

Ephesians 5:3–14

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[0 : 00] Again, our scripture reading for today comes from Ephesians chapter 5, verses 3 through 14. Praise God.

That's good, yeah. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among the saints. Let there be no filthiness, nor foolish talk, nor crude joking, which are out of place.

But instead, let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetous, that is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not become partners with them. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

[1 : 06] For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says, awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. I don't know that it gets any better than hearing a child's voice on a stairwell, praying that the spirit of the Lord would revive them as they have sat in the assembly where we've offered our same sung prayers to the Lord. May the Lord answer that child's prayer. And may he revive our life together in ways that are pleasing to him.

Walking, making one's way, walking has long been a metaphor for making your way through this world.

Think of Pilgrim's Progress, this book which was published, at least in the English language, more than any other book outside of the Bible.

[2 : 30] It begins this way, quote, As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place. The whole book takes on the form of a journey, a pilgrimage, which you and I often hear one speak of in regard to our own lives.

We are, in one sense, in this metaphor of walking through this wilderness world. In the Bible, the metaphor of walking is heightened among all metaphors in regard to what it means to walk with God or not.

It doesn't take long. In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, where we read of Enoch, Enoch walked with God and was not for God took him.

This idea that someone on the earth can walk with God and therefore leave this world and yet be with him. Just a chapter later, it will say of Noah, Noah was a righteous man in a wicked age.

He was one who walked with God. Abraham, of Abraham, God said, Walk before me and be blameless that I may make my covenant between me and you and may multiply you greatly.

[3 : 53] Jacob closes down the book of Genesis by saying, The God before whom my fathers walked has been my shepherd all my life long to this day.

Psalms 1, in the middle of the Old Testament, will open the cascading songbook of God's people with the line, Blessed is the one who walks not in the counsel of the wicked.

Is it any wonder then that in this book of Ephesians, where Paul is outlining Christ's vision for the church, that he would employ this long-standing metaphor of one's walk.

Just look at your Bible, turn it open, or if you have your phone, be ready to scroll and find it. Ephesians 2.1, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. Ephesians 2.10, These are good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Chapter 4.1, Therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called.

[5 : 08] Even 4.17, Know this, I say and testify to the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds. They're darkened in their understanding.

Look at the last verse that we closed down last week on. The bookend on the front of our text, 5.2, And walk in love as Christ loved us.

Look at the first verse that you will walk into next week. Chapter 5.15, Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise.

Look within the very text that we had read with us today. Right in the center, verse 8, right there. There it is. Walk as children of light. How's your walk?

I am out today to lovingly draw your attention to the kind of walk that pleases God. There are really three words in the text on our walk.

[6 : 17] There are two reasons put forward for that kind of walk. There is one word picture that enlightens us and encourages us to that walk.

That's about as simple as it gets. Three, two, one, go. Interestingly, verses 3 and 4 describe what our walk in one sense is not supposed to look like.

Can I show you this? But, that is, but in contrast and an adversative to what it means to walk in love as Christ loved us.

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among the saints. Let there be no filthiness, nor foolish talk, nor crude joking, which are out of place.

But instead, let there be thanksgiving. Three things that describe in one sense what our walk is not like.

[7 : 31] Sexual immorality, selfish indulgence, indecent speech. Right there, you can see them. I remember when one of my sons, not the one present with me day, was along with me on the sidewalk.

I was walking him to the bus for school. And I noticed that at the age of about six or seven, or I guess he was older than that, than maybe fifth or sixth grade, he was turning a foot in.

He was turning a foot in as he walked. And I just said to him, why do you do that? He said, I don't know. It's just the way I walk. I said, well, don't do that. Don't do that.

And he recalls the story of disciplining himself from that moment, like just to not walk with his foot turned in.

Not everyone has the capacity to do that, but he did. And just as you learn how to walk in some sense, you also learn how not to walk.

[8 : 32] If last week, in a sense, we were hearing, not last week, but last time we were in Ephesians, Pastor Nee was giving us, and Pastor Pace as well, they were speaking of chapter four in terms of the clothing of Christ, the wardrobe of the redeemed that we put on.

It seems like we've come to a moment in the text now where the unique contribution of this text is not the clothing of Christ or the wardrobe that you put on as you go out to walk, but rather these things are the clothing that you were supposed to discard.

The walk that you were supposed to rid yourself of. These are the ill-fitting t-shirts and sweatshirts that men keep in their closets long after they should.

As though there might be a moment when you want to put them on again. Shoes which should have been thrown away and don't even fit anymore. Somehow you keep them in your life when they ought to be discarded.

That's what he's moving to. The unique contribution of this text concerning our walk are the three things here that ought not to define our walk. Sexual immorality, selfish indulgence, indecent speech.

[9 : 47] Can I say a word on these three? Yes, Pastor. Every one of us needs to realize how broken and messed up we all are in our ability to walk with God as a result of the fall.

Sexual immorality is this broad general term with quite a wide semantic range. In the original, it's the word pornea.

Of course, you're familiar with pornography. This long-ranging word wherein men and women are conducting with their own bodies life in ways that aren't as pleasing to God as they could be or maybe should be.

Sexual immorality. In one sense, sexual immorality defaces the image of God in us. You know, he made us in his image, male and female.

So part of what it is to be made in the image of God is to be two distinct and different persons, yet one flesh. And sexual immorality has just kind of moved the boundaries on all of this for all of us.

[11:17] When I think of sexual immorality, then the real problem with it is it's defacing the imago Dei in me.

I'm giving myself to persons or objects beyond that which he would have for me. And in the church where we've married ourselves to the Lord, we are to conduct ourselves and our bodies with things that would please him.

Sexual immorality simply would be things like adultery or a man lying with a man or a woman with a woman or a man with a family member.

Or it would even go on in the scriptures to talk about a person lying with a beast. It would deal with incest and all the rest of it.

It would deal all the way through the pornographic images on our screens because therein we plow through people in ways that we weren't designed to.

[12:27] Think of the wonderful fact, though, is that this list is threefold. Selfish indulgence. Did you notice the word covetous there? And it connects it to.

Idolatry. This this selfish indulgence. This problem with selfish indulgence is that it actually leads to the oppression of others.

We got a hint of that a few weeks ago when the thief in Ephesians was told to no longer steal and to make money so that they would have some to give to others.

And the problem with greed is it ends with yourself. So it isn't just your sexual appetites or mine. It's the selfish inclination to garner everything under our own rule, which by nature then leads to the oppression of others.

We oppress others. We oppress others. Think of it in systems where greed takes over. Think of it in systems where greed takes over and the widow and the orphan and the fatherless and the neighbor and the brother or sister in Christ who does not have is now insufficiently supplied for in the world.

[13:41] Because we have determined after all, didn't I do the work? Therefore, it's mine. I mean, I think of it even in Isaiah chapter 2 verse 23.

Everyone who loves a bribe and runs after gifts, they do not bring justice to the fatherless and the widow's cause does not come to them. See, the real problem with greed isn't just what it does to you.

It's that it keeps you from doing what you ought to do for others. And so while sexual immorality defaces the image of God in yourself, selfish indulgence actually damns you as an oppressor of others for yourself.

It moves on beyond that to indecent speech. What an interesting list that these three are all brought together. This activity of our bodies, this desire of our heart, this speech with our mouth now that actually reveals the condition of our inner soul.

Let there be no filthiness or foolish talk or crude jesting which are out of place. See, indecent speech actually reveals a heart that has a disdain for goodness and the glory that's to be found in others.

[15:04] When we bring others down, we defame their dignity. When I'm crude or lewd with my lips, I'm actually revealing the condition of my heart that has a disdain for things which are beautiful and good and right.

Often these things then come from within us. They speak, as I said at the outset, to the degree to which we're messed up and broken because of the fall.

Because of the fall, we go forward seeking this immoral world, this indulgent world, this self-satisfied, arrogant world, this defaming of God's glory in my life and in yours.

All these things are happening. Now, I know for some of you, this might be some of your early exposure to the Bible. And even the hearing of this word today would have been, wow, what is going to come from this kind of text?

This is strong. Am I not free to pursue life on my own? Am I not free to handle myself, my sexual members, as I desire?

[16:26] Am I not free to do what I want with the money that I earned? Am I not free to speak in the ways that are truth-telling to what's within me? Well, let me put you at ease.

Yeah, you're free. If you're entirely free on this point, you can. Let me put it differently.

People do. Every day. You're free to live in this way. But you need to know that there's a cost to yourself and there's a social cost, too.

Sexual immorality is standing behind the sex slave trade. Sexual immorality, at some level, stands behind rape on campuses.

Sexual immorality is behind the degradation of women, most especially. It's behind abuse.

[17:32] Sexual immorality is why families are torn. Marriages are ripped. Why wives feel worthless. Sexual immorality is why we have a social fabric in our culture that has been destroyed.

You're free. But you're part of a world. You're part of a walk. You're part of a way that's that a one-man, one-woman world would have protected us from.

We wouldn't be dealing with as many things. Selfish indulgence. You're free. But realize that if you are greedy, you are involved in the oppression of other people, people, groups, and individuals.

If you speak crudely, you're tearing down the very creation around you that God would have elevated. Now, there's a social cost is what I'm saying.

That's not actually the reasons that the Bible puts forward, so I should probably look at those.

Because not only are there three words that he would say ought not to define our walk, there are two reasons he puts forward right here.

[19:03] Did you see them? They're right there in verses five and through seven or so. Let me read it. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetous, that is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

That's one. Let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

That's two. Two reasons why we ought not to walk in that way. First, you end up missing out.

Second, you end up being culpable for all that is messed up.

And who wants to miss out and who wants to be responsible for the mess up? Missing out. The one who lives in this way has no part, no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

And it's actually a present tense sense to it. It's as though in Jesus, the kingdom of God comes. In Jesus, you begin to learn what love looks like.

[20:09] In Jesus, he begins to exemplify for you the light that is in God. And in Jesus, his kingdom comes. His rule comes. His walk comes.

And his people are to walk according to his word. So what you miss out on, it says here, is the inheritance in the kingdom. Just think of it in the future even.

What we've already learned from Ephesians about one's inheritance. It isn't just that you're going to get a lot of stuff when you get to heaven. The inheritance that Ephesians has centered on a couple of different times is that God, the Father, presents his son, Christ, the inheritance, which is the people for whom he died.

So in one sense, you are supposed to be part of the family picture at the wedding supper of the lamb. And the father says to the son, I have a gift for you.

I have a gift, which is all the people that your blood purchased. All the people who love you with an unending love. All the people who came to understand that they gave their life to you.

[21:21] And now here comes the photo. And Jesus is at the head of the table. And it's the selfie. And he's there. And he clicks. And you're cropped out.

You're outside the frame. You're not there. You are not part of God's plans and purposes for his son for all eternity.

Over what? Over a few decades of selfish indulgence and sexual immorality and filthy speech?

Over that? Over that? You're going to miss out? I don't want you to miss out. I want you to...

I want all of us to go, that's me right there. There I am. Hiding behind a bunch of people, but I'm there.

[22:20] I am the father's gift to the son. And I gave my life to him out of love.

The other thing, though, isn't just that you miss out, but that you're also part of why everything continues to be messed up.

Look at that verse 6. Let no one deceive you with empty words. For, because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Again, this is present tense. We always think that the wrath of God is something for the very end of the world.

That the angry God is finally going to call a spade a spade and get it all done. No. Actually, there are other letters in the New Testament that says the wrath of God has already been revealed. And that's the sense here. And what is the wrath of God that's already being revealed? It's that God says, if you want that, I'll give it to you. It says that God gave them over to do things in their bodies that they wanted to do.

[23 : 25] Or in their mind, as they perceived to do. And so the wrath of God is already at work. How is the wrath of God at work?

By allowing us to deface his image. By allowing us to defame our neighbor. By allowing us to oppress our brothers and sisters around the world.

By allowing us to continue in greed. By allowing us to do what we want with our bodies in ways that actually have great consequence upon ourselves and the rest. By allowing you to say whatever you want to say.

Even if it's not helpful. In other words. This walk.

Is well reasoned. That's what God's saying to you today. Why change your walk? Well, I don't want you to miss out.

[24 : 30] Says Paul. And I don't want you to be culpable for all that continues to be messed up. In fact, I think that the church is a redeemed people.

It's God's outpost on earth. So that when people look at us, there's a sense of. I don't get it. I mean, they're well ordered, but they're not prudish.

They're trying to discern, as it says here in the text, that you would discern what the will of God is.

That we're making it our effort to discern. How does he want me to live?

Didn't we sing that today, Andrew? Right? I want to live for you. I think four times over. That's what this text is saying. You want to learn how to discern those things.

Right? Why would you want to miss out? Why do we want to be culpable for what's messed up?

[25 : 31] As my wife's mother used to say, and I honor her with this on this day. Why sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate?

Don't do it. If the clothing of Christ, if the wardrobe of the redeemed is there, then here we know the clothing we are to discard.

Here you see the ill-fitting shirts you must trash. The question is, how? How does this happen? Stay with me on this.

The three words on walking, which gave way to the two reasons for that walk, conclude with a number of verses where there is one word picture to push you on your way.

And the word picture is light. Light versus darkness. Look at verse 7.

[26 : 37] Look at verse 7. The way this whole thing transitions from these reasons to this word picture. Therefore, do not be partners with them. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

The image is light. This is a perfect image because dark, just think of it mentally, not spiritually even. Light is enlightened. You go to school to get enlightened, learn things.

Darkness is ignorance. Darkness is, in a sense, depraved, but it's ignorant of things. And he says, you're children of light.

Remember, it was Jesus who said what? I am the light of the world. He said, I'm it. You want to know what God's like? I'm here. And so the light of the world has now spawned children by faith in his name, which is the church.

[27 : 39] And therefore, verse 11, we take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness in which we all lived. But instead, look at this, expose them. And I would say we have to expose them to ourselves.

The sins of our own soul must rest now under the light of Christ. Right? If you say you have no sin, well, you're a liar.

The truth is not in you. You may prefer one of the three words to me, but all three or any of the three place us in the same point. But if we do confess our sins to Christ, who is light, to the one who was

pure, whose blood paid a price, then he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

So we actually need light. That's where do we go? We go to the light. We need exposure to the Lord. We need to begin in this church to learn about Jesus.

We need to understand that covering up things doesn't hide the blemish of those things. We need to understand that you have an advocate. But if you spurn the advocate or you play loose with the advocate and claim them only when you need them, but never actually leave the way of walking behind, then you question yourself, am I really his child or not?

[29 : 00] Am I going to be left behind? If you have never to this point in your life come to a relationship with Jesus Christ, I would ask you to do that even now at your own seat.

You need to know that you are caught in a way, in a walk that is stronger than your ability to release yourself from. It's just stronger than us. And you actually already know it's debasing your own life. But you know that this church is telling you that Jesus came as the light in the world, that darkness is now exposed, that in his own crucifixion on the cross, the father is willing to look at his obedience and transfer it to your unrighteousness.

He's willing to clothe you in the righteousness of Christ. Not of your own. And all of a sudden you're wearing Christ.

And he gives you a spirit. And over time, it usually doesn't just come immediately, but over time you'll begin to say, I'm making progress in my walk. I'm not turning that foot in like I used to.

[30 : 14] That alley I used to always walk down, I'm passing that thing by now. I've been there, done that, but I don't want to miss out. I want to be responsible for all this messed up.

So I'm just walking the straight and narrow. You can do that. Just say, Lord, sign me up. Give me your spirit.

That is stronger than mine. Do it. Come to the family.

Look at the good results that come. When you go to the light, when you expose yourself to the light, verse 13, it actually becomes visible.

Now you can see yourself for who you really are. And when it becomes visible, it actually is light. Therefore, it says, and then he quotes Isaiah 60, verse 1.

[31 : 12] Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. If you actually got the word picture, the way it's really rolling in the text, it like elevates at every point.

Well, you are light. You ought to go to the light. When you come to the light, you are light. Arise. Shine. Sleeper. Awaken. Don't be asleep.

Don't be honest. There's too much at stake. Christ will shine on you. You know, this was a word, and I'm about done, but I want you to hear, just hear, some of these connections from Isaiah on this.

The text is Isaiah 60. It's in the middle of a bunch of chapters about Israel being called to be light, but their inability to be light, but God sending a servant who is suffering who will be the light.

So there's this continual call to be who you're supposed to be, this continual inability to be who I am, and yet the suffering servant who will represent me before God.

[32 : 21] So in Isaiah chapter 51, verse 17, wake yourself. Wake yourself. Stand up, O Jerusalem.

Or in chapter 52, verses 1 and 2. Awake. Awake. Put on your strength, O Zion. It's like, Jerusalem. Awake. It moves on from chapter 52, even to verses 11 and 12. Depart. Depart. Go out from there. Touch no unclean thing. Go out from the midst of earth. Purify yourselves, you who would be vessels for the Lord, for you shall go out in haste. Then the Lord will go before you.

It's really stunning. 52, verse 11 and 12, which we've seen. And then 52, verse 13 is there as well. Behold, my servant will be the one that will act wisely.

[33 : 23] He shall be the high one. He shall be the one lifted up. He shall be the exalted one. And then the verse of our text, as though he's been meditating on it. Chapter 60, verse 1. Arise.

Shine. For your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the people. But the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.

It is as though the glory of God will come cascading down through dancing lights, resting on his people. As though there are south-facing stained glass windows from the heaven, and it will cascade across the people, and they will no longer be in darkness.

And beyond that, look at verse 3 of chapter 60 of Isaiah. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your shining.

Dear family, dear brothers, dear sisters, dear fathers, dear mothers, dear members of Christ Church Chicago, God's plan is that the light of Christ would so dance upon our souls collectively, that we would learn to live with one another in ways that please God.

[34 : 45] And that as such, it will be mission critical, for others will come through these doors and say, what is with you?

I am loved, yet you are leading me. You speak of Jesus. You have complete forgiveness for me. And yet you're walking with me.

The resurrection, may we not miss out. Being useful to him now, may we not be messed up. What a metaphor. Walk. Eternal life.

Now and forevermore. Walk. A better way for others in the present. Walk. Not robbed with a future with God.

[35 : 54] Walk. No longer contributing to the path that God allows us to bring. Walk. Benefits that are future and present.

Walk. Don't miss out. Walk. Don't mess up. Walk. When you do, you have an advocate. Walk. Arise.

Sleeper. Arise. Jerusalem. Arise. City. Of God. To the glory of his name.

Our Heavenly Father. We thank you for the Bible. And all of its strangeness. And all of its purportedly hard edges.

But we thank you that it reveals to us what we need most. May we with humility. Humility. Give ourselves to the best of our ability.

[37 : 04] To walk in the light of Christ. And with deeper humility. Give ourselves to loving those. Who are yet walking in the way of darkness.

And use us. That the nations. Would give glory to our Lord. In whose name we pray. Amen. Amen.