

WHY IS THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH NECESSARY?

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DEFINITION

Purity: 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, genuine."

Purity, in its essence, is a reflection of God's character and presence in our lives. To the extent that we live in purity, we reflect for the whole world that God is at work within us, shaping our desires, choices, and actions with more than just hormones. God wants us to be pure - ¹⁶because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." **(1 Peter 1:16)**.

Church: Those who in obedience to the true gospel and doctrine of Christ have surrendered their lives to Jesus - ⁴¹Then those who gladly received his word were baptized...⁴⁷...And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved **(Acts 2:41a, 47b)**. ...He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son **(2 John 9b)**.

Necessary: Unavoidable, Needful

INTRODUCTION

The law requires that commercial products sold either for food or for medicine make known the content and the net weight of the product on the outside of the container. In some cases the purity of the particular product is specified. It is unfortunate that spiritual merchandise is not always so labelled. In spiritual matters, it is necessary for us to judge for ourselves the purity of the merchandise we buy. Too often people consider this of little importance. We are rightly concerned about the food we eat to nourish the physical body. Is it not infinitely more important that we exercise even greater care in regard to the spiritual food we consume? It is important that we think about the purity of the church which as so much to do with our soul's eternal welfare.

THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH

The church, as the body of Christ, demanded a purity that was and should be very distinct from the society in which it arose. An aspect of the purity of the church was reflected by Paul's illustration of the church as the bride of Jesus Christ: ²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,* ²⁶ *that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,* ²⁷ *that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.* (**Ephesians 5:25-27**).

Christ so loved the church; that He died for the church. For what purpose – that He might sanctify it in this world, and glorify it in the next world. That He might sanctify the church and cleanse the church even with the washing of water by the word. Why all these? That He might endue all His members with a principle of holiness, and deliver them from the guilt, the pollution, and the dominion of sin. *The church purity was created by Christ's death for the church.*

It is evident that the Lord wanted the church for which He died to be kept pure and undefiled. To the church at Corinth Paul wrote, ² *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* (**2 Corinthians 11:2**).

HOW IS THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH CREATED AND MAINTAINED?

Creation of the purity of the church is done solely by Christ alone. Christ continuous sanctification and cleansing of the church with His blood and through His word, even for those who submit to Him through baptism in water. **Ephesians 5:25-27 and 1 John 1:7**.

Maintenance of the purity of the church is accomplished by both the efforts of Jesus and the members of the church. How can the church (all members) maintain her purity?

Purity of members from heart to lifestyles: If the church is to be kept pure, we must also begin with the members who constitute the church. In setting forth the qualities of character which members of the coming kingdom 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.

Repentance, reformation and self-improvement must begin with consciousness of sin, the lament over it, the longing for divine goodness, and the opening of the heart or mind to the reception of that goodness. Paul, James and John stressed the need for us to make efforts on our part to be pure from the heart to our lifestyles. ¹ *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* **2 Corinthians 7:1**. ⁸ *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**. ⁷ *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.* **1 John 1:7**.

Apostle Paul love to make emphasis on the need of a Christian to make personal efforts to be pure - *Walk as children of light* ⁹ *(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),* ¹⁰ *finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.* (**Eph 5:8c -10**).

Refusing To Have Fellowship With Unfruitful Works Of Darkness: There is need for us to personally refuse to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. We need to reveal how these unfruitful works have negative impact on people's lives - ¹¹ *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.* (**Eph 5:11**).

Avoid Evil Company: We must take personal responsibility not to allow evil company corrupts our Christ-like lifestyles; not to keep company with anyone named a brother or sister, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an

extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. But must make means by prayers and counselling to win such a brother or sister back to God (**I Cor 5:9-13; 15:33; II Thess. 3:6, 14-15; Eph. 5:7**).

Constant Participation In Worship Services: The church purity can be maintained if we are constant in our worship or service to God. If our service is to be acceptable to the 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. If our motive is to please God, then we must not be guilty of forsaking the assembling of saints – the assemblies of ourselves together - **Hebrews 10:25**.

It is the will of Christ that His disciples should assemble together for collective prayer, teachings and exhortation - to warn ourselves and one another of the sin and danger of backsliding, to put ourselves and our fellow-Christians in mind of our duty, of our failures and corruptions, to watch over one another. The communion of saints is a great help and privilege, and a good means of steadiness and perseverance; hereby our hearts and hands are mutually strengthened. The intended result is for more closeness to God, for mutual edification and access to continuous purification (**1 John 1:7**).

Effectiveness Of Church Leaders: If the church is to be kept pure, it is necessary for:

- Preachers to preach a pure gospel in love. The gospel must be adequately taught for the church to be rich in God's knowledge and curb the spread and influence of denominationalism. The preacher must not modify the pure gospel in order to match modern trends but must be tactful enough to know how to present the pure gospel to everyone, in every season, culture, circumstance and generation.
- All church leaders (*elders, preachers, deacons*) must take the responsibility of convincingly teaching members to walk in integrity, with no "secret sins" or "secret worlds" of lust and sin.
- All church leaders need to encourage transparent relationships in the body so that those struggling can get help from others because many are in delusion, self-deceit on daily basis, thinking they can be right with God while involved in a secret world of lust and sin. Many are having sexual feelings stirring within them, not knowing how to keep those feelings under control. Many are in a dilemma where they quit one sin and but hang on to other sins. All church leaders must by personal responsibility find a way to connect to members to enable them reveal any sin or challenge that they may be struggling with - ¹⁹ Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me."**(Joshua 7:19)**.
- All church leaders must be keenly aware of the tremendous increase of domestic violence, breakdown of marital relations, fear of Satan, depression, idolatry, hypocrisy, materialism, immodesty, drinking of alcohol, drug abuse and sexual impurity in the church. These are some of the main issues the church faces today which must be addressed with seriousness and daily urgency. It is better to risk giving offense than to permit the temptations of impurity right in the church. Reach out to the young members (*both in age and conversion period*).
- All church leaders and all church workers (*ushers, zonal leaders, and departments' personnel*) should take care to know the state of the flock. There must be a fervent connection with the members to be able to propose lessons, give counsels and offer prayers that connect to the welfare of both the souls and body of members. There should be frequent messages on purity, faith, hope and love. Biblical counsel and biblically based resources should be made available to the congregation. Hearts must be changed through the word of God and prayers. Sin should be called sin. When

members become immoral in life, church leaders especially must seek to restore them, in the spirit of meekness. There must be this determination to see people find their way to deliverance from sin.

- All church leaders must be careful of the pattern used in restoring repentant members - The goal of discipline is always to save, not punish, the sinner. They must strive to help a repentant and willing member make such a move. They must not go to the sinner with cold hearts and glassy stares. They must not place man-made restrictions on how people come back to the Lord. *They must make efforts to make the church fellowship so rich and meaningful in the church that for one to lose it would be the ultimate tragedy.*

IMPURITY IN THE CHURCH

One of the greatest threats to the church today is the impurity of its members. One of the greatest dangers to the church today is that it may lose its identity by becoming so much like the world that those who are not members of the church cannot tell the difference between the world and the church. How impurity does come into the church?

Members Diminishing Influence In The World: As our influence in the world reduces, the influence of the world in the church increases and we like the members at Corinth becomes very impure in their moral life.

Sometimes, we live and act like the chameleon. We conform in our actions to the company we happen to be in. We adopt the popular saying that *when we are in Rome, we do as Rome does* - ² *You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice (Cf. Exodus 23:2).*

The Rise Of False Teaching: In the early church and in the church today, false teachers introduction of irrelevant matters and twisting of the doctrine of Christ brings impurity in the church.

Forsaking The Assemblies Of Ourselves: Forsaking the assemblies of ourselves is a reflection that we consider the presence of God as irrelevant to our faith and deliverance. This action, when unchecked, becomes a deadly habit that leads to hardness, apostasy and impurity in the church. When we become proud of our ability to mingle with denominationalism—manifesting acceptance and tolerance of their unbiblical beliefs—we are guilty of the very attitude that Paul condemned in **1 Corinthians 5:2**, that Jesus condemned in **Revelation 2:15-16**, and that John condemned in **2 John 11**.

Participating In The Unfruitful Works Of Darkness: When we are having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, we bring impurity in the church. By *unfruitful works of darkness*, we refer the works of the flesh, including bribery, corruption, fraud, forgery, malice, bitterness, lying, backbiting, pride, hypocrisy, drinking of alcohol, drug abuse, gambling and taking pride in secret sins.

One of the women who were able to make Samson very weak was a harlot from Gaza. Samson violated God's law regarding purity by being in the house of this woman. Even though he showed great strength in taking the gates of her city and putting them on a hill, he was paving the way for his enemies to capture him. This means, there are places where it will be difficult for us to do the right thing; there are social programs in which by participation, it will be difficult for us to do the right thing; if we go to such places; if we participate in such programs, we will definitely do the wrong thing and bring impurity in the church.

Keeping Evil Company: When we have fellowship with sinners, and be in league with them, we share in their guilt and bring impurity to the church. ³³ *Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33).*

Just as Delilah begged Samson over and over till he revealed his secret, so also devil can convince us over time, through any form, any situation and through fellow members, that sin is

not so bad. Once we yield to his ideas, we find ourselves becoming prisoners of sin and defiles the church!

When we keep company with so-called brethren participating in the evil of this world (**I Cor 5:9-11; Cf II Thess. 3:6, 14f**), we bring impurity in the church.

When We Glory In Sin: Note, It is a very wicked thing to glory over the miscarriages and sins of others. It means we do not consider the consequence of the sin. It means we are puffed up with them.

The sin of one (*most especially, when not checked*) could bring impurity to all other members of the church. This could be one reason, the Bible laid emphasis on a man seeking for his lost sheep - ¹² "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? ¹³ And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. ¹⁴ Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (**Matthew 18:12-14**).

Consider the case of Achan and Israel (**Joshua 7**). In *verse 1* - and yet, though it was a single person that sinned, the children of Israel are said *to commit the trespass*, because one of their body did it, and he was not as yet separated from them, nor disowned by them. They did it, that is, by what Achan did guilt was brought upon the whole society of which he was a member. This should be a warning to us to take heed of sin ourselves, lest by it many be defiled or disquieted. *Achan did perished not alone in his iniquity* (**Joshua 7:24-26**).

Many a careful businessmen have been broken by careless partners. Many communities have gone into war because of the careless actions of few members. This should concerns us to watch over one another for the preventing of sin, because others' sins may redound to our damage.

Becoming Agents of Unrighteousness: Any time we become devil's agents in keeping brethren from obeying God, we bring impurity to the church.

WHY THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH IS NECESSARY?

In **I Cor 5** and **II Thess 3**, Paul knew that the church had to deal with anyone who is sinning openly and declaring that sin is NOT sin. Congregations today face this same situation. If we read between the lines, the solutions, Paul stated, we will understand every godly measure approved by God in providing discipline is to keep the church pure. Why is the purity of the church necessary?

- ✓ Because it demands a rebuke of sin, wickedness and error. But, will anyone in error come out of error, if error is never rebuked? You can't "love" someone out of error. If anything, it will set them even more deeply in it.
- ✓ Would the man who had his father's wife have repented without the needed rebuke? (I Cor 5:4ff) If Paul's epistles (*which contained rebukes*) were read in the churches (**Colossians 4:16** ¹⁶ *Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea*), do you suppose the negative content was edited out first?
- ✓ It helps in the recovering ourselves from the snares of Satan. Some disciplinary measures are meant to be temporary. The intended result is that hopefully the guilty member's eyes would be opened to the truth and would be able to repent of his/her sin and be reunited with the congregation.
- ✓ The purity of the Lord's church is an important aspect of her identity. In **Revelation 2:5**, we see the possibility of a loss of fellowship with Jesus in the removal of a congregation's lamp stand. The Lord expects His church to condemn sin and will in no way condone it, no matter how impure the world becomes.

- ✓ It helps to kill the arrogance enjoyed in applauding sin. Yes, some brethren have this habit of deceiving other members that their sins are normal, are reflection of civilization and do not have any consequence - ³²*who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. (Rom. 1:32; Cf. Eph 5:6).*
- ✓ It helps to curb the spread of impurity to other non-sinners members - ⁶*Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? (1 Cor. 5:6).*
- ✓ It refreshes the church spiritually - ⁷*Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. (1 Cor. 5:7).*
- ✓ Because ⁵*...no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God (Ephesians 5:5).*
- ✓ Because it helps to prevent hardness of his heart. Achan never discovering himself till the lot discovered him is an evidence of the hardness of his heart, and therefore he found no mercy.
- ✓ It shows to us that the putting away of sin by true repentance and reformation, is the only sure and most effectual way, to gain and re-gain access to the divine favour from God.

CONCLUSION

When we cross the boundaries set by God for our well-being, we choose a path that, while sometimes pleasurable in the short run, undermines our confidence in God and says to Him that we don't really believe He knows what's best for us.

Sin stains keep us from being used of God. Thus, purity of life is at the very heart of God's plan for our lives. We need to follow God's plan for purity. We need to take this principle seriously: *Do not flirt with impurity.* The more effort we put into following God's words to be pure in our hearts, actions and lifestyles, the stronger our Christianity, faith, marriages and homes will be.

Our prayer is for us to be and remain agents of purity in the church in Jesus Christ Name!

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