

## **The Perversion of Love**

Scripture: Ephesians 5:3-7

Code: 49-29

We come now to the time of the reading and explaining of the Word of God. This is when we hear from heaven. We have offered our worship and our praise humbly to the Lord; now we hear His voice. And our text today is Ephesians chapter 5. If you will, take your Bible and turn to Ephesians chapter 5. For those who are visiting us, we are working our way through the book of Ephesians. We've been doing it for quite a long time, but it's been a marvelous journey for us; and we find ourselves in chapter 5 and looking again for the second time at the opening seven verses of Ephesians 5. Let me read them to you.

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

"But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an 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."

As we saw last time in looking at verses 1 and 2 this chapter begins on a beautiful high note: "Be imitators of God, as beloved children." We are the children of God. God is not a God who draws us nearly to Himself; He draws us all the way to Himself, and He makes us His own children by birth and by adoption. Not only are we His children, but we are His beloved children, and we are loved by God from eternity past through eternity future. We are therefore to be imitators of God. And what does that mean? Well in verse 2 it says it means that we walk in love. You're never more like God than when you love, because everything that God has done for us is done because He loved us. That's John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" to us for salvation.

Be imitators of God. That's a high bar, I understand that; it's a high bar. And you might say to yourself, "That seems far too high for us to attain." And if you're thinking of being equal to God in the comprehensive reality of His nature, it is too far. But you can imitate God in ways that the Bible designed you to imitate God and in what ways the Spirit of God enables you to do that. And to help ease the burden of that command to be an imitator of God, let me draw you back to chapter 3, verse 14, where the apostle Paul is praying, and he is bowing his knees before the Father—who identifies with all of us, that we are His family in heaven and on earth—and he prays for us. And he prays that God would grant us, verse 16, "according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man."

So first, we need to understand Paul is praying for us, and he's praying for something that has become possible because the Spirit of God has taken up residence in our inner man, so that we can "be strengthened with power" to the end "that Christ may," verse 17, settle down, be at home "in your

hearts through faith”; and then this—“that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.” In chapter 5 he says, “Be an imitator of God.” That’s a command. Here it’s an indicative. You can be “filled up to all the fullness of God” if you know fully “the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.”

So again, imitating God is about having love the way God loves; and we looked at that last time. How does God love? Verse 2 explains it: “Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, [as] an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.” And we said this: that primarily, divine love is known for its forgiveness, for its forgiveness. That is the simplest definition of divine love. God loves us enough to offer us unconditional, self-sacrificing, forgiving love. And we saw last time that that’s what He asks of us. If you’re going to love like God, then you forgive; sometimes seventy times seven you forgive. But you’re never more like God, Jesus said in Matthew 5, than when you love your enemies; and that demands forgiveness, endless forgiveness.

So the call here, in this aspect of our life as a Christian, is to walk in love; that’s part of the worthy walk. Back in chapter 4, verse 1, Paul implored us to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we are] called,” and that’s an effectual calling to salvation. So to walk worthy, we have to walk in love.

Can we do that? Yes, because we have been transformed. If you go back to chapter 2 and remind yourselves of those very familiar verses, verse 8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Then verse 10, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” Just as much as God elected your justification, He elected your sanctification. You have been chosen and ordained to good works, and those good works were ordained before time began.

God ordained that believers would be marked by righteousness and holiness. Go back to chapter 4 and verse 24: “Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” All of these things describe what it means to be a child of God. We are beloved children; we are to walk worthy, we can walk worthy. We are to walk in love; we can do that. The Spirit of God dwells in us in the inner man. Romans 5:5 says that the Spirit has literally shed abroad the love of God in our hearts. We can love the way God loved, obviously not to the perfection of God, but in the character of that love, which is unconditional, self-sacrificing, and endlessly forgiving. This should mark us.

Our little journey last Sunday in verses 1 and 2 was a sweet time together as we contemplated the character of this love and began to examine our own hearts to see whether we are truly marked by that love. And it’s an extensive kind of love; it has height and depth and length and breadth. And it’s manifest not only in God’s loving us, but in Christ loving us and offering His life as a sacrifice, as verse 2 says.

So again, I just rehearsed what we learned last week: We are to walk in love. That means the daily pattern of Christian conduct is marked by love that is sacrificial, unconditional, and endlessly forgiving. And it is possible, because if we love that way, according to chapter 3 as I just read, we can be filled with all the fullness of God. The most godly persons are the persons who love the most, who love sacrificially, unconditionally, and endlessly forgiving. Think of how the church would be if

that was all being lived out.

So since you are the beloved children of God, verse 1 says, “Be imitators of God . . . and walk in love.” That was the plea. It’s possible because of the transformation. I want to borrow some of Peter’s words in 1 Peter just to expand a little bit on your understanding of what being born again means. Listen to what Peter writes in 1 Peter 1, verse 3: “Blessed be”—this is a benediction, really, a doxology—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” The way you describe conversion is there’s a new birth. Peter says it again in verse 23: “You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.” You are a new creation; you have been born again. Peter marks that again in chapter 2, verse 2, “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”

You have been born again, and Peter extends what that means in the same second chapter; go to verse 9, “You are [now] a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” You put God on display; the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ is now shining through us. You were once not a people, now you are the people of God. You had not received mercy, now you have received mercy.

“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the things in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.” So we now have the capacity and the command to live to the glory of God; we have been transformed to that reality.

Peter says more in 2 Peter chapter 1. He says that God by “His divine power has granted to us”—in verse 3—“everything pertaining to life and godliness”—everything; you’re not missing anything; everything—“through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises”—and then this amazing statement—“so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped”—past tense—“the corruption that is in the world by lusts.”

What is the new birth? You’re a new creation, and you have been granted the divine nature; you have been transformed. You are a new creation, and God Himself—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—all take up residence in the believer. This is the way we are to understand salvation. Let me borrow from Paul in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 4, as he speaks about this transformation: “But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”—we are both the born sons and adopted sons. “God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father!’” We speak to God with intimacy because we are one with Him—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Verse 7, “You are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.” God is in the process, in redeeming His people, Hebrews says, of bringing many sons to glory. You are a child of God. And again, that’s what verse 1 says: We are “beloved children.” And as beloved children who bear the mark of God, who possess the divine nature, in whom Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dwell, we

should imitate God. We have the power not in our own strength, but in the strength of the Spirit and by the work of the Word through the Spirit, to walk in love; and that love will be like God's love—again, sacrificial, unconditional, and continuously forgiving love.

One other text that I would lay before you is in 1 John chapter 4 and verse 7: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." So if you know God and you're born of God, you love. The one who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love. And "by this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation"—the satisfaction—"for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides enough in us, and His love is perfected in us."

Again, you're never more like God than when you love sacrificially, unconditionally, and with forgiveness. And we have a model of that, a pattern. The plea is in verse 1, the pattern is in verse 2, and Christ, as we saw last week, is the one who loved us and gave Himself up for us as a satisfactory offering to God that arose from the cross as a sweet aroma. That's all so magnificent, so beautiful, so wondrous, so precious, that, in a sense, I hate to descend into verse 3, but necessarily must, because it starts to turn here, and it turns very darkly, and it's very ugly.

"But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints." There is an antinomian's nightmare, that verse. If you think that somehow because of the grace of God and because of the forgiveness of sins and because Christ has set you free from the punishment of the law, that you can live any way you want to live, then this verse will jerk the chain fast and get you back to reality. This is the perversion of love. Paul goes so fast from the perfection of love to the perversion of love. This is the satanic deception. You see the word "deceive" down in verse 6.

And I think we all understand that the world seeks love. If there's any theme that seems to be the most ubiquitous theme in our culture, in terms of music and literature and media, it's about love. The world wants love; they want to live in love. Loving, being loved, making love is the ultimate high. It sensitizes life to all the emotional experiences, high and low, to all the emotional extremes that releases the highs and lows of human feeling more than anything else. Love is the ultimate human experience, but what the world offers is a false form of love. It's not the perfect love; that's illusive. Oh, I think people are seeking for a love that is everything they could imagine love to be, but they never find it because the only ones who can truly love are those who are in the knowledge of God and in whom God dwells. Endless songs and plays and films and books and television programs and all the rest are evidence of the chase for love. But love so fast descends into what is ugly.

Read an article this week produced by Michigan State University Department of Science, and they came out with the fact that there are currently on the Internet 4 million pornographic websites, 4 million being trafficked on a daily basis by 80 million people. More people are tuned into those websites than everybody on Netflix, Twitter, and Amazon combined. What are they looking for? Well if you ask them, they would be looking for some kind of gratification, some kind of love, some kind of meaningful relationship. It's a fool's paradise. They're like Ponce de León trying to find the fountain of youth; it's not there. They give themselves to a person for a little while, they give themselves to a certain behavior for a little while, and it comes up dry, it comes up empty, and they're more deeply wounded than they were before they experienced that; and it just adds another scar to them and

makes them a step more jaded toward the reality of ever finding true love.

The point is this: Whatever God designs perfectly, Satan will counterfeit; and that's the deception. If the love that God grants us is self-sacrificing and unconditional and relentlessly forgiving, the love that Satan offers will be a perversion of that. It will be self-centered, self-indulgent, conditional, and unforgiving. When the world talk about love, it usually really, simply, means self-love: "I need you to fulfill my desire for my satisfaction."

Physical desire, personal passion is by nature selfish. People love for what somebody provides for them, gives to them, does for them. That's the satanic option. Paul says, "This is not the kind of love I have in mind," in verse 3: "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not be even named among you, as is proper among saints." It should never happen in the church of Jesus that someone pursues an illicit love, whatever it is; the Spirit of God vehemently denounces that kind of conduct. It is love's perversion. And the term there, "immorality," is the familiar word *porneia* in the Greek, which means sexual sin in the broadest sense, any kind of sexual sin, anything other than the sexual relationship between a married man and a married woman constitutes pornography.

There is a term in the Greek language, *egkrateia*, which is the opposite of *porneia*, and it denotes control or self-discipline. Socrates used to say that self-control is the greatest of all virtues, and he himself confessed to having a difficult time experiencing it. Plato said the same thing. Aristotle said the same thing. And of course, the Greeks were base in their paganism, and they talked about self-control but never found any way to control their own lusts.

This word *egkrateia* is used in a very interesting conversation in the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Acts, where the apostle Paul is having a conversation with Felix, who is a Roman governor. And Paul and Felix meet in verse 24 of Acts 24. Felix arrives with Drusilla, his wife, who was Jewish and was his wife by adultery. He had basically had an adulterous affair with her and stolen her from her rightful husband, and so it was a sordid marriage. Felix sends for Paul to hear him speak about faith in Jesus Christ. This is a gospel opportunity, right? This is a gospel opportunity to speak to a very powerful politician about faith in Jesus Christ. And what did Paul do? Verse 25 says, "He was discussing righteousness, self-control"—and there's that word *egkrateia*—"and the judgment to come."

Now by today's standards of evangelism, for so many people that you hear about, this would be to completely blow the opportunity. Why would you confront a man about righteousness that you know is living in unrighteousness? Why would you confront the man about self-control when you know it was his inability to control himself that caused him to have the adulterous relationship he had? And then, why would you tell him that all of this is leading to divine judgment? And the answer is because you would tell him the truth, you would tell him the truth. And Paul got exactly the desired response in verse 25: "Felix became terrified."

We are all told that the terror of the Lord should cause us to persuade men; it's part of it. Paul went after this politician on the basis of his inability to control his lust, and therefore to violate God's standard of righteous, and therefore to be under judgment from God Himself. That's what *porneia* is, the absence of that self-control. People don't have much self-control, as we know. They can try mechanisms in their life to control the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; but in the end it's going to win because it's the truest expression of their fallen nature.

So when we come to the term “immorality” here, *porneia*, which is the absence of self-control, we could be talking about anything. We could be talking about sexual sin outside of marriage, premarital sex. We could be talking about adultery, violating your marriage covenant and having a sexual relationship with someone you’re not married to. We could talk about homosexuality. We could talk about pedophilia, any kind of unchastity, prostitution, harlotry; any kind of sexual sin, transgender, you name it, it’s all swept up into the word *porneia*, *porneia*.

“Pornography” comes from two Greek words: *porneia* and *graphē*. *Porneia* is sexual sin, *graphē* is to write. Pornography is writing about sexual sin; that’s what pornography is: to write about perverted sex. And again, 80 million people—and that’s probably an understatement—interacting with that on a daily basis. They’re coming after your kids; and if they’re not heterosexual pornographers coming after your kids, the homosexual pornographers are coming after your kids, and they’re aided and abetted by schoolteachers, school boards. And the further up the chain of academia you go, the worse it gets until you’re in the university, and it’s a cesspool of the attempt of people to corrupt the next generation. That’s all they have to offer.

That’s pretty sad when the church buys into any of it at all, because it’s so inconsistent. How inconsistent is it? Go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 6, 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 9: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” Then verse 11: “Such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” This is what conversion does: It transforms you, transforms you.

And so verse 18 of that same chapter, Paul says, “Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body”—and that can include even venereal disease. “[Don’t you know] your body’s a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you’re not your own? You’ve been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” And back in verse 15 he said, “Don’t join your body, the temple of the Spirit of God, to a harlot or a prostitute.” If you’re living in any kind of perverted love, you’re either outside the kingdom or you are disobedient, sinful, and headed for divine chastening, if you are a true believer. So immorality never to be named among you; it shouldn’t even appear.

I remember years ago when evangelicals were sort of applauding the fact that they found out the Catholic priests were immoral. And now all of a sudden it caught up to evangelicalism. There’s no way to protect from false teachers and false Christians. But among those who are true believers, it “[shouldn’t] even be named among you.”

And then he adds the word “impurity,” *akatharsia*, like a catharsis, a cleansing. This is unclean. So you go behind the sin to the sensuality, with this. There shouldn’t even be any sensual indulgence. It’s sometimes translated “filthiness.” This is looking at the passions and the lusts and the desires and the thought life.

You hear people say today, “Well look, it’s OK if you don’t consummate the act—if you hear about SSA, same-sex attraction, but I don’t do anything about it.” The sensuality is forbidden as well as the

act. And it all constitutes what Paul identifies here as “greed.”

Why do you find greed here? We usually associate that with money. But no, there certainly can be greed expressed toward money, toward something you don’t have that is a material thing. But when you covet something sexually, that you have no right to, that’s the kind of greed Paul is talking about. This is also idolatry—says that down in verse 5—because you have substituted sexual fulfillment for the Lord.

I mean, this is all so ugly, so vile, anything but beautiful. And I would just warn young ladies, if a guy says, “I love you,” and wants to take away your purity, he doesn’t love you, he loves himself, and you need to find somebody else because he’s coveting what doesn’t belong to him, and his sexual desire is his idol, not the Lord.

You say, “Well maybe he can’t control it.” I don’t believe that, because the Holy Spirit dwells within him. Covetousness is *pleonexia*, it’s “greediness.” When people get caught up in sexual sin, there is a level of greed in that sin that is just insatiable. We talk about it as a sex addiction; and it is so powerful that it literally will take a person to total destruction, because anytime you want something you have no right to, anything that you want that doesn’t justifiably belong to you within the framework of God’s purpose and God’s will, it is worshiping the idol of your own desire.

In classical Greek that word sometimes meant “defraud”; and that’s what people do—they defraud someone. They find someone who has something they want; they have no right to it, but they take it, and therefore they have defrauded that person. That’s why Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4 says, “Let no one defraud you.” He’s talking about sexual sin there. “Don’t let anybody steal what is not theirs from you.” It is idolatry. It is covetousness.

And again, I want to repeat the end of verse 3: “It must not even be named among you.” There should never, ever, ever be something like this among the people of God. That’s a far cry from thinking you have some freedom in Christ because you “love” a girl, to engage in illicit sex with her before you marry her; or because although you have a wife, you find another woman that you like better, and because you love her, that justifies adultery. No. No sexual sin, either in the act or in the sensual attitudes behind the act, constitutes anything but lustful greed and idolatry; and it should never ever be named among you. Why is that? Because it’s not proper for saints. That is amazing. The word “saints” is *hagios*, the word for “holy.” Holy people shouldn’t do that—never.

And even the Corinthians, as many problems as they had, Paul identified, back in 1 Corinthians 1:2, “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling.” If there was any group in the New Testament you might think weren’t saints, it would be the Corinthians; but they were, which made their behavior so much the more inconsistent. In fact, their behavior was so bad, in chapter 5 it was reported that “there is immorality among you,” you saints, “and immorality of such a kind as doesn’t even exist among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife”—some form of incest. And “you become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.”

This is where church discipline comes in. That kind of person is to be confronted. Paul says, “I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with

you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

You say, “Well, wait a minute. If we’re too hard on these sinners, they may not get saved.” No. If you’re hard on these sinners, they might get saved. This has no place in the church. John 15:3, those beautiful words of our Lord: “And now you are clean through the word.” When you are justified, when you are regenerated, you come out clean. Even your conscience is clean. This should never be named in any association of true believers; it’s completely alien.

And Paul won’t stop there. He’s going to go even further. You shouldn’t do it, you shouldn’t cultivate sensual thoughts about it, which is another issue that deals with 1 Corinthians: You don’t want to hang around the people who claim to be Christians but who are immoral. But he says, “It shouldn’t even be named among you; it shouldn’t even be discussed. It shouldn’t be something you have to deal with.” And then he goes even further in verse 4: “No filthiness.” That has to do with something which is disgraceful; the root of this is something disgraceful. And if you go down to verse 12 you’ll see that translation in the NAS: “It is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.” You don’t want to participate in any unfruitful deeds of darkness; you want to expose them. It’s disgraceful to even speak about them, let alone sit in the theater and watch it happen or watch it on your computer or on your iPhone or on your television. No filthiness at all, nothing that is disgraceful.

He goes even further: “No silly talk.” That word is *mōrologia*. First word is “moron,” second word is *logia*, which means “word.” This is what you call low obscenity. This is the obscenity of a drunkard. This is the obscenity of a lowlife. This is gutter talk from the lips of a fool. Your language should be purged of any low gutter talk with sexual implications.

And then he adds, “coarse jesting.” That word literally means “to turn easily.” And this is the thing that’s what we call “high obscenity.” The low obscenity is just the gross gutter talk; the high obscenity is the clever innuendo where somebody thinks in perverse ways, and you could say something completely innocent, and somehow in a flash they can turn it into something sexual and something ugly. “There’s no room for this kind of behavior. There’s no room for sensual thought. There’s no room for greed. This should never be named among you. There’s no place for low obscene talk or high, clever, sophisticated jesting, none of it. Why? Because it’s “not fitting.” It’s not fitting. You’re holy ones. You’re the children of God.

And Paul turns and simplifies the positive by saying, “Instead of all of that, why don’t you just give thanks?” Why would he say that? Because he wants to turn you away from the idol of your sexual desire, to the living God who’s the source of everything. Just live a thankful life; that’ll protect you from your idolatry. Just spend your entire life thanking God for what you have, for everything that you have, everything that He has given you. First Thessalonians 5:18, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God concerning you.” Gracious, thankful speech.

Go back to verse 29 in chapter 4: “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.” Never should anybody hear from the lips of a child of God—one who is imitating God, one who is to love the way God loves—anything that shows any interest in the deceptive, false love of illicit sexual impulses.



And then the final segment of this text, we saw the plea, “Imitate God”; we saw the pattern, the way Christ did: It’s an unconditional, sacrificial, and forgiving love. We saw the perversion in verses 3 and 4. Paul goes right to the punishment in verse 5: “For this you know with certainty”—this is the final point. “This you know with certainty”—this is something you have heard from me before—“no immoral or impure person or covetous man”—and he repeats exactly the same words that were back in verse 3—“no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is [therefore] an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

In other words, if that defines you, you’re not in the kingdom of God. What he is saying is, “Why would you do the things that people outside the kingdom do? This is inconsistent. You are a beloved child of God. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. You’re a beloved of the Father, beloved of Christ. You are holy ones. You are citizens of the kingdom. And this you know with certainty: That kind of behavior is characteristic of the people who are outside the kingdom of Christ and God. Why would you ever tolerate that kind of behavior?”

Titus 2:11, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.” Everything in the grace of God that has brought us salvation teaches us to live godly lives. Salvation teaches us that.

So verse 6, “Let no one deceive you with empty words.” Don’t let anybody tell you that you can have a sexual relationship with someone you’re not married to because you’re in love and because you’re both “Christians.” Don’t let anybody tell you that it’s OK to be a homosexual and conduct your life in that way and still claim to be a Christian. You, in fact, have another god, and your god is your own sexual desire.

You say, “Well, I’ve sinned.” Yes, yes, you have; I get that. But if you’re a true believer, it’s not the pattern of your life. “What happens when I sin?” Go back to verse 32 of chapter 4: “Be kind of one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Now we’re right back to where we started. If you walk in love, then you’re like God; and God forgives, right? Remember last week?

Yes, you’ve sinned in that way; yes, I understand that. No one is perfect. But if you belong to Him, you’re forgiven. For you, it’s kind of a *paraptōma*, Paul calls it; it’s a slip-up. It’s not your god; it’s not your idol.

Here we are in a world that’s so twisted, that about a week ago we had one day, Memorial Day, to celebrate and give honor to all the men and women through the centuries of American history who have died for our freedoms—one day. And now for thirty days we’re supposed to celebrate perversion. It’s just how twisted the world is. It’s the deception. It’s the kind of behavior for which the wrath of God comes in verse 6: “Because of these things the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience.” That term was used back in chapter 2 to describe unbelievers.

The wrath of God is designed to come down on people who live like this. Why would you entertain that and ever try to justify it? So verse 7, a final exhortation: “Therefore do not be partakers with them.” Don’t do what the unconverted people do. Don’t live like the world. Don’t be deceived by

empty words, empty words because of these things. What are “these things”? Immorality, impurity, greed, which is idolatry, these sexual perversions. Because of those things, hell awaits the sons of disobedience. God hasn’t changed His attitude, and God’s attitude towards sexual sin was pretty well demonstrated in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Somebody said that when God spoke about homosexuality in the Scripture, He only whispered. I don’t think He was whispering in Genesis 19 when He buried the entire city of Sodom and Gomorrah under fire and brimstone for homosexuality. And I don’t think He was whispering in Numbers 25 when He confronted 24,000 Israelites that had illicit sexual relationships with Moabite women; and God killed all 24,000 of them. His attitude has not changed. That’s where God’s judgment is going to fall; that’s where His wrath is going to come down. Don’t you be a partaker with that. And if you have in the past, know this: that if that has occurred in your life, you have God’s word that He has forgiven you all your sins. The past is the past; it’s time to make resolve for the present, right?

Our Father, we thank You for Your Word, its clarity for us. We are not at all in the dark about what it is that You desire and what it is that You demand. We hate to even soil our minds with the discussion of things like this, so we ask that You would draw us away from those things that are not even to be named among us, and draw us to Yourself. And may in our worship to You, may we rise to express thanksgiving for everything that You have given us. If we’re really thankful to You, if You’re our Lord—and You are—and we are thankful to You, then we don’t want anything but what You give us. We don’t want anything but what You ordain. We don’t want anything but what You approve.

Since we are Your beloved, since we are the ones who are to imitate You, since we are the holy ones, the saints, and since Jesus is our Lord and our only Lord, may our worship and devotion to Him protect us from making idols out of iniquity and transgression. Protect us from the evils of this culture. Protect our children, protect our young people. Give us wisdom as parents and families to build walls around those that are vulnerable in these areas. Protect them from the deadly damage that can be done through the corruption that is in the world around us. And may the church, may the church right here gathered, Grace Community Church, continue to be a shining light for righteousness and godliness and truth; and may we do it with joy and hearts full of gratitude and love.

And we thank You for the power to so live that we can adorn Your name, and knowing all the while that when we fail, You forgive us unconditionally, and You promise that we are secured to that eternal life which You planned for us before the foundation of the world. May there never be a question ever about the reality of our salvation, to us or anyone else, because we let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. To that end, we pray for Your glory. Amen.

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