

## **Open the Eyes of My Heart (Part 20)**

Ephesians 5:1-14

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The tragic death of George Floyd reminds us of how unjust and broken this world is. Although we don't experience such discrimination, it still should be on our hearts. And although we know that Jesus will fix everything when He returns, we who have access to the Father through Jesus should pray for Him to bring justice and peace in the meantime, because He has the power to change things. This is just one way in which the children of God can show love in an effective way towards those suffering in this broken world.

Now, recalling last week's passage, we are reminded of how God's people should relate to one another in love, through their speech and concern for one another, working out their differences, and serving as a beacon to those outside the body of Christ. Ephesians 5:1-2 summarizes the previous section by emphasizing that we should imitate Jesus by walking in love. We should live lives motivated by love, forgiving and bearing with each other, compromising with each other, and putting others first.

In vv. 3-14 Paul moves on from how we treat each other in church to how those outside the church view us, specifically with regard to purity in the body of Christ. He says that sexual immorality (*porneia*), impurity, and covetousness should not even be named among us. All these three sins are related to sexual sin, violations of that which is reserved for the marriage bed. The first two are obvious, but covetousness is also related to sexual immorality in the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, which mentions specifically coveting your neighbor's wife, which leads to adultery. Paul's not just talking about our behavior, but about our reputation. When others speak of us, sexual immorality should not be named. We should not be known for this. The fact that the Catholic Church has become known for sexual abuse of children reminds us how such a damaged reputation can drive outsiders away from the church. We must keep ourselves pure. We must not be known for impurity.

Paul talks about filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking in v. 4. These things are all references to dirty jokes and inappropriate speech. This can be extended to the kind of music we listen to or what we watch. Everything you intake imprints itself on your brain and effects what comes out of your mouth. My son likes to play Brawl Stars on the iPad, and the result is that half

of what he says is somehow related to Brawl Stars. Likewise, what we expose ourselves to can take hold in our minds.

Both sexual immorality and dirty speech are related to self-gratification with that which is impure. These things shouldn't be in our hearts. We shouldn't practice them nor should they come out of our mouths. Instead, we should express thanksgiving (v. 4). Rather than seeking the impure, thinking that what God has given is not enough, we should thank God for the pure and good things He has given us. Rather than seeking to indulge ourselves in sexual sin, which cannot truly satisfy, we should be satisfied in the greater joy God has given us through Jesus. We should be careful about what we expose ourselves to, that we don't indulge in that which can cause us to stumble. This struggle is especially relevant to men. Examine yourselves and pray that God gives you strength to be satisfied in Him.

In vv. 5-6 Paul says that the sexually immoral have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. This is strong language. It doesn't mean that those who struggle with sexual sin are denied entry into God's kingdom. But it tells us that we must take this seriously. God's people should not be associated or defined by impurity. We are new creations. Though we may struggle with it, sexual sin must not be a part of our routine and we must not embrace it.

This leads to the next statement about how we should walk. The previous statements were to walk in a manner worthy of the calling we received (4:1), not to walk like the Gentiles in the ignorance of God (4:17), and to walk in love (5:2). Now we are told to walk as children of the light (v. 8), bearing fruit of goodness, righteousness, and truth. The outsiders are in the dark. They don't know Jesus and they flee from the light like mice, because they don't want their impure deeds, done in secret, to be exposed (vv. 11-12). Their deeds are fruitless. They are like assassins in the night (Psalm 11:2), always hiding and living only for their own self-interest. But we who live in the light are not afraid of having our deeds exposed, because they are pure. Our deeds should be good and righteous.

Verse 13 says that whatever is illuminated by the light becomes light. Paul quotes an ancient baptism hymn in v. 14, which says that those who have been brought to life through Jesus are now in the light of Christ. We all reflect Jesus' light to others. So pursue Him and walk in the light. Let us be lights to others by how we live, and point them to the light of Jesus. And when we stumble, let us not fear but rather be assured that through Jesus God is faithful to forgive us.