

PURITY THROUGH GRATITUDE

- I. The standard God has called us to (Ephesians 5:3)
 - A. Ephesians 5:3 “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 holy people.”
 - B. God is calling us to more than just staying away from sexual immorality but to all kinds of impurity.
 - C. Definition of purity: a persistent, determined pursuit of righteousness.
- a freedom from sin or impurities
 - D. In I Peter 1:15, God calls us to live holy lives.
 - E. Dove soap says it is 99.9% pure. Don’t you wonder what is in the other .1%?
 - F. The way we tend to think is if something is mostly pure then it is okay. But if I told you I had a pitcher of ice tea, and it only had one drop of poisonous acid in it, would you drink it? It is 99.9% tea and only .1% poisonous acid.
 - G. God calls us to a high standard. This standard of purity is not just talking about sexual purity. He is calling us to purity in every area of our lives.
 - H. But if God calls us to it, He also will enable us to do it.
 - I. Notice Ephesians 5:4.

He adds to not a hint of sexual immorality, impurity or greed, “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking which are out of place but rather thanksgiving.” (Ephesians 5:4)
- II. Fighting impurity with gratitude
 - A. How does gratitude help us fight impurity?

If you were thinking of something to replace impurity with, would you have picked gratitude? (maybe love or self-control)
 - B. In the Bible, a principle to overcome sin is not to just try to stop doing something (“put it off”), but the Bible teaches that we need “to put on”, that is, replace the sin with what is right. (Ephesians 4:22-24) But how does replacing impurity with gratitude help?
 - C. The opposite of gratitude is greed. Greedy lust wants what it does not have. When we say greed, we are speaking of more than money. So if you can get rid of a greedy heart, then the evil actions will go away.
 - D. Greed can pervert our desires when you want a good thing too much.

If you are hungry and you want a sandwich, there is nothing wrong with that desire. But if you want it so badly that you are short-tempered with the server at the deli, your desire has become sinful because you want it too much.
 - E. You can also have a good desire, but you try to satisfy that desire in the wrong way. Sexual desire is not in itself a wrong desire, but if you try to fulfill that desire through lust, then it is sinful.
 - F. In contrast, gratitude is the attitude of the heart that is thankful for everything God gives.

1. Greed wants what it doesn't have.
2. Gratitude is thankful for what it does have.
3. The focus of thankfulness is on God's provision and helps us to take the offensive in the battle against sin.

G. When we lust, we are craving something God has not given to us. When we give in to that lust, we experience a brief moment of pleasure and then guilt. (Hebrews 11:25-26) It doesn't bring the joy it promises.

H. Review

So we said that impurity, greed and sexual sin come when our hearts desire something more than God or something other than God. These desires begin in our heart. (Mark 7:21-23) If we are going to change, we need to change at the heart level. We can't blame our circumstances. We need to replace lust - desiring what we don't have - with gratitude - what we do have in God.

III. So what has God given us?

A. He has given us His Son, Jesus, and made us His beloved children.

1. Read I John 5:3-5.

We can have victory over sin. Because by faith, we have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus dwells within us to empower us. (Galatians 2:20) He is a real person. The most powerful person in the universe, and He is always with us.

2. Christ came to "redeem us from the empty way of life" (I Peter 1:18) and in its place, to give us abundant life and eternal pleasure. (John 10:10, Psalms 16:11)

3. How does this help us overcome sin?

Faith sees through the false promises of sin and sees that God offers us so much more.

4. When we learn to be satisfied with God and grateful for what He has given, the power of sin is broken. John 6:35 "He who believes in me shall never thirst", or Jeremiah 2:13.

B. He's given us His promises which counter the false promises of sin.

1. Sin (sexual sin) promises pleasure (Proverbs 7:18) but leads to death (Proverbs 7:26-27).

God promises abundant life. (John 10:10)

2. Sexual sin promises relationship but leads to isolation & heart ache. (Proverbs 7:21-23)

God promises an unconditional loving relationship with Him. (Hebrews 13:5b - "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.")

3. Sin promises a place of refuge.

When you are hurting, tired & afraid, sin says "Run to me, and I will comfort & protect you." (Proverbs 7:24-26) God promises that He is your salvation & refuge. (Psalms 18:1-3)

IV. Action Steps to Overcome Sin (I Timothy 4:7)

A. Repent

We need to acknowledge the lies that we have been believing. Confess them as sin.

B. Refocus your heart from lusting for the things that you don't have and put your focus back on God and thank Him for all that you do have. (Romans 1:21) The reality is when you have God, you have all you need. Sin is to give in to our desires to please ourselves – to worship ourselves. We need to instead worship God and purpose to please Him. (Romans 1:25) There is a saying – “Only two choices on the shelf, pleasing God or pleasing self.”

C. Replace sinful thoughts & behaviors with right thoughts & behaviors. (Ephesians 4:22-24)

If you are feeding your mind with sexual pictures, sensual music & raunchy TV, then you need to replace this with God-honoring entertainment, Scripture, etc.

D. Remove yourself from tempting situations. (2 Timothy 2:22)

When it comes to sexual temptation, we are always told to flee.

Conclusion:

We don't need to say to ourselves, “I shouldn't give in to impurity & sexual sin.” The good news is that we can say to ourselves, “I don't want to sin because God is bigger & better.”

Small group:

1. What does purity mean? Do you think it is possible for us as Christians to be pure? Why/why not?

2. When you are tempted to run to sexual sin, what is the thing you are looking for?

(pleasure, intimacy & relationship, refuge, something else)

3. How is gratitude helpful to fight against sin?

4. Are you a thankful person? Why/why not?

What steps do you need to take to become more grateful?

5. The Action Steps were to repent, refocus, replace, remove. Which of these do you need to work on the most? Why?