

“Purity and Holiness”

by Jon Cardwell

November 23, 2008

www.vayahiy.com

(<http://vayahiy.blogspot.com>)

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:2-8).

v.2 *“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”*

The prayer of the apostle is that grace and peace be increased to us in our recognition of God (the Father), and His Son, our Lord Jesus. This “knowledge” (ἐπιγνώσει) is not just information about God, but a thorough recognition of the supernatural revelation of that truth. It’s a full discernment. It is a gracious knowledge.

v.3 *“According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue:”*

Here is why we know that the knowledge is a supernatural recognition because it is according to His divine (θείας) power (δυναμεις) that the knowledge come as He has called us to glory (δοξη) and virtue (αρετη): glory and praise; glory and excellencies. Virtue is a word used of moral excellence, but also comes from manliness... a rather excelling discipline. Now this virtue, in context with the passage, is a supernatural grace.

Now, before we continue any further, let’s take a look at the times in which we live. Basically, I wrote the following and posted it on the Internet yesterday. Our text can find a very reasonable doctrinal application in the topic and considerations that I brought up in the article:

We are bombarded all the time with evil and wickedness because we live in an unregenerate world; we are surrounded by the depravity of the human condition that exists without God. It’s in the workplace. It’s in the stores we shop in. It’s in the parking lots before we even get to the stores. It’s in our very neighborhoods. It’s everywhere; we can’t help that.

Often, the images of the things we see and the sounds of the things we hear stay with us for quite a long time. So when we see something of the depraved condition of mankind, or hear of its corruption, it can affect us.

The salvation that Christ has purchased does not only save us from future judgment and give us the promise of being eternally with Him in the sweet by and by; it also strengthens our characters through sanctification as we experience real eternal life daily though we live in the midst of the corruption of a dying world. This is one of the reasons why the sovereign Lord left us on the planet until He come again. Death is around us, yet His life doth abound in us.

It is one thing to be in the world and not of the world, yet, quite another to run after its wickedness. “Wait a minute,” someone objects, “what wickedness do I run after?” One of the worst evils that we run after in 20th and 21st century America is entertainment in general, and with movies, sports, and television in particular.

“Now you’ve gone too far, Cardwell” another objects, “not all the things we see in them are evil and wicked.” Agreed; when we compare them to themselves they may not be that wicked or evil, and with that regard, your objection is correct; nevertheless, I ask you to take them to the Cross of Jesus Christ in the light of His precious Word and then tell me that they are not vile, evil, and altogether wicked. When we compare entertainment with entertainment and evaluate it within its own category, we are really doing so in order to justify our own indulgences in them.

Please keep in mind that I’m not saying that the medium is evil; that is, the technology that is used to convey the entertainment: cameras, projectors, film, tapes, recorders, TV sets, and etceteras (the rationale used to say these things are evil would imply that books are an evil medium as well). The medium to convey information, even truth, is neutral, neither good nor bad. There are some good, virtuous, and glorious media produced through these mediums today. Personally, I have been and continue to be blessed with audio recordings of Alexander Scourby’s narration of the Bible. In fact, I understand that there is a DVD available that allows you to read the Scriptures on the television while Mr. Scourby reads the blessed Word. Praise God! for when my hands can no longer turn the pages of my precious Volume, I will still have a way with which to read and hear God’s awesome revelation.

“Christianity” has synthesized so much of the world in the name of “cultural relevance” that we, as sincere Bible-believing Christians, almost have no choice but to justify the entertainment media, because to do so would condemn us as hypocrites through the millions of dollars we have spent to produce Christian entertainment in movies such as the *Left Behind* series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, or even movies based upon historical figures like William Wilberforce in *Amazing Grace* or Corrie ten Boom in *The Hiding Place*. I know, I know; I can already hear the arguments, even the outrage, that I have desecrated the sacred cow of movies that not only “have so much of God’s truth in them for the edification of the saints, they are also great tools for evangelizing the unchurched and the unsaved.” I hope that I might still maintain my disagreement with the “good view” of Christian entertainment in the spirit of meekness and humility by saying that those things are still only mere entertainment for the saints and misleading error for the unsaved (and I have combined the unchurched with the unsaved because someone who

doesn't love Christ's church, no matter what her faults, hates her Husband, Jesus Christ).

[I must insert this parenthetical note: I understand that because what I've just said may take someone quite off guard so I ask that if it has taken you off guard or offended you, please read the rest of the article carefully before rushing to judgment on the entire piece. I ask this, not for my sake; I care not that I be thought as vile and offensive— apart from Christ, I am nothing but a vile offense; but I ask, for your sake, dear reader. Please, read the entire treatise and consider it thoughtfully with a perspective of the Cross of Jesus Christ according to God's holy Word.]

Also, I must quickly interject here that there are anointed men of God, men that I recognize as servants of the Most High, who seem to me, to be far more holy than I could ever think to aspire to be, yet, they watch an occasional Hollywood theatrical release, one that has a reasonable "rating" from the MPAA and a story that is uplifting and seemingly edifying. Why would that be? I would suggest that the grace of God so overflows from His throne, so lavish at Calvary's tree, so mercifully pouring forth from the blood of His wounded side, that God's love covers a multitude of sins. Let me put it this way...

When we come before the Cross of Jesus Christ and its truth as revealed in God's awesome Word, even the best of our prayers and our most sincere devotions and worship fall short, and in fact, are utterly sinful, compared to the pure glories, the infinite majesties and eternal splendors found in the love, grace, and mercy of God displayed in the Trinity during the crucifixion of Christ. How, then, could we possibly glorify a movie or television program as something better than our prayerful meditations in God's Word when that form of entertainment only has a small portion of God's truth or principle at best, and is merely only the director's interpretation of it. And if the writer and director in Hollywood are unsaved, are we supposed to believe that he or she is a false and greedy prophet like Balaam, going forth in a trance like Balaam to prophecy good tidings and God's blessings upon God's people?

And as I mentioned earlier, the medium of film, video, audio, &etc. is not wicked in and of itself. It is only the technology of communication that we have progressed into in these last days. Yet, are we now slaves to that technology that we cannot communicate without it? Here's an example of what I mean...

I received an email recently for a petition that was circulating to receive one million signatures in order to express a multitudinous concern with regard to Christian ministry broadcasted on American airwaves. It appears that a petition with 287,000 signatures, only 1 percent of the U.S. population, is being brought before the federal government so that religious broadcasting would be removed from the American airwaves. Now, frankly, I have been quite blessed by some of the anointed teachings from ministers I have heard on the radio or seen on a video, either videotape or digital disc. I, myself, have also been on the radio frequently in Alaska, and have even been told by others what a blessing it has been to them. Therefore, in one sense, I would like to see the freedoms we have in America, particularly the religious freedoms purchased by the lives, blood and prayers of our founding fathers continue to flourish. Nonetheless, I believe that there's an important spiritual perspective that we are truly missing when we don't bring

this before the Cross of Christ. Would it actually be that bad if religious broadcasting were removed? Perhaps, it may actually be a greater blessing than having it at all as it currently exists. Consider this:

1. Not only would the good ministers be removed from broadcasting, but also removed from the airwaves would be the false, injurious and altogether heterodox teachers and teachings that have been expressed lately in the name of Jesus.
2. Such removal may stimulate actual Biblical evangelism because now, instead of having our beloved pastor preaching on the radio to reach the masses, we, the body of Christ, would have to be mobilized to do that work in our communities. My, whatever did the Reformers, Puritans and Covenanters do before radio? or our apostolic and prophetic fathers two thousand years ago for that matter?
3. Think of the time our pastors and teachers would have in prayer and the study of God's Word for the flocks under their care if they didn't have to spend time on today's technology in appearing on television, preaching on the radio, or teaching in videos for conferences and home Bible studies, &etc.
4. In fact, though this may actually be a part of point 3 above, by not broadcasting, the pastor may actually have more time for visitations, praying for and with the parishioners, and building up the man of the house to be the leader of his home by training him in the catechism and confession of faith so that that husband and father could be the head of his family for God's glory.
5. Think of the time we might have in conversation with one another as the Lord's people, speaking to one another as the oracles of God and making merry in our hearts with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, instead of turning on the radio to hear our favorite Christian broadcaster.
6. Think of the time we might have in praying with one another, and reading the Scriptures to one another, as a family in our homes, again, instead of turning on the radio to hear our favorite Christian broadcaster.
7. Think of all the other financial and material resources that could be saved for something like missionary support, Bibles for the people and translations in their native tongues, orphanages for the fatherless, homes for the widows indeed, mercy for the despairing, food for the hungry, help for the needy, healing for the infirmed, clothing for the destitute, and hey... how about this one: a salary for our pastors (and with that, I believe that you are all sophisticated enough to know that I'm speaking of pastors that take on one or more full or part-time jobs to feed their families so they can continue in the work God called them to do: minister to a local congregation).
8. By all means, keep religious broadcasting and support it prayerfully and financially; but if it is kept to the downfall, detriment, or dismissal of any of the points mentioned above, especially in those graces and mercies mentioned in point 7, then let our current Christian broadcasting be anathema, and may it perish in the most severe compartment of hell along with every vile and wicked sin of the ungodly world. In fact, if our Christianity is merely represented by the technology we use, though the Word that comes forth through the airwaves is blessed, the means to convey the truth is actually blasphemy because the truth becomes mere lip service: *"This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me"* (**Matthew 15:8**); and again, *"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore*

whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Matthew 23:2-3).

The example above has exposed some important points that allow us to look at the overall area of entertainment with a good and godly perspective. If these points, and I believe that they are valid and very important for our consideration, apply to the outright preaching and teaching of God’s Word in using the technological mediums available to us, then these points mentioned above would most assuredly warrant the same consideration with regard to religious entertainment, i.e., Christian movies produced from fictitious literature, such as the *Left Behind* series; and Christian theatrical releases of a biographical or historical nature, like the movies *Amazing Grace* and *The Hiding Place*.

Through Christian entertainment we have spent a great deal of money for a marginal result. If we would rather watch a movie about the church of Christ than *be* the church of Christ then there is really something wrong with what we are doing and it is time that we stop, bring it before the Cross of Grace, and seek its correction, instruction, and training in righteousness through God’s holy Word.

After looking at this subject from the perspective of Christian radio preaching and Christian movies and television, we might think that to discuss the secular world’s influence upon us through the entertainment media would be unnecessary. Yet, I sense that as I write, if I don’t reiterate these same truths about Hollywood’s contribution in polluting our purity, someone may say, “Well, you never said anything about renting at Blockbuster or subscribing to Showtime!”

With regard to Hollywood entertainment, both theatrical and television, let us ask ourselves the following questions and consider the following points:

1. Does the movie or television program you intend to watch come from the world or come from God? from darkness or light? If it comes from darkness, then it is a given, we should have no part of it, and in fact, are commanded to rebuke the unfruitful works of darkness: “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*” (**Ephesians 5:11**).
2. Does the movie or television program you intend to watch glorify God in its entirety or are there some scenes, segments or portions that glorify Satan, evil, wicked works, sinful man, or the unbelieving world? If so, we are commanded not to set it in front of us: “*I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me*” (**Psalms 101:3**). Justifying the good parts over the wicked parts in a play, show, movie, or program turns us aside from the glory of God and causes their works to cling to us, and us to them.
3. Does that movie or television program you intend to watch take you or any members of your family away from delighting in daily prayer to God, worship of God, and reading and meditating upon God’s Word? It is written, “*Pray without ceasing*” (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**); “*Rejoice evermore*” (**1 Thessalonians 5:16**); “*But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in His law doth he meditate day and night*” (**Psalms 1:2**).

If a movie or television writer, director, and producer are unsaved, their interpretation of even a good thing is from a dead, unredeemed, unregenerate, reprobate heart and spirit. Therefore, why would we go to them for spiritual truth? Simply, we wouldn't because it's not appropriate. It's not fitting. The disciples didn't fast while Jesus was with them. A lawyer, as educated as he is, is not the best choice for having a medical exam; and we certainly wouldn't have our physician defend us in civil court. *"No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old"* (**Luke 5:36**).

In fact, the scholarly divines who framed the Westminster Confession of Faith and those saintly men who penned the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 would have considered the casual viewing of a Hollywood movie or television program equal to breaking the seventh commandment of God, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery"* (**Exodus 20:14**). That's right. The Westminster shorter catechism states that the things forbidden by this commandment are "all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions" (Answer 71; with Scripture proofs from **Matthew 5:28; Ephesians 5:3-4**).

So, as Francis Schaeffer puts it, "How should we then live?"

v.4 *"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."*

In the exceeding great and precious promises given us, which we will see in a moment, we become partners, as it were, that is, enter into a fellowship with God in the participation of His work of conforming us to the divine nature of His beloved Son; purifying us and making us holy... and in so doing, *THAT* is how we become distinct, separate, holy people unto the Lord; *THAT* is how we are further distinguished from the corruption of the world and its lusts, which we have escaped by God's sovereign grace in our Redemption purchased upon Calvary's Tree. Therefore,

v.5a *"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue;"*

Because of the reality of the Christ's Redemption Truth, His sovereign grace in salvation that is evidenced by saving faith, we are moved to add to that faith, virtue (αρετη); that excellence that comes through supernatural discipline: a desire for personal purity and holiness.

Personal purity comes from a determination not to willingly set those vile, evil and wicked things before us. When we do not *"walk circumspectly"* (**Ephesians 5:15**), we willingly and, or, unwittingly place ourselves in the very situations that do not bring glory to God, and will furthermore, bring less glory to Him if left uncorrected because it retards our spiritual maturity, our growth in faith.

Remember that determination does not come from the innate strength within us, but from *His* supernatural power from above: *"for when I am weak, then am I strong"* (**2 Corinthians 12:10**).

v.5b *"and to virtue knowledge;"*

Although this is the root of the word “knowledge” we saw in **vv.2-3**, this “knowledge” (γνῶσις) is the general knowledge that comes by factual information; in context with the whole of Scripture, and this passage in particular, this is the knowledge that not only contains general facts, but revelation truth found in God’s holy Writ.

The more we surrender to God by the reality of Christ’s Redemption Truth, the more we will desire to set the good and pure things before our eyes, meditate upon the true and pure things in our thoughts, and listen for and hear the holy and pure things with our faith.

“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Psalms 12:6).

The purity of God’s pure word purifies our minds; then with pure minds, subjects our wills; then with submissive wills, strengthens us to increasingly turn aside from the wicked things and increasingly embrace the honest, the just, the pure, the lovely, the virtuous, and the praiseworthy (**Philippians 4:8**).

The greatest distance that the truth must travel is not the eighteen inches from the head to the heart, but instead, the eighteen inches from the heart to the head. The reality of the regenerated life in Christ, a new creation with a new heart and new spirit, must now be realized by a renewed mind. The mind must now get in step with the new life wrought by the supernatural power of God by His sovereign grace; and that mind is renewed by the truth of God’s Word.

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4:23).

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).

v.6a *“And to knowledge temperance;”*

Temperance (ἐγκρατεῖαν) can be translated “self-control”; yet, I suggest that this is a further submission to God through the revelation of His Word, as it reveals the majesties and glories of the Cross, because this “temperance” is the same word used of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:23**).

v.6b *“and to temperance patience;”*

This “patience” (υπομονήν) here is not the same patient “long-suffering” (μακροθυμία) of **Galatians 5:23**. This is the steadfast endurance that comes through great tribulation: *“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).*

See how they are kept? by the commandments of God.

v.6c *“and to patience godliness;”*

“Godliness” (ευσεβειαν) is the same word used in **2 Peter 1:3**. It is also translate “holiness.” First, this godliness is recognized as what the Word of God is all about: “*and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness*” (**Titus 1:1**); and second, the holiness of God’s Word supernaturally transforms the hearer (or reader): “*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory*” (**1 Timothy 3:16**). This is what the born-again life is. As Christ was manifest in the flesh to redeem sinful man, though ascended to heaven His godliness is manifest in mortal flesh through those He has graciously saved.

v.7a “*And to godliness brotherly kindness;*”

“Brotherly kindness” (φιλαδελφιαν) is the supernatural affection of saints that honors and esteems others as better than ourselves, giving them first place or first rank in our hearts and minds: “*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another*” (**Romans 12:10**). This is an expression of true Biblical humility.

v.7b “*and to brotherly kindness charity.*”

“Charity” (αγαπην) from the root *agape*. This includes everything in **1 Corinthians 13**, to God and to others.

v.8 “*For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

To “abound” (πλεοναζοντα) means to “increase moreover.” In other words, this isn’t a do-this-once-and-you’re-done kind of thing. As your faith as now increased (**Romans 1:17**) and God’s glory in you has increased (**2 Corinthians 3:18**), then you add again, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity, again and again; ad infinitum, until the Lord come.

[Now, although I mentioned sports as part of entertainment, and I concentrated mainly on movies and television, we’ll just have to leave that as a topic for another time. Let us, go with and grow with that which the Lord has given us here, and press toward the mark of our high calling in Jesus Christ by renewing our minds with His blessed Word, and taking every thought captive unto the obedience of Jesus Christ.]