

Galatians 5:19–21

“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Understanding “Impurity”

In the New Testament, the Greek word translated as “impurity” is *akatharsia*, which literally means “uncleanness” or “filthiness.” It refers to moral corruption, especially of a sexual nature. It goes beyond physical actions and includes impure thoughts, desires, and attitudes (see Matthew 5:28).

While all sin separates us from God (Romans 3:23), Scripture makes it clear that certain behaviors are especially defiling, described as “perversion” or “abomination” due to their deeply

corrupt nature.

Examples of Severe Impurity in the Old Testament

To better understand what kinds of behaviors qualify as this deep impurity, we can look at the Old Testament, where God provides clear examples:

Leviticus 18:23

“Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.”

Leviticus 20:12

“If a man has sexual relations with his daughter-in-law, both of them are to be put to death. What they have done is a perversion; their blood will be on their own heads.”

These verses deal with bestiality and incest, which God labels not just as sin but as “perversion” (*Hebrew: tebel* – meaning confusion or corruption of divine order). These acts violate both moral law and natural order, and thus are called “impurity” of the highest level.

Why This Matters for Believers

Paul’s warning in Galatians is clear: “Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21). This is not just about individual acts, but about a lifestyle of unrepentant sin.

Jesus came to cleanse us from all impurity (1 John 1:9), but continued willful sin—especially of this severe kind—shows a heart that is not submitted to God (Hebrews 10:26-27). Impurity affects both our relationship with God and our eternal destiny.

The Hope of Redemption

The good news of the Gospel is that no sin is beyond God’s forgiveness. Paul himself reminds the church in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

“Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men
nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.
And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

Impurity, as mentioned in Galatians 5:19, includes all forms of moral and sexual corruption, especially those that pervert God’s design for human relationships. These sins not only defile the body but also grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). However, through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, anyone can be cleansed, forgiven, and restored.

May the Lord help us to pursue purity of heart, mind, and body, and to walk by the Spirit rather than the flesh..

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What Does “Impurity” Mean in Galatians 5:19?

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