

NOTES

~ Purity & Holiness ~

- **Introduction:** Why the need to pursue holiness?
 - In the **beginning**, mankind chose to disobey God and walk away from His provision and protection.
 - God wants us back; we must make a choice: His ways or ours . . .

- Purity, Morality, & Holiness **defined**
 - **Purity:** Uncontaminated; set apart; morally innocent.
 - **Morality:** The opposite of fornication (sexually-detestable things like homosexuality, prostitution, etc.); adhering to excellent standards. Good Scriptural examples are **Philippians 4:8** and **2Peter 1:5-8**.
 - **Holiness:** Set apart.

- Purity relative to God's covenant with **Israel:** He commanded them to remove all immoralities and serve Him alone. We see Israelites returning to Israel pursue purity in **Ezra 6:20-21**.

- Purity relative to God's covenant with **the World**
 - What purity & holiness *should* look like today:
 - Be an example through purity, which may through understanding the Word of God. **1Timothy 4:12-13**
 - Dead to immorality and impurity. (**Colossians 3:5-8** and **Ephesians 5:3-5**)
 - Be pure - set apart from wicked behavior. **2Corinthians 7:1**
 - Self-control and resulting purity lead to life. **1Timothy 5:5-6**
 - Present & future consequences of *impurity* and a lack of holiness: Judgment, etc. (**1Corinthians 6:9-10; Matthew 13:41-42**)
 - How to find holiness and righteousness:
 - Repent and follow
 - Stay away from potentially risky behaviors (i.e. flirting, alcohol, pornography, dressing provocatively, etc.)
 - **Learn** God's ways (**2Timothy 3:16-17; 1Timothy 4:12-13**)
 - Self-control: (**Galatians 5:22-23; 1Corinthians 9:25-27**)
 - Use our bodies to please God (**1Corinthians 6:18-20**)
 - Not be enslaved by lusts of the body (**Romans 6:6 & 12-13**)

- **Summary:** To be reconciled with our God, we must live pure lives and be set apart from worldly ways – be *holy*. We can do this by learning of God and *His* ways, turning away from behavior that's contrary to those ways (repent), and applying what we learn through self-control. While difficult at first, the rewards will be incredible and everlasting!

~ *Purity & Holiness* ~

Introduction

Beginning

Reconciliation

Definitions

Purity –
uncontaminated

Morality – adhering to
excellence

Holiness – set apart

Introduction: Why the need to pursue holiness?

In the **beginning**, mankind chose to disobey God and walk away from His provision and protection.

God wants us back; we must make a choice: His ways or ours . . .

Purity, Morality, & Holiness **defined**

Purity is personal or moral cleanliness or blamelessness and characteristic of those who are ‘moral’. Impurity would be the opposite - unclean and blamable and characteristic of the immoral.

Therefore, sexual purity would be attained by refraining from those things God has deemed as unclean and rebellious. This includes acts of fornication: adultery, homosexuality, incest, bestiality, and sex with prostitutes. It could also include abusing our bodies or allowing sexual desire to control us instead of the self-control.

Let’s consider brief definitions of purity, morality, and holiness:

Purity: Uncontaminated; set apart; morally innocent.

God desires righteousness and blamelessness from us. Therefore, purity would describe the level of attainment of that state whatever the thing we want to be pure in. Think of it this way: in nature, something nearly pure (like fine gold or diamonds for instance) has little if anything else mixed with it. The purer, the more desirable the object is.

Morality: The opposite of fornication (sexually-detestable things like homosexuality, prostitution, etc.); adhering to excellent standards. Good Scriptural examples are **Philippians 4:8** and **2Peter 1:5-8**.

[Philippians 4:8]

[2Peter 1:5-8]

Holiness: Set apart. For instance, the word ‘holiday’ is a combination of ‘holy’ and ‘day’ to signify one that’s set apart from the others . . .

God desires purity

So, how did the pursuit of purity relate to God's covenant with **Israel**?

Purity has always been God's desire and is related to **holiness, blamelessness, cleanliness, righteousness, and spiritual life**. This was true within the confines of God's covenant with Israel and is still true in our current covenant with the Christ.

Good to know the Law

Today, liberal theologians and their churches often promote an idea that the Old Testament instructions do not apply to the New Testament believer. And, while it is true the old *Law* doesn't apply, **it does reveal God's design and desire** for His people – a kingdom of priests who are morally and spiritually pure.

Purging **foreign** impurity from Israel

To bring His plan with Israel to fruition, God instructed them to rid the land He'd given them of anything impure, or evil. The Canaanite occupants were steeped in pagan worship of gods and goddesses like Innana – the "Queen of Heaven"ⁱ – and Molech. They sacrificed young animals in strange ways such as boiling them in the milk of their mothers (cf. Deuteronomy 14:21) and even gave their own children to priests for burning in honor and worship of these false gods (cf. Leviticus 18:21 and 20:2-5). They and the animals had to be eliminated to ensure the land and its new occupants – the **pure bride of God** – **wouldn't become defiled** by participating in these practices.

Purging **local** impurity from Israel

God's desire for a pure bride in Israel is evident not only by the command to eliminate Canaanite humans and animals, but also by His order to kill any **Israelite** indulging in gross immoral practices warned against in the Law. We see several of these in Deuteronomy; the offenders were to be killed to "*purge the evil from Israel*" (cf. Deuteronomy 17:12).

Return to purity after Babylon

Priests of God returning from exile in Babylon in the middle of the 5th century BCE understood the purity and obedience He required. Desiring to once again become His holy people, they and the other returning exiles resumed the pursuit of holiness and purity by setting themselves apart from 'the nations' and celebrating God's feasts and festivals such as the Passover.

[Ezra 6:20-21]

Purity & holiness **today?**

But what about purity relative to God's covenant with **the World today**? What should purity and holiness look like? What are the consequences of living an impure and unholy life?

Purity in both old and new covenants

Appearance of purity today?

1. Be an example as a result of learning
2. Dead to immorality & impurity
3. Set ourselves apart from the world
4. Exhibit self-control

Again, God desired holiness and purity from Israel. He still desires for us to be morally and spiritually pure even though our new covenant with Him through Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law under Moses.

What should purity & holiness look like today?

First, we'd be an example through purity, which may come through understanding the Word of God. Unfortunately, the lack of purity and holiness in our lives keeps God and His Spirit from acting and we end up appearing just like the rest of the 'unbelieving' world.

[**1Timothy 4:12-13**]

Second, we'd be dead to immorality and impurity. This is how we become pure and holy . . . We'll later learn that self-control of our bodies can put us in a position to be this way.

[**Colossians 3:5-8**]

[**Ephesians 5:3-5**]

On a related note, we're pure by setting ourselves apart from wicked behavior. What **examples** can you think of?

[**2Corinthians 7:1**]

Also on a related note, self-control and resulting purity can lead to eternal life. It can certainly also improve the quality of our life on earth through improved health, the ability for the Spirit to work in our lives, etc.

[**1Timothy 5:5-6**]

**Consequences of
impurity & un-holiness**

How do we find
holiness &
righteousness?

1. Repent
2. Stay away from
risky behavior

Examples of risky
behavior:

- Sensuality
- Flirting
- Dress
- Alcohol

Need to grow in faith
& obedience

While we're on the subject of being an example of purity and holiness, let's look at the consequences of not pursuing behaviors that lead to them.

We've already talked about how the pursuit of holiness and purity can improve our lives on earth and lead to everlasting life. So, it makes sense that the opposite would be true of those who don't chase those behaviors. These could be considered *present* negative consequences.

Let's take a look at future consequences of *impurity* and a lack of holiness, which include God's judgment and wrath.

[1Corinthians 6:9-10]

[Matthew 13:41-42]

Well, we don't want to be subjected to God's judgment and wrath. So, how do we find holiness and righteousness?

The first step is to repent of impure or unholy behavior – anything that is contrary to God and His ways. Repentance = a *change in behavior that comes from a change of heart*.

Then, we need to stay away from potentially risky behaviors (i.e. flirting, alcohol, pornography, dressing provocatively, etc.) to ensure we don't give into temptation.

The following acts can introduce the risk of sin and sexual impurity.

- **Engaging in sensual activities** like viewing pornography (including publically-acceptable media with erotic images) or entering into 'racy' discussions or crude joking.
- **Flirting**. This activity dishonors a spouse (if either party is married) and introduces the risk of an adulterous relationship.
- **Dressing provocatively**. Men are visual by nature and by design. Scripture suggests modest apparel – probably to reduce the risk of arousal.
- **Consuming alcohol**.

Finally, we need to grow in our faith and obedience through knowledge and its application in self-control.

Must learn and put into practice!

1. Learn

Having a good understanding of what purity is and of those things that would constitute sexual impurity is important. However, just as our belief in Jesus must result in obedience to be effective, our desire for purity must be put into action through self-control of the body and its desires.

When we didn't know better, it was easy to become slaves to lusts of our body. Paul had a lot to say about this in **Romans Chapter 6** (definitely worth a read!). Other excellent Scriptures that highlight the importance of increasing knowledge and self-control include the following.

- **Learn** God's ways to understand the standard by which actions can be judged and corrected when necessary.

[**2Timothy 3:16-17**]

[**1Timothy 4:12-13**]

2. Exhibit self-control

- a. Worship
- b. Love

- Exhibit self-control. In fact, purposeful use of our bodies in obeying God is probably the greatest form of worship (Romans 12:1) and display of love.

[**Galatians 5:22-23**]

[**1Corinthians 9:25-27**]

3. Use the body to please God

- Use our bodies to please God.

[**1Corinthians 6:18-20**]

4. Don't be enslaved by lust

- Not be enslaved by lusts of the body

[**Romans 6:6 & 12-13**]

Summary

Summary: To be reconciled with our God, we must live pure lives and be set apart from worldly ways – be *holy*. We can do this by learning of God and *His* ways, turning away from behavior that's contrary to those ways (repent), and applying what we learn through self-control. While difficult at first, the rewards will be incredible and everlasting!

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. —Philippians 4:8.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. —2Peter 1:5-8.

For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure. Then they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, both for their brothers the priests and for themselves. The sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the impurity of the nations of the land to join them, to seek the LORD God of Israel, ate the Passover. —Ezra 6:20-21.

Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. —1Timothy 4:12-13.

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. —Colossians 3:5-8.

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. —Ephesians 5:3-5.

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. —2Corinthians 7:1.

Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives. —1Timothy 5:5-6.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. —1Corinthians 6:9-10.

“The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” —Matthew 13:41-42.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. —2Timothy 3:16-17.

Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. —1Timothy 4:12-13.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. —Galatians 5:22-23.

Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable . . . but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. —1Corinthians 9:25-27.

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. —1Corinthians 6:18-20.

knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin . . . Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. —Romans 6:6 & 12-13.