

Ephesians 14-08-24a

This is August the 24th, 2014. Our Sunday morning study of the book of Ephesians continues this morning, picking up in chapter 5, verse 3. We'll take a moment as we always do to give us each an opportunity to go before the Lord individually and ensure that we're qualified and susceptible to receive God's grace and the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. If the Bible class depended on my eloquence, we wouldn't get very far.

It depends on God the Holy Spirit. He is our teacher. He is the one that takes the Word of God and makes it, as they used to say, perspicacious, makes it understandable, makes it pertinent and meaningful in our individual souls and enables us to collectively reflect the glory of God.

Shall we pray? Father, thank You for all the ways that You have blessed us and provided for us and sustained us. We're grateful even when from a human point of view it seems as though things are not optimum, they're not the best or not necessarily what we would have chosen for ourselves, but we know that You weave these things together in the perfect fabric of Your plan for our good and for Your glory. We thank You most of all for the Lord Jesus.

We thank You for the example that He set for us in coming to this earth, laying aside all of His privileges and His status and His power as Your Son and the second person of the Trinity to be an example for us, to show us how life can be lived in the presence and power of Your Holy Spirit and in the guiding light of Your Word. We thank You for Him. We thank You for His accomplished work on the cross.

We thank You for His ongoing work of intercession and encouragement as He sits even now at Your right hand. We thank You for the gift of Your Spirit who dwells with us and in us, guides us, makes Your Word real to us, assures us of our relationship with You and our future hope of resurrection and eternal life. We thank You for the passage that is before us this morning.

We thank You for the freedom and the opportunity to study it together, and we ask Your blessing on us as we do so. May each one who participates in this excursion into the truth of Your Word, may we each find encouragement and meaningful application in these truths. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

Ephesians chapter 5, of course, begins with a therefore. We looked last time at the structure here where each of these sections begins with therefore. There's a march going on here.

There's left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot, therefore, therefore, therefore, therefore. And as we come to this one, and sometimes there's a little bit of variation. We'll see that down in verse 15.

See then, see then is structurally serves the same purpose as a therefore. But we're at chapter 5, therefore, looking back at all of the things we've studied, I've reviewed it enough, we don't need to do it. Because of the truths that have been reviewed and have been expressed and have been

eloquently communicated in the first four chapters as we organize this material, Paul says, do what you have seen God do.

Be that kind of person. Be doers of what you have seen God do. As beloved children, as children who have a positive, functional relationship with their father.

And walk in love, walk by means of love. Sometimes something brings us to a halt. There's a circumstance that draws us up short.

We're not sure how to proceed. Something bad has happened. Something has left us nonplussed.

How do you walk? By means of love. We are going to see how important that little prepositional phrase is as we get into verse 3 this morning. Because verse 3 depends directly on verse 2. Love has become so nebulous, we've talked about this before, you know, it's probably the single most common word in popular music.

And the concept is so broad, it is used to cover so many things from pizza to people. We, how do you wrestle that concept down into something meaningful? It's an abstraction. It's a platitude.

You know, there's no more useless expression of inanity in my mind than the Beatles thumping along singing, all you need is love. For what? With that and a dime, you can't even get, you can't even smell coffee, much less get a cup of coffee. All you need is love, for what? It's meaningless, it's trite, it's shallow.

Walk by means of love. So we want to understand what this love is, and that's where Paul is going. He says walk in with by means of.

This is the function of the preposition in. It is the function of the whole idea of the dative, locative, or instrumental is to indicate the environment in which something takes place. It can be in the sphere of, it can be by means of, it can be along with or using something.

This is in agape, in, by, or with. And there are times when all of those senses are in play, they're all active. Well, that just makes it more difficult.

Love was nebulous enough, now we don't even know if it's in, by, or with, or all of the above. And that just exponentially increases the nebulousity of the concept. So we need some definition.

We need some clarity here, don't you think? If I said, okay, Bible class is over, I want you all to stand up, pack your gear, go out and walk in love. Get it done, we'll have a test next week to see how you did, well, what would you do? Well, I could put L-O on my left shoe and V-E on my right shoe and walk in love. I could do that, that would be one way.

Paul is going to helpfully, thankfully, under the ministry of the Spirit, give us clarity. By the end of

this class, God willing, we'll have a good grip on what this actually means. And oddly enough, it is going to be by way of contrast.

Because in verse 3 we're going to get, here's what love is not. And if something partakes of these things, guess what, you're not walking in love. Now, as I said Friday night, because we have turned the corner into application, some of this is not for the casual.

It's not for the go along to get along. It's not for the kind of, well, I'm here so I'll listen. This is for those people who are serious about their relationship with God and their walk before the Lord.

If you're serious about your walk, you want to know how to do it. People who have to be in the public eye, whether they're actors or models or whatever, they go to school to learn how to walk. It's a class.

It's a skill that is taught. And you think, are you kidding me? I've been walking since I was one and a half or two. You're going to teach me how to walk? Well, if you're going to walk elegantly and properly and in a pleasing and engaging way, you may have to change some things about the way you walk.

If you're walking like somebody that just came in from the potato field and you're hitting heels first with knees unbent and you're upstairs and people can hear you, you're not walking like whoever a current model is. You're not walking gracefully. You're not walking lithe.

I read voraciously when I was in high school and I got into these stories of the frontier and of the prairie and the woods and the whole Boone, Crockett, Native American ethos thing going on. I read everything. There's no book I didn't read.

And one of the things that impressed me was one particular author, when he talked about our Native American brethren, he said, he was talking about this one guy in particular. By the way, this is not the Deer Slayer or Natty Bumpo. Hawthorne, forget it.

The guy never darkened the edge of a forest. He had no concept of what he was talking about. Hawthorne is the worst.

You just want to pull your hair out. He's got canoes that have 20-foot tall superstructures going under four-foot branches hanging over the ground. I mean, it's so physically impossible.

He's in a world of fantasy. But I digress. There was a different author, a much better author, talking about how an Indian would travel through the forest in his moccasin feet silently, travel through, up and down the hills, going around, you know, never surprised the game.

The animals are unaware of his presence. He's slipping silently through. And I thought, that is really cool.

I want to try that. So I would go up in the woods behind our house and try to move silently. Well, you've been in the woods.

What's the first problem with this whole silent movement thing, whether or not you've got moccasins? I mean, you can go in your sock feet. What's the problem? There are dead leaves everywhere. You can't breathe without rustling the leaves.

And you start, and it's like, shh, shh, shh, shh. You sound like you're dragging a corpse through the woods, you know, when you're just trying to walk. And this idea, however, with practice, and if you begin to watch where you put your feet and look ahead and the path that you choose, you discover, guess what, you know, there are places where the leaves are not so thick or where the leaves are damp or where there's something sticking up other than a log.

Another one of these little dime novel rules is never step on what you can step over, which is a pretty good rule of thumb. But I would go up in the woods and practice these things just to see if I could do it. And you can't move silently like a spirit through the woods, but you can be much, much quieter because you learn how to walk.

You can learn how to walk even though you've been walking all your life. Walk in love. This is something we've got to learn.

We don't grow up walking in love with anything but ourselves. We walk in the pre-Copernican self-centered everything revolves around me universe. That's the way we walk.

We don't walk in love. This is why it's an imperative. This is why it is a command.

This is something we need to do. And this is a present active imperative. He isn't saying that we haven't been doing it and we need to start.

He's saying, keep on walking in love. When you get this going, don't forget and start stomping or stumping or dragging or, you know, hopping or whatever it is. Keep on walking in, by, with, according to, by means of love.

As Christ also, here's where we start to get some definition, the vast, vague, amorphous notion of love and in, by, and with begins to coalesce by looking at Christ. Did He love everybody indiscriminately? No. Did He love everybody at all times? No.

Did He heal everybody who was sick all the time? No. Is He the embodiment and the manifestation and the perfect expression of love? Yes. So if we walk in love as Christ loved us, that greatly defines it.

Gave Himself for us, the concept of sacrifice inherently means that it costs us personally something. It isn't a sacrifice if it costs you nothing. David expressed this standing at the edge of Aaronah's field.

The plague has stayed, David wants to make a sacrifice, he purchases the land that will become the location of the temple, and Aaronah says, hey, you can have it. And David says, no, I will not make a sacrifice of that which costs me nothing. And this is one of the reasons Jesus is called the Son of David, because it is that attitude, with which Christ loves.

Gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice. Offering and sacrifice. We talked about that last time.

It's not just an offering, it's a sacrifice. Both words are here. And if we are going to walk in love, you can expect that it will involve sacrifice.

Yes, I would really, in an ideal world with no other constraints, be doing X, but because I love you, I am instead doing Y. Sacrifice. Philippians chapter 2, the interests of others ahead of our own. This is really important when you get to chapter 3, verse 3 in chapter 5, because there's more going on there than meets the eye.

And it is a sweet-smelling aroma. We talked about that in detail last time. That brings us to verse 3, "...but fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints." And these three things are grouped separately.

Look at the whole verse, "...but fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints, neither filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting, which are not fitting, rather giving of thanks." Then in verse 5 you have a whole different listing. But we have three lists here in verses 3-7, three sort of what they call vice lists. The first one has three components, fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness.

Paul says, don't let those even be named among you. Nobody should look around and even, the subject shouldn't even come up. Shouldn't be named among you.

Nobody among you should carry that reputation, should have that stain, that identity. It is fitting that sanctified ones not be tainted with these three particular things. Then in verse 4, "...or, nor, neither, filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting." How many elements there? Three.

You've got three in the first list, three in the second list, and then we have another little interruption, but rather giving of thanks, that's the antithesis. And then in verse 5, "...this you know," and he's going to make a fresh statement there. We'll get to that a bit later.

Let's look at this first section. We've got three sections of what is not walking in love. And make no mistake, this section, verse 3 through verse 7, is telling us what walking in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as an offering and sacrifice, sweet-smelling savor, this is everything that is not.

This is the antithesis. This is the other side of the line. So it's important for us to understand it,

because if we are going to leave here, stand up, grab our stuff, walk out, and walk in love, it would be very helpful to know, whoop, if I've stepped in any of these, I have stepped out of walking in love.

This is a good way to know how to do it, by knowing what not to do. So fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness. First three elements.

Let's start with the first one. Fornication. This is the word *pornea*.

Now, if I say in 50 words or less, describe for me what fornication is, if I said define fornication, write it in a couple of lines, what would you say? This is one person having sex with another person without the benefit of marriage. Fornication would include stuff like premarital relations. This is two people having some sort of physical, illicit sexual relation.

That's fornication. That's what that is. If you're fornicating, you're engaging in this physical act, and you two people aren't married to each other, fornication.

That's what that is. It could include some involvement on one side or the other of prostitution, either being one or hiring one. It could be boyfriend-girlfriend who lose their compass and their judgment and do something foolish.

It could even include a lot of perverse things, same genders and whatnot. Fornication, it's sexual impurity, sexual immorality, fornication, *pornea*. That is generally true, but that is not the meaning of *pornea* in Greek.

It is not the meaning of *pornea* as it translated the Old Testament Scriptures. It can include those things, but it is not limited to them, and if you limit your understanding to that, you miss the main idea. Think back now.

What is our context? What is Paul explaining for us? Walk in love the way Christ did. Walk in love the way Christ did. And it is not enough to say, well, Jesus Christ never did any illicit, immoral activity that could be called fornication, so that covers that base.

Not at all. Walk, keep on walking in love. Now, it's a little bit awkward talking about these things, but just bear with me.

We're not going to be on the physical side of it for long, because that's not what's going on here. But think about this. When some sort of illicit, immoral, physical behavior like this takes place, what is the Bible actually prohibiting? What is it that offends God about that? God invented biology, right? And God designed that this particular area of activity is pleasurable.

God built that in. It didn't have to be, but it is. And it is the pleasure side of it, it is the gratification side of it that causes people to cross boundaries and to do things they shouldn't do after the gratification.

It's gratifying. You know, we don't have a big problem with people unable to stop themselves from hitting themselves in the head with a hammer. You know, I've tried and tried, and I see a hammer laying there, I just have to pick it up and hit myself in the head with it.

We don't have that problem, do we? We have problems with things that are gratifying, and yet to engage in those things unless the conditions are right is wrong. Certain conditions, it's functioning properly, it is in its realm, and other times it's not. So it's the gratification that makes this a problem.

If there was no gratification aspect, why would people waste their time? If it didn't have a thrill, if it didn't produce some sort of sensory satisfaction, what's the problem? I can walk by a hammer, I can go through the whole hammer section in Home Depot, never have a stray thought. Doesn't bother me at all. Don't feel like picking up a saw and starting to, you know, remove anything.

I'm fine. I can walk all through the tool section, no problems at all. Why? There's no satisfaction in hitting myself in the head with a hammer.

So the first and fundamental point to keep in mind here about pornia is there is an element of gratification that is a part of its definition. By definition, pornia is gratifying, and pretty much without saying, self-gratifying. We're talking about it gratifies me.

I'm not so worried about what gratifies you, I want to gratify me. I don't engage in fornication because you get gratified, I engage in fornication because I get gratified. This is what the fornicator says, right? So, first point of definition for pornia, inherent in it is self-satisfaction.

It's inseparable from it. It doesn't work if that is not in it. It's essential to the definition, okay? So Paul says, fornication, two other things, let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints.

Let pornia, dot, dot, dot, not even be named among you, and that not being any kind of a concept that can attach to you, that's fitting for sanctified ones. This will help us understand the definition. Whatever this is, those who are hagios, holy, sanctified, set apart, dedicated to God, like the priests were, like the implements and accouterments of the temple, the tabernacle and temple, those things that were dedicated to worship and reflecting the glory of God, it is fitting that those things be undefiled.

Now, what was the big beef about David going in and getting the showbread and eating it and allegedly feeding it to his men? You remember when he's fleeing from Saul, he stops by the priest at Nob and he goes and sees the high priest and the guy says, well, here's two things, here's the holy bread and here's Goliath's sword. And then Saul comes behind and slaughters, you know, Doeg the Edomite, that whole thing, the showbread. Why was there even an issue, I mean, bread is bread, here's some bread, why would anybody raise any kind of an issue about David eating the showbread? It's just bread, flour and oil, baked, what's the problem? What's

different about that bread? It's dedicated to God, it is hagios, it's holy.

You don't do with that bread what you do with common bread. It is dedicated to a purpose, it is in the presence of God and to be in the presence of God. Do you think if, you know, you've got the priest doing their rounds, they've got all their different functions and the guy that brings in, he's going to swap out the showbread.

Showbread's been in there a while, you know, they regularly have to swap it out because like us, it's perishable, the grass withers, the flower fades and the bread molds, right? So sooner or later, the old showbread has to come out and the new showbread has to come in. You put it in there and anoint it with oil and there's a whole ritual for it. So here's Abiathar the third, you know, coming in and he's going to bring in the tray of showbread and put it on top of the table in there, acacia wood overlaid with gold, remember that? He's going to bring it in, but he trips, a little piece of sacrifice rolled off the altar and got over there and he stumbles over it, showbread falls off the tray onto the ground.

What's he going to do? I don't think anybody saw that, you know, one bounce rule, I'll put it back on the tray, I'll take it in, it'll be okay. Do you think if that showbread hit the ground, he could just pick it up and take it on in? What if it fell and he stepped on it while he was trying to catch his balance? And so, you know, 10 of the loaves are pretty good, but the other two are just mashed flat, big sandal print on it. Pay attention now, I actually am getting to a point.

So, is that bread fit to go into the holy place and sit on top of the table of showbread in the presence of God? Why not? Bread's bread, flour's flour, oil's oil, it hasn't materially changed, what's the difference? It is defiled. You don't bring something defiled into the presence of God. You can't use it for that purpose anymore.

Holy means qualified to be in the presence of God, right? That's one of the ways you know something is holy. If it incinerates as it gets close to God, it wasn't holy. You know, it's just like getting too close to the sun.

Small vapor cloud of scattered molecules, well, that wasn't holy. Coming into the presence of God, showbread can't be defiled. Be ye holy, for I am holy.

Now, if you don't intend on being in the presence of God, if the presence of God isn't in the presence of God, it's important to you. If you don't consider that to be your destination, defilement's not an issue. But fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be named among you as is fitting for those who are holy, who do intend and plan and hope and experience dwelling in the presence of God, now and in the ages to come, right? That's the point that he makes here.

Now, here's the thing. The secular, materialist, unbelieving, God-hating, rock-throwing, Christian-mocking world says your God is no fun. Fornicating is fun.

Doing a lot of these other things that your Bible labels as sinful, it's fun, it's enjoyable, it doesn't hurt anybody, consenting adults doing what they do, what's the harm? Your God is just no fun. He's prohibited these things because it's really just a bunch of old men trying to retain power over all you lackeys, and you're insecure, and you need comfort, and so this superstructure of creaky old men with their rules, you find some kind of perverse comfort in it, and your whole system is just all messed up, and I dismiss and reject the whole thing because it's just no fun. God is no fun.

The issue in fornication, the issue in pornia, and by the way I am summarizing about 23 pages in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, I thought about going through it and explaining how we arrive at this, don't have time, I'm just going to cut to the chase. When you review the use of zana and all of its cognates in Hebrew, which is what the Greeks translated as pornia when they translated the Old Testament into the Septuagint, there's moikia in a few places in that, but zana, zonah, that whole word group that was used for prostitution or fornication or sexual sins, and the metaphorical equivalent, and it is more often, far more often used in the Old Testament in its metaphorical connotation. Here's a quick analogy.

What do I mean when I say unfaithful? Well, you don't know until I give you some context, right? Am I saying somebody's husband was unfaithful, or am I saying a Christian was unfaithful? You need some context, right? Because unfaithful has a different valence, it has a different connotation depending on what I am talking about. Zana in Hebrew and pornia in Greek are exactly the same. If I have given you a physical context, then yes, I am talking about actual physical fornication.

If I give you a spiritual context, I'm no longer talking about some spouse being unfaithful, I am talking about spiritual unfaithfulness, unfaithful. And pornia in its essence means unfaithful. Now, the concept of pornia, why would I do that? Why would I engage in something that would fall under that rubric, pornia, that label? Why would I do it? Because it gratifies me.

I justify it, I vindicate it. I want to do it. I think in some way, shape, or form, this is advantageous.

Here's our closing thought for this first session, so watch for it. Love inherently, by definition, sacrificial towards self, beneficial toward others. Putting the interests of others ahead of myself, offering and a sacrifice for a sweet-smelling savor to God.

Not to me. I don't do it because I think it smells good. I don't do it because it gratifies me.

I do it. The Lord Jesus, if we're going to walk as He walked in love, He presented Himself to the Father as an offering and a sacrifice for a sweet-smelling savor in God's behalf, in God's interest, to please God, and in our interest, to save us and deliver us from hopeless damnation. There were two priorities that Jesus set ahead of His own interest and His own personal gratification and satisfaction, pleasing the Father and benefiting us.

That's love. Pornia, by definition, my gratification comes first. I will satisfy myself, by definition, at the expense of others.

I am putting my interest ahead of the interest of others. This is key, because we tend to think the Bible condemns fornication, it's just a rule. It's just not supposed to do.

I don't understand, personally, and listen, in the culture today, even in the Christian church, people say, look, what's the difference in us, we're simpatico, we're already shackled up together, what's the difference if we sleep together? How are we any different than the couple over there that went down and stood in front of a guy and said, I do, that's two people and they're having sex, we're two people and we're having sex, we're both consenting and we're both adults, we're not hurting anybody, so this fornication thing is kind of arbitrary, it's just kind of a rule, and in our heart of hearts we think, you know, I think God's just trying to kind of limit the fun, you know, He's just, only certain people can have the fun, and why can't we have the fun, and what's wrong with it, who's getting hurt? When we come back from the break, as we look at this concept, fornication, let it not even be named among you, why does that make a difference? Not be named among you. I thought fornication was just, you know, two people getting with it, what's the big deal? Paul puts this fornication in the context of among you. This is fornication which inevitably affects the people around the people doing it.

You cannot have pornia without effect around it, you can't. Listen, two people on a desert island, not married, engaging in this kind of thing, it will eventually have a repercussion. You think, oh, no way, child, is it going to be a child, sooner or later, two people on an island, do this for very long, it's going to be a child, right? Somebody's going to be affected, it is always bigger than you, always.

You get rescued, people find out, oh, yeah, well, necessity is the mother of invention. It always is in the context of a larger community. And fornication, by definition, will harm, it is not in the interest of others.

Let fornication, he didn't say, don't be a fornicator, he says, don't let fornication be named among you. He is reminding us that this stuff always has community effect, always. It's just the two of us and we just love it.

You're lying to yourself, put away the deception. It always affects others, always, always, without exception, it always does. You say, well, what if you're the last two people in the world? Is God in His heaven? David goes to great lengths talking about all the places you can go and not be out of God's presence.

There's always somebody else involved. And it says something about your priorities and your desire to please God when you willfully disregard His wish that this not take place. Let it not be named among you.

Named means somebody is speaking, somebody has noticed, somebody is telling somebody else, hey, there's fornication going on. It is a community issue. Get over yourself.

It's not about you. It is about everybody else. Walk in love the way Christ did.

If Jesus sat up there as the second person of the Trinity and just ignored the community of human beings and ignored the wishes of His Father that those that He loved be saved, Jesus could have just dwelled in the sublime oneness of His second personness and said, well, I've got mine, I've got my equality with God, and I'm going to grasp it. Can't fault Him. I mean, if you were God, would you let go of being God? The only way you could do that is if you thought something else was a higher priority than your own self-interest.

Walk in love as Christ. That means anything you do, and in particular, this area called pornia, don't blind yourself to the fact that it has implications, it has an effect, it is deleterious to the interest of others, always. And God doesn't forbid fornication because He doesn't want people to have fun.

God forbids fornication because fornication always harms, always harms those who are outside. We're going to see what the Bible has to say about this, and we're going to come to understand why this is number one in the list. I mean, seriously, two people, you know, doing something over here, out of sight and out of mind, how can that be the first thing in the list? Because it's a lot more than that.

It is emblematic. It is metaphorical for the concept. It is a convenient illustration of it.

It stands for it, but pornia is much bigger than a physical act of intercourse without the benefit of marriage. It's way more than that. And that's why the Bible uses it consistently in its spiritual connotation.

Let's pause here and take our break.