

# The Portrait of the Church: Purity (Part 3)

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[ 0 : 00 ] It can be opening your Bibles to Ephesians.

Of course, that's where we are and have been and will be for I'm not sure how long. We are going to be getting into chapter 5, so you know we are progressing.

We will get through about 8 verses of chapter 5 tonight as we kind of focus on the portrait of the church. And we will explain again that's kind of what this larger portion of the letter to the Ephesians is about and kind of two strokes of the brush concerning the church and that is unity.

And we've spent quite a bit of time looking at those portions of scripture that deal with unity or oneness in the church. And now we've been on the subject of purity, purity, purity in the church. And really, we've been on that a little while. And we'll be on that subject all the way up through verse 21 of chapter 5. And so the portrait of the church.

[ 1 : 19 ] Now we've already looked at how believers are to walk differently. And we looked at the description of that difference. And we looked also at the kind of some of the implications of that difference in our walk as believers.

And then number two, tonight, we'll start to look at this portion of it or aspect of it. And that is that believers walk rightly.

Believers walk rightly. And really, that will take us all the way to verse 17 of chapter 5. So chapter 5, verses 1 through 17. I'm going to go ahead and read that portion of it, even though we're not going to get all the way to 17 tonight, but this will at least put this second point concerning the purity of the church, put all of it together in our minds as we look at the scriptures.

So let me go ahead and start with verse 1. Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as it is fitting for saints, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

[ 2 : 57 ] For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light. For whatever makes manifest is light.

Therefore, he says, awake, you sleep. Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

[ 4 : 10 ] Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. All right? So, all 17 verses will come under this heading, Believers Walk Rightly.

And so, for these 17 verses, really as we look and we can divide them pretty neatly into three parts. Now, not equal parts in terms of numbers of verses.

But it really does divide itself pretty easily, pretty neatly. And we can do that by noticing the three times that Paul uses one of his favorite words, and that is the word walk.

He uses the word walk three times in these 17 verses. Each time he uses the word walk, it is to introduce an aspect of the believer's walk as a child of God in this world. And not just believers kind of in some generic sense, but, or, you know, a wide, broad sense. But believers in terms of the assembly of the local body of believers. [ 5 : 22 ] God's new society. And, all right, so, this is why we say that believers should walk rightly. And this will be our focus for these 17 verses.

Now, the first one, where Paul uses the word walk, and so, therefore, identifies this kind of first division of this passage. The first time is really in verse 2. The first time he uses it in verse 2, and you see it there. And walk in love. The latter part of verse 2. Walk in love. All right, now, Paul says a number of things about this love. So, we want to kind of focus on this love to begin with. To walk in love. And he says at least three things about this love. The first thing is the imitation of love. That aspect of the love of which Paul is speaking. The imitation. Imitation of love. Verse 1. So, we begin with verse 1.

[ 6 : 23 ] Therefore, be what? Imitators. Imitators of who? Of God. As dear children. All right, so, he's identifying us as dear children.

That's the way it is translated in the New King James Version. And I think also in the King James. But almost every other translation is a little bit different. It uses a different word.

So, let me explain. This phrase, as dear children, is speaking of who we are in our relationship to God. All right?

We are loved by God. As dear children, we are loved by God. And we know that, don't we? I mean, obviously, we should know that. There may be some times that circumstances and other things in life may cast some doubt.

But that doesn't last very long. And usually we think, well, this is not possible that God would not love me. I know he loves me. And he loves us. And I know he loves me.

[ 7 : 26 ] And you know he loves you because you are his child. A dear child. Now, the word dear comes from the Greek word agapetos.

That's the word that's right there in the text. Agape, we know that word, don't we? Agapetos is an adjective.

And that's why some versions will translate that. In fact, most modern versions translate this with the word beloved. So, it's beloved children.

Even the NIV kind of puts both words together. The NIV translates it dearly loved children. The same idea. Beloved children.

Beloved children. All right, so first, God identifies us as beloved children. God loves his children. So, born again believers, that is those who are spiritually birthed by God, are beloved children.

[ 8 : 29 ] Loved by the Father. Loved by the one who birthed them in Christ. That's us, all right? All right, and so then, children who are loved, and this is what we ought to get from this.

This is the most important thing. Children who are loved by their Father, love their Father in return. It's just a natural response.

To love the one who loves you. The Father loves us. We, in turn, love Him. He loved us first. We loved Him because He first loved us.

And then we take that a step further, and this kind of brings into play all of what Paul is saying in this first verse. Our natural desire is to be imitators of the Father in everything.

To be imitators of Him. A child tries to imitate his or her father. And I understand, you know, what it's like to be a teenager.

[ 9 : 35 ] I mean, I still have a teenager in my house. And, you know, usually they don't want to imitate their father at all. Or they do, but they don't want you to know that.

You understand what I'm saying? You know, all we have to do is kind of walk through the mall. Here's a good example. Walk through the mall, and one of my sons will be there with me, and I'll look at his shirt and say, You know, I really like that shirt.

And he'll say, I don't really like that shirt. And then I'll look at one and say, Isn't that disgusting? It's a hideous shirt. I like that. You know, you understand?

You've had this go on. All right. So that's kind of the game we play. But in reality, it's very natural for a son to want to be like his father.

And now, I would add one exception or kind of a caveat to that idea of this being natural. That is, sin, though, tends to disrupt and destroy that which is natural and to turn it into something that is unnatural.

[10:46] And Romans 1.30 tells us about that. Unbelievers are haters of God, but they're also disobedient to parents. And so sin is what kind of wrecks that.

But still, in the believing community, for sure, it is a natural thing for a son or a daughter to want to emulate their parents, want to imitate them.

And, you know, all throughout my years, I've always respected my father. And I know there are cases where children don't respect their parents, and it's a result of sin.

I'm not putting myself up here and say I wasn't a sinner and not a sinner. I certainly am. But I've always had a respect for my father. And, in fact, it's almost a compliment to me when someone says, you know, you're just like your dad.

Or a certain mannerism, the way you speak or the thing you do. You know, when I was pastoring a church in the same association where my mom and dad's church was, in fact, at the time my dad was the minister of music, hadn't been serving in several churches in association for a number of years, so everybody knew my father.

[12:08] And so I was pastoring in a church in the same association. So we'd come together for various associational events. And I just, you know, people would say, you know, you're just like your dad.

You look like him, and you act like him, and you speak like him. And I just loved that. I really did because I wanted to emulate my father. I had to have such a respect for him, you know.

Now there were kind of the side jokes, too. Because my name's Don Coleman. And his name is Don Coleman. And I would always have to say I'm the Don Coleman with hair.

My dad is almost completely bald. That wasn't any disrespect, all right, from my father. Just the facts. Yeah, just the facts. Just the facts.

And, you know, he did the same thing. He'd always say Don Coleman with hair. All right, anyway. In fact, I'm kind of worried when I say that God's going to make my hair fall out.

[13:06] Good job. I teach you a lesson or two. All right, but the point, Paul's point here is that beloved children of God imitate him.

They imitate him by a life that is characterized by love. That's his point here in this passage. All right, so first, the imitation of love.

And then second, the motivation for love. And it's in verse 2. Walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us.

Now you could not find a greater motivation for us to love the Father. And not just to love the Father and love Jesus, but to have the love of the Father express, being expressed through our lives.

To have a character of love as believers. There's not a greater motivation than the sacrificial love of the Lord Jesus Christ. All right, so let's just kind of take this, walk through this word by word.

[14:13] Christ, of course, revealed his love for us through the giving of himself for us. That's what Paul said. Now, some of these words are interesting.

Given, paradidomi, it's a very important word of the Greek New Testament. And it means literally to be given into the hands of another.

All right, so that kind of gives you a clue of the depth of the meaning of this giving of himself. And we know that Jesus did that, right?

He gave himself into the hands of another and was crucified for us. All right, so given, and then for us is also very significant, actually two words in the Greek text.

For us means literally on our behalf. I've explained this a number of times. The word for, quite often when it is used in Scripture.

[15:16] And especially when it's used to convey the idea of the cross, of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, his death for our sin. The word for is a very significant word.

It means more than he just did it for us. He did it in behalf of us. In fact, we could even go deeper and say he did it in our place.

He did it in our place. So, giving of himself for us. This is the motivation for us to live a life that is characterized by love.

He did this for us in our behalf. And then the giving of himself for us was total. Total and effectual.

And we can understand three things about this from what Paul says next. First of all, he says something about the act of giving.

[16:21] The act of Christ giving of himself. The act of it. The word offering. Offering speaks to the act of giving. The word offering just refers to a free will offering to God.

Giving of anything. So, it's more of a generic term. But it is a word that speaks of a free will offering. And so, you can just jot this down.

Jesus freely offered himself to God. He freely did that. In fact, he did it out of joy. Joy that's set before him endured the cross. So, he freely gave himself.

He wasn't made to do it. He freely gave himself to God. Again, on our behalf. And then the extent of the gift.

First, there's the act of giving. And then there's the extent of that gift. And the word sacrifice is what helps us understand that. Because the word sacrifice here is always used in the New Testament to refer to a blood sacrifice.

[17:25] A bloody offering in which the victim is slain. So, it wasn't just a little bloodletting there. Jesus died for us.

Now, we know that. But this is what Paul is saying about the extent of his gift. Jesus died on the cross for us. And then thirdly, the result of the gift.

The result of the act and the extent of the gift. The result of Jesus dying on the cross. You have this phrase, a sweet smelling aroma.

And it's a reference to sacrifice. In fact, it's something that quite typically would fall in the context of the burnt offering.

You know, and the smoke would rise. And that smoke from the offering would be a symbol of that offering being extended up to God.

[18:22] And then him breathing in. I mean, it's just the imagery of the aroma of the offering. Now, we can't imagine that smoking, you know, the smoke from a burnt offering would smell very good.

But it's used metaphorically here. When it says that it was a sweet smelling aroma, it refers to the acceptance of the sacrifice. Jesus offered himself, died as a sacrifice on the cross.

And it was a sacrifice that God accepted. And the proof of, of course, is the resurrection. So God the Father accepted the sacrifice of his son given on our behalf.

So this is just, you know, a very concise statement about the importance of the cross. But he's using this to reveal the supreme motivation for, for, for every one of us to walk in love.

That is to have a life that is characterized by love. And Jesus is the example of it. He's the motivation for that. And then a third one, third aspect of this love is the destruction of love.

[19:39] And he probably, well, not probably, he clearly spends more time talking about this than he does the other two aspects of love. The destruction of love. Because verse 3 begins with that conjunction, but.

And the conjunction then signals the counterforce that stands against love. The counterforce that stands against love.

That is, sin destroys the love we have for God. Sin destroys the love of God in and through us. So, really, those two aspects.

So, see, there are two things to consider about this love. It's God's love, you know, was directed toward us. We have, we love him. But it also, there's God's love in us that is operating through us and extends out from us to everyone.

And so, there is something that can destroy that. Something that we could allow into our lives that would destroy that kind of love.

[20:47] Both the love that we have for God. And also the love of God operating in us and through us. And the sins listed here.

That Paul says should not even be named among us as is fitting or proper for saints. They all fall under the category of sexually immoral sins.

Now, sin is bad no matter what kind of sin. But Paul highlights this certain category of sin that really, the Bible indicates it's sin against our own bodies.

But these kinds of sins, these sexually immoral sins, perversion and such. These things will rob us, destroy in us, our love for God.

Our active love for Him. Our devotion to Him. And also destroy the operation of God's love in our own hearts. It can be so bad that we even stop loving others.

[ 21 : 59 ] When these kinds of sins become dominant in our lives. And they should not even, he says, they should not even be named among us.

There should not even be any suspicion of them. And what are they? Well, the first one is fornication. Fornication. Fornication. Pornea. From which we get our word pornography. Pornea. And really, pornea is a very generic word. Generic term for all sexual immorality. But the emphasis is usually on immorality of a premarital nature.

Fornication. Sexual immorality prior to marriage. But also can be used and include sexual immorality as an extramarital sin.

You know, adultery would be the more specific term. But pornea can refer to any and all sexual immorality. And then the word uncleanness or all uncleanness.

[ 23 : 04 ] Now, when that word uncleanness is used in combination with pornea, then you know that this is the broadest reference to all kinds of sexual immorality.

Again, premarital, extramarital, all of it. So, pornea and uncleanness. They put together that. That's the whole thing. And then covetousness.

You say, well, covetousness isn't a, you know, sexual immorality type of sin. But it is in this context. Covetousness, used with preceding terms, the reference is to the coveting of another person's body for purposes of immoral self-gratification.

It would be like a man coveting another man's wife. So, you see, coveting can be used in this context.

And this is the context in which Paul is using covetousness. All right. So, fornication, all uncleanness, covetousness, and then filthiness.

[ 24 : 15 ] Filthiness. And it's not just something your mother complained about when you were a kid. You didn't wash behind your ears or something. I'm talking about dirty body. But the word refers to indecent behavior.

Obscenity. An obscene way of behaving. Again, in the context of immorality. And then fifth, well, fifth and sixth, but put these together because they go together.

Foolish talking and coarse jesting. Coarse jesting. Now, these are kind of antiquated terms. Kind of carry over from the old king's English.

But the new king James doesn't change these things. But I think we understand what they mean. And these two sins of speech come from immoral thinking. All this goes together.

A dirty mind expresses itself in dirty conversation. That's the idea. And we know it's true.

[ 25 : 24 ] And the more filthy a person's mind is, the more filthy is their conversation. Now, a person can subdue it for a time and just through self-discipline.

You know, it's amazing how a person can clean up their speech when they get around a preacher, you know. But then, you know, I've discovered in the last, I don't know, ten years maybe, that a lot of people don't even do that anymore.

You used to say, pardon my French preaching. I used to hear that all the time. But now they just say, no big deal. All right.

So, all those sins are all under that category of sexual immorality. But then, Paul says, rather, give thanks.

The giving of thanks. God's people are to be thankful. The giving of thanks. For what? Now, just like covetousness seems to be out of place here, until you understand that it's covetousness that is directed, you know, toward, you know, the coveting of sexual immorality, thankfulness seems to be out of place.

[ 26 : 41 ] But, again, it's related to this subject. It's to be, Christians are to be thankful for the physical expressions of love and intimacy. We're not to think that all, here's that word, sex, is sinful.

It's not. It's something given by God. And, of course, when it is, these expressions are kept in the right context, which is biblical marriage.

You know, I have to add the adjective biblical because marriage has become something. You know, our Supreme Court is dealing with that right now.

And I'm afraid to say, though I hate to be a pessimist, I think I know the outcome, what the outcome is going to be on that. But, so I'm talking about biblical marriage as God defined it. And so, you know, far from that act of marriage, that intimacy and love, far from that being sinful, it's something to be thankful for.

And that's what Paul is saying. It's God's gift to the marriage relationship. So, sexual sins, here's the bottom line, sexual sins destroy God-ordained expressions of love.

[ 28 : 03 ] All right. And then, to cap that off, God's wrath and judgment will fall upon those who are totally given over to sexual sin.

And so, let's kind of walk through these verses here. Don't really have to comment very much on them. The verses themselves are very self-explanatory.

They're kind of categorized or divided into three parts. First of all, the certainty of this judgment. The certainty of it.

Now, we're talking about God's judgment, not upon immoral sin in general, because we can be guilty and God will forgive if we repent.

We're talking about, he's talking about those who have given themselves over to it. And a true believer cannot do this.

[ 29 : 03 ] And so, God is just, or rather, Paul is putting before the readers, the believers there in Ephesus, how serious this kind of sin behavior is.

So serious that you should know that these are the things, well, this is what will happen to those who are totally given over to it. And so, therefore, you don't want any part of this.

And you don't even want even the most minor of these sins to be even named among you. And so, first of all, there's the certainty of this judgment.

Verse 5, For you may be sure of this. I like the strength of the ESV there, even the NASV. For this you know with certainty.

What do we know? That God will judge those who are given over to sexual immorality. And then, second, the eternity of this judgment.

[ 30 : 08 ] The eternity of it. The eternal ramification in that sense. Verse 5, No fornicator, and this is what you know for certain, no fornicator, those who are given over totally to fornication, unclean person or covetous man, again, related to sexual immorality, is sexually greedy people.

Alright. Who is an idolater. Does idolatry fit in here too? Because idolatry in this context is the worship of sexual sin. This kind of covetousness, where you covet sexual immorality, is idolatry because it becomes the very worship of your life.

Worship. A worshiper of sexual sin. What about these people? They have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

That's an eternal ramification. Now, he's not saying that believers who might fall into the trap of this kind of sin and commit sexual immorality, that they're going to lose their salvation.

That's not the idea. What he's doing is showing the believer, listen, this is serious. God's serious about this kind of sin. You don't want it even to be named among you.

[ 31 : 39 ] Because those who have been given over to it, it's certain that God's judgment is upon them. And it is eternal. It's an eternal judgment.

And then thirdly, the severity of this judgment. Verse 6, Let no one deceive you with empty words. Let anybody tell you this is okay.

This stuff's okay. I mean, you know, any part of it, it's okay. You know, it used to be the expression, the erroneous expression, hellish expression.

You know, it's alright to look, just don't touch. It's ridiculous. So, you know, alright, I can sit in my living room and watch, you know, nudity in the movie on my TV, but I'm not really committing.

That's the lie. It's a lie. Or on the internet or whatever other media. And so, the lame they deceive you with vain words, empty words, worthless words.

[ 32 : 42 ] For because of these things, what things? The immoral practices. The wrath of God comes. That word comes means it always comes.

Always has. It will today. It will in the future. In fact, there's a future judgment that all fornicators, those who have given over to it, will face.

But God's judgment has come periodically even before His final judgment. It comes, always comes, always comes upon the sons of disobedience.

And I kind of put in there in your notes, you do remember what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. And we could do a, you know, kind of a history, study of history of the major civilizations throughout the history of humankind that have fallen into destruction because of sexual immorality.

And we're on our way here in our, in our culture, in our, our great society.