

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on March 10, 2019:**

**"Transforming Life Lessons
for the Church Today from Ephesus:
Part 11 (Ephesians 4:25-5:5)
The Church's Purity – in Practice"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman shows how we reflect Jesus when we exhibit spiritual purity in our daily lives.]

Notes

Introduction:

- Paul's message here in Ephesians for the church then and for the church today is particularly illuminating because it helps to clarify and broaden our understanding of "purity."
- The first 3 chapters of Ephesians we find Paul laying out the basis of our "new humanity" that Jesus has created in the church.
- And Paul shows all the promises that Jesus has extended to us as believers.

- And now Paul is unpacking what scholars call Christian ethics or Christian behavior which is reflected from our relationship with Jesus.
- Previously we shown that Paul has talked about the doctrinal basis for unity and then for purity.
- So, then we'll discuss the concept of purity in practice and also with the context of the church meaning each one of us as believers.

Recapping Transforming Life Lessons from last week (Ephesians 4:17-24):

1. Believers aren't to live as they did before coming to faith.
2. That former life reflected a lack of understanding, ignorance, and hardness of heart.
3. That former life led to calloused lustful thoughts, practicing impurity and greediness.
4. Believers have learned a better way of life in the truth of Jesus.
5. Believers are to put off this former life that Paul calls the old self.
6. Believers are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds.
7. Believers are to put on the new self-reflecting the likeness of God, righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Today's message:

- The passage that we're going to look at today is an extension of what we looked at last week.
- As you might recall, pastor Craig's ditty from last week about purity goes like this:

Purity is Surety we aren't living in Obscurity but growing in Maturity.

- The life "in obscurity" is how we lived our lives before we knew Jesus Christ.
- And typically we think of the word "purity" in terms of "sexual purity" or a lack of sexual morality.
- What we'll discover today is that Paul talks about six other ways that Christians cannot show purity in their lives.
- But Paul also gives the antidote to that by showing what we also need to reflect to show purity in our lives.
- It's important to note what Paul tells us "to take off" but more importantly to note what Paul tells us "to put on."
- This shows the concept of purity within the church is multi-faceted.
- Now, who of us here would like it to be said that we are growing in maturity?
- That would be all of us, because Jesus through the Holy Spirit resides in us and that is what He's inspiring us to do.
- We all want our minds changed and conformed to the very mind of Christ.
- Yet, at the same time, we have challenges and we act out of our unbelief because we still have our fallen nature.
- Yet, we are inspired to live differently than we used to – which is a reflection of the relationship that we have in Jesus.
- Now, it doesn't come automatically, but it comes over time and day by day we see more of these positive attitudes in our life.

Don't tell lies, tell the truth (Verse 25):

Ephesians 4:25 (NASB), Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

- As a church we are one family; as a church we are one body – the body of Christ.
- And so, putting on "truth" and putting off "falsehood or lies" will reflect that nature.

4:25 (Mirror), Faking it and lying to one another was part of the old life; now truth remains the constant inspiration in your every conversation. We are related to one another like different parts in the same body.

- So, the more we are growing in this maturity, we will be reflecting the life of speaking the truth rather than speaking lies.
- Why is this so important?
- It's often said that "The best way to build trust is by making promises and keeping them."

- And that's so true – when we make promises on a consistent basis, even telling someone will call them back, we build trust.
- We need to remember that if we can't keep a promise, we shouldn't make it.
- Now, if you find that you can't keep a promise you made, then let that person know that as soon as you can.
- Jesus told us, "I've come to save the entire world."
- And then we get up to the Pearly Gates, Jesus tells us that He felt that his statement was too lofty and now He has decided to save only a quarter of the world.
- But Jesus doesn't do that. When He makes a promise, it's as good as gold.
- Telling the truth reflects the heart and character of Jesus.
- But, in today's society, not many tell the truth or keep their word of promise.
- Craig's dad had this jaded saying, "First of all, don't believe anything you hear and only believe half of what you see."

Don't lose your temper, ensure your anger is righteous (Verses 26-27):

- Now the Bible talks about a "righteous" anger and an "unrighteous" anger.
- So, if we're going to be angry, we need to be righteously angry.
- Unrighteous anger is simply acting out of our unbelief, acting out of hurt pride, and lashing out at people, which is so easy to do.

26) (NASB), Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27) and do not give the devil an opportunity.

- Paul was aware that our attitudes, our thoughts, our actions can be shaped by other worldly pressures.
- Paul reminds us that there is a spirit world out there which can take advantage of our shortcomings if we go down that path of unbelief.

26) (Mirror), Even if you think you have a valid excuse, do not let anger dominate your day! If you don't deal with it immediately the sun sets for you and your day becomes one of lost opportunity where darkness employs anger to snare you into sin.

- Now we know that Jesus can be righteously angry, but it's difficult for us to know what righteous anger is in our lives.
- Craig wanted to give us a positive comment from his dad, "Your mom and I won't go to bed to sleep, if we've had an argument and can't resolve it."
- Now, as a family, we're going to upset some people from time to time, but we need to go back and resolve it.

27) (Mirror), Any sin that you tolerate is an open invitation to the devil. Do not give him a platform to operate from.

Don't steal, but rather work and give or be generous (Verse 28):

- Obviously one characteristic of the culture of that day was stealing.
- And Paul is saying that as a church we shouldn't reflect that.
- And as a corollary to that is that we should rather work and give.

28) (NASB), He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.

28) (Mirror), If you were a thief before, you are one no more. Find an honest job where the fruit of your labor can be a blessing to others!

- In the Financial Balance class that pastor Craig conducted in January and February, he went through 99 Proverbs that speak about financial principles and building wealth.
- There is an underlying thread to these Proverbs concerning the purpose of wealth – it's not to hoard wealth for the purpose of security, but to be generous to others, especially when you see someone in need.
- And so this principle of purity is embedded in generosity and to be able to provide to someone who is in need.

Don't use your mouth for evil, but for good (Verses 29-30):

29) (NASB), Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30) Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- Now this Greek word that translate "grieve" reflects sorrow, reflects pain, and reflects distress.
- So when we are acting out of old self or our unbelief, which is easy to do, Paul tells us that it has an effect on the Holy Spirit.
- Please note that grief, sorrow and pain are not something that an inanimate object could experience.
- This also supports that the Holy Spirit, one of the persons of the Godhead is a person and not a power or an inanimate object.
- Now grieving the Holy Spirit doesn't change God's love for us.

29) (Mirror), Instead of cheap talk, your mouth is now a fountain of grace, giving encouragement and inspiration to everyone within earshot. 30) The Holy Spirit is your signet ring from God to confirm that you are redeemed to live your life in the light of day; any conduct that belongs to the night grieves him.

- It's important that we reflect the heart of Jesus and reflect the heart of the Spirit, which shows our growth and maturity.

Don't be unkind or bitter, but kind and loving (Verses 4:31-5:2):

31) (NASB), Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

32) (NASB), Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. 5:1, Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2) and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

31) (Mirror), Take up the strongest possible position against every form of distorted behavior in your own life. Do not allow yourself to be spiteful; outbursts of violent emotion and rage do not become you. You don't have to shout in order to make your point. People must feel safe in your conversation; therefore, slander and hurtful words are out!

32) (Mirror), Be inspired by kindness and compassion; your forgiving one another when you might feel irritated and frustrated demonstrates the way God graciously treated us in Christ.

(Mirror) 5:1, Mirror God; you are his offspring. 2) This is how: let the love of Christ be your life;

- When pastor Craig read this line, "Let the love of Christ be your life," it deeply moved him.
- We can't do all of these virtues that Paul is bringing out here on our own, because these are supernatural virtues. They come from the Holy Spirit.
- If we only live out of our humanity, these things are never going to happen.
- So, how do we let the love of Christ flow through us? We do it by "abiding in the vine." That means abiding in our relationship with Jesus through prayer, study and meditation.
- And so, if we are in love with Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Father and are in relationship with them on a daily basis – being renewed – these virtues will flow. In fact, they CANNOT not flow!
- So, our job is to simply be in relationship and "Let the love of Christ be our life."

2b) remember how he abandoned himself to us. His love is contagious, not reluctant but extravagant. Sacrificial love pleases God like the sweet aroma of worship.

Don't use lewd or vulgar language, but thanksgiving (Verses 3-4):

3) (NASB), But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4) and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

- Today, we might call this locker room talk, if you've been on a sports team.
- If we hear that kind of talk, as believers, we should just walk away from it and not get involved.

3) (Mirror), Love has nothing in common with lust, immoral acts, or greed. The absence of these motives even in the way you talk sets a standard of excellence. 4) Any distorted language, sarcasm, or below the belt jokes are uncalled for; much rather let gratitude grace your conversation.

- We let our language and our conversation to be filled with grace and something that is uplifting and edifying.
- Like pastor Craig's mom used to say, "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all."

- If we are in this relationship with God and Christ is flowing through us and the Holy Spirit is flowing through us, we don't have to really think about this, it's going to naturally flow out of us.
- Jesus said in Matthew (12:34), "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks."
- So, when Jesus is in abundance in our heart through our abiding relationship, then His conversation will flow through us so that we will say the right things to connect with that person about spiritual matters.
- So, we don't need to worry about what to say we just go with the flow and abide in the vine

Paul's last comment is about judgment on the not-yet-believing life (Verse 5):

5) (NASB), For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

- Now this is one of those Scriptures we can look at and go "wow" and "ouch."
- But keep in mind, this verse has to be kept in context.
- In the first verses of chapter 1, Paul told us that we were signed, sealed and delivered by Jesus Christ.
- Also Paul told us that the Holy Spirit was our signet ring meaning that we belong to the Father, Son and Spirit.
- This verse is not about believers who slip into their unbelieving mode, but rather it's about a person who doesn't know Jesus or doesn't have a relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit.
- These are people living that life of obscurity.
- What Paul is also telling us in these previous verses is that these vices, which he warned us against, won't exist in the future.
- And that's because the only person that will be in the kingdom is going to be a believer who has a relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit.
- So, this should not be a fearful verse.

5) (Mirror), The Christ-life gives distinct definition to the kingdom of God. You cannot live a double-standard life. Abusing people through adultery, lust, and greed is like worshipping a distorted image of yourself, which is what idolatry is all about.

- This points out the not yet-believing-life of obscurity.
- Yet, we know that this kind of life will one day go away, because it won't exist in God's kingdom.
- Also we should not let that verse reinforce the thought that those kinds of people will be outside of the kingdom.
- This does not say that ultimately God will change every idolater to a believer.
- Now, as a church, we don't take a position. We don't know if all will be saved.
- Yet, pastor Craig's personal opinion is that someday all will come to this understanding and that there won't be one idolater left.

- Pastor Craig has some pretty strong support from the centuries of scholars who take a “hopeful universalist” position, like he does, instead of an “in fact universalist” position.
- But he’s not going to preach anything outside our denominational doctrine.

Concluding comments:

- We learned today that an impure life is not just simply sexual immorality or those things of a wrong sexual nature.
- Paul is showing us that an impure life exists in a number of ways, which he details.
- As we reflect more and more on these positive virtues that Paul says to “put on” and less and less of the negative things that Paul says to “put off”, we know that we are reflecting the heart of what God wants His church to be.
- And, so inclusion pastor Craig asks that all in the congregation say together his ditty about purity.

Purity is Surety we aren't living in Obscurity but growing in Maturity.

- Amen!

Closing prayer