

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Walking in Love, Part 2**

Scripture: Ephesians 5:2-7

Code: 1932

Ephesians, chapter 5, is our text again this morning, as we continue to work our way through this beautiful epistle written by Paul – Ephesians, chapter 5. Last time and this time, we're looking at verses 1 through 7, Ephesians 5, verses 1 through 7. Let me read them to you as a setting for our message this morning.

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not fitting: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

Now, this is a tremendously potent passage. And it's very important for us today, for the society in which we live, for the church of Jesus Christ, and even for Grace Community Church. In the last week alone, it has come to my attention, four individual people in this church who have involved themselves in fornication. And I guess, in a sense, I felt like the apostle Paul, who said, “It is commonly reported that there is fornication among you.” To the Corinthians he said that. These things should not be so. We live in an age when fornication or sexual sin is rampant. You wouldn't be adverse to call this society the sexy seventies. We are inundated, drowned, preoccupied, and our senses are dulled to the potency of the attack that comes against us.

And it's a tragic thing because it affects the church. I heard in the last week, additionally, outside the walls of this church, of a pastor, another in the long line of them, who was involved in sins of fornication. Not too long ago, fornication was the sin of a pastor, not in what we would think as the normal way, but homosexuality. Why is this happening? What causes this? Well, the apostle Paul deals with it here, and I think we need to look very carefully at what he says. Now, last week we learned that one aspect of the worthy walk is to walk in love, verse 2, see it there? Walk in love. And we saw that the key element to walking in love is to be a follower of God, a mimic of God, an imitator of God.

If, as 1 John says, “God is love.” And you are to walk in love, then you are to be like God, and so we are to imitate God, we are to mimic God. He is the pattern, and the pattern is best expressed by God in His incarnation of Jesus Christ. And so if we are to walk in love, we are to walk as Christ walked, and that is exactly what 1 John 2:8 says: “If we say we abide in him, we ought so to walk even as he walked.” We are to, then, walk in love, which imitates God, God is manifest in Christ, so we are to be like Christ. We are to love like He loved. Now, remember the last section of the book of Ephesians, from 4 to 6, is a discussion of the worthy walk. Chapter 4, verse 1, tells us to walk worthy, and part of walking worthy of our high calling, walking consistent with our high calling, is to walk in love.

Now, this love walk has four elements, and I gave you two of them last week; let me quickly review them. First of all – and these are positive ones – first, there is the plea in verses 1 and 2. He pleads with us to walk in love, and the word walk means daily conduct, manner of life, process of living, lifestyle, if you will. We are to be characterized by love, and the pattern is God, we are to imitate God. The psalmist said, “I will be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.” We are to be filled with all the fullness of God, chapter 3 says. And so what Paul is saying is – and I want you to get this thought, we didn’t deal with this last week, I want to just throw it in today – since you are God’s beloved children – see it in verse 1? Since you are God’s dear children, imitate Him.

Now listen, the basis for imitating is that we are His children. This is one of the richest, most joyful designations of Christians in all of the New Testament. We are called the children of God; we are called the sons of God. In John 1:12, it tells us, “As many as believed on Him, to them gave He the right to be called the children of God.” In Ephesians, chapter 1, it tells us that “He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.” We are literally the children of God. We are the children of God, the offspring of God; we have been begotten by an incorruptible seed.

We are then, as His children, to bear His likeness, right? We are to bear His character, His characteristics. We are to manifest that which is true of Him. We are to adorn His very nature. Since we have been begotten of God, as we learn in 1 Peter, since we are characterized by an incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever, since God has come to live in us and make us His children, we are then to live manifesting His characteristics. So that’s the heart of it, people. The reason we are to imitate God, says Paul, is because we are His children, and we are to pattern our lives after our Father. In Galatians 3:26 – I just add this – it says, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

Now listen, when you put your faith in Christ Jesus, when you received Christ as Savior, at that point you became a child of God, you were born again, to put it in John 3 terminology. There was an incorruptible seed planted within you, there was new life, and the manifestation of the life of God through you should be the most normal thing. It is abnormal for you not to imitate God. You look at a

child and the most normal thing for a child is to be like his parents, and so it is in the spiritual dominion. You have within you the indwelling life of God. In Galatians, chapter 4, and verse 4, it says, “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

“And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts. You are no more servants, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God.” When you were saved, you became a son, you became a child. God’s Spirit is in you, and the life of God should manifest itself. And so because, Paul says, we are children of God, we are then to imitate our Father. The most normal thing is to be like Him. Now, if God is love, then we are to imitate His love. If it is true that God is characterized by love, as 1 John 4:7 to 11 says, if it is true that God is characterized by love, then we, too, are to be characterized in the same manner. So we remember the plea, “Walk in love.”

Now, the second point we saw last time – and I want you to note this – is the pattern, and I already mentioned it. The pattern is our Lord Jesus Christ, the end of verse 2. How is this to work, how is it to be manifest, what is our example? “As Christ has loved us, and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” All right, we are to walk in love, and the model we are to follow, the pattern we are to trace our lives on, is Christ. I remember when I was a little kid and starting out in school, one of our teachers wanted to teach us how to draw, and so she passed out papers of pictures, and the pictures were in great big bold ink, and then she passed out what she called tracing paper.

And all the little kids would take the paper and stick it on the bold page, and the picture would come through, and we’d take our little pencils and we would draw, tracing. That’s the very word “pattern” in the New Testament. That’s the word for type, or an example it’s used, as Paul says to Timothy, “Be an example to the believers.” Be somebody the believers can trace their life on.

Well, that’s exactly what he’s saying here. Take Jesus Christ, the bold statement of Christ’s life, and put your life on top of it, and trace your life out, just as His is. He is the pattern. This is the heart of the passage. We are to love as He loved. Now, backing up to verse 32, I remind you last time, that the characteristic, the major characteristic of God’s love is that it is forgiving. Do you see it there in verse 32? “Forgiving one another, as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Now, for “to walk in love,” that’s the first characteristic I want you to note. It is a forgiving kind of love, and we went into that last time, didn’t we? God’s love is a forgiving love.

Now, by the way, there’s a footnote that you ought to see in verse 32: “Forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you.” Now, if it just said that, if it just said, “forgiving one another, as God hath forgiven you,” we’d have a little problem. Because we’d say, “Now look, God, You’re a holy God. You’re an absolutely righteous God, and You hate sin, and You can’t tolerate sin, and the Bible says You will punish sin. In fact, it says, ‘The wages of sin is’ – what – death.’ Now God, how can You just

forgive like that?" If it said, "Forgive one another as God has forgiven you," we'd say, "Well, how can You just do that? How can You just say, 'Well, I know I don't like that stuff, but I'll forgive you?'"

Well, what does that do to God's justice? Doesn't it violate His holy justice? No, because the little phrase is there: "For Christ's sake," which means because of what Christ has done. In other words, that penalty which was ours was borne by Christ, and because of something Christ did, God is able to forgive, and that's the whole point. When Christ – verse 2 now – when Christ gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a sweet-smelling savor, He paid the price that God's justice demanded, and freed God to forgive the sinner. But if it had not been for Christ, it would not have happened. God can love us, and God can forgive us, because Christ paid our penalty.

That is the message of the tenth chapter of the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 10:10: "By which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." In other words, the only thing that sets us apart to God is that Christ bore our sin. Verse 12: "This man, after he offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." In other words, sitting down is a picture of rest, and when Christ one time made one sacrifice, it was so total, and so complete, that He never needed to do another thing. He sat down. He was finished. And verse 14 sums it up: "By that one offering he perfected forever them that are sanctified." He bore in His body our sins. "He who knew no sin became sin for us." And so Christ did something that freed God to love us; and God's love first of all is forgiving.

Now secondly, I told you God's love is not only forgiving but it is unconditional. His love is not defined by the object in any sense. It is His nature that loves, it is His innateness that loves, it is God loving as God must love, because He's God. And so His love is forgiving and unconditional. And the third thing we told you last week, that it is self-sacrificing. God's love is forgiving, unconditional and self-sacrificing. "God so loved the world that he" – what's the next word – "gave" – that's the key. It is self-sacrificing. Now listen, people: this is a very basic truth you must get.

If we are to love like God loved, if we are to imitate God, then we must love people with a forgiveness that is without limits. We must love people unconditionally, with no dependence upon their response, and we must love people sacrificially, that is with the giving of ourselves, not the seeking of something from them. Now people, listen: when you live and walk in love, it doesn't mean you go around saying, "Oh, I like that person and I like this person," and you work on an emotional level. No, it means that it is your nature to be forgiving without limits, loving without even a necessary response, and self-sacrificing, seeking only to give and not to gain.

So we said last time that Jesus loves us. When we sin, He forgives us. When we don't respond, He keeps loving us. And when all we want to do is take, He keeps giving. That's the kind of love that is to characterize our lives: unconditional, forgiving, and self-sacrificing. I would be unfaithful to my own mind if I didn't have you look at John 13 for just a moment, and then we'll close out those review

points and go to the next. But in John 13, which I think is the most beautiful picture of the love of Christ, apart from the cross, anywhere in the Bible, John 13. Now, I want you to see this unconditional, forgiving, self-sacrificing love in action.

Now, you'll remember the setting, because I've taught it to you many times, but in John 13, the disciples are having an argument, and they're arguing about who's going to be the greatest in the kingdom. They're really concerned about who's going to rank high when Christ sets up His earthly kingdom. They want to get in on the gravy, they want to be big shots, they want to be mucky-mucks. And the Lord sees them in this big argument, and the real issue here is, of course, that Jesus is about to be crucified, and He's already told them this. He's already told them He has to die. He's already given them the whole outline, but they are absolutely indifferent to what He's going to go through.

They don't even care, they're not even concerned about it. They are absolutely selfish, they are absolutely sinful, they are absolutely unresponsive. If there was any real love in their hearts, they would have been comforting, and encouraging, and sharing that love with Jesus Christ. If there was anything of self-sacrifice in their lives, they would have been washing His feet, they would have been at His hands, saying, "What can we do, Lord, because You're the one that's going to bear this?" But instead, their selfishness was manifest. Their sinfulness was manifest, their self-centeredness was manifest, as they argued about who would be the greatest in the kingdom, instead of being concerned about Christ.

And in that argument, nobody would wash anybody's feet. But it was a custom to wash feet in those days, before you had a meal, but none of them would do it, because none of them wanted to take the role of a servant. They were all fighting for the chief places. And so supper had begun, and after it had begun, Jesus took a basin. It says in verse 4, "He rising from supper, laid aside his garments; took a towel, girded himself. Poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet." Now people, listen to me: now, that's love in action; that is love that is forgiving. Here these guys were sinful, they were full of pride, they were full of self-centeredness, they were full of self-seeking, they were full of indifference to each other.

They were resenting each other, because they felt that the other guy among the twelve might be seeking to get a higher rank than they were. There was a terrible, sinful aura in that whole deal, and yet Jesus washes their feet. Jesus does a kind, and tender, and loving, sympathetic act, that is unconditional, forgiving love. He didn't even ask a response out of them. They didn't even give Him the right response. He didn't say, "Now, if you guys will cool it and love Me a little, I'll wash your feet." He washed their feet anyway, because love does it; it doesn't have to depend on the response. And finally, it is self-sacrificing; the Lord of glory washing the feet of these sinful, self-seeking men.

And you go over to verse 13, Jesus sums it up by saying this: "Ye call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one

another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." In other words, He said to them, "You saw how I loved you, didn't you? You saw that I loved you by an act of love that was unconditional, that was totally forgiving, that was totally self-sacrificing, and I expect you to do the same to each other."

And later on in the chapter, verse 34, after an interlude with Judas, He picks up the same teaching, and He says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know you're my disciples, if you have love one for another." Now listen: notice in verse 34, "you are to love as I have loved you," and how had He just loved them? He had just loved them with forgiveness, with an unconditional love, and a self-sacrificing love, and that's the very thing he's asking for them to manifest. And He says to them, "The servant is not greater than his lord." If I love that way, then that's the way you are to love. So that's the positive side.

Now back to Ephesians. We are to walk in love. What does that mean? We're to love like Christ loved. How did He love? Forgiving, unconditionally, self-sacrificing. That's the positive presentation, now watch how fast he goes to the opposite – here comes the negative. And right away, in verse 3, we see the perversion. The plea in verse 1 and the first part of verse 2, the pattern at the end of verse 2, and now the perversion. Whatever it is that God establishes, Satan will counterfeit, and here comes the perversion immediately, in verses 3 and 4, and you see it there, fornication. Sex sin. And it's propagated by verse 6, the deceivers with their vain words, who are nothing more than the object of God's wrath. Where God establishes true love, the world comes along and establishes the phony, the counterfeit.

The world really – I'll be honest with you – the world wants to live in love, there's no question about that. I mean they want love bad. In fact, the only thing they want more than love is money. But apart from money, they want love; the world really goes after love. People agree, and you hear them talk about it all the time. Love, loving, and being loved, or making love, as they call it, being in love is the ultimate high. People agree, it's the greatest experience to be in love. It has a way of sensitizing life to the extremes of emotion. You will never be as happy as you will be when you're in love. You will never be as sad as you can be when you love. You will never know the gamut of emotions that you know when you are sensitized to these extremes by being, quote, unquote, in love.

Love is the ultimate human experience. And I mean we – the world just continues to sell it. I mean the songs you listen to, I don't care whether they're the ballad-type songs, the songs of the parent's generation, or whether the acid rock craziness of the kids today, it's the same underlying message, you know, that love is in there. It's either the fantasy of a love sought, or it's the shatteredness of a love lost, or whatever it is – it's this constant quest for love, see. It may be a song about a father and

a son, or two friends, or a husband and wife, or a lover and another lover, or whatever, but love is this fantasy, this illusive dream that the world chases. And of course they base their concept of love on what it does for me; it's a self-seeking thing.

And it's obvious from the songs, and the plays, and the films, and the books, and the TV shows that they just keep fostering this chase for the fantasy love, and people in the world are looking for the ultimate love. You know, they hear the philosopher talk about it, and the singer sings the song about this love that's so rapturous, and so fabulous, and so fantastic, you know. And they read a book about it, or they see a movie about it, or a TV thing where, you know, everyone is so in love. And if you've noticed, it's always the person that you're not married to that gives you the greatest thrill. That's the fantasy, see. And so the world chases this fantasy, seeking a dream of a perfect love and a perfect fulfillment.

And there are a lot like Ponce de Leon, looking for the fountain of youth. It's stupid; it's a dream of a fool's paradise. They give themselves over to one person for a while, and then they suck that person bone dry, and then they go off to find another one they can drain, because their fantasy says that love is what I get. God says love is what you give. Listen to me: the world's love is conditional. The very opposite of Christ's love, it's conditional. It says, "Give me what I want, and I'll love you." It is unforgiving; "Blow it too many times, and you're out of my life." That's it, and it's on to somebody else.

I always think about the guy who got married, and got his bride, and he got in the cart that was pulled by the horse, and they were leaving the wedding. The horse bolted real hard, and the guy said, "That's one." A little while down the road, the horse bolted, and he said, "That's two." The third time the horse did it he got out, took a gun, and shot the horse. And his wife said, "What are you doing?" And he looked at her and said, "That's one." You know, whatever the world's kind of love is, it doesn't leave much room for error. You don't mess up very many times; I'm gone baby. That's the way it is. It is unforgiving.

Secondly, it's conditional – it's conditional. As long as you get the right responses, you hang in there; as soon as the responses aren't what you want then you're gone. And thirdly it is self-centered, not self-sacrificing. It is self-centered; it feeds on its own need. It is the very thing opposite what God says characterizes us. Look at Matthew 18 for a moment – Matthew 18 – just to give you one illustration of how the Lord illustrated this worldly feeling. Now, here you can find that there's a contrast. Jesus presents His love, which is totally forgiving, unconditional, and self-sacrificing. And Peter comes to Him and says, "Well, Lord, I mean this unconditional, self-sacrificing, forgiving love, how far does it go? I mean shall I forgive my brother seven times?"

"Jesus said unto him, 'I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain king who would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had nothing with which to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and that he had” – that is, all his possessions – “and payment be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshiped him, saying, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.’” Which is ridiculous – he never could have paid back that sum, but it was a nice thought. “Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”

Who do you think the lord of the servant is here? It’s God, isn’t it? And this is the sinner, and the sinner is coming, and he even comes on a works basis; he’s even going to say, “I’ll do it all, I’ll grit my teeth and I’ll pay back the whole ten thousand.” Ridiculous; couldn’t do it in his lifetime. In spite of his foolishness, God is generous enough to forgive him. “But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, who owed him a hundred denarii” – that’s just about three months’ work – “and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, and said, ‘Pay me what you owe.’ His fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.’” And he could pay it all; that wasn’t that much.

“And he wouldn’t let him, but he went and cast him into prison, till he could pay the debt.” Pretty tough to do when you’re in prison. “So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, came and told their lord all that was done. And the lord, after he had called him, said unto him, ‘O you wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtst me: Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?’ And his lord was angry, and delivered him to the inquisitors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also to you, if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother his trespasses.”

In other words, typical world’s perspective: no forgiveness. And the Lord came to him and said, “You give evidence of not being a Christian. You’re not in My family. You’re not in My kingdom. There’s no love in you.” The point is this, people – it’s a simple point. The world is not forgiving. The world bases its responses on conditions – you pay up and I’ll tolerate you – the world is self-seeking. The Christian is the opposite. That’s what we want you to see. Now, let’s look at Ephesians 5, verse 3 and 4, specifically. “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not fitting: but rather giving of thanks.”

If God’s love and the love of God’s children is self-sacrificing, forgiving, and unconditional, then be sure that Satan will pervert that, and the love of the world will be selfish, self-centered, unforgiving, and conditioned on what it gains, not what it gives – that’s the point. So when the world says love, it isn’t using God’s definition; it means desire, self-pleasure, lust. Oh, I’m not denying that now and then there’s some self-giving in it, that now and then there’s some milk of human kindness, now and then there is some magnanimity in it, now and then there is some generosity in it. There are times when love, human love, does reach a higher level than at other times. But the basic commodity is self-



pleasure, self-gaining, and it is a conditional thing.

I never cease to be amazed how many people say, “Well, we’re getting a divorce, because you don’t meet my needs anymore.” Well, who ever said love was all about somebody meeting your needs? Love is all about you meeting somebody’s needs. Physical desire, personal gratification is a fickle dream, it’s an illusive bubble, and if you want to chase your whole life long to find the ultimate fantasy, you’ll wind up desperate, destitute, and never having realized it. The world says, “I love you for what you do for me.” It is shallow, selfish, sensual, sexual. Satan tries to sell this to the world. And it’s incredible to me that Christians fall into the trap.

People, I think that what’s happening in the church today in this area of divorce, and the breakup of marriage, and infidelity, and all of this, is based simply on this one principle: Christian people will not walk in love as God defines it. They won’t. Paul says, “I’m not talking about the world’s love, fornication, uncleanness, covetousness; that shouldn’t be once named among you, not one single time should that be heard of.” The word fornication, you know that word. It’s mentioned in its noun forms at least 35 times in the New Testament – it’s a big problem. Now, when something is mentioned 35 times, it’s a problem. The word *porneia* means sex sin, and it means any kind – any kind.

There is a term in the Greek, *egkrateia*, and that word means – it’s a great word – it means discipline and self-control – that’s its basic meaning. And it denotes the power of control that a person has over himself, *egkrateia*, it’s a good word. Socrates said it is one of the chief virtues; so did Plato, and so did Aristotle. The word was self-control, self-discipline. By the way, it is used ten times in the New Testament, and it always means self-control, sometimes translated temperance, but meaning the same thing. But watch where its real significance is: the ancient Greeks used it to refer to sexual self-control – sexual self-control. They said it is the ability to transcend one’s passions, to transcend one’s desires, sexually.

Now, in the New Testament is it used in that way, also; in Acts for example, 24:25 – let me just show you this, very fascinating word. And Paul here is talking about – he’s talking to Felix. “And as he reasoned” – he’s talking to Felix, he talked to him, watch this one, this is really powerful – “about righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come.” Now, you say, “Well, that’s a pretty general message; a little righteousness, a little self-control, a little judgment to come.” No sir. Do you know what he was doing? Listen: Felix married Drusilla in an adulterous relationship, and here is Paul in front of Felix, this powerful man, and he says to him, “I’d like to give you a sermon, Felix.

“It has to do with righteousness, as opposed to lack of self-control, sexual self-control, which leads to the judgment of God.” Listen, what he was doing was nailing Felix to the wall on his own relationship to his wife. This wasn’t any generalized message. He was saying, “Felix, you’re a living illustration of God’s righteousness violated by a failure to have sexual self-control, which ends in judgment.” In 1

Corinthians, chapter 7, the word is used again, and there it is used in reference to marriage, where the apostle Paul is teaching and he says, "If they cannot have self-control, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." And it means sexual self-control.

If you have a problem with that, get married. Don't try to say, "I have the gift of singleness, but it sure is difficult, 'cause I have this tremendous desire for marriage." No. If you have that desire, and you do not have self-control, sexual self-control then you're better to be married. In other words, I want you to see that the word *egkrateia* is a word that refers to sexual self-control. Now, the Greeks said that that word had an opposite, and the opposite was *porneia*, and so now you can see by the opposite what it means: a lack of sexual self-control. That's *porneia*. It is an antonym of *egkrateia*. It is behavior out of control, it is undisciplined, it is beyond the limits that God sets.

And by the way, it means bestiality, homosexuality, it was used to speak of pedophilia, which is sex with children, child molesting, any kind of unchastity, prostitution, harlotry, anything comes under that term; any lack of sexual self-control. *porneia*. There's a Greek word *graph*, which means to write. *Porneia* and *graph* is pornography, to write about sex sin. That's where the word comes from. There's no place for this in our life. He says, "This shouldn't be once named among the saints, not one time." You'll remember if you were here when we studied 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, how that the apostle Paul says there's no place for this in our life, none at all.

"Such were some of you," he said. "You used to be like this, this is in the past; but since you've come to Jesus Christ, that's all gone, that's all done away with. That's all in the past, there's no place for that." And the Corinthians, of course, were throwing up all kinds of stupid arguments about the fact, "Well, meat for the body, and the body for meat." Do you remember that? I mean it's only biological, just like eating. After all, it's just a biological thing. And the apostle Paul says, "It isn't biological at all. Don't you know your body is a member of Christ, and when you join yourself to a harlot you join Christ to a harlot?" And by the way a harlot is anybody who has sex outside of marriage.

And when you do that, it's not just a biological thing. You're taking Jesus Christ, with whom you are one, and you're joining Jesus Christ to a harlot. It's not just biological. If you're living in any kind of a perversion of love, you're a blight on the church. And in 1 Corinthians, chapter 5, and the apostle Paul writes, he says, "It's reported commonly there is fornication among you." And he says, "Instead of being stricken about it, instead of being mournful and broken about it, you're puffed up, and you have not mourned." And he says, "Your glorying is not good." And he says to the church, "You put that person out of the church. Deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Don't let that leaven destroy the lump."

And he says, "If you find a fornicator in the church, I write unto you not to company with a fornicator. If he calls himself a brother, and he's a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; don't even eat a meal with him." 1 Corinthians 5: put them out. You're a blight on

the church. You need to be removed from the church if you live that way, to say nothing of the fact that you're definitely not walking as a child of God. In 2 Peter 2, he calls people that do that "scabs and filth spots on the assembly." Satan will always introduce a counterfeit.

Now, look further – and we won't go over these words in detail, because we have in the past. But he says, "Neither fornication, nor uncleanness." Remember that word? *Akatharsia* – uncleanness. It's used 11 times in the New Testament. The first time it was used by Jesus to speak of – now watch this one – the first time it's used of Jesus to speak of the vile, rotten, stench that occurs when a body decays and is filled with maggots. That's the way Jesus used it; it's a rotten, stinking, wretched word. Now listen: it's used 11 times. The first time it was used by Jesus to speak of the rottenness, of the filth and decay, of a body in a tomb. The next 10 times it's used, it is connected with sexual evil. It means the vile, rotten, stench that goes with sexual sin.

It refers to immoral acts, thoughts, passions, ideas, all the way on to orgies, every bit of it. That's not love. You say, "But it's so wonderful, we're in love." And Jesus says, "It's the same word that speaks of the rotten filth and decay of a body full of maggots." Pretty strong language. People say, "But we're in love." No you're not in love, because love doesn't do that. We have sex madness I'm afraid, even in the church. It really shocks me some of the books that are now being written by Christian people. You know, *Sex for Christians*. I've thrown some in the trash can. I've had some books sent to me written by Christians, published by Christian publishers, dealing with the issue of sex, read about three pages and pitched it, in the trash.

You know what's happened is the world is selling this so effectively that the church is coming in the back door and buying some of it, and sort of trying to sanctify it. You can't sanctify this. I heard one person say in his premarital counseling he had advised the couple to see each other naked before they were married, so that they would have some idea of what they were getting into. Ludicrous. This isn't something clinical that can be dealt with in that fashion. There are some who even suggested pre-marital sex relationships for Christians before they're married.

Look at the next word – shouldn't be any of that, no uncleanness or covetousness. You say, "What does covetousness have to do with this?" *Pleonexia*, covetousness, could be translated greediness, and you know what it says? If you go back to Exodus 20:17, when it's talking there you shall not covet. It says, "You shall not covet this, and this, and this, nor your neighbor's" – what – "wife. You want to know something? People in our society, and I dare say people sitting right here in this church, covet other people's wives. They covet other women. They covet women they see on TV, or the movies, or ads, or magazines, or books, or whatever.

This is sin; this is the counterfeit. It is part of the lie, the illusive bubble, the fantasy that never is, that never happens. You know those beautiful, magnificent movie stars – they're supposed to be so wonderful – that fill up the fantasies of so many plain people are the same ones who can't stay

married to anybody. It's a fantasy, it's a, it's a lie, it's a deceit, it's illusive, it isn't there. Greediness. People go after women, and women go after men, like notches on their belt. By the way, in Greek the word *pleonexia* means to defraud – to defraud; it's a hoax, it's a literal hoax. It's to go after somebody to defraud them. Do you know what happens? Somebody comes after – I've just heard about a situation where a husband is stalked by a woman not his wife.

She goes after, and it looks so good, and it looks so good, and it turns out to be a fraud. There's nothing there, the fantasy is a lie, and the thing destroys and damns every good thing in life.

*Pleonexia*. The Latins called it *amor sceleratus habendi*, which means the love of possessing. People will sacrifice everything to get it. They'll destroy their children, they'll destroy their spouse, they'll destroy their relations to their friends, they'll destroy their home, they'll destroy their job. They'll destroy anything when they get the greediness that says, "I've got to have that because the fantasy will be fulfilled there," and it never will. It's Satan's lie right out of the pit.

And so the Bible says there will be a counterfeit, and "let it" – look at the end of verse 3 – "not be once named among you." Not one time. People say, "Well, I couldn't help it. I fell in love outside my marriage." That's not a proof of love, that's not a justification for divorce; that's simply a proof of the rotten, sinful heart that you've got. That's all. People say, "Well, we couldn't help it. We're so in love, and I don't love him anymore." Then you're a sinner, because you're commanded to love that one. You're a sinner. And that isn't going to justify a divorce; that condemns it. In addition to not loving your husband, or not loving your wife, or whatever starts this thing, you're a coveter, too.

Because you've coveted something that was not yours, and was outside God's laws, and outside God's will, and outside God's plan, so you not only sin in not loving as you should, but you sin in coveting what isn't yours. And you ought to read David and Bathsheba. You'll sin again, because you'll steal what isn't yours from whatever person it belongs to, and so your sin just keeps going. "Let it not be once named." Not even one time. Look at the end of verse 3: "as becometh" – *hagios* – "holy ones." How could holy ones be characterized by unholy love, unholy lust, selfish, conditional, and unforgiving? We are set apart. We are holy. How can holy ones be engaged in unholiness? How can those who are the children the Holy God be doing unholy things?

You say, "Well boy, I've never done that. I'm sticking with old Mom here all through the years, and hanging in there." That's good. But just so nobody gets off the hook, verse 4 says you shouldn't have any "filthy talk, foolish talk, jesting, but only giving of thanks." You say, "Well, what's this?" Listen: not only are you not to do it, you're not even to talk about it. Now, that ought to literally devastate our society. Filthiness, by the way, means general obscenity. The literal root is that which is disgraceful, and it has to do with words. It basically has to do with words; verse 12, of this same chapter, "It is a shame to speak of things which are done of them in secret." You don't even talk about that stuff.

That's why it bothers me that there's so much license, even within, quote, unquote, Christianity, to talk about that area of sexual life in a way that I don't feel the Bible allows. And whatever happened to the glory of discovery for two people set apart by God to marriage? Disgraceful talk is what filthiness means. It has to do with words that are disgraceful. You can't read a book without that garbage in it from the world. You can't see a television program, you can't see a film. You can hardly have a conversation with some people. And yet it is never to be ours to be indulged in; never once are we to be in a filthy conversation, never once are we to listen to disgraceful talk. We are called to holy conversation.

Read James 1. We are called to holy conversation. When you open your mouth, they ought to be the words that come from the mind of God, the heart of God, the lips of Jesus. Not the stuff that the world talks about. I don't know how people can go sit in a movie and watch all this stuff and listen to all of that. I don't know how you can do that with your television. I don't know how you can read books like that, or magazines like that, or laugh at jokes like that, when the Bible says it should never be once named among you. Not only filthiness, but look at foolish talking, *mrologia*. From *mros* we get moron; it means stupid talk. It's talk coming from somebody who has an intellectual deficiency.

I call it low obscenity. Let me show you what I mean. Low obscenity – this is the sin of the drunk, the sin of the fool, the sin of the gutter mouth, the low-class, obscene stuff. Just filthy gutter talk, senseless, profitless words with a filthy connotation, low obscenity, *mrologia*, moronic. But the next word is very interesting. It's the word jesting, and it is the word *eutrapelia*. It doesn't mean low obscenity, it means high obscenity. You say, "What in the world is that?" Well, the word literally means able to turn easily. Have you ever known anybody who can take something that is said and turn it easily into something dirty? That's the clever wit of the talk show host, you know? The late night guy, who no matter what you say, he twists it to have a filthy innuendo.

So on the one hand, you've got the moronic stupidity of the drunken or the fool, who just talks filthy gutter talk; on the other hand, you've got the sophistication of the clever man, who's not stupid but who has a clever dirty wit, who can easily turn anything to have an innuendo. In both cases, it's garbage can mind. In both cases, it is talking about something that is evil, and Paul says you don't do it in verse 3, and he says in verse 4, you don't talk about it. Clean up your life, clean up your talk. So Paul says love has been perverted into sexual lust, uncleanness, covetousness, and it's all for self-gratification, and it's unforgiving because when you don't bring any, when you don't deliver the goods, when you don't fulfill, I am gone to somebody else. It's all conditioned on the right response.

We are not to involve ourselves in that, as holy ones, and we are not even to talk about such things, or hear them talked about. On the other hand, verse 4 says we are to give thanks – we are to give thanks. That's pretty clear. You know why we're to give thanks? And I want – just get this. If you don't get anything else I say, get this, because thanks is the most unselfish thing you do. Did you get that? Thanks, absolutely unselfish. Instead of seeking selfish things – sexual fulfillment, uncleanness,

coveting – instead of indulging in all these self-fulfilling things, stop, say thanks. That's why you see it says in 1 Thessalonians, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God concerning you."

Nothing you ever do in your life will teach you unselfishness like giving thanks. You spend all day giving thanks, and you'll step right outside yourself, because thanks has to be offered to God, see. Don't be self-centered, is what he's saying; give thanks, give thanks, give thanks. Express your love to God, express your love to others, let your life be characterized by saying thanks. And I believe you can go even from God here to those around you. Instead of wanting everything from everybody, instead of wanting to take, why don't you love in a way that says, "Thanks." Thanks for what you mean, thanks for what you are, thanks for what you allow me to give you. Just be a thankful, unselfish person, instead of selfish. God's love is unselfish and thankful, and the world's love is thankless and selfish.

And finally, the plea, the pattern, the perversion, leads to the punishment. It's clear what it is; we'll see it quickly, look. "For this you know, no fornicator" – no person who lives in fornication – "no unclean person, no covetous person, who is an idolater" – because if you covet something, it's an idol, and he lists all three of the same things that are in verse 3, persons like that – "have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." Do you hear the same message we've been hearing now for a month? If you live like that, you're not what? You're not saved. You're not in God's Kingdom. You'd better examine yourself. No fornicator, did you get it? None. No unclean person, and no covetous man who's an idolater has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.

That's not our lifestyle. Those people are in the world. There's no room for doubt about God's attitude toward immorality. No wonder you shouldn't do it, no wonder you shouldn't even talk about it. We're the children of God, do you see this in the text? We're the children of God, in verse 1. We're the beloved of Christ. We're the holy ones, the end of verse 3. We're the citizens of the kingdom, and we must act consistent with our identity. He says – look at verse 5: "This ye know." This isn't any big mystery, you know this. And by the way, I'm afraid some people don't know this. Now, we want to say to everybody, "Well, so and so, I know they're constantly living in fornication, I know they're living with a person all the time, I know they do this all the time, I know they're homosexuals, but after all, they made a decision."

Listen: this you know, that no fornicator is saved. No person who lives like that. There's going to be a change. Oh, maybe there'll be a time when a believer falls into the sin of fornication, but that is not going to be the continuing characteristic of his life, without a break. From the time he was converted, there's going to be a change, because salvation is based on repentance. If you ever learned anything when you were saved, you learned that. Titus 2:11 – listen to this: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Now, when you got salvation, it says this: "Teaching us." Did you know your salvation teaches you something? It teaches you "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age."

When you were saved, you learned that much. Your salvation taught you that much, that you couldn't go on living in lusts and ungodliness. Salvation teaches; that's basic stuff. So he says, "Those people, they don't have any part." You say, "Well, what about a Christian who's drawn into a sin in that area, or a Christian who does do that foolish talking or filthiness? Well, the Lord will forgive." Sure, 1 John 1:9, He keeps on cleansing us. And there will be times when we as Christians do fail maybe in those areas. It isn't necessary, but there may be times when it happens, and God will forgive. But it will not be the flow of your life to live like that; not at all. I've told you for years now: holiness is a change in your life at salvation, and then a decreasing frequency of sin.

Well, verse 6, he says – this is the punishment, now – they're not going to enter the Kingdom. "And let no man deceive you with vain words." Don't you let anybody tell you, "You can do this and be a Christian." Don't you let anybody tell you, "You can live like this and God will forgive you." Don't you let anybody tell you, "You're going to be all right, you're going to get in the kingdom. It'll be okay, you made a decision, you did your religious thing; it's all right to live like this." Don't let anybody deceive you with those empty words; they're empty, they're meaningless, they're useless. "For because of these very things" – what things? Fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, and jesting – "comes the wrath of God on the sons of disobedience."

Do you see? These are the very things for which God damns people to hell. Don't let anybody deceive you. These are not characteristics of children of God. They are characteristics of children of disobedience. Do you see the contrast? Verse 6 ends with the children of disobedience; verse 1 began with the dear children of God. There's a difference. And the result of it all is a final word – listen and I'll close – verse 7: "Be not ye therefore" – what – "partakers with them." The word partaker means partners. Don't join the world in its evil. The past, beloved, is past. Let's pray.

Father we know that the world offers a selfish, conditional, unforgiving love, a counterfeit, and You offer selfless, forgiving, unconditional love. Thank You for loving us that way. You loved us when we didn't deserve it, and then You told us to love each other when we don't deserve it either. Help us to love like You loved, so that we can imitate You as dear, beloved children. Keep us from the world, and the evil one. God, I pray that You'll protect these precious people from this area of sin, so that it will not be once named among us, that Jesus may be glorified, in whose wonderful name we pray. Amen.

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