

The Portrait of the Church: Purity (Part 4)

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Preacher: Don Coleman

[0 : 00] Let's take our Bibles and open them to Ephesians chapter 5.

! And then we'll continue on.

I want to go ahead and read, though, chapter 5, verses 1 through 21. It doesn't hurt us to re-read the text so that we can kind of put all of this together in our minds.

We're not able to take this whole chunk at one sitting, one standing, one sitting, more than one sitting. And so sometimes we can kind of lose the continuity of it.

So I want to go ahead and read the text again, and then we'll take up where we left off last time.

Chapter 5 of Ephesians, Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

[1 : 24] But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

But no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them, for you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

It's a little awkward there because you have a parenthesis, and I think most translations bring that out, but verse 9 is a parenthesis, so really the flow is kind of broken up by that.

[2 : 32] So verse 8 says, For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. That's the sentence without the break.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore he says, Awake you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is, and do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation.

But be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

[3 : 48] Alright, so there's the larger text, but I again assure you that all these verses go together. There is a theme, really, again, just to remind you, a theme that started way back at the beginning of chapter 4.

And kind of the theme we could identify as a portrait, a portrait of the church. And so we've been moving through this portrait of the church, and looking at two kind of brush strokes in the portrait.

The first one being unity, the unity of the church. And that's chapter 1, verses 1 through 16. Started down a long time ago. And the second kind of brush stroke is purity, or holiness, we could say.

The purity of the church. And that started with chapter 4, verse 17, and continues all the way to, well, the end of what I read here tonight, chapter 5, verse 21.

Alright, so those two things. And so for the past several Wednesdays, we've been looking at what the Apostle Paul has to say about the purity. About the purity of the church, or purity in the church.

[5 : 06] And number 1, believers walk differently. That's the first thing that we consider. Believers walk differently. And then last week, we started to look at Paul's second point here.

And that is that believers walk rightly. They walk rightly. And that will have us consider the first 17 verses of chapter 5.

Now, last week I pointed out what I think is a clue. A clue as to Paul's division of thought. You know, when you're studying Scripture, there are clues that a writer will give you.

They help you kind of outline his thoughts as he's writing. Everybody writes in some logical manner. Even though when we read the Bible, sometimes we think, I just don't see the logic here.

You know, because it seems like, you know, not only do we have mile-long sentences quite often in Scripture, at least as it's translated into the English, but we also, it seems sometimes to just be a kind of smattering of different thoughts and ideas.

[6 : 19] That's not really the case here. And so, you know, we might even miss this particular clue and still be able to see some of the different movements of thought, the flow of thought.

But the clue, really, that Paul gives us is this word walk. The word walk. So each time he uses the word walk in this passage, it is to introduce an aspect, a different aspect of the believer's walk as a child of God in this world.

So that kind of helps you, kind of clue you in on how the Apostle Paul structured his thoughts as he wrote. So the first one, first time he uses the word walk, is found in verse 2.

Verse 2 says, and walk in love. Alright, so walk in love is the first kind of movement in his thought, flow of thought. And we looked at that last week.

Walk in love, verses 1-7. And just again, to give you kind of a review, divided that, this walk, walking in love into three parts.

[7 : 27] First, the imitation of love. Verse 1, Therefore be imitators of God as dear children and walk in love. So we're imitating the Father.

If we want to understand what kind of walk is it, then we need to look at how Jesus walked. And so we're imitating him as dear children. And then second, the motivation for love.

And the motivation is really quite simple, yet profound. Verse 2, Walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us. So that's the motivation to walk in love, the kind of love that Christ loves and did love when he walked this earth.

And then finally, the destruction of love. Verse 3 begins with that conjunction, But, but, and then Paul reveals how sin destroys the love we have for God, as well as the love of God in us and through us, that we should be expressing toward other people.

Sin robs us of that. Sin is such a killer of love, of true love. God kind of love. It destroys that.

[8 : 43] When there's sin in the family, it destroys the love between husband and wife and parents and children and children to their parents. Sin is a wrecking ball to any relationship that we have in our lives.

So, now, all of the sins listed by Paul here are related to sexual sin. Now, he's not trying to say that other kinds of sin are somehow lesser or not important or not as damaging.

All sin is a destructive force against love. And that love relationship with God and our love relationship with others.

But he highlights the most crucial, most powerful types of sin that can destroy love.

So, sexual sin destroys genuine love. Love for God as well as the love of God for self and for others. Alright, so, walk in love.

[9 : 49] And, alright, so, believers walk rightly. First, we walk in love. And now we're ready to go further in the text. And see the second thing. And that is that believers walk in light.

Walk in light. Verses 8-14. Walk in light. Let me go ahead and read verse 8 again. For you were once darkness. But now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light. And then this parenthetical statement. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. Alright, so, walk as children of light, finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

So, let's just kind of pick this apart. In the Bible, quite often, the words darkness and light are used metaphorically.

Metaphorically. In fact, if you read the Gospel of John, John really, quite often, used the word darkness. Or, like the word night.

[10:55] Or, you know, like, for example, Nicodemus visited with Jesus at what time of the day? At night. Now, I don't have any doubt that it really was night time when Nicodemus had this visit with Jesus.

But it is also a way for John to clue you into a spiritual condition that Nicodemus was experiencing in his life. It was a spiritual condition of darkness.

Night. And so, John loved to use those kinds of words that he used metaphorically in order to convey a spiritual condition. So, this is what Paul is doing here. Using darkness and light metaphorically as kind of synonyms for certain spiritual conditions.

So, darkness, what is it a synonym for? Ignorance. It's sometimes used to convey the idea of ignorance. Error. Evil.

Wickedness. All those things. Light, on the other hand, is symbolic of truth. And righteousness. And goodness. And we'll see all three of those words used by Paul in this very verse.

[12:04] All right, so Paul's point is to present a contrast between two spiritual conditions. Two. Not two that are taking place simultaneously, but two that take place at different times in a person's life, in a believer's life.

So, it's a contrast between these two spiritual conditions. And those two spiritual conditions point to two different times in a person's life. When the believer's life was like, what the believer's life was like before salvation, that would be darkness.

And what God intends for the believer's life to be like after salvation, which would be characterized by light. Light.

Darkness and light. So, there's a contrast between these two. The symbols of darkness and light are used by Paul to help illustrate this contrast. Now, I want you to notice that Paul makes the contrast between these two spiritual conditions more profound, even more profound, through the use of some words.

The words were and are. Were and are. Two verbs. Were and are. So, here's how he presents the contrast.

[13:24] And so, he begins with what we once were. What we once were. He says, for you were once darkness.

That's a condition. What we were before salvation. We were darkness. Now, there are two things that we need to understand about this verb were, as Paul used it.

And so, this comes from the form of the verb in the language. And so, that would be the first thing. The verb is a verb. This verbal form of were is past tense.

I guess you couldn't have guessed that. I mean, when we use the word were, we always are thinking in past tense. Were. Now, that's a very strong past tense because it's further fortified with this other word that's in the text, translated in the New King James as once.

Once. So, you were once. So, Paul's point, Paul points to the condition then that no longer exists is what he's talking about.

[14:30] It's past tense. It's not past tense and ongoing, but it's past tense and done. It's over with. And so, he's pointing to a condition, a spiritual condition, that no longer exists.

Darkness is a thing of the past. All right, now, he's talking about a condition. Who we once were, and we were darkness.

And so, that leads to the second thing that we need to understand about this verb. And that is, the verb is not modified by a preposition. There's no preposition. And, I don't know if you really look at it, I think you'd come to this conclusion.

You would expect there to be a preposition here. For example, Paul did not say, you were once in darkness. Wouldn't you come to expect that? You were once in darkness.

Now, that's true. And there are other places in Scripture where that idea is conveyed. In darkness. In the sphere of darkness. He also did not say, you were once of darkness.

[15:36] That is, the darkness came from some other entity or some other source. Now, both those things are in some sense true.

But it's really worse than that. It's worse than that because Paul says, you were darkness. Now, that's something different, isn't it? You're not just in it and of it.

It's bad enough. But darkness is what you once were. We were darkness. Now, think about that. This is pretty serious. Before you came to salvation in Christ, your entire being, your behavior, everything, is characterized by darkness.

That's not talking about, not suggesting that as a lost person, you know, you never did anything that was good. A good thing. Or moral. Anything like that.

[16:37] Talking about that is talking about how it would be defined before a holy God. Because before a holy God, all of our righteousnesses have built your rags.

It's not talking about anything in a practical sense. Because even as children of light, we can do things that are darkness. We can do things that are associated with the darkness.

And I'm talking about what we're doing or the practical side of it. It's talking about what we were. Who we are in our very nature. In our very character. You and I were not only in sin prior to our salvation, but our very nature was characterized by sin.

Even the good things we did. You and I were not only in bondage to sin and Satan's kind of evil system.

We're not only in bondage to that. But our nature made us contributors to it. This is very serious. And so, let's see the contrasting condition.

[17:49] That's what we once were. And then Paul shifts in his contrast to what we now are. What we now are. But now, he says, you are light in the Lord.

Now, similar to the preceding verb, the verb were, this verb that's translated in the English text are, and actually it's a word that comes out of a word that already exists in the text, but we would have a separate word, but it's combined with other words in the Greek text.

But the word is present tense. The verb are is present tense. Now, that's, of course, important. And even though you might think that goes without saying.

I mean, were is past tense, and are is present tense. But a present tense in the Greek carries a whole lot more weight and force, meaning, than our verb are in the English.

In the first place, the believer's new condition is light, which again is symbolic of truth and righteousness. And that's our new condition. Truth, righteousness.

[19:03] But the present tense form points us to an ongoing, a permanent condition. This is who we now are, and will never be anything else but this now.

We were darkness, and we couldn't help ourselves, and everything we did, and everything that defined us, was darkness apart from Christ.

Then we were saved, and now we're light. We're light. That is, truth and righteousness. That's who we are now as believers. Again, we're not yet talking about how that crosses over into some of the things we do in life, and we're going to get to that, and so forth.

But right now, He's just defining who we are, and not because of anything we've done, but because of the grace of God. All right, so, and also, like the verb were, here with this verb are, there's no qualifying preposition connected to the word are.

So, here's the idea. Truth and righteousness is what we are. Now, we probably have a better feeling about that than we do about the darkness side of it.

[20:17] But, this is who we are. We're not perfect. See, we're not talking about that. We're talking about who we are in Christ. We're in Christ.

And so, we are, in that sense, just as righteous as Christ. Not righteous in the things we do, but righteous in our position before God.

And so, truth and righteousness is what we are. Jesus said in Matthew 5.14, you are the light of the world. You are the light. That is, through the new birth, we share in the righteous nature of Christ.

And so, He is the light of the world. That's what John 8.12 says. And so, therefore, His born-again children are the light of the world. Matthew 5.14.

All right, but now there's a qualifier here. And the qualifier is that we are light by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ.

[21:22] We're united with Him. He said, but now you are light in the Lord. In the Lord. So, we're light because of Christ and our union with Him.

So, our behavior then, here's where we get down to the things we do and how we think and so forth. Our behavior must conform to our new identity.

It should always conform to our new identity. And so, that's why Paul says, walk as children of light. Again, we understand the word walk meaning that our behavior, the way we conduct our lives. And so, we're to conduct our lives as the people we really are.

And we're children of light. We might say it this way, walk in conformity to who you now are. Children of light.

So, that's the qualifier. And then I think we might call it a quantifier. The quantifier is the fruit of the light.

[22 : 27] The fruit of the light. Now, I know you've noticed, and I don't know if you're looking at your copy of Scripture that you have with you.

You may have other translations. Verse 9, in the New King James, says, fruit of the Spirit. Now, I get kind of on shaky ground when I let you know these things, but, you know, there are many, many, many manuscripts of the Bible.

New Testament. Full manuscripts of some books that are copies of copies of copies. And there are many of them, some of them just partial manuscripts, some of these little scraps of text that have been found through archaeology.

And so, you know, when we put together when, not we, I'm not smart enough to do it, but when the scholars put together translations of the Greek text, they, they, they, they don't have just one copy of the Greek text.

They don't get out their Greek Bible and then just turn that over into English. They have many, many, many manuscripts that they look at. And there are variances in these manuscripts.

[23 : 48] No variance as to theology and, and, and, and things like that. God has preserved His Word, but sometimes a word will be different in one manuscript as opposed to another.

I'm getting this big shmeel because I want you to know that verse 9, the older and more, what scholars would call even more reliable manuscripts, have the word light here rather than spirit.

You know, the New King James and King James were translated from a certain family of manuscripts. It's called the Textus Receptus.

And, and there are many old manuscripts, But, they used the manuscripts that were available at the time the King James was, was translated, which was when?

Anybody know? 1611. That's a long time ago. We have uncovered a great, a great deal more manuscripts of the New Testament.

[24 : 50] And so, another kind of what we call family of manuscripts has been, have been compiled and many of the more modern versions draw upon it rather than the Textus Receptus.

And, and so, there are some variances. So, which is it? Fruit of the light or fruit of the spirit? Well, I think it's fruit of the light. Fruit of the light not only because it makes sense with the context.

He's talking about light. And this is a parenthetical kind of insertion here after he talks about walking in the light. And then parenthetically he says the fruit of the light is.

So, it makes sense in the context in the flow of thought there. and so, I kind of like the ESV on this particular verse and this is how the ESV renders it.

For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. Now, here's the idea. We should always radiate the light that we are in Christ.

[26 : 04] We should always, you know, light radiates. We should always radiate that light. Here's what we are, who we are. We're children of light by virtue of our salvation. We are light.

That's who we are. But as children of light, that light should always radiate from us and produce fruit. And this is what he's saying in the parentheses.

Our new lives in the Lord should radiate goodness and righteousness and truth.

those three things. And it's kind of interesting when you really analyze those words goodness, really the focus there is our relationship with others. The good things that we do on behalf of others.

Righteousness speaks more of our relationship with God. And truth used in this context really is connected to our relationship with ourselves.

[27 : 05] That is, our personal integrity. integrity. This is the fruit of light. As children of light, these things should always be radiated. Radiated as light from us.

The fruit of our light. Goodness, righteousness, and truth or personal integrity. And by the way, that last one really pertains to how we think and act when no one is looking.

Or when no one could ever find out. That's the true measure or definition of personal integrity. And then the goal of walking, we could say, as children of light, is twofold.

One, to please the Lord. Alright, so this is the goal of walking as children of light. Please God.

Please Him. The latter part of verse 10, we kind of take this from a verse of order because this is really the main thrust of verse 10.

The latter part of verse 10 says, what is acceptable to the Lord or pleasing to the Lord? Here's the goal for our walking that we would always please Him. And then, the second part of that would be to

prove to the world that we are children of light.

[28 : 29] To display that, to prove that, to validate what we claim to be. You see, verse 10, the first part of verse 10, finding out, really it's the word testing or proving what is acceptable to God.

We prove it. Every day, we ought to be proving to the world whether they accept it or not. And for the most part, they will not. Whether they interpret it correctly and respond to it in some saving way, that's another matter.

that's God's business. But, every day and wherever we go and whatever we say, whatever we're involved in, should always be proving that we are who we say we are.

That we are who Christ says we are. We're children of light. And by the way, you know, that actually, in the end, causes us more trouble than it does good because people react to that.

They react to God's people who are actually walking as children of light because, you know, it exposes the darkness and Paul's going to get into that here in just a minute as well. Alright, so Paul then, as we kind of move along in his thought, he then recognizes that the children of light still live in a world of darkness, don't we?

[29 : 48] So, you know, just coming to grips with this wonderful reality you know, I'm a child of a light. I am light because by virtue of my union with Christ and so everything is hunky-dory and great in the world.

Well, it's not because we're living in the midst of darkness all around us and it seems to me that it's getting darker and darker every single day.

And so, how should we then relate to the world of darkness that is all around us? Well, as children of light, our attitude toward darkness should be twofold.

Negatively, number one, negatively, our attitude should be described this way in the negative.

Verse 11, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. So, negatively speaking, our reaction to the darkness that's all around us is to not have any fellowship with the works of darkness.

[30 : 58] And then, positively, the latter part of verse 11, but rather expose them. Now, expose doesn't sound like a positive thing, that sounds like a negative thing, but when you understand what he's talking about here, it is a positive thing.

So, negatively, we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Positively, we are to expose the fruits, the unfruitful works of darkness.

We're to expose them. Alright, so, several questions we could ask about that and answer. Why? Why expose them? Well, because evil deeds are shameful and they need to be exposed.

wickedness needs to be exposed, unmasked, rebuked even. Verse 12, for it is shameful even to speak those things which are done by them in secret.

And I've come about this close to taking issue with the Word of God here because it seems in our day nothing's shameful. Nothing's shameful. And nothing done in secret.

[32 : 06] It's all out in the open. And yet, there are still things inconceivable in our minds and hearts and our way of life that are still done in the secret.

We just can't even begin to imagine. But they're shameful and they need to be exposed. And so, that's why. Then how? Alright, how? Well, darkness is exposed by radiating the light of goodness and righteousness and truth.

Verse 13, but all things that are exposed are made manifest or made visible by the light and that is a good thing for our world. Now, you know, if you're like me, you're thinking, well, that doesn't sound like much fun.

I don't know if I want to be involved in that. You know, always exposing the darkness. Well, the fact is, if you're walking as a child of light, you're going to expose darkness without even trying.

Because just walking as a child of light is what shines the light and light always exposes darkness.

[33 : 19] Always does. And so, whether you deliberately desire to expose and rebuke and mask wickedness in some overt way and in some deliberate way or whether it just is because of who you are and where you go, darkness is exposed because you're walking in the light.

Either way, it's going to happen. It's going to happen. And it's a good thing. Good thing for this world. And so, that leads to the third question, what? What, as in, what is the ultimate goal here? And the goal is to bring others out of darkness and into light. There is an evangelistic element here in this passage. Verse 13b and then on into 14.

Paul says, for everything that becomes visible is light. I'm quoting from the New American Standard because it really brings out the wording here much better more literally.

So, think about that statement. Everything that becomes visible is light. How do you understand that? Everything that becomes... Alright, so you're light and because you're walking as a child of light and goodness and righteousness and personal integrity, you're shining the light of truth.

[34 : 46] then that light always exposes darkness and so is the idea that everything that it exposed becomes light? Well, in a sense, yes.

Or in a potential sense. Our walking as children of light is not going to turn all darkness into light. but our desire, what we want is that our light would expose darkness and that darkness would become light.

The darkness in a person. And that's why he adds, awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you. That's a quotation loosely from Isaiah 61.

So loosely that there's some question whether it is a quotation from Isaiah 61. But it's scripture. And this is talking about salvation.

Awake, sleeper, that's the lost person. Arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you. And I answered in J.B. Phillips translation because it really brings out what I think Paul's idea here is.

[36 : 03] It is possible, after all that happened to you, for light to turn the thing it shines upon into light. It's possible for light to turn the thing it's shining on into light, the darkness into light.

Thus God speaks through the scripture. That is, this is evangelistic, it's an evangelistic element here. If we will walk in the light, some of the darkness that we are exposing and unmasking the darkness in people will be turned to light through their own salvation, through their salvation.

After all, part of the light that we are radiating is the light of the gospel. And the power of the gospel is unto salvation for all those who believe.

So in this sense, we have this ultimate goal as children of light, that is to turn darkness into light.

Now God does that, but through our witness, through the witness of our life, and the way we respond to things in life, and the loves and affections that we express in this world, and our desires to be pure, and to walk purely, and so forth, these things are used by God for the cause of the gospel and turning darkness into light.