lifted which came upon it when man fell {cf, Rom 8:19-23}.

God is patiently trying to teach us that we are no longer to depend upon that fallen life, what we call "the flesh," the old life, the old method of operating. The resources that we lived by and depended upon before we became Christians -- our personality, our training and education, our good looks, whatever we counted on -- are no longer to be our resources. They are natural resources and to partake of them is wrong for a believer. That is what God is teaching. We are not to feed on a fallen life, for God has provided a new life, the life of Christ, imparted to us and now part of us. And that is a proper life -- a God-intended, God-provided life -- proper food. Therefore he who eats this life, drinks this blood, as Jesus said, "has eternal life," is operating on God's intended provision.

We eat and drink of this life whenever we draw upon the life of Jesus for strength to love someone who is not very lovely, or for patience when we are irritated and hard-pressed, or for kindness when we don't feel very good. If, in any moment of demand we reckon upon his life, then we are drinking his blood and eating his flesh. When we do that, his life is flowing in us and Christ is at work in us. That is the difference. And this is what God is seeking to remind us of. We have a reminder of it in the Lord's table where, by symbol, we eat of his flesh and drink of his blood, and that pictures the life we are to live. You can see how God labors to teach this. Anything else, he says, is a curse and if you fall prey to it you will be cut off from among your people, i.e., your life will be of such a character that there will be no observable change from the old life. You will not be living like a Christian. You may be a Christian, but you will not be living the Christian life if you depend on anything else.

Now let's move on to the theme of sex in Chapter 18:

Next to the preservation of life the most powerful human drive is sex. And sex, as we are beginning to understand these days, is like a great river which, when it flows quietly between its banks, is a boon and a blessing to mankind. But when it is raging in full flood, inundating the landscape in permissiveness and promiscuity, it is terribly destructive and hurtful. And so God's Word is careful to regulate us and help us in this area. It is amazing that God takes the risk of letting us have this fantastic power in our lives. He doesn't take sex away from us if we misuse it. He takes that risk with us, with a plea to us that we learn to keep it within its banks. That is the way this chapter starts:

And the Lord said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, I am the Lord your God. [That is, you can trust me.] You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. [All the nations have gone astray.] You shall do my

ordinances and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord your God. [That is, trust me!] You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live: I am the Lord." {Lev 18:1-5 RSV}

You can see how God underscores the purpose of these instructions. They are to make you live, not die -- not be restricted, not narrowed and hemmed in and prohibited from expressing yourself. No, quite the contrary! They are in order that you might live, might enjoy life to the fullest degree, might find it whole and rich.

So God instructs us, now, in this area of sex and here we learn truth about sex that you will never learn by reading the book *All You Have Ever Wanted to Know About Sex *but Have Been Afraid to Ask*. There is a lot here that is not in that book. I have read the book and found it very shallow. The author doesn't know very much about sex. He documents a few obscure sexual practices I hadn't heard about previously, but he gives very little information about what sex is and what it is for. Like every other worldly book about sex, this one doesn't tell you very much. It is very distorted.

But here in Scripture you get the truth about sex. All through the Scriptures we are taught that sex is to be a total union of a man and his wife, expressing physical, emotional, and spiritual oneness. That is what sex is all about. It is a total union. Therefore marriage is its only possible expression -- anything else immediately becomes abortive and hurtful because the union cannot be total outside of marriage. No way!

So, you see, sex with the wrong person is always harmful. And the most harmful of all, according to this passage, is sex with those who are near of kin. That is what God goes on to warn his people about, beginning with Verse 6:

"None of you shall approach anyone near of kin to him to uncover nakedness. I am the Lord. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home or born abroad. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter or of your daughter's daughter, for their nakedness is your own nakedness." {Lev 18:6-10 RSV}

The section goes right on, covering the cases of all the relatives and in-laws. The phrase which is used repeatedly here, "uncover nakedness." is a Biblical euphemism which designates the total act of sex, especially including sexual arousal, preliminary fore-play. Even that is prohibited because it is harmful. There is to be no sexual arousal practiced with anyone who falls into these categories.

By reading this section carefully and comparing it with other passages which deal with sex we can perceive two basic reasons for this prohibition:

First, genetically, as we well know, sex with relatives which results in procreation inevitably intensifies weaknesses in the family strain. The royal families of Europe are not very healthy because they have been intermarrying within their near of kin relationships for centuries and are now so closely intermarried that there is much physical weakness among them. And laws everywhere forbid incest. There is a recognition on the part of governments that society is injured by sexual relationships resulting in children between those of close kin.

And, second, psychologically, to have sex or even to arouse passion in one who is near of kin is to have a form of sex with oneself. As the passage indicates, nearness of kin is closeness to self. The "nakedness" of relatives is related to our own "nakedness." And sex with oneself, in any form, apparently violates a kind of protective shield which is intended by God to keep the race from demonic invasion. We don't understand much about human life. We are really very, very ignorant about what happens in human relationships, and that is where these words can be of great help to us. You need only read the scriptural passages that deal with sex to realize that there is a tie between illicit sexual practices and openness to demonic influence. This is why God warns again and again throughout the Scriptures that nations or individuals who give themselves over to widespread sexual laxity are opening themselves to the most destructive, pernicious, demonic activity.

When a proper regard for the sexual limitations prescribed by God is broken down, the barrier which protects mankind from the unseen forces of darkness which surround us is vitiated and demonic invasion can then occur very easily. This is what destroys a race. A nation begins to fall apart at that point. Society comes apart at the seams. You only need to read the first chapter of Romans to see how inevitable is the decay and the decline. And it moves rapidly into other forms of violations and perversions, as this passage goes on to specify: Verses 19-23:

"You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness. [That is an inordinate sexual demand, even within the marriage relationship.] And you shall not lie carnally with your neighbor's wife, and defile yourself with her. [That is adultery.] You shall not give any of your children to devote them by fire to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. [That was an offering of infants to the fiery iron god, Molech. They actually laid children in the heated arms of the image of the god so that the children were cremated alive. This was demon worship and evidently it was regarded as some form of sexual act.] You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. [That is homosexuality.] And you shall not lie with any beast and defile yourself with it, neither shall any woman give herself to a beast to lie with it: it is perversion." [That is bestiality]. {Lev 18:19-23 RSV}

All these practices, the Bible suggests, provide open doors to the destruction of the race, and of the individuals involved, because they open people's lives to demonic influence. The spirits of darkness which are waiting to move into humanity to possess it, individually and corporately, are given purchase, are given foothold by loose sexual practice. Thus satanic influence grows, and oppression and mental illness and all the other accompaniment of demonic activity creeps into the race.

The end result of this process is given in Verses 24-30:

"Do not defile yourselves by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am casting out before you defiled themselves; and the land became defiled, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for all of these abominations the men of the land did, who were before you, so that the land became defiled); lest the land vomit you out, when you defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. For whoever shall do any of these abominations, the persons that do them shall be cut off from among their people. So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs which were practiced before you, and never to defile yourselves by them: I am the Lord your God." {Lev 18:24-30 RSV}

How tenderly God deals with his people! How graciously and faithfully he warns them that by violating his statutes they will only destroy themselves and that the ultimate effect of sexual looseness is ecological disaster.

Now that is an amazing revelation! And it shows how little we understand life. We are so ignorant of our own humanity and of the way we are tied together and affect each other by what we do -- whether other people know about what we do or not. Especially have we been ignorant of the way in which all humanity relates ultimately to the land -- God never forgets that. Man does.

I wonder if there aren't young people here with us this morning who really have never had occasion to stop to think whether milk actually comes in cardboard cartons. It doesn't, of course. It comes from a cow, who eats grass. And bread doesn't come in loaves wrapped in waxed paper. It comes from grain grown on the land. Cities have a way of removing us from the land and we forget that we are a people totally dependent upon the soil. All human life stems directly from the land and is intimately related to the natural world.

And God says that there is a tie between wrongful sexual practices and ecological disaster. When sexual practices are wrong, demonic influence twists the thinking of men and they do things to the land which turns it against its inhabitants. The expressive figure that God uses is that the land is defiled and it "vomits out" the people -- it can't stand them anymore. It rejects them.

If you think that the ecological crisis we are undergoing today -- the widespread pollution and the destruction of our natural resources -- is due to the population explosion, you are very, very wrong, because there have been ecological disasters for millennia before now in human history. Here in this passage is the record of one. The inhabitants of the land of Canaan were cast out beforehand by the land itself because of the sexual looseness of the people. And there are many records of similar ecological disasters in human history -- long before there was a worldwide population boom. It isn't population explosion that creates the disaster. No, the reason for it is that man in his ignorance of life does not understand the things that unite us to the land and to nature.

We would never think that our harmful sexual practices have something to do with our ecological crisis. But God, in his infinite knowledge of human affairs, knows that there is a tie and he tells us faithfully and honestly, "If you go on in the way you are going, sexually, the land will become repulsed by you. You will violate it and destroy it, despite your best intentions, and it will reject you. You will no longer be able to sustain yourself upon it."

So, the impending ecological and economic disaster our nation is facing is directly traceable to the sexual permissiveness that we have indulged in, and to our creation of wrongful attitudes toward sex. It never occurs to us that there is a tie between *Playboy* and pollution, but it is there. God sees it and he is faithful to tell us these things.

We wouldn't understand all this if he didn't reveal it to us. And we cannot find our way out by ourselves. Nature reflects only the ravaged and ruined condition of the spirit of man. And as society falls apart in direct disobedience to what God has said -- ignoring the gracious provision of a Redeemer, of a Savior, who offers a whole way of life that is entirely different, and a different power to live by -- our nation becomes infiltrated with demonic thought, twisted satanic lies, delusions and illusions, and the land becomes increasingly defiled and sick. Ultimately, unless we have a national change of heart, it will vomit out its inhabitants.

God's word, of course, is always the same: Repent, think it over, think again -- especially the people of God -- and believe! Remember, God alone can handle life. God alone can master our sexual desires. And he is ready and graciously waiting to provide what we need, so that we might live a whole, full, abundant life.

Prayer:

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the revelation of your truth. How penetrating it is! How deep and profound it is! How it goes below the shallow thinking of the leaders of thought of our day and ties together things that we would think are quite disparate. We ask you, Lord, to help us to understand this, and to enable us to be an island of righteousness in the midst of a sea of iniquity, "to shine as lights in the midst of a generation of crooks and perverts" {cf, Phil 2:15}-- not because we are any better in ourselves, Lord -- we know we aren't -- but simply because by your grace you have opened our eyes and have taught us the truth. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

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