

The Portrait of the Church: Purity (Part 1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 April 2015

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0 : 00] Let's read the text.

Let's read verse 224. When I started making my notes, I had every intention of getting to the end of verse 32. And I didn't make it.

So let me just read verse 32. I know that's no surprise to anybody here. So let me begin then with verse 17. This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.

In the futility of their mind. Having their understanding darkened. Being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them. Because of the blindness of their heart.

Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness. To work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ.

[1 : 23] If indeed you have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Christ. That you put off concerning your former conduct. The old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that you put on the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness.

Alright, so that's as far as we'll get tonight. And in my humble but accurate opinion, that's quite a ways to get tonight. So, well, shouldn't be apologizing, should I?

Alright, let's, kind of by way of introduction. And I think a lot of this I have in your notes. Even though you're going to remember some of this. We've been talking about that ever since we started with chapter 4.

But the theme of these verses actually runs all the way to chapter 5 verse 21. And that too I've mentioned a couple of times.

[2 : 27] And again, if you have been here all along as we've been studying through Ephesians. Especially this particular part we're in right now. Then you know that the larger text from chapter 4 verse 1 all the way to chapter 21 verse 5.

Really deals with this theme, the portrait of the church. This is what Paul is giving to us in this larger text. The portrait of the church or God's new society of people.

And we are. The church is a new thing. And so the portrait of the church. And so the first 16 verses of chapter 4 which we've already studied.

Focused on unity. Remember? Unity was the focus or oneness. Oneness of the church. In the church rather.

And then starting here with verse 17. And then again running all the way to chapter 5 verse 21. The focus is going to be purity. Purity. And so we're going to begin that tonight.

[3 : 38] Or the holiness of the church. We could put it that way. You know holiness. The very word. Means different things to different people. And sometimes it has a.

Kind of a lofty connotation. And we. We may just apply it to certain people we know. But the word holiness basically means that we're. We're.

Sanctified. We're separated. We are. Holy ones. Set apart. From sin. And set apart to God. And. And so that will be his focus. Is.

Here. Starting with verse 17. Now. We talked about this several weeks ago. But the key word. Paul uses in the. Kind of the larger text.

Is the word walk. That's a key word. He repeats it over and over again. In fact. He used the word seven times. In the entire letter. And. And used it a total of five times.

[4 : 37] In this. Description of the portrait of the church. Five times he uses that. And. We're going to see. It's several times in the text that. We're looking at tonight.

Walk. That's the key word. And. We don't have to. Think really hard about. What that's referring to. The word comes from. Peripeteo. We'll just.

Write that down. Peripeteo. It's a compound word. Peri. Is the preposition. Around. And. Pateo. Even though that word. Doesn't appear in scripture.

Appears in other forms. Just means to walk. To walk around. Alright. That helps us understand. What this word means. Walk. Right. It means to walk around. We do that every day. Don't we. Sometimes.

I walk around in the house. Because I start walking. To get something. And forget what I went to get. And so. I walk around the house. You know. But. That's basically the meaning of the word. To walk around.

[5 : 31] And yet. You know. The way the bible is using it. It means to. Well. Literally. To make one's way in life. How you make your way in life.

Or. To progress in life. Would be. Another word. These just come straight out of a. Greek lexicon. To regulate one's life. I don't know if I included these in your notes.

But this kind of helps us understand. The meaning behind this word. Walk. That appears. Not only a number of times in Paul's writings. But in many places. In the bible.

People. It means. The way you conduct your life. That possibly would be. I think. The best way to define it. And now. Paul. Then.

Is of course. Referring. Then. To the way. We live our lives. And. He's referring to the way we live our lives. In every context of life.

[6 : 26] Alright. So it's not just simply. You know. A set of. Instructions. On how to live your life. As you. When you come to church. You know. Or. When you're involved in some.

Kind of spiritual activity. Or religious activity. You know. Sacred activity. You know. We have a tendency. At least people have a tendency. Generally. To make a separation. Between the sacred. And the secular. But for the believer. There is no secular. It's all. Sacred. And so. When Paul. And other bible writers. Speak of our walk. In life.

It's referring to the way. We're conducting our lives. In every single context. Of life. Be it. Private. As well as. Of course. Public. At home. At work.

At play. At church. And I don't mean to put church. At the end of the list. But in most of our. Of us. In our thinking. We put the church. At the top of the list. And we don't really go.

[7 : 18] Any further than that. So. But it implies. To every context. Of life. So. Walk is the key word here. And so. Everything.

About. The walk. Of a true Christian. Could be summed up. In this way. Summed up. Based upon what Paul. Has written here. And it's this.

Followers of Christ. Are different. Different. So. We need to understand. The word walk. In that sense. And that's. This is the sense. In which.

Paul is teaching us here. the way we walk is different. It's different than the rest of the world. It is different in essence.

It is essentially different. It is radically different. Radically different from every other person on planet earth. Or to put it in maybe more straightforward terms, since followers of Christ are essentially different than unbelievers or non-followers, followers of Christ should no longer act like unbelievers.

[8 : 28] Now, you know, we hear that. Well, yeah, of course. And yet, you know, quite often, believers act very much the same as unbelievers in many contexts of life.

And it ought not be that way. This is what Paul's point is going to be, that we're different. This new society, this church, we're not only, is there a oneness with us, but there is a unity within us, but there's also a purity about us that really applies to every area of our lives individually, as individual believers.

And so we're not to act like unbelievers. All right, so having said that, here's point number one. Believers walk differently. Believers walk differently, and that really is what Paul is talking about, really all the way to verse 32, even though we're not going to get that far tonight.

And we could divide these verses, I mean, all the way to verse 32, 17 and 32, we could divide these verses into two parts.

First, which will be our discussion tonight, the description of the difference. And then second, and we'll start this next time, the implication of the difference.

[9 : 50] So the description of the difference, the implication of it, and we'll get to that second one next time, and really we'll go further than that as we get on into chapter 5.

All right, so tonight, first the description of the difference, verses 17 through 24. Paul categorizes the difference in the believer's walk under three descriptions, or with three descriptions.

And we could name them this way. In the first place, believers keep putting off what is natural.

That's a description of a believer, a description of the difference between the true believer, the true follower of Christ, and everyone else.

Believers keep putting off because the idea, and we're going to see this in a number of the verbs that Paul uses, is a continuous thing. There's a sense in which it's a decisive act in any of the things he's going to be teaching us, but it is also, there is a sense, and we must continue to renew that. We keep putting off, taking off, like unclothing, what is natural. What is natural, or the unregenerate man. We put that off.

[11 : 16] The things that belong to the unregenerate man, which we once were, all of us. All right, so, now, Paul has already given us a graphic description of the natural man.

We studied it, well, I don't know, months ago, back in Ephesians chapter 2. Really, quite a vivid description of the natural man, the unregenerate man.

And we need to keep that description, that description in Ephesians 2, keep that in our minds as we kind of walk through this, really another description in verse, chapter 4.

But I've provided that passage there for you in your notes, chapter 2, verses 1 through 3, I want to read it. I've also tried to emphasize certain aspects, certain words, in the verse, so take note of that. And you he made alive, all right, now that's not part of his description, that's who we are now, who were, you were, it's past tense, were what? Dead.

[12 : 26] You were dead. This is a description of the natural man, the unregenerate man. You were, and by the way, ladies, man is, I'm not talking about men, I'm talking about mankind, kind, okay, that includes all of us.

I don't know why I feel like I have to say that every time. Were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked, see all these past tense, once walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, and daughters, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

I underlined those two words because Paul's going to be talking about those things again here in chapter four. The mind, first of all, and the flesh.

And were, by nature, children of wrath. That is, children deserving of God's wrath. Just as the others. Who are the others? All unbelievers.

No matter who they are. Gentile, Jew. Alright, so, we want to keep that description in mind. The disturbing description, really.

[13 : 51] I mean, especially if you really look deeply behind all of these various concepts, you know, dead, you know, and walking according to the course of this world, you know, conducting ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh.

that's a very, very graphic description. And that's what, and who, we all once were. Every one of us. And still would be. Were it not for the grace of God. And I would even say, and to a certain extent, for a season sometimes, we still can be.

We still can be. In some sense, if we choose to disobey and walk according to the flesh. Believers can make steps and choices in life that are based upon control of the flesh rather than the control of the spirit.

And we don't have to, but we often do. And so, believers are to keep putting off what belonged to the natural man, the unregenerate man.

[15 : 05] All right, so we're going to take this verse by verse as we kind of walk through this even though I have somewhat of an outline. verses 17 through 18c. There are four parts to verse 18.

Ignorance of the mind. The ignorance of the mind. So, Paul begins with the mind. Ignorance.

Now, it's difficult to separate the mind from the heart. We think in our minds. We also think in the heart. They're connected. But, he's talking about an ignorance of something.

An ignorance of the mind. And this is what he said. This I say therefore and testify or affirm, really insist upon in the Lord that you should no longer walk.

There's that word walk. And, by the way, it is in the present tense. That means it's active. It's continuous action. Keep on walking as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the futility of their mind. [16:16] Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them. That's quite a description. And, in these verses, Paul describes the natural man as empty-minded.

Basically, what he means. He uses the word futility. Empty-minded. And, what does that mean? Well, does it mean, you know, unintelligent? That's really not having to do with that. or uneducated? That's not really his idea here. Certainly doesn't mean, you know, that there's some mental retardation. You know, that's true of unbelievers.

I'm not talking about that. I mean, there are believers, unbelievers rather, who are some of the most intelligent people you'd ever hope to meet, ever might meet. Very intelligent.

[17:21] But, no, the meaning is it is a mind that has nothing of the nature of God in it. Nothing of the nature of God, the purpose of God, the character of God, nothing of the thoughts of God, the truth of God.

We could add any number of words there. That's what he's talking about. And so, the first phrase in verse 18 kind of explains this. The mind, it's the mind that has nothing of the nature of God in it, is an empty mind.

It's an empty mind. That is, it is spiritual, its spiritual perception is darkened. This is what Paul says, it's darkened. The mind of the natural man cannot perceive the truth of God.

Now, it can perceive facts of God. You know, there are unbelievers who quite possibly know more about the Bible than anyone here in this room.

In fact, it's been said, and I think it's true, that Christianity or the world of scholarship, Christian scholarship, is indebted to an extent to some rank liberal theologians and scholars over the years who didn't believe a lot of things that the Bible taught, and yet they were meticulous about interpreting and defining words and discovering archaeological evidences and so forth.

[19:00] It's amazing to me that they can know all those things, be very meticulous about it, and yet at the same time, not believe. Not believe.

So, it doesn't have anything to do with intelligence. It's talking about a perception, a spiritual perception, and it's darkened.

It cannot perceive the truth of God. Not the facts of God, but the truth of God. And what is the truth of God, chiefly? The Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ.

His person, His power, His provision, salvation. Albert mentioned John 14, 6, a moment ago, Jesus said, I am the truth.

He said, I am the way, the truth, and life, but he says, I am the truth. It's truth personified. So, when a person does not know Jesus, he or she is spiritually ignorant, or i.e., the ignorance that is, like he says here, the ignorance that is in them, and therefore they're alienated from the life of God.

[20:12] That is the unregenerate condition. Alienated from the life of God. Verse 18, D, through 19, A, insensitivity of the heart.

So, he begins with an ignorance of the mind, and then moves to the insensitivity of the heart. And this is kind of a natural progression.

Now, remember, this is a description of the unregenerate. That which the believer is to put off, is to not have anything to do with anymore.

And so, this is a description of the unregenerate man. Insensitivity of the heart. He says, because of the blindness of their heart, who being past feeling.

The word blindness, and that's how it's translated, of course, in the New King James. That's what I just read it from, but you have probably other versions out there, and some of them will have the word hardness, hardness of the heart.

[21:24] Is that the ESV? ESV, probably NASB does too, I don't remember. But, so, that's really a better translation, hardness. In fact, the Greek word is parosis.

Parosis, meaning the covering with a callus. A callus. And parosis. parosis. You know, we get this malady called osteoporosis.

And it's a callus on the bone, is what it is. But, now we normally think of callus, I don't know about you, but I think of calluses on my hands.

You know, I'll get out there in the fall, and I've got to take care of those leaves, and I get out the rake, and I'm not careful, I don't put the gloves on, and I'm out there, and I'm raking, and before I

even know it, I look, and what do I have?

Blisters. So it begins with blisters. So it kind of starts with a carelessness in my working habit. You know, I just get out there, and I do too much, and all of a sudden I've got blisters.

[22 : 36] But the next day I still have the leaves, so I've got to get back out there, or maybe the next weekend I still have more to do, and so I'm going to get back and what replaces them?

Calluses. And is that a bad thing? Well, in a way it's a good thing, because then you don't feel the pain anymore. Or maybe a better illustration would be some years ago, a couple of my sons had the harebrained idea they were going to teach their dad how to play the guitar.

That lasted about two weeks. I couldn't even get to the point of getting calluses on the tips of my fingers. It hurt so bad. So we know what a callus is, and what a callus does.

It deadens the feeling. In fact, at some point, depending on the severity of the callus, we can't feel anything. I have some places, as a matter of fact, on my hand, where I've developed calluses over the years that I don't have any feeling anymore.

And we understand that. So we kind of apply that to the word that is being used here. So the result, then, of a continued life of sin is a calloused heart.

[23 : 54] Calloused heart. It's past feeling. It's past feeling. All right, so like the callous on a hand, it happens little by little over time, doesn't it?

Early on, one feels the pain of the sin. Or we might say, use the word guilt. But eventually all feeling of guilt is gone.

And there's, your heart's just past feeling. So a calloused heart, this is the condition of the natural man, and it can also be something that a believer can experience for his time, for his season, to just kind of go down a path where little by little you become desensitized or calloused about some certain activity in life.

And then, you know, one day, God, the Spirit is so gracious to wake us up and open our eyes and say, well, how did I get here? And it was a callousness that we allowed to form on our heart.

But this is the hopeless condition of the natural man. calloused heart toward righteousness, toward truth, toward God, toward the things of God, the truth of God, and a past feeling.

[25 : 21] Alright, so then, the natural consequence then, if we get to verse 19, the latter part of verse 19b, is iniquity of the life. Alright, so you see the natural progression there, from what?

The ignorance of the mind to the insensitivity of the heart to then the iniquity of the life. Having or have given themselves over to lewdness or sensuality to work or to practice all uncleanness, it is every kind of uncleanness, or immorality, with greediness.

We normally associate greed with money and material things, but here the idea is just a desire for more. It's the same idea behind the word, only here it's applied to immorality and sensuality and you can't get enough of it and there's a greediness, a desire for more and more and more.

Alright, so this is the iniquity of the life. We're talking then about the believers walk, about believers walking different and so the first one, believers keep putting off what is natural, the unregenerate man, and then next, believers keep putting off what is carnal, the old man.

Alright, so let's look at the next three verses. First of all, verses 20 to 21, the communication of Christ. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus.

[27 : 12] Alright, so, in the person of Christ, like we said before, truth is personified, isn't it? Christ is not just the truth speaker or the one who leads to truth or teaches truth, He is the truth, truth personified.

And so, we've not just learned about Christ, though we have and do, and we've not just learned from Christ, we have learned Christ.

That's kind interesting that Paul put it this way. See, when you trust Jesus Christ, then you receive the embodiment of truth, the very embodiment of truth.

And there is no truth apart from knowing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. And that's why the study of God's Word, the written Word, will always be unfruitful until you know, savingly, know Jesus Christ, the living truth.

And so, you know, apart from salvation in Christ, you can read the Bible all you want to, but you'll never come to the understanding of it, never know the truth, the embodiment of truth, apart from knowing Christ as your Lord and Savior.

[28 : 38] That's why, you know, you meet some people and they're not true believers, they've never been born again, and yet, from time to time they'll pick up the Bible and read the Bible and they come up with some of the most cockeyed ideas about what Scripture says.

And you might even find yourself thinking, well, how in the world did come up with that idea? Because, you know, you can read the Bible and you would never come up with that conclusion about those strange things, you know.

Well, the difference is, you know Jesus. You've learned Christ, the embodiment of truth, the personification of truth, is in you.

I so then, consequently, verse 22, the conduct of corruption. Paul says that you put off concerning your former conduct the old man, the old self, which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. So, you get the imagery here, kind of like removing an article of clothing. If I had a coat on, I'd demonstrate, but I'm not going to take anything else off that I have on here.

[29 : 50] But like removing an article of clothing, believers then are to put off the corrupt conduct in life, all corrupt conduct. Now, the form of the Greek word translated put off conveys the idea of kind of finality or a once for all.

This should be a once for all act. Now, we have to revisit it quite often in our lives, and so there is some continuous action, but we're not talking about a process or a gradual thing.

You know, I've just, I'll put off this bit of sin first, and then, you know, see how it goes, and then in a month or so I'll delve into this other area of sin, and I'll put that off, and, you know, just give me some time, Lord.

No, it's a once for all decisive decision act to put it off once and for all, all, all corrupt conduct in your life.

All right, so believers then keep putting off what is natural, the unregenerate man. Believers keep putting off what is carnal, the old man. And then third, believers keep putting on what is spiritual, the new man.

[31 : 12] You have to be clothed with something, don't you? Obviously. Verses 23 and 24, and be renewed, again, continuous action, be renewed, keep on being renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on, once for all, the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness.

All right, now, you're going to love this, to be renewed is literally to be made young again. All right, how do you like that? Well, there's more to it than that, of course.

I mean, our bodies are continually getting older. You say, don't remind me about that. But, and yet, in Christ, our minds are getting younger.

you say, well, I don't know about that. I don't seem to be able to remember things I used to be able to remember, think about things, you know, and so forth. But, it's not talking about intellect, all right? Not talking about brain power. You know, they have pills for that, by the way. You keep seeing these on the TV, you know, commercials for certain supplements or something that's supposed to help brain power, you know.

[32 : 29] or you can get online, go to one of those websites, they say it's just like playing games, but it's, you know, supposedly exercises the brain. Maybe those things work, I don't know.

We're not talking about it, Paul's not talking about that. But, but rather, in the sense, it's in the sense of spiritual vitality, the spirit of your mind. And it's talking about the maturity of your knowledge of God's word, the maturity of it, so that you're not, you know, kind of, tossed back and forth.

You come to a place of maturity in your understanding, your knowledge of the word of God. And it's all talking about an ongoing maturity in your power over the flesh.

That ought to be getting better as, as we go, as we progress, as we mature as believers. Also, I think a maturity of hope, hope in heaven.

You know, closer we get to it, the more excited we get about that, and the more mature we, maturely we think, maturely, the more mature is our thinking about, about what happens after this life is over.

[33 : 40] And so, you know, you know, when you're really young, you may hear an older person say things like that, and you're thinking, that just doesn't make any sense. What do you mean? You know, I'm not ready to die.

I don't want to go to heaven yet. And so, you meet someone who is mature in the faith, as well as mature in age, and they just long to be with their Lord in heaven.

And it's difficult for a young person to understand that kind of thinking. But see, we're talking about this process being renewed, being renewed, and it makes our mind younger, and younger, that is in the sense of a vitality in our spiritual thinking.

to put on the new man refers to a commitment to the new life in Christ. I mean, there's not two people living inside you.

It's a new life that he's talking about. And so, we put off the carnal, we put off the carnal, keep putting off the carnal, the old life that is dominated by the ignorance of God.

[34 : 51] Not God's ignorance, your ignorance of him. And then, we are to put on the spiritual. Put on the spiritual, the new life that is dominated by, as Paul says in this verse, true righteousness and holiness.

So, this new life is dominated by righteousness and holiness, which has been made according to the very likeness of God. And so, we could even make a parallel here hear with other passages to speak about our being transformed in the very image of Christ, becoming more and more like Christ.

And this is what God is creating in us. All right. So, we're talking about the difference that exists among followers of Christ. Believers walk differently.

So, we have the description of that difference and next time we'll have the implication of that difference and talk about some actual sins that are no longer a part of us.

And we'll get back next time.