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21

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Walking In The Light

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Ephesians 5:1-14



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Well Providence, good morning to you. Hope that you are doing well, and have had a great week. If you're a guest with us, we're so glad that you are here as well. If you have a Bible with you, if want to turn with me to Ephesians 5, we're going to look at verses 1-14, if you don't have one with you, there's lots of Bibles in chairs near you, and if you don't have one at home, take that home as a gift.

What we're doing though, is just walking verse by verse through this book, we're up to 5:1. But even before we read this, and I want to pray for us in a moment, I want to share with you just a few thoughts about what the Bible says about itself. That is, it says that if God, by his Spirit is not living inside of our heart, that many of the passages of the Bible, not only will we not be able to truly understand them, but the Bible says that they won't even be appealing to us when we do understand them. That there's a need for a transformation of the heart, so that our heart is inclined toward the things of God.

There's a verse in 1 John 5, and it says that the Commandments of God are not burdensome to those who know Christ. What this means is that when God's Spirit is living in you because you're trusting in Jesus Christ, the son of God. Then God's Spirit literally changes the desires of our heart, not only to be able to understand it, but that when we read God, and his heart, and we see what He wants for us, is that we see these things, not only are they not burdensome, but it creates pleasure in our heart knowing that these things create pleasure in God's heart if it do them.

You may be in a place of your life to where things look dark, and feel dark. It may be that you're world right now is dark. It may be that your heart, or your mind, they just feel dark. I want you to know that God loves you. We want you to know that God loves you. He created you, and you are important to him. You're valuable to the Creator of the universe.

So much so that when God seeks to explain to us His love us, His love for you, He says, "This is the extent of my love for you. I literally gave you my son." See, what the Bible says is that we sinned against God. We broke fellowship with Him. And what that does is it creates a stirring in our heart, a longing, there's guilt or regret. There's a sense of hunger, it feels like there's a hole in our heart and we have to fill it with different things. When we're far from God, we tend to fill it with everything but God, which offends God.

What happens is that distance from God, it creates this longing to where we start thinking, "What I really need to do is work really hard in order to merit some favor with God." We look at the whole spiritual life like a mountain. God's up there, we're down here, and if we're distant, then I need to climb up the mountain. The Bible tells us that you can't climb well enough, so God loved us and He knew that task was impossible for us, so He did the unthinkable and that is that He sent his son down the mountain.

His son, Jesus Christ, lived a perfectly righteous life on this earth. And after doing so, it says in the Bible that He died for your sin and for mine, to pay the penalty of His son, Jesus Christ, lived a perfectly righteous life on this earth. And after doing so, it says in the Bible that He died for your sin and for mine, to pay the penalty of that sin. He was then buried in a grave and He rose from the dead. He became the victor, not only over death, but over sin, over evil, over Satan. Then He extended to us an invitation and that is we were to believe in Him and trust Him, meaning instead of trusting in your accomplishments to climb the mountain, that you would trust in His accomplishments when He came down the mountain.

What the Bible says is that we would be forgiven of all of our sins and he, God, would literally give us the righteousness of Christ and we would be adopted into His family. And I realize that most of time, you hear this at the end of a sermon, but I wanted to do this at the beginning and I wanted to give you an opportunity right now, we just sang songs about, "Jesus, thank you." And some of you, you don't know why you should be thankful to Jesus. But maybe now you do.

And if your world is dark and if you want light, if God is confirming in your heart that you need to be forgiven, that hole in your heart, that all of your efforts and all of your plans and all of your aspirations have proven to be insufficient in order to feel whole, in order to be whole. We want you to know the answer is found in Christ and I want to give you an opportunity right now to actually trust Him. So if you would, would you bow your head and let's pray together?

For those of you who would love to know God in that way, to have a relationship with God, you can pray a prayer like this. Father in Heaven, I acknowledge what You say your word is true about me and that is that I'm a sinner. I have made decisions that violated what You say is good and right, and I confess to You my need. I can't save myself. I cannot climb the mountain. And all of my efforts have proved to be futile. But God, I believe what You did for me. I believe that You sent Jesus from Heaven to earth.

I believe that He was the son of God and I believe that He died for my sin, to pay for my sin. I believe He was buried and that He rose from the dead, and I confess Him as the Lord of my life. Would You forgive me of my sin? Would You adopt me into Your family? Father, I pray for those who have a heart right now that's inclined to look to You in this way. That You would give them courage, that You would fill them with Your spirit. That You would forgive them, and You would do just what You say in your word that if we believe in our heart that God, You raised Jesus from the dead and if we confess Him as Lord, then we will be saved.

Now, Father, I pray as the church family, along those who maybe just came to faith in Christ and who now have the spirit of God in their heart. I pray that You would help us not only to understand a difficult text, but that You would help us to see it as appealing as a way of life. I ask that You would give us grace as You speak through weakness again. In Christ name, we pray. Amen. Amen.

By the way, if you trust in Christ, we as a church family are rejoicing with you and would love to have the opportunity to know about that. We'll let you know how later. I want to show you a name tag. It's on the screen right now or it will be, and if I gave you this name tag, it says, "Hello. I am." And I asked you to pick a word or two that would identify yourself and you couldn't use your name. What word would you choose to help us understand who you are?

So that you're honest instead of, in a room like this, let's just say it is your best friend that you absolutely knew without a shadow of a doubt you could tell them the deepest, darkest thing about who you are that's shaping your life. It's your identity that, "This is who I am." And you knew that they would love you after you told me, what would you write as the two or three words that most describe who you are as a person?

You see, the book of Ephesians is all about Christ and it's all about identity of what Christ is doing in our life and what Paul wants to do in this book of Ephesians is he wants to help us, his readers, grow to the place to where our first inclination, if we had to do that exercise, would not be to write necessarily a characteristic about us. That we would write something like, "Christian." Or some synonym that you find within Ephesians that tells us about our new identity in Jesus Christ.

Our identity shapes our behavior. You and I both know this. Whatever you choose as a word to identify yourself or words or phrases, it has tremendous impact on your future interactions, in particular with other people. I want you to think about this. Let's just say that you wrote the word, "Shy." Or maybe, "Dad," or maybe, "Victim." Because of something in your past.

Whatever word you choose, it has tentacles of why you are that way, why you would choose that way, but it also reaches forward. It not only reaches past as the why you're that way, it also tells you how to behave in the future. If you identify as being an introvert or a shy person, you've expectations when you come to a party or some social gathering of how you're supposed to interact. And you even, when it's your identity, associate upon other people. You assume upon other people that they would look upon you in that way and it would be acceptable. "It's okay. She's shy. He's shy. He does this with his kids because he's a dad."

These identities that we carry around, things that are true about you, they're very powerful in determining who we will become. What we find here in chapter 5 is he wants to tell us three things that are true of us, who know Jesus Christ is Savior. And then he's going to lean on those identities to tell us then how to live in the future. So let's read it together.

He says, "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity and to covet must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."

”For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, who covets; that is, an idolater, has no 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 become partners with them; for one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”

“Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.”

“But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’” He begins, and He says, “Be imitators of God.” And then he tells us why. That’s the behavior, and the behavior is tied to an identity in Christ, and what is that? It’s “beloved children.” The word beloved literally means, object of love.

All of us have some kind of collection of something, whether it’s toys, or cars, or whether it’s tools. Whatever it is, but all of us have a favorite one, don’t we? It’s our beloved of all the people in this room, and all the people in the world. There’s only one that I would call my beloved. It’s Tabitha, my wife. She’s my favorite one. She’s the object of my love.

What this says is this, is that God Almighty ... I want you to think about this for a second. Don’t look at her. She’s up there, she’s smiling. Right, it’s all good. I want you to think about this. The Creator of the universe has made you the object of his love. As a child, you are beloved by God Almighty. When we trust in Christ, we’re adopted into His family. We became beloved children. This is our identity.

Now, what would a beloved child do? A beloved child imitates. You see, some of you don’t have a parent that you want to imitate, but you look at other people who have a parent and you’re like, “Man. I want to be like that.” It’s interesting to watch their children, you think, “Boy. They just naturally want to imitate.” But isn’t it true that even if you don’t like your mom or dad, that there’s things that you do that you imitate them without even trying?

Your voice, the words that you choose, the inflection of your words, your facial expressions, how you show affection, how you walk, your gate, your step. It looks like your mom or your dad. But in particular, when we have a beloved father, there’s things that we want, we’re inclined to want to be like them.

Most of us, dads or moms, who mow the yard and who kids wants to emulate, we have a little toy mower. Now, we don’t have it anymore, my boys are older. Back when they were really little. I’d go out and mow the yard and they’d get their little plastic mower and they’d walk behind.

They're not doing any work whatsoever, but what's interesting is at the end of it, there's something about mowing the yard, about yard work, and about seeing things become better, become more beautiful that's really appealing. So I would naturally do ... I still do it, is after yard work, right? I step back. Ordinarily this time I would go back to a sidewalk and instinctively, I don't know why I do it, I put both thumbs in my pocket and I just look. I just do this.

If you come to our house, you know, you'll be like, "It doesn't look that good." It doesn't, but it looks better than before I started, right? So I'm just checking it out. Years ago, literally. One of my boys, all right, I won't say his name. He's out there. We finished, and he's mowing the yard with his plastic mower behind me, and he beats me. He actually goes out to the sidewalk, he puts his thumbs in, and he goes, "It looks nice." And this is where what Paul says takes place, is that when we recognize our identity in Christ, then we are a beloved child and we want to emulate Him. That we began to imitate Him.

His whole message here, these 14 verses, what he's saying is this. As beloved children, look to the father through the lens of the son. The father is invisible, but the son lived. His life is recorded. We know how He lived. When Jesus was on the earth, He actually said, "I do nothing at my own accord, I only do what I see my father doing." So God, the son, is imitating God, the father, and He says, "Now you imitate me as beloved children."

What He does is He shows us three areas in these passage that we want to imitate. The first is this, is that God calls us to imitate a life of love. You see this in verses one and two. He says, "Be imitators." And then He says, "and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Now what you see there is three characteristics of Christ-like love. The first is sacrifice. It says that He gave Himself. He willingly gave himself. To love like Jesus, what it means is that we have to be willing to part with or to give up something that's of valuable to us. It may be your favorite toy, it may be your time, or energy. But it looks like sacrifice. If you love like Christ, it's going to cost you something that you care about.

Let's just say that you have a family member, maybe it's a spouse, and you have a life insurance policy on that person and that loved one dies. And the life insurance policy comes due and that company sends you a check, let's just say that it's for \$ 50,000. You receive that check. When you receive that check, you don't say, "Wow. A better life. They loved me so much." No.

Why? Because it's an obligation. But if you're involved in a small group, maybe here at Providence or somewhere else, and those people they rally around you and make meals, and they come to you, and they're parting with things that are valuable to them like time and energy and money in order to care for you, in order to love you. You associate that with love. You say, "Wow. I feel so loved."

This is Christ-like love. It starts first with sacrifice. The second characteristic He says to us ... He goes is, "Full of grace." He says that He gave himself for us. There's a target, and that target wasn't performing so well when He loved us. Romans 5:8 says that, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." What this means is this: is that if you and I are going to imitate God in the way that we love other people, then we're going to have to serve people when they are undeserving.

We're going to have to forgive people before they are forgivable. We're going to have to love people when they're still unlovely. And then there's a third. The third characteristic He says that He did all of this as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. And this speaks of motive. You see, God was serving us and loving us, but while He doing these things, He was looking up to the Father, he's saying, "God, I'm doing all this for you. As an offering to you. I want to please you. It's a pleasure for you."

Years ago, when our boys were in little leagues of basketball. One time I was late to a game, so one of my boys was out there and he was playing, he didn't know that I was there yet. I was looking around and he was just loafing. Literally he was loafing. He wasn't running very fast, he just looked like he was out there, right? So he runs by and he doesn't know, and the ball goes about near me, and he comes up. I just said, "Hey." And he looks up and he sees me, got a big smile on his face. I said, "It's time to play." And literally he gets out there ... You should have seen him.

It's as if somebody had just literally put gasoline in his engine and now all of the sudden, he was so excited about playing. Even in failure and even in success in the game. He kept looking over, "Is dad watching? Is dad watching?" And what Paul was saying is this, when Jesus was on the earth, whatever He was doing, whether it was healing people of their sight, whether it was dying for people on the cross, is He would kept looking up to Father, "Are you pleased with this? This is for you."

And it's the same with us. When we love this way, what we're doing is we're imitating God in the way that we love. And who can do this? Only people who have a genuine identity as a beloved child who are responding to the love of God and wanting to love other people.

The second thing that He calls us to is to imitate a life of purity. Purity. You see, Jesus tells us, or God's word tells us in Hebrews 4, that Jesus was tempted in every way, just as you and I were and yet He was without sin. He never sinned. He was the model of purity and love. What Paul does next is he identifies a series of behaviors that sometimes in the world are associated with the word called love. "I love this person. I love this."

But what he does is he compares it. He contrast it. In fact, have you noticed how verse three start? It's the word, "But." It's the world of contrast. Live this way, love this way, but these things are not love. What he does is he lists a series of behaviors. They were never seen in Christ and never to be seen in those imitating Christ. What are they?

The verse one is sexual immorality. Verse three. Matthew 15:19. The same word “porneia”, it’s translated, fornication. Literally means to have sex with somebody that is not your spouse. Why? Because Jesus didn’t do this and we’re imitating Jesus. The second one is impurity. Impurity literally means to be mixed with defilement. It means to be pure and made less pure. Impurity. I want you to think about this for a second.

Let’s just say that there’s a city on a hill, a beautiful city. Huge wall. Huge towers and a big castle and happy people. Where there’s amazing sewage system that nobody in the city has to see or smell. It’s all underground. But there’s a guy who, for some reason, he’s just crazy and what he does is he walks down the mountain and he finds where the sewage comes out. There’s a big pipe. And sometimes, right, when everybody has to go to the bathroom, a lot of sewage comes out, and sometimes it’s just a low drip.

You think, “This is the most disgusting illustration he’s ever come up with.” It is. But hold on for a second, right, because it’s about to hurt. Just imagine someone from that city coming down with a pure, white, linen cloth. Coming down that sewage pipe, and just standing underneath it. And sometimes lots of sewage comes out, we call that pornography. I mean, intentionally go to a place. I’m just, “I’m not going to participate physically in the action, but I’m going to participate. I’m going to make myself impure. I’m going to defile myself. I’m going to become mixed.”

And sometimes it’s just a slow drip. Sometimes it’s just the shows that we watch, that are trivial, or they’re banal, that don’t edify. We watch, we get to the end, we just feel numb. We feel dull. We were defiled. We’re not ready to worship, because we just feel dirty. What he’s saying is this, “O, believer, you are that white linen cloth.” There’s no reason to stand underneath. Why? Because Jesus never stood underneath. We’re imitating Him.

The third behavior is to covet. Coveting is a strong desire to possess, and in this context, where all these behaviors really are directed in the sexual world. What he’s talking about there is to where we have a strong desire to objectify and possess a person for our self interest, for our flesh. I say objectify.

We say things like this, or maybe we don’t say, we’ve heard someone say things like this. “I want her. I want him. I want a piece of that.” What are we meaning when we say that? What we’re doing is we’re objectifying. We’re making a person, created image of God, we’re treating like a piece of pie that’s cut up in pieces.

We take a piece of pie and we leave them less than we we arrived. Listen to me, Jesus never did that. He never interacted with people, took part of who they were, instinctively, their personhood, their identity, part of their soul, part of their body, and left them less than when He showed up. He never did it. He never coveted.

He goes on and He talks about what comes out of our mouth and He ... We're going to group these together. He says, "Filthiness, foolish talk and crude joking." Isn't it true that far from God one can turn anything, including a cloud formation to an object of innuendo or filth?

We'll talk about anything, and we can turn it into something that is crude or filthy when our heart is far from God. And isn't this exactly what we looked at back in Ephesians 4? Look at verse 17, 18, 19. He says, "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart."

"They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy or covetous to practice every kind of impurity." And he says, don't believe her. This is out of bounds for us. It's out of bounds. Why? Because verse 20 and 21 says, Christ has come to us. He's revealed himself to us. He's revealed that He is the creator of sex and He's created it as a seal of commitment for a marriage relationship between a man and a woman. He's given us some model to follow.

He keeps talking about this, but then he gives us another identity in Christ. He says, "Don't you realize this is not fitting for saints?" In Chapter 1:1 of Ephesians, He calls us saints. That's another identity in Christ. The saint is not a perfect one. It's a forgiven one, who's been given an identity in Christ and now is seeking to live out that identity by imitating the one who is perfect in that identity. Jesus Christ is a saint. He's perfect. He's righteous and he says, "Don't you see this is out of place for us?"

I want to show you a little picture. If you came upon this swing set. You're out on a park with your kids and you saw this swing set. What would you think? You'd say, "Wait a minute. Those seats are out of place. They're not in the right room." And I would agree with you. Last night, if the Tar Heels were due gear back to UNC, what would you say? You'd say, "Man. That's out of place. Their identity is Carolina. They wear light blue. That's who they are. That's their identity."

So when they leave out of that, we think, "Well, that's out of place. That doesn't fit quite right." It's like furniture that's ... You're like, "Wait a minute. Who moved the couch?" And what he's saying is this, is that when you see these behaviors in the life of a believer, He says, "This is out of place." He says, "This is not proper among saints."

Why? Because 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 says this, "Flee from sexual immorality ... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God with your body." What is he saying? He's saying, "Wherever we go, if we're in Christ, we're taking Christ with us."

So when we take Christ, when we go into sin, you need to understand you're dragging Jesus with you. And His spirit who lives within you. We looked in chapter 4:30, and it says that what He does is that when He gets into a position that He doesn't like, that he's not comfortable with, because you're forcing Him to be there, He calls us to feel conviction or guilt, regret. "I don't like that." That's God saying, "Hey. I'm here. Don't forget. This is out of place. This isn't fitting."

So Paul then runs to the heart. He says, "I want you to know something and be sure of this, and everyone who is sexually immoral and impure or covetous has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ." What is He saying there? He's saying if you and I live in impurity without any pain of guilt or conscious, you need to ask, is God spirit living in my heart? If you can sit under the sewage valve of pornography and feel no tinge of pain, you need to ask, "God, are you there? In here?"

Then you're going to find people saying, "You know what? I got a deal with God. I trust Him, but I live how I like." So Paul goes a step further and He says, "Let no one deceive you with empty words." Our identity comes out. He says, "Do not become partners or participants with them."

Now, sitting here right now ... Or me standing and you sitting. I see you, right? And everyone in some other venue see you too, sort of. The fact is I know right now. Just as it was the case last hour, right? It got really quiet about this time. I know that some of you right now are pretty mad at me. You may be really uncomfortable. You may be sitting next to a girlfriend or boyfriend you're sleeping with, you live with, and they're not your spouse. And you're hearing all of this, and you're saying, "You know what? These guys, these preachers, is all they talk about. Money and sex."

Some of you in the room, you may not be mad. You may just be apathetic. "Whatever, these guys are always talking about this." And some of you in the room, you're genuine believers and yet you're wrestling in your heart with what you feel right now. You don't feel necessarily anger. You don't feel apathy. You feel conviction. You feel distraught. There's hope, you see.

I know the battle. I know purity is a battle. I know that we all live in a land where hookups are the norm, where people dress more modest in bed than on a beach. Where sensuality drips like frosting at that Krispy Kreme place. It's just everywhere. You think, "How am I supposed to be a pure person in this world?" I realize it is difficult, but friends, let me ask you this question: is God's word not clear? It's clear. He's called us to imitate a life and Jesus Christ is pure.

The third thing is that God calls us to imitate a life of light. Light. Jesus had the ability to enter a room and literally bring everything to light. All the darkness, He could dispel. It was an amazing ability. The reason is because that's His identity. John 8:12. He says, "I am the light of the world." He's living out His identity. He says, "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Friends, when you trust in Jesus Christ, you need to understand He gave you a new identity. And here He talks about the third one. He says, “You were darkness.” He didn’t say you lived in darkness. You were a part of it. You were around it. He says, “You were it.” So was I. We were part of the darkness. That was our identity.

Another identity for those in darkness, He says, “We’re sons of disobedience.” You need to hear this. There’s an enormous difference between a believer who’s has an identity as a beloved child that’s wrestling with purity, and a son of disobedience, which is a reference to somebody who has no regard for the social ethic or glory of God. Two totally different things.

See, when we trust in Christ to give us a new identity, He says, “You were darkness.” He goes, “But now you are light in the Lord.” So when we practice or permit darkness, we’re being untrue to who we are. What is He saying to us? He says, “Walk as children of light.” You are light, so walk as children of light. He says, “Try to discern what’s pleasing to the Lord and take no part in the works of darkness, but rather expose them.”

You see, your light is little, unlike Jesus’s light. Your light is like a headlamp. If you’ve ever been camping or in a cave, you wear a little band around your head, there’s a little light. The fact is that light only shines where you look, so it is with your light.

What he’s asking us to do is he’s saying, “Listen to me. Point that light within your heart to the different areas and different rooms of your life and dispel all of the darkness, all of the lies, all of the corruption, all of the impurity that’s there. You got to get rid of it. Be fiercely inhospitable to any impurity in your life.” He knows it’s not easy, which is why He compares it to waking up. Who likes to wake up? Who likes to get up?

Some of you like the snooze button is like your best friend. It’s like, “That is my friend. Let me just touch that one more time.” It’s hard to wake up, sometimes. That’s what he says. He goes, “For you to actually expose the darkness and impurity in your own heart is as difficult as waking up.” So what is he saying? He says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Which is a paraphrase of Isaiah 60:1-2.

Before we take the Lord’s Supper, I want to give you just a few applications. The first is this, let’s just Christ, the Savior. He gave you an opportunity to do that already and I just exhort you as friend, as somebody who is ... Who knows the war, who knows impurity, who knows regret, who knows guilt, who’s familiar with everything that we’ve talked about. And I want you to know that there’s forgiveness found in Jesus Christ if you look to him, so we as a church and I urge you to trust Jesus Christ as your savior if you’ve not.

The second thing is this. Let’s, as a church family, those of us who have trust in Christ, let’s discover our identity in Christ. I would encourage you to read through Ephesians and just begin circling words at the end or around the words, “in Him.” We’re saints in Him, we’re forgiven in Him, we’re chosen in Him. We are beloved children in Him. We are light in Him.

This is your identity, and if you can actually begin to absorb that within your heart, to where if asked, “Who really are you? Who makes you who you are?” And if you’re first thought are these identities that are true of you in Christ, I promise it will shape your future. It will shape your future obedience, it will shape your heart.

You see, some of you are going to leave. Someone’s going to ask you, “What was the sermon about?” You’re going to say, “It was about sex.” This sermon, honestly, is not about sex. It’s about your identity in Christ. Sex is just simply one arena where that identity has to be played out. Do you know who you are in Christ? It makes such an enormous difference in the rest of your life.

The third thing is this is as a church family, let’s distinguish ourselves by our love. Oh, Jesus was perfect in purity and perfect, perfect as light, but isn’t it true that what everyone knew about Jesus was this was a man who loves me. This is why Jesus says, “Listen, out of all the things that you can be as a people, by this all men will know that you’re my disciples if you love one another.”

I just want to commend you, church family. I see Christ-like love, sacrifice, and grace, and motive to worship in you all the time. So encouraging to me. And for those who are doing this [inaudible 00:34:44]. It’s out identity, it’s who we are.

And the fourth is this, is let’s pursue the supremacy of Christ as our strategy for purity. If I had another half hour, which I don’t, don’t worry, I would dig deep because there’s a lot of us, when it comes to this point, you’re like, “Okay. I get it. But now how do I stop? I don’t want to do it anymore, but I keep doing it. Why? How do I stop? How do I become a pure person?”

And what I want you to know is this. It’s all the discipline and self control that you can add, it is important, but it will not move the ball. It won’t.

The only hope that you and I have to be pure in this world is to be enthralled with something sweeter and better than impurity. You see, our soul was created by God with the ability to expand and contract to the object of our treasure. If we are on this earth, and tiny pleasures like lust, when we make them our treasure, like “That is my treasure. I want that, I want that, I want that.” What happens is, our soul literally shrivels up like a raisin because it doesn’t take much of a soul in order to rap around a little lust.

But this is the amazing thing. When our soul contracts, what happens is lust grows all the more powerful. That’s why you have people all the time, “I just can’t stop. I can’t stop looking at it. I can’t stop reading it. I can’t stop watching it.” Why? It’s because when they’re ... When we are emotionally and intellectually adrift from genuine pleasure, we have to go to the next best thing. And that’s our little lust. But watch this.

If you and I as a people will seek to pursue a knowledge of who God is, and we will make Jesus Christ our treasure, your soul will begin to expand and what you'll find is that sex will actually begin to shrink in its power and it will actually find it's true God-given size and intent in your life. It will.

This sermon is all about Jesus. This world is all about Jesus. He is love and pure and He is light. God has given us a remarkable way for us to remember and it's called the Lord's Supper. So for those that will be serving us, if you want to get up and head to the back and get ready with the elements. The two elements that we celebrate, that Jesus told us to celebrate, are the cup and the bread, which is symbolic of the blood and the body of Jesus Christ.

For those of us who know Christ and who've been made new, who have an identity in Christ, you have to understand that this is for us. It's for you. Whether you are a member of Providence or not, if you know Jesus Christ, the Savior, this is for you. We welcome you to take it. But if you're here and you've never trusted Christ, we want to ask you to respectfully let them pass because to take them is to treasure them.

But for those of us who do know Christ, God tells us that when we do this, that we need to come with a clear conscious. As these elements are being passed, what you're going to have the opportunity to do is really two things. One is to confess your sin, if you've not done so already, so that you can take it with a clear conscious. Two, I just want to have you listen to Ephesians 5 read over us as we prepare to take this Supper.

If you will, let's bow. Let's pray together. Father in Heaven, we thank You for your amazing love for us and how You have made very, very clear within your word way to live. We also thank you, God, that You've loved us first, that we are beloved children, and as we take the Supper and as we remember what You've done for us, we gladly proclaim with our lips and with our lives that we believe in Jesus Christ and it is a privilege to do this. So God, would You reveal any sin in our life, help us to confess those so that You can forgive us. We will be forgive. God, we need your help. Now we pray in Christ's name. Amen.



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