

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on February 24, 2019:**

**"Transforming Life Lessons
for the Church Today from Ephesus:
Part 10 (Ephesians 4:17-24)
The Church's Purity – Doctrinal Basis"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman shows that to live a new life of purity can only happen when we participate in God's renewal and transformation of us.]

Notes

Introduction:

- Today, we are going to continue with our series on Ephesus with its lessons for the Ephesians and certainly for us today.
- The passage we'll be covering can be summarized as the church's purity and the doctrinal basis for that.

- Now as we looked at chapters 1-3, Paul has shown us that Jesus has created a new humanity.
- He's also shown that all of us in the church are a part of that new humanity.

- From chapter 4 on, Paul has shown that the church is to reflect certain qualities.
- Last week, we saw that Paul urged the church to have unity.
- And today, we're going to look at the doctrinal basis for purity.

Recapping Transforming Life Lessons from last week (Ephesians 4:1-16):

1. Paul implores believers to walk in a manner worthy of our calling.
 - That simply means to live out a life of love for God and loving others, which is unique and transforming.
2. The church is to reflect humility, gentleness, patience, and love.
 - These are all fruits of the Spirit.
3. The church is to spare no effort in preserving unity of the Spirit.
4. Church unity reflects the unity of the Triune God in all.
5. Church unity is enriched by a diversity of spiritual gifts.
6. Jesus gifted His church with specific offices or callings.
7. The primary gifted office that remains today in the New Testament church is that of Pastors/teachers.

8. Pastors are to equip believers for the work of service to build up the Body.
9. Church unity requires growth in maturity and relationship with Jesus Christ.
10. Our primary purpose as believers is to be transformed into the very fullness of Jesus.
11. Believers may have been called as children but they are no longer children if maturing in Jesus.
12. When believers are maturing in Jesus they will no longer fall prey to false doctrine or schemers.
13. As believers grow up in all aspects of Jesus we will reflect His love by speaking the truth in love.
14. As believers properly deploy their gifts in serving the body, the church is built up in love.

Today's message:

- Now in verses 17-24, Paul focuses on the subject of purity.
- He does this by contrasting what he calls our former life with our present life.
- He tells us to take off “the old person” and put on “the new person.”
- Paul also uses the word “pagan” to represent our former way of life.
- Pastor Craig doesn't encourage us to use the term “pagan” to our not-yet-believing friends.
- Rather, pastor Craig likes to call them not-yet-believers.
- Pastor Craig then said a ditty rhyme that will help all of us preview what today's message is about and help us to remember it more than just a day or two.
- *“Purity is surety that we aren't living in obscurity.”*
- Paul is going to point out that in our former life, as non-believers, we essentially lived what might be called a life of obscurity.
- But in contrast, by living a life as a believer, with our minds conformed to the heart of Jesus, then our purity becomes our surety to contrast our former obscurity.
- Paul, in verses 17 through 19, will contrast what our former life (the pagan life) was all about, and why now, in our relationship with Jesus, we are to reflect an entirely different life.

Ephesians 4:17 (NASB), So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

[The Mirror Bible is a translation that's taken through the lens of incarnational Trinitarian theology, which reflects the theology of our denomination.]

17) (Mirror), My most urgent appeal to you in the Lord is this: you have nothing in common with the folly of the empty-minded masses; the days of conducting your lives and affairs in a meaningless way are over!

- So, Paul is urging the Ephesians to say, “The life that we had before is no longer the life that we live today, and that we are to be a different people.”
- Now, we know that becoming a different people just doesn’t happen automatically.
- It happens over time; it happens with our relationship and participation with the Father, Son and Spirit.
- And so, the church, then, is to reflect this purity of life.
- Now our theme Scripture for this year is 2 Peter 1:1-11, which seemingly tells us the various fruits of the Spirit that we are to do and obey.
- But, we know, in reality, that’s not how it works.
- We bear fruit of the Spirit through our relationship and participation with the Father, Son and Spirit.
- Our participation involves prayer (conversation), study (curiosity), and contemplation (meditation).
- In order to overcome our human nature and to live a new life of purity, it can only be accomplished through our relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit, which changes us.
- We can’t just live a life of purity by our own willpower.

18) (NASB), being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

- What Paul is essentially saying here is that if we don’t know who we are – that we are completely included and embraced in God’s love and that we are His beloved children, then we’ll live a life in darkness and ignorance.
- Now, we know from Scripture, that all of humanity, believers and not-yet-believers, are included in the love of the Father, Son and Spirit.
- And we also know that all of humanity doesn’t understand who they are because the scales haven’t been removed from their eyes yet.
- So, when people are in that state of ignorance, they are in a darkness of mind.

18) (Mirror), The life of their design seems foreign to them because their minds are darkened through a hardened heart ruled by ignorance. They are blinded by the illusion of the senses as their only reference, stubbornly wearing a blindfold in broad daylight.

- So, this is what it’s like to be a not-yet-believer.
- Paul is saying that a life lived apart from Christ is really no life at all.
- So, let’s not take it for granted what it really means to have that relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit.

19) (NASB), and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

- Paul used the Greek word to describe the heart, which means “petrified,” signifying that it’s so hard and without any flexibility that it can’t be shaped or changed. It’s like a heart of stone.
- Yet, when Christ comes into our heart through the Holy Spirit, He gives us that heart of flesh, one that can be re-shaped. And that’s huge!

19) (Mirror), Having become conditioned to a life distanced from God; they are calloused in spirit, and are lust and greed driven; they have completely abandoned themselves to outrageous shameless living.

- This life without Christ leads us to just wanting to please the flesh.
- And if we don't have God's love, joy and peace filling our hearts through a relationship with Jesus, our human calloused hearts will seek its own pleasure.
- Paul is telling the Ephesians that even being a believer and having a new heart, they could still slip back into their old lifestyle.
- So he is encouraging them to stay focused in their relationship with Jesus through the spiritual disciplines of prayer, study and meditation.
- This will lead them to purity and surety and out of obscurity.
- Paul is now going to contrast the lifestyle of a not-yet-believer with the lifestyle of a believer in verses 20-24.
- In verse 20, he is going to show that we first learned about Christ and then in verse 21 that we heard about Christ and were taught about Him.

20 (NASB), But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21) if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,

- Paul is showing how the Christian life is completely different from our former life – all because of Jesus.

20) (Mirror), Of what total contrast is Christ! 21) It is not possible to study Christ in any other context; he is the incarnation, hear him resonate within you! The truth about you has its ultimate reference in Jesus.

- This Jesus, who resides in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, makes us unique.
- We are unique, not for our own purposes, but so that we can reach out to others with the love of God.
- And as we exercise those spiritual gifts and serve the church, we build up the body.
- And now in verses 22-24, Paul points to the truth in Jesus Christ.

22) (NASB), that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23) and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

- Pastor Craig asked the question, "Have any of you heard me talk about the importance of being renewed?"
- "As a matter of fact, our theme for this year is about renewal and that we don't do it alone, but we go together."
- "Can we all see why renewal is so, so, so important?"
- "That's because living a life without renewal, we're destined to a life of obscurity."
- Now first and foremost, we are renewed by the Holy Spirit on a daily basis, when we become believers.

22) (Mirror), Now you are free to strip off that old identity like a filthy worn-out garment. Lust corrupted you and cheated you into wearing it. 23) Be renewed in your innermost mind. This will cause you to be completely re-programmed in the way you think about yourself!

- We can think about ourselves in many ways, because of the kind of life we grew up with – whatever education we got or didn't get, or whatever problems or challenges we had, or perhaps because of the lack of our parents love for us.
- But Paul is saying here that our former life has nothing to do with the life we live today because of this renewal that goes on.
- When Regional Director Rick Shallenberger visited pastor Craig and his wife a few years ago back in Ohio before they moved out here, he said that our denomination was not hiring maintenance pastors anymore, but they were hiring renewal pastors.
- So, pastor Craig asked Rick, "How do you define a renewal pastor? What is he supposed to be doing?"
- The pathway that our denomination is on is to be changed by God's renewal and transformation of us.

24 (NASB), and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

- So, when we live out his life of renewal, when we are putting on the "new self", so to speak, we become "righteous and holy."
- And we are "righteous and holy" by the virtue of the fact that Jesus has reconciled and redeemed us into a relationship with Him, which is irrevocable.
- We are "righteous and holy" not because of what we've done, but because of what Jesus has done for us.
- But at times, we may not live the most pure life, but the fact remains that Jesus Christ loves us and what He did on the cross for us has forever changed everything and is irrevocable.
- As we live out this renewed life and reflect God's love toward others, that relationship grows.
- And so we should never ever beat ourselves up by saying, "I should have done this or I should have done that."
- So when we slip off that path of renewal, we simply get back on it and keep moving forward.
- And so Paul is telling us to just go live out that life of love and relationship that we have with Jesus.
- And when we do that, any obscurity that we once had, is tossed to the side.

24 (Mirror), Immerse yourself into this God-shaped new person from above! You are created in the image and likeness of God. This is what righteousness and true holiness are all about.

- In our renewal process, our mission is to reach out to others.
- There are many facets to this renewal – but if it doesn't start in our hearts and that love that comes out of loving God first isn't happening, then we are not walking that walk.

- But, when we are in that relationship and loving God, then God loves through us, which is the state of true righteousness and holiness that Paul is referring to.
- It's only through that relationship and that renewal process that we become changed.
- And having our minds conformed to the very mind and heart of Jesus Christ is the maturing process that Paul spoke about.
- And because of this, we become different people, which is a supernatural thing.

Concluding comments:

- So, "*Purity is surety that we aren't living in obscurity ... in the state of maturity*" (an added thought since pastor Craig first introduced it).
- And as we reflect that life of purity, both individually and through the church, we're maturing and growing – and that's what Paul said life's all about.

Closing prayer