



LIVING GRACE  
COMMUNITY CHURCH

## **“Walking in Love”**

**Sermon Date: February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

### **Reflections on Sunday’s Sermon**

*Below is a reference to the section of the New City Catechism that we went over on Sunday:*

#### **The New City Catechism—Lord’s Day 9**

#### **What Does God Require in the First, Second, and Third Commandments?**

First, that we know and trust God as the only true and living God. Second, that we avoid all idolatry and do not worship God improperly. Third, that we treat God’s name with fear and reverence, honoring also his Word and works.

### **Prayer**

Praise the Holy Spirit who brought about new life in us. Praise Him that He is transforming every area of our lives, even the most private areas such as sexuality. Praise Him that His work of sanctification is not merely external but internal, transforming our thoughts and motives. As you pray, consider making this prayer your own (this prayer was taken from Prone to Wander by Barbara Duguid and Wayne Houk).

*Lord, we confess before you the ways in which we have abused your gift of sexuality. You gave us sex to be a wonderfully good gift within marriage, but we have perverted it in so many ways, using it to distract us from our boredom or loneliness, or to make us feel loved and accepted. We have used our sexuality as a means to serve our idols, instead of receiving it as a gift from you, to be used as you intended.*

*There is not one who is blameless in your sight in this area. Some of us confess before you physical acts of impurity that have left us feeling defiled and dirty. Others have committed the same acts in our minds and are thus equally guilty before you. Some are self-righteously proud of what we have not done, using our purity as grounds for boasting before you, when any vestige of purity that we have is a gift from you.*

*Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that sexual brokenness is only one small window into the pervasive brokenness of our lives as your image bearers. Thank you for Jesus’ perfect obedience in this area, as in every other, which enables us to stand before you forgiven and cleansed in Him. Lord, help us to take our sexual brokenness to the cross; help us to experience the comfort and peace that comes to us in the gospel and that enables us increasingly to say no to our idols. Above all, may our brokenness fill us with still deeper longing for the day when we will finally be made whole, when Jesus Christ returns. Amen.*

## **Scripture**

### ***Ephesians 5:1-6 (ESV)***

*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

*<sup>3</sup> But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. <sup>4</sup> Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

## **Handling the Word**

Let's break down the passage:

1. Why are we called to imitate God? (v. 1)
2. Why are we to walk in love and what does it look like to walk in love? (vv. 1-2)
3. What are some things that are inconsistent with being a saint—set apart by God? (v. 3)
4. If we are to speak of sexuality, how should it be done? (v. 4)
5. For those who walk in the ways described in verse 5, what don't they have?
6. What is poured out on those who condone or promote sexual immorality, impurity, or covetousness? (v. 6)

**Sexual Immorality:** interpersonal activity involving sex organs that does not conform to God's revealed laws governing sexuality. (Baker's Evangelical Dictionary)

**Impurity:** any activity, thought, word, or action that does not conform to God's will for our lives. (gotquestions.org)

**Covetousness:** strong desire to have that which belongs to another. (Baker's Evangelical Dictionary)

## **Understanding and Applying**

1. In summarizing Ephesians 4:20-32, Paul states ‘be imitators of God, as dearly beloved children’ (v. 1). Based on what we have been learning, why can Paul call believers to such a high standard of living (Ephesians 1:4-5, 2:10; 3:20; 4:1, 4:24)? Have you ever been commanded to ‘imitate’ God without understanding the reason as to why you can—necessity and ability—and if so, how did it affect you?
  
2. Referencing verse 2, Ian Hamilton states that “Paul issues an *unconditional* command”— ‘walk in love.’ Have you ever put conditions upon which believers you pursue, love, serve, honor, and forgive (1 John 4:20-21)? Further, with Christ’s love—sacrificial and pleasing to God—as our incentive and example, how might this love towards us shape our motives, words, and actions towards other believers, especially those who differ from us (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Philippians 2:5-8)?
  
3. Calling the Ephesians to walk in love, Paul states that ‘sexual immorality, and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among’ them (v. 3). How is our culture encouraging, towards society in general and you personally, sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness, and why is it inconsistent with God’s will regarding sexuality (Genesis 2:24)? Why do you think Paul links covetousness with sexual immorality and impurity (Exodus 20:17)?
  
4. Being imitators of God, we do not merely avoid sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness but more, these things are to not even cross our minds and lips flippantly (vv. 3-4). Do you see our culture trivializing, humorizing, or crudely representing sexuality, and have you found yourself being led to do the same? Give examples. Instead of following the world, we are called to give thanks regarding God’s design for sexuality. Whether married or single, do you think the belittling of sexual intimacy within the context of marriage can affect your ability to thank God for His design and parameters?

5. Given our new nature, and its implications—righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24)—Paul asserts that anyone who practices sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness will not inherit the kingdom of God (v. 5). Do you know of churches or Christians who claim fellowship with God but approve of such practices, and how does the Bible contradict their permissiveness (Romans 8:5-10; Hebrews 10:26-27; 1 John 3:4-10)? In your own words, why are you called to no longer practice sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness?
6. Paul doubles down on the consequences for those who approve of sexual sin, ‘because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience’ (v. 6). It may not always be evident, but God’s wrath is poured out and will be poured out on those who reject God’s laws regarding sexuality. Is there a difference between a saint who struggles with sexual sin and someone who indulges in sexual sins? Explain. Why should God’s warnings of wrath be a source of comfort for us as we continue to live in this world?
7. It is important to remember that our passage is still set within the context of maintaining unity among the saints (Ephesians 4:1-6). How might the practice, approval, or jesting of sexual sin lead to division rather than unity among the saints? Have you ever seen this happen, please share?
8. Praise God who, in Christ, hasn’t merely saved us from the consequences of our sins but also enables us to rightly bear His image—to imitate Him in thought, word, and deed even as it relates to sexuality. How has this passage shaped your understanding of what it means to be a child of God and your view of sexuality?

*“God’s salvation in Christ is double-edged: we are saved from the just judgment and condemnation of God, and we are saved for lives of righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). Christians are citizens of a kingdom that reflects the righteousness and moral purity of its King. This means that God’s dear children are to live differently, not according to the thinking and behavior of this passing world but according to the unchanging character of the thrice holy, pure, and righteous God. This sets the Christian and the church on an inevitable collision course with the world and its values.”*

*-Ian Hamilton*