

Introduction

- How do you seek fulfilment?
- Its mainstay of the advertising industry...
 - eg "Drive of your life", Peugeot
 - or all those glossy magazines!!
- In this passage Paul draws four contrasts:
 - four true signs of a fulfilled life;
 - and four fake ways in which the world seeks fulfilment but ultimately finds out something second best.

A life of love, instead of chasing sex (v.1-3)

- *On page 2 of the Sun was a sobering news report: "men who watch too many porn films are four times as likely to become impotent because they get bored by the images they see of the body, warned Italian sex expert Andrea Dotti." Opposite this on page 3 was a photo of a naked woman, with the usual kind of caption... Did no one on the editorial team notice the irony!?!*
- First sign of a fulfilled life is one lived in love.
 - and that in stark contrast to the chasing after sex that, then and now, is often viewed as an alternative.
- For the kind of love Paul invites us to share is the kind of love which took Christ to the Cross!
 - it is that intense!
 - comes in deep relationship, the kind there should be between members of the Christ's family, Christians;
 - seeking it in sex only leads to quest for more sex...
 - *Tamasin Day-Lewis, producer of a Channel 4 documentary series on adultery, said: "I haven't yet been able to find a happy adulterer."*
- Why settle for second best?

A life of thanksgiving, instead of cynicism (v.4-7)

- The Christian who has opted for second best might also find momentary laughter in gossip, coarse talk and negative cynicism about the world and people in it.
- But Paul assures us there is something better:
 - conversation which springs out of a basic thankfulness for what God is doing in the world.
- Doesn't mean every sentence is full of religious words!
- Rather our conversation can be under-pinned by an attitude of thankful and optimistic joy in the good.
- Thinking that smut and sarcasm, the demolition of someone else's character is the height of wit is just deceitful.
- Why settle for second best?
- *Peter Graystone is a Christian writer from England. As a teenager he and a friend when they were travelling on the London underground. It was a long journey, and since there was nothing else to entertain the two, they were whispering with each other about their fellow travellers. With some shame he remembers that it was a disgracefully stereotypical guessing game about the jobs that various people did. As the train pulled into a station, a middle-aged woman walked the entire length of the carriage, and as she passed them bent down and said quietly, "Actually, I teach deaf and dumb children how to lip read."*
- Why settle for second best?

A life of light, instead of secret deeds (v.8-14)

- "Deeds of darkness" are those which have a secret appeal, but which we cannot fully enjoy because we could not talk to Christian friends about them....
 - and we all have some "deeds of darkness" in our closets.
- The kinds of pleasure which cannot be appreciated because bringing them to "the light" of public knowledge would be shameful and not only second-best, but completely illogical for the Christian (v.8).
- Don't settle for second best!

A life in the Spirit, instead of dulled by spirits (v.18-20)

- It is frightening what one little misprint can do! Not just Crawford and the prayer sheet - the notice sheet in Motherwell suffered the same fate fairly regularly!
- *Most amusing misprint I've heard in a while: a Baptist church in West London was promoting a charismatic celebration... but they accidentally advertised the wrong kind of spirit on the advertising leaflets! It said: "The service will be Spirit led. It well BE GIN with prayer"!!!*
- A completely exhilarating life is available to the Christian because of the presence of the Holy Spirit.
 - the excitement he brings can be both physical and emotional, as well as spiritual
 - alcohol has a physical excitement, but with a painful price to pay;
 - alcohol has an emotional excitement, but eventually a morose after-taste;
 - and alcohol alone never has a hint of spiritual uplift
- Don't settle for second best!

Conclusion

- There is, of course, more at stake than just settling for second best in life.
 - it is a matter of choosing what is wise, with all the wisdom of God;
 - making the most of your years on the planet, because there is an evil in the world which will try and stop us;
 - doing what God wants, because to waste all he has done for our reconciliation is simply foolishness (and nobody likes to be a fool!).
- You see, selfish sex, cynical words and attitudes, deeds of darkness, drink are all ways of covering over our need for love:
 - we want fulfilment, and ache for something that will fill that void
 - but the funny thing is, we are already loved!
 - why are we to be imitators of God - because we are already his children
 - **and particularly, his dearly loved children!**
- As we become more deeply aware of his love for us, our status as dearly loved children, we will want to imitate him:
 - and so the second bests of selfish sexual lust, of cynical words, of secret deeds, of alcohol over God's Spirit will pale
- **Deeply impressed by sons of Fred Masson!**
 - **I want my boys to pick up on what I think is important** (and not just my undoubted bad habits!!)
 - **but more, I want to so know that I am God's loved son that I will imitate him!**