

(Ephesians) Ephesians 4:23-5:20

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the transformative power of Christ in renewing our minds and behaviors, urging believers to actively put off their old selves and embrace their new identity in Him.

Duration: 59:25

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-4

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of building our lives on the foundation of what God has done for us. The frequent use of the word 'therefore' throughout chapters 4, 5, and 6 of Ephesians signifies the connection to the doctrinal section in chapters 1 to 3. The speaker urges listeners to imitate God and forgive others as He has forgiven us. Additionally, the sermon highlights the need to walk in wisdom, avoiding sin and foolishness, and making the most of our time. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of not only stopping negative behaviors but also actively doing good and helping others.

Transcript

Today to Ephesians 4 and verse 23, he's contrasting how we should walk and how we should live with the way we walked in our former life. He says, in the old days you walked according to the way all other people in the world walk. People walk, those who are unconverted, those who are not born again, the way they walk in the futility of their mind, verse 17, darken in their understanding and so on, callous, having given themselves over to sensuality, verse 19, impurity, greediness, and so on.

He says, but now you come to Christ, you're trying to learn from Christ. Now put off that old man by an act of your will. You say, in Jesus' name, because God has condemned this old man, I put it off.

You've got to put off what God has condemned and be renewed. You cannot make yourself like Christ. The Holy Spirit does that.

But you've got to offer yourself for the Holy Spirit to do it. You know, like clay in the hands of the potter. The difference is the clay doesn't have a will of its own, but we do.

But just like the clay cannot make itself into a beautiful vessel, we cannot make ourselves like Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can do that, but we have to surrender into the hands of the potter. And so it says, be renewed means let the Holy Spirit renew you.

Be renewed. Let the Holy Spirit renew your way of thinking. Worldliness is primarily in your mind.

A lot of people think worldliness is in the way we dress. It is not. It may manifest itself in the way we dress, but the worldliness is not in the dress.

The worldliness, all worldliness is in the mind. And because a person has a worldly mind, he may dress in a certain way, or speak in a certain way, or do things in a certain way, spend his money in a certain way, spend his time in a certain way. There are hundreds of manifestations of worldliness.

Dress is just one of them. A lot of times we think of dress as worldliness, and we think of a person who wears white clothes. They're holy.

It's a lot of rubbish. Worldliness is in the mind. It's an attitude.

It's an attitude to money, material things, to other people. And it's there in the mind that we are to be renewed. Like it says in Romans 12 too, be renewed in your mind and don't be conformed to the world.

That's a clear verse which tells us that worldliness is in the mind. And here it says, be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on this new man, that is, this new nature, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. This new man is a new creation.

Our physical birth was not a new creation. We were born through our parents. The seed came through our parents.

But when it comes to this new birth, this new life that we have, that's a totally new creation in our heart. And we can't create anything. Only God can do it.

And God created a new life within us. And this new man, created by God inside our heart, is being created. The word is created in verse 24.

It's not just modified, rectified. God's not trying to improve your old nature. Your old nature is like an old garment.

And Jesus said, if you take a new patch and attach it to an old garment, the whole thing will tear. And God doesn't do that. You got to throw away that old garment and take a totally new garment.

God is not out to rectify and repair your old nature. Christianity is not a moral self-improvement program. No.

It says here that we are to be renewed. This new man is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. And one translation has it, the holiness which is no illusion.

Reality, real holiness. Real holiness is something that goes all the way down to the bottom. Now, you know, nowadays there's all types of veneers and laminates that people put on wood to make it look nice.

It can look like teak on the outside. But you scratch the surface and you discover it's not teak inside. It's only a laminate.

It's only on the surface. It's laminated wood. There's a lot of laminated Christianity as well.

Something that's stuck on the surface to make it look spiritual. But here it's speaking about the holiness which is not an illusion, but which is reality, which penetrates right into the innermost parts of our heart. That is this new nature.

This new nature has got a holiness that goes right down deep inside. You scratch all the way to the bottom and you find it's holy. That's the new nature.

Put on this new nature. Submit to the Holy Spirit. Allow Him to transform you into the likeness of Christ.

Allow Him to show the glory of Christ to you. Learn Christ in this way as it says in verse 20. We have to exercise our will.

If all this was automatic, I mean if we didn't have to do anything, then all of us would be great saints by now. The fact that we haven't become great saints proves that it's not something the Holy Spirit does automatically. The two mistakes among Christians in the matter of holiness is one group that thinks that we've got to struggle and grit our teeth and do it on our own.

And the other group who says well we don't do anything, we can't do anything, God does everything. And I find carnality in both groups. Some people are worldly and some people are legalistic.

Both are carnal. Worldliness is carnal and legalism is carnal. But the balance is where we recognize that we cannot do anything on our own but submit to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to do the work to write His laws upon our heart to make us like Him.

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, who's supposed to do that? Is the Holy Spirit supposed to do that or are you supposed to do it? And if you're going to tell a lie, that's your choice. And the Holy Spirit may try to restrain you but He's not going to catch you by the neck and pull you back from telling a lie. You can go and tell a lie.

Ananias and Sapphira came to the church and they told a lie and God allowed them and punished them. So falsehood is something we can choose but it says laid aside. When He says put off the old man here's something that you need to put off.

There's a lot of lying among Christians. A lot of giving people a wrong impression. That's what lying is.

You know you can tell a lie without opening your mouth. When you give a person a wrong impression of your spiritual condition, you're being false. Laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor for we are members of one another.

Does the right hand try to deceive the left hand? Does the hand try to deceive the leg? We're members of one another. We're not trying to cheat one another. Do you recognize that you're members of one another? Then be transparent.

Be honest. Speak the truth each one with his neighbor. And the another thing he speaks about here is anger.

Verse 26. This is a problem that many believers have. Anger.

It's one of the commonest sins among believers. And here is a command which says be angry but don't sin. That means there is an anger which is not sinful and there is an anger which is sinful.

What is the anger which is not sinful where we are told to be angry? Let's go back to what it says in verse 20 about learning Christ. The way to discover which anger is sinful which is not is by learning Christ. Look at Jesus and see how He did it.

We see instances where Jesus was really angry. When people were making money in the name of religion in the temple, He was so angry He made a whip and chased them out, turned their tables because He was concerned about the glory of God. When God's name is dishonored, when people make money in the name of religion, you should be angry.

And when you see people making money in the name of Jesus Christ, exploiting poor widows and taking their money and living in grand style, if you're not angry, you're not like Jesus Christ. That's the time you should be angry. But we look at Jesus at other times when they spat on Him and called Him the Prince of Devils, He was not angry.

And when people spit on you and call you all types of names, you should not be angry. If you're angry then you're not like Christ. Jesus was angry once when the Pharisees would not allow a man to be healed in the synagogue.

When you see people being kept in religious systems, even so-called Christian religious systems, and not being permitted to be liberated by the gospel, not being permitted to be born again and to become disciples of Jesus, you've got to be angry with such religious leaders. And if you're not angry with such religious leaders, you're not like Christ. So we see that the anger which the Bible commands is an anger that concerns the glory of God, the good of other people.

Where you see poor people being exploited, where you see women being exploited by others, you've got to be angry with that corruption in the system. But anything that concerns you, where people harmed you or spoke evil of you or hurt you, we cannot be angry. That's sinful anger.

Where it concerns the glory of God and the good of others, we must be angry. Where it concerns ourselves, anger is always, always sinful. Now in the race of Adam, we find it's exactly the opposite.

People are not going to get angry. They don't get angry when it concerns the glory of God. They get angry only when it concerns themselves.

That's because they're upside down. Jesus came to make us right side up. And when we become right side up, we get angry when it concerns the glory of God.

And we don't get angry when it concerns ourselves. That's the meaning of being angry and don't sin. And then it gives us a helpful time limit to our anger.

Now a man of God doesn't use this time limit if he's angry and he's slipped up and fallen. He immediately confesses his sin and asks forgiveness from the one he's lost his temper with. But if you don't succeed in doing that, it says in any case, don't let the sun go down on your anger.

In those days when the sun set, they didn't have electricity. That was the time people went to bed, soon after sunset. So the meaning here is don't go to bed with anger in your heart.

Husbands and wives, make sure before you go to bed at night, you've forgiven one another. You've asked forgiveness. Make sure before you go to bed at night, you've got rid of all your anger against brothers and

sisters who've done so many things wrong against you.

Don't let the sun set on your anger. Settle each day's problems on the same day. Don't have any accounts to be carried over to the next day.

Think of all believers and all husbands and wives lived like this. We'd have heaven in our homes and heaven in our churches. We turn today to Ephesians in chapter 4 and verse 26.

In our last study, we were seeing the importance of being angry without sinning. And we saw that anger that concerns the glory of God is the anger that is not sinful. And anger, where we are angry because somebody hurt us, that's always sinful anger.

And if you do get angry like that, it says in the latter part of that verse, make sure you've cleansed it out of your system, forgiven that person, asked forgiveness, whatever it is, before the end of the day. And then it says, don't give the devil an opportunity in the next verse. In other words, if you read it, verse 26 and 27 together, it means if you go to bed with anger in your heart, you have given the devil an opportunity.

Like the dentists say, brush your teeth before you go to bed. Otherwise, all those bacteria will be working on your teeth the whole night. And so, cleanse your heart of anger before you go to bed.

Otherwise, the devil is going to be working on your heart and destroying you. The devil gets an opportunity, this verse teaches us, when a believer retains a grudge against someone in his heart, something unsettled, it could be a husband and wife, could be a brother and a brother, it could be against someone in some other group, forgive them, release them, get rid of your anger. Go to bed every night with a heart that's forgiven everybody.

That's God's will for you. And the devil will never get an opportunity in your lives. An unforgiving spirit is what opens the door for the devil to come into a home, into a heart, into a church.

Verse 28 says, let him who steals, steal no longer. But rather, let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need. Now, this is a wonderful verse that teaches us what should happen when a person becomes a Christian.

Now, when a person becomes a Christian who was a thief before, what's he supposed to do? You say, stop stealing. But that's only the negative part of it. There's another side to it.

He must stop stealing, and it says in this verse, he must start working. Start working so that he has some extra money, not just for himself, but some extra money to share with someone who is in need. This is the opposite of what he did before.

So when a Christian, when a person is born again, he must not only stop doing the evil that he did before, but in that area where he did evil, he's got to do some positive good. So there are two sides in verse 28. One, the negative side, stop doing that, and then, that's not the end, start earning money and start giving.

That's the opposite of stealing. Don't just be satisfied that you've stopped stealing, and now you're earning your own honest living. That's not enough.

Are you helping other people? Let's apply that to another area. What about our speech? It says here in verse 29, in the old days, a whole lot of rotten words came out of your mouth. Okay? Now that you're born again, what should happen? Stop speaking rotten words? Good.

But that's not enough. That's just the negative side. You stop stealing? That's not enough.

You start doing something good to help people now. Give to people. In the old days, you spoke rotten words? You stopped speaking rotten words? That's good, but that's not enough.

Now we've got to also positively speak good words, which build up people, according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. In the old days, you hurt people. Now what are you going to do? Just stop hurting them? No.

Now bless them with the same tongue with which once upon a time you hurt people. This is Christianity. The same hands with which you stole from people, now you give money to people who are in need.

The same tongue with which you hurt people once, you use the same tongue to bless people. This applies to every area of our life. Whether it's money or our tongue, we don't just get rid of the negative.

We do something positive. Christianity is not to say, I'm not going to be like the devil. I'm not going to behave like the devil.

Okay, that's fine. That's not Christianity. There's just one part of it.

Christianity is, I'm going to behave like Jesus Christ. I'm not just going to avoid sin. It says about Jesus, He loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

There are two sides to this. To avoid what's evil and to do what's good. Jesus went about doing good.

And so both of these are needed. And it's in relation to our tongue that the Bible says in Ephesians 4.30, Don't grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Do you know that we grieve the Holy Spirit most by our speech? If you read verse 29 and 30 together, it says, Don't let any rotten word come out of your mouth.

Not even one rotten word. Don't let one rotten word. Be careful with your speech.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled people and on top of everybody's head, there was a tongue of fire, thereby indicating that in this new covenant age, the most important member of the human body that the Holy Spirit was going to use would be the tongue. It wasn't a hand of fire or a leg of fire or an ear of fire. No, it was a tongue of fire.

What's the significance of that? The most important part of your body, which God wants to use through the Holy Spirit, is the tongue. He wants to control your tongue and make you a spiritual man. James 1.26 says, If a man cannot control his tongue and he thinks he's spiritual, he's fooling himself.

He's not spiritual at all. He's deceiving his own heart. So, it says in connection with the use of our tongue, the unwholesome words we speak, Don't grieve the Holy Spirit of God, verse 30.

Grieving indicates this love the Spirit has for us. You can't grieve an enemy. You can only grieve a loving father.

You anger an enemy. It doesn't say here, Don't anger the Spirit of God. It says, Don't grieve him.

You see something in that word? Not that the Holy Spirit is angry with you, but he's grieved. He feels sorry when he hears the way you speak to your wife, the way you speak to your husband, sometimes the way

you speak to your children, or the way you speak to your parents, or the way you speak to your neighbors, or the way you speak in the bus, or the officer. He's grieved.

He's grieved because that's not the way a Christian should speak. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit by the rotten words that come out of your mouth. The Holy Spirit's sealed you.

You are his possession. He's got his mark on you, like the standards organizations in the world that give ISO certifications. The Holy Spirit's put a seal upon you saying, You are a child of God.

Now behave like one. Don't grieve him. And therefore, let all bitterness, verse 31, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and slander be put away from you along with all malice.

That's the negative. And the positive, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you. You notice this contrast between the negative and positive coming repeatedly from verse 25 onwards? Put aside falsehood, verse 25.

That's not enough. Speak the truth. Be angry, verse 26, but don't sin.

If you were stealing in the past, stop stealing. Now start giving, helping those in need. You used to speak rotten words, 29.

Now you speak good words. You used to have bitterness, wrath, anger, and all that in your past life, verse 31. Now be kind, forgiving, tenderhearted.

We need this balance, putting away that which is evil and replacing it with that which is good. This is the mistake a lot of Christians make. You remember Jesus said about a man who had a demon, and the demon was driven away, and he kept his house empty.

He kept his heart empty. It was all cleaned, all the filth was removed, but it was empty. The falsehood was put away, the bitterness was put away, the stealing was put away, the wrath and malice was put away, and the house was empty.

What's the result? Seven worse demons come and occupy the house. Eight demons, where there was only one before. Why? Because the house was kept empty.

We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We don't need to just cast out the demon. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

So where I put away rotten words, I must replace them with kind words. I put away stealing, I must replace it with giving. I put away bitterness, and I must be kind and tenderhearted.

I put away anger, and I forgive, actively forgive, and so on. I put away falsehood, and I replace it with speaking the truth. Where I hurt people in the past, I stop hurting them, and I start blessing them.

Let's look at verse 31 a little more. It says here, let all bitterness be put away. How much of bitterness should be put away from your life? All.

If you've got bitterness against ten people, and you've forgiven nine of them, do you know that you haven't obeyed God at all, until you obeyed, until you put away bitterness against that tenth person as well? All wrath. Do you really believe that God wants us to put away all anger from our life? Don't ever tolerate

anger in your life. Anger is a sin.

Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5, verse 22 onwards, that it's first of three steps to hell. If you're angry in your heart, then you speak something. Ultimately, it says you can be guilty of hell fire.

All anger. It says, all gossiping, verse 31, all slander, all evil speaking. If only God's people would take just that, Ephesians 4, verse 31, seriously.

Imagine what holiness would come into the church. Imagine what power would come into the church. Imagine what utterance would come into your mouth when you begin to speak God's word.

Put it away. Ask the Holy Spirit's power to put away all hatred, all anger, all bitterness, all evil speaking, and be replaced with tenderness, kindness, forgiving, even as God forgave you. Turn today to Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 1. This is actually a continuation of the end of chapter 4. It's in the same paragraph.

Again, it begins with the word, therefore. You notice that a chapter 4, verse 1. We saw it in chapter 4, verse 17. And we see it in chapter 5, verse 1. We see it in chapter 5, verse 15.

Frequently, the use of the word, therefore. Therefore. Chapter 6, verse 13.

Therefore. It's all based on the doctrinal section in chapters 1 to 3. He's saying, build your life on that foundation. On what God has done, you've got to do something.

Therefore, in view of all that the Lord has done for us, chapters 1 to 3, what should we be? We must follow God's example. He had just said, in verse 32, that we must forgive each other exactly like God in Christ has forgiven you. How does God forgive us? He says, then, in that connection, he says, be an imitator of God.

Follow God's example. Just as little children imitate their father. Haven't you seen little, small little children trying to imitate their father and trying to be like their father because they admire their father? He says, like that, be imitators of God.

The way God forgave you in Christ, you forgive others. Now, how did God forgive us? He didn't judge us. He didn't punish us.

Not only that, when he forgave us, he said, I will not remember your sins anymore. What a wonderful promise. He says, I will not remember your sins anymore.

He doesn't mean that God's forgotten. Do you think God's forgotten what you did 20 years ago or yesterday? He hasn't forgotten, but when he says, I will not remember, he's not saying, I have forgotten. It never says, I've forgotten.

It says in Hebrews 8, 12, I will not remember. The meaning is, I choose not to remember it. That's how we must forgive others.

That means we choose not to remember the wrong they did against us. We choose not to remember it when we meet a person. We choose that thought may come to our mind, remember what this fellow did to you last year or last week, but we choose not to remember it against that person.

That's how God forgave us, and it says here, that's how we must forgive one another. As long as we live in this world, we will need to forgive one another, because we are in the flesh. We make mistakes.

People around us will make mistakes. We can't help it. And the only way to live in unity in the church is if we forgive one another.

The only way to live in unity in a home is if we forgive one another. We will do things to irritate one another. It's natural, normal, because we are in the flesh.

You cannot avoid it. What shall we do? Forgive one another. Release one another.

Be an imitator of God. And walk in love, just as Christ loved you and gave himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. Notice that Jesus said, I'm giving you a new commandment.

Love one another. Was that a new commandment? Wasn't it there in the Old Testament that you must love your neighbor as yourself? Jesus himself said the greatest commandment, the second greatest commandment in the law was to love one another, love your neighbor as yourself. How is it a new commandment? It was new in this sense.

Jesus said, now love your neighbor not as yourself, but as I loved you. That's the new part of this commandment. Love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

And so we see here that that is our standard. As Christ loved us, as God forgave us, we got to forgive others. That's imitating God.

As God loved us, we got to love others. That's imitating God. When, how did God love us? And when did he love us? Did he love us when we were perfect? Did he love us when we stopped making mistakes? Did he love us when, only when we started loving him? No.

His love for us was not at all dependent on whether we loved him in return or not. He loved us long before we loved him. He loved us when we hated him.

He loved us when we had no time for him. He loved and drew us to himself with our, with his love and kept on loving even when there was no response. And now many of us love him, but he loved us long before that.

He says, now be an imitator of God. That means you got to love people like that. Somebody doesn't love you, just love him.

Somebody doesn't respond to your love, just keep loving him. This is, life is impossible unless you're filled with the Holy Spirit. Human love loves when there's a response.

It's like you throw a ball and the ball comes back from the wall and you're happy to throw it back again. It's like tennis. You hit the ball to the other court, the other person hits it back and you hit it back again.

You hit it back and forth. That's how human love is. It always has got to come back.

But if it doesn't come back, that's the end of your love. Because God's love is not like that. He keeps hitting the ball whether it doesn't, whether it comes back or not.

He just takes another ball and hits it again. If that doesn't come back, he just hits another ball again. His love is like that.

He keeps on showering his love on us and says, be imitators of God. Love like that. And look at Jesus' example.

Always in the New Testament you find Jesus being held up as our example. The one who loved us with an everlasting love gave himself for us and first of all gave himself as an offering to God. He gave himself as a beautiful sacrifice, a fragrant aroma to God.

Do you know that when Jesus gave up his will and died on the cross and suffered, God smelt a sweet perfume there. And when God sees you giving up your will and dying to yourself, he'll smell that sweet fragrant aroma once again. Again he repeats concerning immorality.

Isn't it enough that he's said it once or twice or three times? No, we need to hear these exhortations again and again and again and again and again. Look at the number of exhortations against immorality and impure speech and bitterness that there are in the New Testament. Look at the number of exhortations there are.

How many exhortations do you find in the New Testament epistles on physical healing? It's difficult to find more than one or two verses in all the letters. How many exhortations do you find on material prosperity? It's difficult to find more than one or two verses in all the letters and yet you find so many believers taken up with one fragment of a verse here and a fragment of a verse there that speak about physical healing and material prosperity and ignore the hundreds of references to purity and to stay away from immorality and to humility and faith and goodness. It's a tremendous work the devil's done sidetracking Christians from pursuing holiness into pursuing earthly gain and physical health.

Notice what it says here, don't let immorality or any impurity or greed. Once again you find immorality and greed put together just like we saw in chapter 4 verse 19. There is no difference between an immoral person and a greedy person.

You may think you're a decent type of Christian because you're not immoral you're just greedy for more and more money and more and more of the things of this world. Well when you're greedy you're in God's eyes you're no different from an immoral man. The world standards may be different but God's standards are very different.

Immorality and greed are put together in scripture again and again and again. Let it not even be named among you. That's not, that means you shouldn't even be talking about these filthy things that worldly people talk about.

You should not have dirty jokes. You shouldn't have filthy conversation of any sort as a Christian. Let it not even be named among you.

There must be no filthiness, silly talk, dirty stories, foul talk, coarse jokes. These are not for you. Instead here's the balance.

Speak what is fitting. Speak of God's goodness and be thankful. Get rid of the garbage from your conversation and replace it with good words because you can be certain of one thing.

Listen to this. No immoral or impure person or greedy person. Covetous man.

And a covetous man he says is an idolater will have an inheritance the kingdom of Christ and God. The kingdom of Christ and God will never receive someone who's greedy. Covetous.

He says a greedy person is really an idolater. He's so greedy for more and for money he's worshipping money as his idol. He worships money and money is the one he bows down to.

He goes places to get money. No immoral or impure person or covetous man has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. No.

No immoral person. Please remember that. Brothers and sisters, dear friends, not a single person can call himself believer, spirit filled, baptized in the Holy Spirit, whatever he likes.

If there's immorality in your life, if there's impurity in your life, if there's covetousness and greed in your life, you will not have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Faith without works is dead. And don't let anyone deceive you.

It says in the next verse, with empty words, saying, oh, well, you've accepted Christ. These things don't matter. They do matter.

There's no difference between a covetous person and an immoral person. There's no difference between a greedy person and a debaucher in God's eyes. Neither of them will enter Christ's kingdom.

And don't let anyone deceive you with some doctrine that he brings to you. Empty words, because the wrath and the judgment of God come upon the sons of disobedience. The sons of disobedience are those who live in immorality and those who live in greediness.

So it says here, don't be a partaker with them. Don't have any fellowship. Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins.

There are so many ways in which people say, yeah, God understands and all that. No, there's no excuse for these sins. Don't even associate with such people.

For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of the light of the Lord. This is how we're supposed to walk. Today at Ephesians in chapter 5, it says here in verse 7, don't be partakers with these people who claim that it's not serious when you're impure or immoral or greedy or covetous.

Don't even associate with such people. You know, we cannot keep ourselves from sin if we associate with people for whom sin is not serious. If you want to stay free from sin, associate with people for whom sin is a serious thing.

If you associate with people who crack dirty jokes and have filthy habits, you may be popular, but you won't please God. You have to make a choice. Do not associate with such people.

We have to work with them in our work spots, but they must see that we are different. They must see that our behavior and our conduct is totally different. We don't laugh at their jokes.

We don't associate with them. We were once darkness, but now we are light. The difference between our former way of life and our present way of life should be the difference between darkness and light.

Children of the devil and children of God. If you're light, it says we must walk as children of the light. And the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

Right living, right behavior, and absolute truthfulness. The opposite of all this is darkness, evil, falsehood, sin. That's darkness.

But light is goodness, truth, righteousness. And then it says, it's referring back to learning Christ in Ephesians 4.20. It says you try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. As we walk the Christian life, one of the things we should endeavor to learn is what is it that pleases the Lord.

A true disciple of Jesus is always seeking to learn what will please the Lord. How can I please the Lord a little more in the way I live, the way I speak, the way I think, in my attitudes to difficult people? What will please the Lord? Let me do what pleases the Lord. If you make that exhortation, if you take that exhortation and seek to live by it, a tremendous change can come in your life from today, trying to learn Ephesians 5.10, what is pleasing to the Lord.

Just imagine if from today you try to learn in every situation what is pleasing to the Lord. In this particular situation, what will please the Lord? Let me do that. In that situation, what is pleasing to the Lord? Let me do that.

In my speech, what will please the Lord? Let me choose that. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them. See, this is more than just avoiding evil.

It says, not only should I not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but my light must expose it. Now, we're not called to go around telling the police of all the wrong things that people are doing or to go and tell all the tax authorities in the world of all those who are cheating taxes on taxes. That's not our calling.

That's not the meaning of this verse. The meaning of this verse is that my life is such a light that it exposes somebody living in darkness to himself. I'm not going and telling somebody else about this man.

No, I'm exposing to him the evil that there is in his life. He feels convicted when he sees me. When I keep quiet and I don't laugh at his dirty jokes, he gets convicted.

He's exposed. That's what it means here. Expose them.

Expose evil in the church. Let the torchlight shine into that corner of the church where there's a little cobra hiding. Expose them.

It's disgraceful, it says in verse 12, to even speak of the things which these people do in secret. There are a lot of secret sins that people do. Don't even talk about them.

Don't even talk about them. It's not enough that we don't do them. It says it's disgraceful even to talk about it.

You know, a lot of evil things that Christians should not even discuss when they sit together. Don't be satisfied that you don't do it yourself. Don't discuss it.

Don't speak about it. It's disgraceful. He explains what exposing means in verse 13.

All things become visible when they are exposed by the light. You know, when you shine a torch into a corner, something becomes exposed, some evil. Our life must be like this, that people who come in touch with us feel convicted, because something in us is like a light.

You remember when Jesus met Zacchaeus. Jesus didn't speak to Zacchaeus a word about his past, or about restitution, or give him a message on holiness or righteousness. It's just the way Jesus conducted himself.

Zacchaeus took one look at the purity and the holiness and the glory in Jesus' face, and he got convicted. Zacchaeus got convicted without listening to a sermon. We use sermons to convict people.

Jesus convicted people just by his face, by his life. And you know, the glory of God can so fill our lives, and the way we live, and the way we conduct ourselves, that people can be convicted just by looking at our face, and just by the way we conduct ourselves, even if we never open our mouth. A God-fearing, humble wife can bring tremendous conviction on a godless, sinful husband, just by her submissive, meek, quiet spirit.

That's why the Bible says in 1 Peter 3.1 that such a woman can win her husband without ever preaching to him, just by her life. Consider what power there is in a life filled with the Holy Spirit. And so, as it says here in verse 13 in the Living Bible, it's translated like this.

When you expose these people who live in sin, the light shines in upon their sin, and shows it up. And when they see how wrong they really are, some of them may even become children of light. See, our goal is not just to make a person uncomfortable by exposing his sin.

That's not... Jesus didn't come to make people feel uncomfortable. He came to save people from their sins. So, our light exposes their sin, and shows them how they can be saved from it.

Otherwise, we're like a doctor who diagnoses a person's sick condition, and then sends him home, saying, I can't do anything for you. He's more discouraged. In that case, it would have been better if the doctor hadn't told him anything.

No, Jesus doesn't come like that just to diagnose a condition and leave us like that. No, He comes to save us from it. And so, for this reason, it says in verse 14, this is why God says, Awake, O sleeper, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light.

Christ will give you... You've got to respond when God is trying to speak to you in your sleepy, spiritual condition. He says, Wake up, and let the Lord give you light, so that your light can shine upon others, and draw them into the light. Therefore, He says, be careful.

Again, the word therefore, so frequently. The therefore's that you find in chapter 4, chapter 5, chapter 6, are all referring back to the first three chapters. It's like building another floor, back on the same foundation.

Okay, we go to another floor now. Be careful how you walk. Not as unwise men, but as wise.

In the earlier verses, He's talking about sin. Now, He's talking about foolishness. You know, there is a difference between living in sin and being foolish.

Living in sin is serious. Being foolish wastes your life. So, first of all, He says, walk as children of light, avoiding all darkness, avoiding all sin.

But even after you avoided all sin, you still need to have wisdom. How should you spend your time? Making the most of your time, because the days are evil. He says, it's not enough just to avoid sin.

You still can spend your time doing a lot of things which are not the best. Don't be foolish, verse 17, but understand what the will of the Lord is. If you don't understand what God's will for you is, you will be foolish.

That's the meaning of verse 17. To be wise is to understand how God wants you to spend your time. God wants you to spend your money.

For example, if you spend your money in a lot of sinful pursuits, that's evil. But you may avoid spending your money in sinful pursuits and spend it on things which are just waste of money. Not on evil things, but not that which is the best.

It's the same with time. You can spend your time doing a lot of evil things, watching a lot of rotten television programs, movies, etc., and that's evil. Now, you stop doing that, and you spend your time doing things which don't have any eternal value.

Watching a lot of programs, perhaps, which don't have much benefit, and spending your time reading novels, perhaps, which don't have much benefit. And there can be so many ways in which we waste our time and waste our money. Not in evil things, but in unwise things.

So, notice the difference here between unrighteousness and foolishness. We need to avoid both. Be careful how you walk.

Avoid sin. At the same time, avoid foolishness. Be wise.

Gain a reputation for wisdom. It's not enough that we avoid sin. We avoid things which are not in God's will for our lives.

Time is so short. Make the most of your time. Redeem the time means buy up the time.

Time is like money. Don't waste it. You've got only one life.

Live it for God. You don't have time to do so many things that other people in the world do, even good things, because time is so short. Understand what the will of the Lord is, what God's plan for your life is, and fulfill that.

We turn today to Ephesians in chapter 5 and verse 18. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God, even the Father. And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Here is the one place in all the epistles where we have a specific command given to all Christians to be filled with the Spirit. And the meaning there is, if it were literally translated, would be, be being filled with the Spirit. In other words, be constantly filled with the Spirit.

The filling of the Spirit, or being filled with the Spirit, is obviously not a once-for-all experience. Ephesians 5.18 is the clearest proof for that. We read that the apostles were all filled, along with many others, 120 in all, on the day of Pentecost.

They were filled with the Spirit. And later on it says again, Peter was filled with the Spirit. So, Peter himself was filled with the Spirit more than once, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

And here is the command which applies to all believers. The baptism or immersion in the Holy Spirit is the first time one is filled with the Holy Spirit. But the Lord has to continuously fill us.

And there is a reason for this. As we walk with the Lord, and we grow older and more mature in the Christian life, our capacity increases, or should increase. That is, if we start off like our capacity being like that of a little cup, it grows and becomes like that of a bucket.

And it grows again and becomes like that of a tub, then of a tank, and then of a pond, and then of a river, and many rivers. But it started off as a little cup. Like the psalmist said, I will take the cup of salvation.

When we are born again, we receive a cup of water, born of water and the Spirit, John chapter 3. We move forward to John chapter 4, we read of a well of water. And we move onward to John chapter 7, and we read of rivers of living water. So the fullness of the Spirit, a cup can be full, a bucket can be full, a tank can be full, and a river can be full.

But there is a lot of difference between these. And so we need to be continuously filled. Our capacity increases as we walk the way of the cross, deny ourselves and follow Jesus.

And as our capacity increases, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit again and again and again and again. And it is also possible, even if we do not increase in capacity, our capacity is still that of a cup, that we can leak out, we can lose the fullness of the Spirit by pride or a bad conscience or something unsettled, etc. Now the first part of Ephesians 5.18 is obeyed by everybody.

Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation. But the second part of that verse is just as important. Throughout Ephesians, we saw in a number of places this contrast, what we are not to do and what we should do, the bad that we should not do and the good that we should do.

So very often, as I said, people cast out the demon and leave the house empty. They don't get drunk with wine, and the heart is empty. And then eight worse demons come and take over.

No, we mustn't leave the heart empty. We don't get drunk with wine, but we're filled with the Holy Spirit. And if not obeying the first part of that verse is a serious sin, that is to get drunk with wine, then not obeying the second part of that verse must also be a serious sin, not being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Why is it that Christians don't take that matter as seriously as disobedience to the first part of that verse? Because most Christians tend to live a negative life. I don't do this, I don't do this, I don't do this, and I don't do this. I've cast out all the demons, and my heart is empty.

That's the most dangerous place to be in. So here is an exhortation like that. Don't get drunk, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit are mentioned in verses 19 to 21. The first word is speaking, and that's exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost also. When they were filled with the

Holy Spirit, they spoke words of praise to God.

In the house of Cornelius, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they spoke praise to God. And here it's not talking about speaking in unknown tongues, as in the house of Cornelius and in the day of Pentecost, but of the spirit of thankfulness that overflows through our tongue, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God, even the Father. So one primary mark of being filled with the Spirit is a spirit of thankfulness and praise filling our heart that overflows through our tongue.

Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, in Matthew chapter 12. The overflow valve of the heart is the mouth, the tongue. When our heart's filled with something, if it could be anger or it could be praise, it overflows through our tongue.

Anger in the heart flows out through the tongue, as Jesus said in Matthew 5, 22 and 23. And in the same way, praise in the heart flows out through the tongue. And that's what happened whenever people were filled with the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles.

And that's why a tongue of fire appeared on top of the disciples when they were filled with the Spirit in the day of Pentecost, indicating that this was the main part of the human body that God was going to use in this New Testament age. A tongue on fire for God. A tongue under the control of the Holy Spirit, giving thanks in everything, always, verse 20, with no murmuring, no complaining, no anger, no bitterness, no grumbling, nothing but rather praise and thanks.

Now, unfortunately, that has not been the emphasis in the two groups that are far against the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Christendom today. Some say the fullness of the Holy Spirit's always got to be manifested with speaking in tongues. But the Bible doesn't teach that in any of the Epistles.

There are instances of people speaking in tongues in the Acts of the Apostles, and that happens even today. God gives that gift. But nowhere in the Acts of the, in the Epistles do we read that as the distinctive mark, distinguishing mark, of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

So it's wrong to make that the distinguishing mark. It's wrong to be against it. I would say if there is a distinguishing mark, it's that a tongue under the control of the Holy Spirit 24 hours a day.

Whereas very often what we see is people praising God in other tongues on Sunday morning and shouting at their wives the same Sunday afternoon in their mother tongue. Well, that's not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can only control a person speaking in other tongues, but not in his mother tongue.

That can't be the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit controls every tongue, our mother tongue and other tongues. And so giving thanks to God at all times, in all situations, speaking in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing, making melody in your heart, praise, a spirit of thankfulness and praise without, with a total freedom from grumbling, murmuring, complaining.

This is one of the primary, primary characteristics of being filled with the Spirit. Can you imagine how wonderfully pleasant it would be to fellowship with a person like that, who never loses his temper at you, who never grumbles or complains or criticizes or accuses. It's always saturated with a spirit of thankfulness and praise.

It would be delightful to live with such a person in a home, husband or wife, or to fellowship with such a person in any church. And that's how a spirit-filled person should be. And the second thing mentioned here is a characteristic of the, of being filled with the Spirit goes on from there, is to be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

A spirit of submission, a humility, a deep humility and fear of God. Submission is easy for a humble person. So the Spirit of God makes a man deeply humble.

He's willing to be subject to others. He doesn't invade the territories and boundaries of others. He recognizes and respects the boundaries God has drawn around other believers.

A spirit-filled husband will recognize the boundary God's drawn around his wife, and even around our children, in the fear of Christ. The Spirit of God brings a deep fear of God. There's a verse in Isaiah chapter 11, which speaks of the sevenfold Holy Spirit.

You know, the Holy Spirit's referred to as seven spirits in Revelation, the sevenfold Holy Spirit. And the sevenfold Holy Spirit, or the seven characteristics of the Holy Spirit, are described in Isaiah 11, verse 2 and 3, as the Spirit of Jehovah, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and the seventh, the fear of the Lord. He's called the Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

He's the Spirit that brings within us a holy, healthy reverence for God. And this is referring to Jesus, that when the Spirit was upon Jesus, it made Him delight in the fear of the Lord. So because of that, He wouldn't judge by what His eyes saw, His ears heard.

If the Spirit of God is really filled you, it will bring in your life a healthy, holy reverence for God. You'll have a respect for God, which will lead to a great respect for other people. It's not surprising that the devil has counterfeited the fullness of the Spirit with so many wild manifestations.

The best way to ask ourselves, if you're confused about this, whether something is a mark of being filled with the Spirit, is this. Who is the most perfectly Spirit-filled man that you can ever think of? Jesus. There was no one more Spirit-filled than Him.

So when you see a particular manifestation of the Spirit, just ask yourself, can you imagine Jesus doing this? Can you imagine Jesus rolling around on the ground? Just ask yourself that question, and you get an answer immediately, whether this is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit or not. What was it that manifested itself in Jesus when He was filled with the Holy Spirit? A life of love, goodness, going around doing good, we read in Acts 10, 38, filled with the power of God. God was with Him, delivering people from the oppression of the devil, serving people with supernatural gifts.

These are the marks of being filled with the Spirit. Look at Jesus as your example, and you'll never go wrong.

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