

WHY IS THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

Eph. 5:25-27, 2 Cor. 11:2

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Webster defines purity as follows: “Free from all heterogeneous or extraneous matter, especially from anything that impairs or pollutes; free from that which defiles or contaminates; innocent, spotless, chaste, and genuine”. With these qualities in mind let us think about the purity of the church against the background that the church is not the building but the called out from the world.

To the church at Ephesus Paul said “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy (*Eph. 5:25-27*). It is evident that the Lord wanted the church for which Christ died to be kept pure and undefiled. To the church at Corinth Paul wrote. “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (*2 Cor. 11:2*).

Some of the members of the Corinthian Church had become very impure in their moral life. False teachers had introduced extraneous matter and doctrine of the church had to some extent been corrupt. Paul wrote the first Corinthians letter to correct those evils and to rid the church of both moral and doctrinal impurity. He deserved to be able to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ.

In order for Christ to be able to present the church, his bride without spot, members, preachers and elders all share in the responsibility of keeping the church pure.

Members: If the church is to be kept pure we must begin with the members who constitutes the church. In setting forth the qualities of character which the flock or members must possess, Christ said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (*Matt. 5:8*). The heart refers to our inner life. Reformation and self-improvement must begin with the heart with consciousness of sin, lament over it, the longing for divine goodness, and the opening of the heart or mind to the reception of that goodness. James said “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded” (*James 4:8*).

If our services is to be acceptable to God we serve not only must we be pure in heart, but we must serve Him from pure motives. Our motive must be to please God not man. Paul said, "If I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ".

Neither our worship nor our life will be acceptable in God's sight unless we are pure in heart, pure in motive and pure in life. One of the greatest dangers to the church today is that it may lose its identity by becoming so much like the world so much that those who are not members of the church. Christ taught His disciples that they were to have an influence in the world. We all have an influence either for good or for bad. Too many times it is not for good. Christ said "Ye are the salt of the earth." Salt is used as a germicide, as a preservative, and to improve the flavor of food. Do we function that way spiritually? It does its work without partaking of the nature of the thing it preserves. Christians must retain their identity as Christians. Paul pleaded with the Corinthians Christian "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, said the Lord and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you" (**2 Cor. 6:17**). He urged the Romans to "Be not conformed to this world." Many professed Christians are like the chameleon. They are quick-change artists. They confirm in their actions to the company they happen to be in.

The three Hebrew children and Daniel who refused to obey the dictates of the Babylonian and Persian kings, or to conform to the ways of the Chaldeans. If the church is to be kept pure, to retain its identity, it must have more Daniels, more Separatists, more non-conformist and fewer chameleons.

Preachers: if the church is to be kept pure, it is necessary for preachers to preach the truth and nothing but the truth. It is necessary for the preacher to preach the pure gospel of the kingdom. The preacher's first obligation is to preach the truth. His second obligation is to preach the truth in love. No preacher should soft pedal on the truth, nor sugar coat it in order to please men; neither should he make a special effort to make it look difficult for people to attain. Like Paul, he should determine not to know anything save Jesus Christ and Christ crucified. He should reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long suffering. The gospel must be unmixed with modernism, neither theology, philosophy nor psychology will point a sinner to Christ or save a soul from eternal destruction. The pure gospel is as well adopted to the needs of man in this modern world as it was to the needs of man in the first century. A pure gospel, preached in love without compromise is a must if the church is to be kept pure.

Elders: Elders likewise have great responsibilities in helping to keep the church pure. As shepherds they must watch for the souls of their flock. They must guide, guard, feed and protect the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers.

The lord has confined their oversight to the local congregation (**1 Pet. 5:1-5**). They are responsible for the doctrine, the worship that is rendered, the work that is done, and for the way the Lord's money is used in the local congregation. When members become immoral in life they must seek to restore them, in the spirit of meekness. If this fails, they

must see that the ungodly members are withdrawn from the gathering of the saints in order to keep the church pure **(1 Cor. 5:4-5)**.

Our responsibility in maintaining the purity of the church – The church that the Lord Jesus Christ built in the first century is the fulfillment of the old testament prophecy **(Isa. 2:2-3)** and was the eternal plan of God from the beginning. The church that Jesus built is not to be corrupted by outside influences. It is the responsibility of all Christians to maintain her purity.

1. We do this by maintaining the purity of the word of God. To do this, Children of God must learn, grow and teach God's word. If I do not know God's word how could I know what is or not required. Therefore I must be a diligent student and grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ **(2 Pet. 3:18)**. As we learn and grow spiritually, we are to teach others the pure gospel of Christ **(Heb. 5:12-14)**.
2. We must maintain the purity of the gospel plan of salvation. The gospel is God's power to save. A perverted gospel has no power to save. To add or to take from God's scheme of redemption is to destroy its saving power.
3. We must also maintain the purity of worship that God has commanded. Many today will have events they call worship which are more of self-entertainment or theatre production. There will be hand clapping, instrumental, choir etc. The problems come when those in the Lord's church may wish to be like "the nation around them" and begin to include such unauthorized acts into their worship. Faithful children of God will maintain the purity and simplicity of worship authorized in the New Testament.
 - Accapella Sing **(Eph. 5:19)**
 - Praying **(1 Tim. 2:1-2)**
 - Lord's Supper **(Acts 20:7)**
 - Giving **(1 Cor. 16:1-2)**.
4. And finally we must maintain the purity of the church by staying in the fight. It is incredibly sad when one hears that a Christian or even a local congregation is corrupted by denominationalism, worldliness etc. If we are to maintain the purity of the church for which Jesus died and gave His precious blood we must step in to fight **(2 Tim. 2:4)**. This fight must continue until death.

Conclusion

The purity of the church is an important aspect of our identity. If you find a church that will not rebuke error, but instead allows it to remain among them, you have not found the Lord's church. The Lord's church must insist on the purity of the church, condemn sin and must in no way condone it no matter how impure the world has become.

God bless His words in our hearts in Jesus name. Amen