

When we were at **VMI** in October, I was impressed by all the cadets marching to and from breakfast in perfect array.....

I did not say I was envious.... but I was impressed....

They were immediately identifiable (not only as belonging to the institution) but by their particular class....

(I am told that) **Marching** is used in boot camp to teach soldiers good order and discipline....

The purpose of that **used** to be,.... so that soldiers could effectively be maneuvered in battle.... and so that officers could keep count of everyone as they moved from one location to another....

Well.... **we** ...who are in the army of God.....also have MARCHING ORDERS... ..
By faith...we are following in lock step with our Commander in Chief. The Lord Jesus Christ...

He is leading us in **Triumphal Procession**..... not to some **Mess Hall**.....

But to the Celestial City.... to Mount Zion!.....

What keeps us following Him is that the **fragrant aroma** of His SACRIFICIAL death on our behalf.... continually reminds us of the depth of His love for us.....

We know we have been REDEEMED....and that we are not our own... we have been bought with a price....

But as we march in His procession.....All along the way.... we are going to encounter **BATTLES** with the enemy.....

(some of you have experienced that this week)..... conflicts, doubts, fears...pain and suffering assail us...

If we find ourselves stepping out of formation.... (in order to coast for a while)....we will be sitting ducks...for enemy attacks....

Worse than that.... we will bring disgrace to the uniform of Christ... we have been called to wear...

I want you to have that picture of you following Christ.... as a soldier in His army... along with all the other believers who call upon the Name of the Lord with a pure heart.....

As you listen to

Your Marching Orders

(from here in Eph. 5)

1. Keep in Step with the King

One of the biggest problems in our culture is that everyone seems to march to the beat of a different drummer.....so there is very little commonality of purpose or IDENTITYleft in America.... only **confusion** with every man doing what is right in his own eyes...

By contrast, however, those who have been promised an eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God.... march to the beat of **ONE** drummer....

We are intentional followers of the risen Lord Jesus Christ....

We are the Army of the Holy Ones.....

Christ lives in us...by His Spirit..... He **leads** us...(both individually and corporately) by showing us where and how to walk through this wilderness called LIFE... here in His **Word**....

Last week.... we saw from Eph. 5:1-2.... that we follow Him by walking in **LOVE**....by becoming IMITATORS of GOD...(that means)

Loving what God loves....hating what God hates.....

We follow in the example of Christ.... not in order to **become** HIS.... but because God **already has** joined us to Himself and now asks us to walk accordingly....

So as you go through life.... day by day.... hour by hour..... you are making choices.... you **habitually** walk... **according to** someone's rule.....

Either **your own**..... (which means you have declared yourself to be god)... or the world's...(which means you are an idolater)....**OR**.... you follow Christ....walking according to THIS rule...

The Bible makes it clear..... **a Christian** marches in step with Jesus.

1 John 2:6

"whoever says he abides in him ought to walk **in the same way in which he walked**."

Jesus walked on earth in HOLY obedience to His Father

We are to BE holy... as He is Holy.... because He has made us His **SAINTS**...

In our passage today... our Captain begins by focusing on where **NOT** to walk..if we are going to keep in step with our King...

Ephesians 5:3-4

"But **sexual immorality** and all impurity or covetousness must **not even be named** among you, as is **proper among saints**. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, **which are out of place**, but **instead let there be thanksgiving**."

Christ's life was a fragrant aroma... because of His sacrificial love on display at the cross...

It **wafts** out from His story.... every time it is called to mind.....every time the good news is spoken....

If you are marching in His formation... your response is **THANKSGIVING**....

Think of that as the **cadence** to which you march through this life.....

Christ... our leader....shares His gospel.....and you echo back with THANKSGIVING....and praise....

It is the sound of worship.... it is the sound of a happy Christian.....walking with Jesus.

It is also the **ANTEDOTE** for fighting against the vices that Satan wants to derail us with.....

Paul takes pains (here in our marching orders) to make these **pitfalls** abundantly clear... because they are **traps** in which Satan wants to snare you.....

They are VICES = (immoral habits).... which **ooze** into our lives electronically... visually and audibly....

They **DEFILE** you.... in heart, mind and soul.... and render you **unfit** for service in the King's Army....

So Paul says... not only must you not **PRACTICE** them... but there should not even be a **TRACE** of them evident in your life...

First pitfall.... is translated here (v. 3) **sexual immorality** – the Greek word is **pornea** (from which we get our word pornography)...

It is referring to the fixation on the satisfaction of sexual desires outside of marriage....and particularly **BEFORE** marriage.... **or** as is growing increasingly common in America... **IN PLACE of** marriage...

Pornea is so ingrained and accepted in the thinking of nearly everyone you come in contact with.... every media source available to you.....that you have to be extra vigilant for it not to be woven into the fabric of **your** ransomed life...

Ephesians 5:12

"For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do **in secret**."

Do you have any secret compartments in your mind or in your life?

Ones where you go to practice things you would never dream of anyone knowing about.....

If you are a Christian... they bring SHAME to your Savior....

Not only do we sometimes **speak** of sexual immoral people, we follow them..... we spend hours celebrating their lifestyles with them.... and call it **entertainment**.

If you struggle with sexual immoral thoughts (or actions)... the remedy is to REPLACE those things which are out of step....

with THANKSGIVING...

If you are married... give thanks continually for every aspect of your spouse....

Rejoice in him or her (alone)..... as God's provision... God's personalized GIFT to you.

"We are not to joke about our sexuality, but to **give God thanks for it**. Christians are not repressive about sexuality. Rather, they hold it in **highest respect**. Joking degrades it. Thanksgiving preserves it." Kent Hughes

the next pitfall that has no place in our lives.....is similar to pornea.... ...

all impurity (uncleanness).."

One of the biggest blessings (this side of heaven) is the experience of having been **made PURE** through the atoning blood of Jesus...

- GIVE THANKS for that (even now) ! Jesus has made you pure!

He has purified for Himself a PEOPLE for His own possession....

Hebrews tells us He has purified our consciences so that we might serve Him without fear....

Titus 1:15-16

"To the **pure**, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, **nothing** is pure;

but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."

In the OT... all of the ritualistic washings... and abstentions...of the priests.... prior to entering into the service of God.... were meant to be an outward portrayal of how you and I should **prepare our MINDS for action**....now

You recall how the priests were considered CEREMONIALLY **unclean**.... if they came into contact with any of those defiling substances....

One of the main reasons **some** of you have little appetite for the things of God.... is because your mind is still conversant with the **filth** and **vulgarity** of the world....

1 Thessalonians 4:7-8

"For God has not called us for **impurity**, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you."

You are called to holiness.... because you are now inhabited by the Holy Spirit of your King.

You need to know.... that whereas they did not have electronic media to pump worldly values and affections into their lives at the rate of flow you now experience....

The moral climate and values of **Ephesus** when Paul wrote this letter were very much like the ones in America today....

Sexual immorality and homosexuality were accepted by nearly everyone (except for those following Christ).... as being perfectly normal....

And so when Paul tells them that they are to allow "not even a hint" of vulgarity and impurity into their lives.... by replacing their thinking with thanksgiving.....

- The prescription is going to be equally effective for you and I today.

As you are marching.... giving God thankswalking in procession to the house of God....

Be on guard against every form of **GREED..**

Paul calls it here:

Covetousness – being greedy for what you do not have... it is an inability to be **content** with what God has provided for you...

That might be a greed for women (other than your wife)... or it might be for more and better **stuff**.

ML Jones points out that Paul is condemning not just the love of money as money... (which Jesus said is the root of all evil)..but he is condemning the love of all money can do and achieve.

Curtis Vaughan says that while this vice is **celebrated** in our culture...it is **unsparingly** condemned in the NT... always being listed right beside the **vilest** of sins...

That is why Paul says (v. 5) that the greedy (covetous) person is an **idolater**...

Coveting is passionately desiring something **CREATED** in place of a desire for your CREATOR ... who alone can satisfy the longings of your heart.

Have you seen the commercial?...where a wife is taking her husband out to the driveway to surprise him with the gift of a new car on Christmas morning..... he is all happy and they show him sitting in the drivers seat... and just then.... another make of car comes driving down the street... his jaw drops... and you see his heart go out to what he really wants....

That's **covetousness**.... that is a heart that is never **content** with what God has provided you... but is continually lusting after something ELSE.

It is **out of step** with the army of God.... it is marching to the beat of the enemy of your soul....and therefore not even a hint of it should be allowed to exist in your life.

It is not FITTING...for a saint.

No matter what the WORLD says... it is improper among SAINTS.... which is what you are..

As your heart is bathed in thanksgiving... you will create a holy distance between you and these wicked practices....

Ephesians 5:4

"Let there be no **filthiness** nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."

Off color humor and sexual innuendo's are the steady diet of almost anything labeled **COMEDY** in our culture...

Yet filthy speech can only come from a filthy heart... it is the talk of a people who know not God.

The reason they are out of place for you..... is they are making a mockery of the One who sent His Son to rescue you **OUT of** this age...

Foolish talk and crude joking tries to strike the familiar chord of LUST in your mind.... so as to make you laugh...

Make no mistake..... God has designed you to laugh!.... and you can have a good time following Jesus by laughing at yourself.... and with lighthearted teasing of each other....

As long as it is done in love... and not malice.... and **not** in making something COMMON out of something sacred...

Jesus is not amused by sexual innuendo's and dirty jokes.... and you are following HIM.

Replace that pastime with thanksgiving.... you'll find that they stem from vastly DIFFERENT spirits.

the 2nd of your marching orders...

√2. Fear the Consequences of Disobedience

Eligibility has been a hot topic in the world of NCAA football as of late. To be eligible to play amateur collegiate sports.... one must not have any hint of receiving COMPENSATION...

If a player chooses to take compensation (money, housing, a car...) he renders himself INELIGIBLE...

Those bribes are not labeled (like a pack of cigarettes)... WARNING..taking this will render you ineligible to do what you have spent your life training for....

There is a HIDDEN COST of the cheap thrill...

Likewise... anyone who names the Name of Christ but persists in living an impure, immoral life....or who spends his life COVETING.... renders himself INELIGIBLE to participate in the KOG...he is **disqualified**.

Ephesians 5:5

"For you may be **sure** of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

How many times have you heard someone say.... well I just not sure if he / she is a Christian... they accepted Christ when they were a child.... but in the last 20-30 years it has really been impossible to tell them apart from the world...

Paul says here is something you can be **SURE** of!

Everyone...who leads an immoral life...who is impure... or who worships what he can **GET** here in this life... in place of God... **doesn't** belong to the Kingdom...

He is not a part of the church....where Christ is the Head and we are following His lead.... according to His rule....

Nor should he have any hope of HEAVEN... and the eternal KOG.... when it is consummated after every enemy has been put under Christ's feet....

1 John 3:10

"By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever **does not practice righteousness** is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother."

If that describes you... this morning..... I hope you will FEAR GOD enough to **repent...**

To turn from your lifestyle of SIN... and come to the cross.....be saved from what is coming to the devil and all who prove to be his children...

- For what identifies people as a followers of Christ... as soldiers in is **his** army is the **uniform** of their obedience to His commands!

As you rejoice in Christ's redeeming work on your behalf... giving thanks and praise... you will find grace to **DO** what He asks...(little by little)

And the purity which He has freely given you...in Jesus... will begin to be **seen** in your actions...day by day. Those ACTS... those DEEDS.... (do not pass away like things done in fleshly power)..... Instead... like Josephs coat of many colors.....Those deeds make up...one by one ... the wardrobe with which you will be clothed for all eternity!...

Revelation 19:7-8

"Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and **pure**"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints."

As you walk by faith in Christ...in procession to Zion.... you DEEDS (done through faith) are the **UNIFORM** by which you can be properly identified as a child of God.

By Contrast....those who live a life **of DISOBEDIENCE**... are destined to endure the wrath of God.

Ephesians 5:6

"Let no one deceive you with **empty words**, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon **the sons of disobedience**."

Empty Words DOMINATE the landscape of our culture...

They stem from carnal hearts..... out after their own desires.....

Here is a definition of an empty word – one with no Bible behind it.

If someone gives you counsel... or teaching..... and can not show you how the backbone of Scripture is what supports it.... it is an **empty** word...

It might SOUND good.... it might even **FEEL** good.....but it is a trick... it is empty

You must not be deceived by it!

Isaiah 8:20

"To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn."

The empty teaching of today says.... "Oh God will just meet everyone where they are...."

He is too loving to send someone to hell. All roads lead to heaven.

Truth:

God is **so** immensely loving.... He sent His very own Son... from heaven ... to this pit of treason called earth..... KILLED him in your place on a tree.....so that if you BELIEVE on Jesus... you will **not** perish but have everlasting LIFE....

That's how loving God is.....

But God is also perfectly **JUST**...he will **by no means** leave the guilty unpunished.

He says here..... **WRATH**... unimaginably terrible anger.....COMES upon the sons of disobedience...

"COMES" here is **present** tense....

What that means.... is that **as** you DISOBEY God's commands... you will suffer current consequences in this life.... God is not mocked... you will begin to suffer retribution and a foretaste of wrath THRU the consequences of choosing to walk in rebellion against the goodness of God.

Romans 1:18

" For the wrath of God **is revealed** (is being revealed)...from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

As men **push down** the truth of God into a corner...**so** they can DISOBEY... and commit unrighteous acts...

They suffer....

Just ask someone trapped in homosexuality....

Ask someone addicted to crack....

Or a compulsive gambler.... whose life is ruined by GREED.

That is a foretaste of the wrath of God.... it FEELS like hell on earth....

But it is not..... it is only a glimpse of the wrath to come.

Where God says the worm does not die and flame is not ever put out....

The Lake of Fire.....reserved for the devil and his angels.....

Where I pray **NONE** of you will spend eternity....

You don't HAVE to.....

John 3:36

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God **remains on him**."

The COST of cheap thrills is exceedingly high. It is a HIDDEN cost... Satan does not want you to see or realize....

Believe on the Son!..... Trust that God's Word is true....and that there is grace to repent....

Here is HOPE God gives sinners like us on the other side of the same coin....

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not

be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such **were** some of you. But **you were washed**, you were sanctified, you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Let's be a church... that marches to His beat... rejoicing in thanksgiving as we go.