

Everyday Holiness

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[0:00] Well, right now, on the streets of a very large city in Brazil, there are orphaned children fending for themselves.

It's a very hard and dangerous life for these children. Now imagine with me. Through a series of events, you adopt one of these children off the streets of Brazil.

And he's a seven-year-old boy. His name is Ricardo. And Ricardo now bears your name. He is yours.

Legally yours. His situation has dramatically changed. He's been flown up from Brazil. He's living with you. He bears your name.

There's been a dramatic change in Ricardo's situation. He's legally yours. Well, you get him home only to realize that your son is behaving very oddly.

[1:09] Even badly. He doesn't sleep on the bed you bought him. He sleeps underneath it. And under his bed with him, he hoards food taken from your refrigerator and your cupboards.

It grieves you. Your son never looks at you in your eyes. There's something he can't seem to bear when he looks at you.

What are you going to do? How do you respond to your son? Option one.

You threaten him. Ricardo, you better shape up or I'm shipping you back to Brazil. Do you think you'd get a change of behavior?

Maybe. But it would not last. Behavioral change by threat doesn't seem to last long.

[2:24] Option number two. It's not threat. It's grace. Ricardo. As you look under the bed. Ricardo, I love you.

I love you, son. I love you. I love you. You're mine, son. You bear my name now. You are safe in my house now.

Your situation has dramatically changed. You're my son now, boy. I'll provide for you. You just need to trust me. I'll take care of you.

You don't have to live this way anymore. It's not true of you anymore. I love you. I love you.

I love you. And I will help you. You don't need to fear me, Ricardo. Threat, grace. Which one would you respond to?

[3:23] Grace. God doesn't threaten his children into holiness. God loves his children into holiness. Ours is a holiness by grace.

Not by threat. God is holy. Gloriously set apart in all that he is. He's a consuming fire of moral purity. And he is our daddy. Amen to that. He loves us beyond measure. His love is a holy love. It's set apart.

It's unlike anything else. Unrelenting in his love for us. He's determined. He's determined. He's determined. He's determined. With all of his omniscient, omnipotent glory behind him.

He's going to love us. God the Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to make us holy. So that we be holy before him. And then God the Son purchased us with his blood so that we could walk in holiness.

[4:31] So that we could be holy. And then God the Spirit came and dwelt us so that we could have the power to walk in holiness. Our holiness is a triune event.

And holiness is beautiful in God's sight. God is committed to our holiness. He will love us into greater and greater degrees of holiness.

That's his posture towards us. He loves us and wants us to share in his holiness. His holiness is a good thing. Remember how Ephesians is laid out.

Chapters 1 through 3. It's instruction after instruction. This is who you are, Christian. You were called by the Father. You were bought by the Son. You were indwelt by the Spirit.

You went from death to life. You've been united to a holy people. All by chapter 3, the Gospel. That's how all this came to you. It's by grace you've been saved. Not by works.

[5:33] It's God's kindness to you. And then Ephesians 4 through 6, we read exhortation after exhortation. To those who've been made holy by grace.

To those who've been made holy by grace. We're exhorted over and over again to live out that holiness in real time.

Ephesians is a beautiful book. Ours is a holiness by grace. and we're find ourselves in Ephesians 5 this morning that latter half of the book exhortation after exhortation and we're in a passage with several exhortations in it we're in Ephesians chapter 5 verses 1 through 6 and so if you would turn with me there right now I just want to let you know from up front Paul is going to exhort us to holiness God this morning is going to exhort us to holiness to urge us to be holy and it's by grace not by threat so would you turn there and read with me starting in verse 1 of chapter 5 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 in all impurity or covetousness 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's sexually immoral or or impure or who is covetous covetous that is an idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ in God verse 6 let no one deceive you with empty words for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience some heavy stuff that we have been made holy by grace saved by grace set apart by God's grace we didn't earn that he did that in us for us for his glory but as holy ones as saints we must imitate God not the sons of disobedience in this passage these just six verses there's actually a progression of thought there's a logic to the apostles thinking and there's three steps to it there's three stages to it first he says who you are now the second stage is this what must not be named among us and the third step is this why it must not be named among us what you're going to see here is that these are not threats in verses 5 and 6 but these are actually appeals to what God has already done for us in Christ Paul is a master motivator and he's going to motivate us out of grace not out of threat he's appealing to what God has done in you by grace and so let's now dive in and call the mind as holy ones we got to imitate

God not the sons of disobedience so let's remind ourselves of who we are so this is who you are now verses 1 and 2 therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love so there are two exhortations in verses 1 and 2 the first is the command to be imitators of God to be like to be like God the Greek word that translates into imitators actually the word we get mimic from we're to mimic God we're to be like God in his holiness remember 1 Peter 1 16 be holy for I am holy we are to be like God we're to mimic him and then he says this he says be imitators of God as beloved children I find that interesting in fact I kind of found that surprising

I was expecting something more like this be imitators of God because you should be imitators of God because it's right and what we're told here is be imitators of God as beloved children he's pointing to who we are by God's grace he's pointing to what already God has already done for us through Jesus he's adopted us as his children in fact we are beloved children he loves us he wants us to imitate him because he loves us this morning he's saying to you I love you son I love you daughter be like me Paul is motivating us to holiness out of God's love for us like father like son my parents have been staying with us this past week in fact they're here with us now this morning and my wife is in Ohio she's been in Ohio caring for her mom who is who's dying and so my parents have come up and have been just a tremendous help and all throughout this past week we've been doing a lot of reminiscing and laughing a lot

[11:48] I've been reminded of how much I take after my dad I mean we look alike we talk alike we work alike we like the same things pickup trucks the sport of lacrosse getting our hands dirty the movie gladiator we like these things we even laugh alike like father like son there's genetics involved of course but I'm like my dad because I've spent a lot of time with him I've been in his presence and there's a reason for that there's not been one moment in my life that I've questioned my dad's love for me not once and here's been the result I want to be like him I want to be near him I want to be like him how much more our father in heaven he has

loved us with an eternal love he set his love on us before the foundation of the world nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus Romans says and the aim of our father's love is our holiness so that we can be in his presence without fear he loves us and he is committed to loving us into his holiness this is who you are now Christian you are beloved of God set apart for him to be imitators of your God who is your loving father that is who you are now now let's look at verse 2 at the second command because to imitate God in holiness means that we take on a specific family trait have you ever noticed that some families passed on a distinct nose from generation to generation do you ever notice that or passed on a distinct laugh or passed on a unique skill set to be a child of the living God to be part of his holy family is to take on a particular family trait it's called love you see that in verse 2 and walk in love it's a command in light of who we are beloved children we are to walk in love that word walk is all throughout the book of Ephesians it just simply means to live your life and the word love in love what does it mean to walk in love?

here's what it means we live our lives governed by love that's what that means it governs all that we do and so it begs the question so what does that look like?

and that's exactly where Paul points us to he points us to Jesus and walk in love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us do you see it there?

that's the kind of love we're supposed to love others with a love set apart from the rest a holy kind of love it's God's family kind of loving that's the kind of love we're being called to here having been loved by God we are now commanded to love others as Christ has loved us there's a whole lot of love going on there in Ephesians 5 1 and 2 I would just like to point out two distinctions of this holy Christ-like love first thing you need to know is this this love of Christ is upward in its aim at the end of Ephesians 5 2 we read this as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God to God when you hear those words fragrant offering and sacrifice Paul is drawing from the Old Testament

[16:08] Old Testament sacrifice Old Testament worship in the temple and he's saying this is an act of God this is an act of worship of God our loving others is a way in which we worship God Christ's loving us to God was worship of God and now we are to love others the same way we are to love others to God that's what we're being told here God is the goal of our loving others another way to say it is this I want your good which is God and I'm going to live my life so that you can experience that so the first thing distinction of this love is it's Godward it's upward God aimed it's worship the second thing is it's not only upward it's outward upward and outward it's others oriented he loved us he gave himself up for us it's others oriented he didn't give himself up for himself he gave himself up for us it's instructive to us this is how we're to love upward and outward we're to put others first we're to love others as God and Christ has loved us he gave himself up for us we're talking about

Christ's substitutionary death on our behalf his grace to us he brought us into the family of God through the substitutionary death of Jesus what a love is that so here we are commanded to love because we have been loved by God and the kind of love with which we're going to love is a Christ-like love which is upward and outward so in verses 1 and 2 we're exhorted to be imitators of God by living lives to God in a Christ-like way it's a picture of everyday holiness what Paul is saying here this is kind of like the blocking and tackling of the Christian faith this is normal we love God and we love each other that's what we do that's what we're called to now this is normal Christian living this is the standard by which we live our lives now and having set the standard having defined the path that we're to walk walk in love in verses 3 and 4

Paul moves on to expose that which is out of bounds that which is not to be true of us not to be true of the beloved children of God not to be true of those who are walking by love let's turn to now what must not be named among us chapter 5 verses 3 and 4 we read this but sexual immorality in all impurity or covetousness 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 so we've just been exhorted to live a particular way because of who we are now we're beloved of God therefore we love others upward and outward and in verses 3 and 4 he says this cannot be true this must not even be named among you in verses 3 and 4 there are two lists of sins and they're short lists verse 3 has a list verse 4 has a list

I'm going to just briefly touch on that second list because I want to spend the bulk of my time on the first list so let me just point you to verse 4 and help you to see that it focuses on speech let's read that together let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking which are out of place but instead let there be thanksgiving so ever so brief did you notice what Paul says about this speech it's out of place it's inconsistent with who we are now as Christians it's not speaking in a manner worthy of the calling with which we've been called it's inconsistent with holiness it's not pleasing to God so this filthiness foolish talk and crude joking it's all out of place because this is the kind of speech that habitually spoken flows out of a spiritually dead heart out of the heart the mouth speaks and if you've got a dead heart you're going to speak filthy this kind of speech is out of place because it's not holy it's unedifying it's habitual trash talk and what it's most characteristic is of people who don't know

Christ who have yet to be saved who have yet to move from death to life rather we're told what is to mark our speech is thanksgiving now that's consistent with someone who's a beloved child of God an imitator of God consistent with someone who walks in love thankfulness is the overflow of a heart that is grateful to God for all things thankfulness reveals a loving heart aimed at God this is upward and outward kind of speech now let's move back to verse 3 let's spend some time here verse 3 Paul focuses on three sins sexual immorality impurity and covetousness and notice the weight Paul gives to it feel the exhortation the degree of it he says this these things must not even be named among you and what he's saying is they're not to be present in your midst they're not to be even mentioned because they're not there that's what he's saying the new international version reads this

[22:44] I love this translation but among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity or greed because these are improper for God's people they're out of place it's not who you are you've got to feel the weight of this you feel the impact of this what he's calling us to as a church these things must not be even named there must not be sexual immorality among us there must not be any kind of impurity among us there must not be covetousness or also known as greed among us can I just tell you something right now if you're a Christian in the room God loves you your father loves you your father loves you and he wants to love you into holiness now let's dial into these three sins a little bit more what are these things that Paul is saying can't be named among us what is sexual immorality what is this business of impurity what is covetousness let's be clear on what these are sexual immorality is the

English translation of one Greek word so two words in English sexual immorality for one Greek word it's the Greek word pornea it was originally used that word pornea very specifically to speak of prostitution prostitution prostitution of course is an illegitimate sex it is out of bounds but over time this is what happened pornea began to be used for more and more different kinds of illegitimate sexual practice and so what pornea eventually became was kind of a catch basin for all illicit sex anything that was out of bounds can be called pornea sexual so sexual immorality is our English words used to describe all kinds of illegitimate sex which raises a question who says who says what is legitimate and illegitimate sexual practice who says see that on the playground between boys playing basketball trying to figure out the rules oh yeah who says yeah who says who decides what is sexually permissible and what is sexually impermissible is there a universal sexual morality that applies to all people everywhere for all time is there the resounding answer of your

Bible is yes God's word is a clarion call into the confusion of our culture we've got all sorts of things going around of saying what's appropriate and inappropriate sexually before I list for you the different kinds of sexual immorality I'm not going to be exhaustive what I want to do first is to help you see God's good provision for all people to experience the good gift of sex in other words before we talk about sexual immorality let's talk about what sexual morality is let's define what is true before we define what is not what's right before what's wrong let's start here sex was God's idea sex was part of the good in

Genesis chapter one on the sixth day God created Adam and Eve he brought them together he said made them in his image and he said go be fruitful and multiply fill the earth and subdue it and they did and God says it was good it's good God had created Adam and Eve for a purpose and he gave them the gift of sex in order to carry out his command to fill the earth sex was God's good idea it is

God's good gift to us and God has provided one and only one context in which this good gift can be enjoyed and that one place is marriage would you turn your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 13 I'm not sure if you know this is in your Bible but it's wonderful

Hebrews 13 4 says this let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the sexually immoral and the adulterous let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled marriage is a holy covenant and what a covenant is it's a promise that's gone public and so when someone speaks their vows they are doing that witnessed by people it's public commitment it's a covenant and not just witnessed by humans witnessed by the living

[28:43] God marriage is a holy covenant between one man and one woman for life God's good gift of sex is to be enjoyed only within the covenant of marriage so in God's eyes any sex outside of marriage is illegitimate it's sinful it's unholy it's sexually immoral it's porneia and so when we talk about masturbation we need to think about masturbation in light of this one place God allows for the enjoyment of sex that's how we need to think about it when we hear about friends hooking up kind of back in my day it was friends with benefits it might be consensual but if it's outside of marriage it's still sinful in God's eyes adultery is when a married person engages in sex with someone who is not their spouse someone other than their spouse it's sinful because it breaks the marriage covenant one man one woman exclusively committed to each other for life if a boyfriend and girlfriend are engaging in sex it's sexually immoral and it doesn't matter how old they are it could be teenagers in their 20s 30s 40s 50s 60s 70s 80s 90s homosexuality is sinful because it's a disregard for

God's good design one man and one woman exclusively committed to each other for life even if homosexual marriage is legalized by man it is still sinful in God's eyes so what I've been trying to help you see here is what we've got to be clear on that the sole provision for the enjoyment of this good gift of sex is marriage that's the key to this whole culture debate over what is sexually permissible and not anything outside of the bounds of marriage is sexual immorality and it must not even be named among us why at the very heart of sexual immorality is selfishness sexual immorality is sexual selfishness it's the very opposite of what we're commanded to in Ephesians 5 2 walk in love remember love is upward and outward

God aimed in other oriented sexual immorality is downward it's a disregard for God's design it's disobedience and often times it's inward self oriented sexual immorality is unloving and disobedience and it must not be even named among us how y'all doing impurity the word impurity is used ten times in the New Testament nine by Paul and typically when it's used it's used kind of partnered with other words like sexual immorality and sensuality and so typically it has sexual overtones to it but if you notice Paul qualifies it he says all impurity every kind of impurity and so what Paul has in mind here is something a little bit larger grander than just sexual impurity other places where

Paul uses this word outside of kind of a sexual context it's talking about sinful motives and I think that's what he's getting at here so let's just call this habitual selfishness it's a general and pervasive selfishness that affects everything anybody seen Finding Nemo Sydney Harbor seagulls mine mine mine mine mine have you heard of deism have you heard of theism what we're talking about here is me it's all about me me me me that's our culture that's where we're living and that's what God has called us out of it's in direct opposite of what God calls us to in Ephesians 5 2 the love with which we've been called to is upward and outward impurity must not even be named among us covetousness also known as greed sexual immorality is habitual sexual selfishness impurity is a habitual me ism covetousness greed is material selfishness did you notice that in verse 5 Paul calls this greed by another name idolatry idolatry is living for something other than the one true God and it's a capital offense in God's eyes and what Paul is saying is that habitual greed is the worship of a false God and it must not even be named among us I read this a couple weeks ago in my devotions out of Luke Jesus warns us take care and be on your guard against all covetousness for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions covetousness is idolatry because it believes one's possessions give life to the full remember Jesus John 10 10 I came that

they might have life and might have it abundantly here's what the covetous person believes my next person purchase will give me life and life in full does it no the reality is that this kind of living only leads to ruin and death

[35:12] Paul says in 1st Timothy 6 but those who desire to be rich fall into temptation into snare into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs Christ Christ is our life not money not possessions they cannot give us what we need most covetousness is the very opposite of what God exhorts us to in Ephesians 5 1 it's not being imitators of God it's not walking in love God doesn't live for money God exists for his own glory and so must we exist for his glory greed is not walking in love it's walking in selfishness material selfishness you can't serve both God and money Jesus says but you can serve God with your money when it comes to money and possessions to walk in love is to be generous to give wisely to steward money and possessions for the God glorifying good of others and sometimes that means going without to bless someone else for God's glory these are heavy stuff isn't it it's not to be even named among us it's a high standard it's a holy standard that's a good standard we live in a culture that's just inundated with these things and God has called us out of it we once were this way but no longer let's look at why these things must not be named among us there are two reasons in Ephesians 5 5 and 6 there's actually another reason given a little earlier in verse 3 it says but sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among saints you get the logic it's not who you are this stuff must not be named among you because you've been changed you're a beloved child of the living God you're to walk in love and this is inconsistent with that but notice verse 5 for you may be sure of this that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetousness covetous and idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ in God that might put a lump in your throat that might make you wonder oh man am I okay

Paul is describing people who are habitually unrepentant and sinning unrepentant and habitual sexually immoral the unrepentant and habitually impure the unrepentant and habitually covetousness Paul is not talking about Christians he's talking about those who are not Christians those who do not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God he says you can see it in the way he describes it for you may be sure of this that those who habitually practice sin have no inheritance so why is he saying this it's not a threat it's a sober reminder those who have yet to be saved by God's grace live a certain way we've been saved by God's grace we have an inheritance from Jesus

Ephesians 1 14 and 18 so here's the logic and let me put it in the form of a question Christian holy one why would you engage in things that non-Christians live for why would you do that it's not who you are by God's grace you've been radically changed this is no longer true of you therefore these things should not even be named among you it's not who you are anymore the next reason I want you to see is in verse 6 it's similar rationale verse 6 says let no one deceive you with empty words for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience what Paul is saying is this don't be deceived in thinking that there is no wrath of God there is it's a prevalent lie in our day people don't like to think that God is full of wrath towards sinners and the question isn't how do you feel about it the question is is it true or not and God's word is clear God's wrath is real and hanging over the heads of those who have yet to believe John 3 36 so here's Paul's rationale this is not a threat but here's the rationale sexual immorality all impurity and greed are the very things that have caused the wrath of God to come upon the sons of disobedience but you're no longer a son of disobedience you're a beloved child of the living God God's wrath for you was poured out on Christ you've been forgiven and you've been made righteous in God's sight with Christ's righteousness and now you're to be an imitator of God his

beloved child these things are not to be named among us because it's not who we are anymore we're not sons of disobedience under God's wrath we're children of God under his grace he loves us so let me conclude by saying this Paul's not motivating us here to you know get this stuff away from us because he's threatening us

Paul is motivating us to holiness by grace remember who you are remember what God has done for you in Christ by God's grace you've been made holy so imitate your holy father and walk in love and steer clear of all this selfishness that's true of the sons of disobedience you've been saved by grace to walk in holiness let me pray Lord Jesus we are so grateful for what you've done for us thank you for saving us from our sin and saving us to holiness and God I do pray that you would God sanctify us as a church that you would remove sexual immorality from our midst that you would remove impurity that you would remove greed for your glory and for our good for your honor and for what is right

[42:48] God thank you for reminding us this morning that you love us that's what we take to heart in Jesus name amen amen