

Illuminated and Filled

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

Date: 12 November 2017

Preacher: Shawn Woo

- [0 : 0 0] In his book titled Un-Christian, author David Kinnaman highlights a number of troubling statistics from an extensive study by the Barna Research Group.
- They interviewed people who were born between 1965 and 2002, which is most of us. And one of those stats deal with how unbelievers perceive of Christians.
- And of the non-Christians surveyed, 84% of non-Christians said that they knew at least one committed Christian personally. But just 15% of them said that their lifestyles differed in any appreciable way from that of unbelievers.
- Many so-called Christians live unchristian lives. That's where he gets the title of his book. And this discredits the proclamation, the church's proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ.
- But that should not be so, because according to this passage, the saints of God should walk in the light of Christ by being filled with the Spirit.
- [1 : 0 8] That's the main point, that the saints of God should walk in the light of Christ by being filled with the Spirit. And I'll talk about this in three phases. First, I'll talk about the character of holy living in verses 3 to 4, and the basis for holy living in verses 5 to 14, and the means of holy living in verses 15 to 21.
- So the character, the basis, and means. And just to warn you before I start, the first part of the sermon is going to be very hard-hitting. So just bear with me and stick with me on the journey, and I'll give you some hope in the middle of the sermon.
- Okay, so Paul begins in verse 3 with the character of holy living. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you.
- Now, Paul says later in the same chapter, but verse 31, he cites Genesis 2.24 and teaches that the only appropriate context for sex is in an intergendered, monogamous relationship.
- So sexual immorality then refers to everything outside of that. And the word impurity is related to that. It refers to anything that is vile or impure.
- [2 : 2 2] It's closely related to the word sexual immorality and often refers to sexual sins as well, even though it's kind of a more general term. And that's why they're joined together by the conjunction and. And so examples of this would include fornication, which is sex before marriage.
- It would include adultery, which is sex outside of marriage. It would include prostitution, which reduces the holy covenant-making act of sex.
- It reduces that to a commercial act. It would include anything that falls under a category of dishonorable passions and unnatural relations, described in Romans 1.26-27.
- That would include homosexual sex, Romans 1.29, which is transgression of the divinely instituted order of the two complementary genders. It would include incest, which violates the divinely appointed familial structure and boundary.

It would include pedophilia, right? Zophilia. You can, and anything you could think of that would fall under those kind of categories. And Jesus would include even pornography, right?

[3 : 27] Because he teaches in Matthew 5.27-30, even looking at another person lustfully is tantamount to adultery. So this is, like I said, this is hard-hitting, but stick with me.

So sexual immorality was a big problem during New Testament times. And adulterous relationships, men sleeping with their slave girls, temple prostitution, as well as homosexuality were all part of everyday Greco-Roman life.

And not much has changed since then. And certain forms of sexual immorality, however, are being normalized and even glamorized in unprecedented ways today.

And, in fact, most instances of sex depicted in our media are illicit sex. I mean, think about it. Can you think of an example of sex in the media that's this intergender monogamous faithful relationship?

I could think of very few, right? I mean, most of them are, I mean, they deal with fornication, adultery, polyamory, homosexuality, because our culture deems monogamous heterosexual sex boring, right?

[4 : 30] And so as Christians, but we don't let the culture define sex for us. We let God define and confine sex because he's the one who created it in the first place, right?

There's so much confusion and brokenness about this in our culture. But if we would trust God and his design for creation, we'd be able to enjoy it in a much fuller way within the proper bounds that God has given us.

And this is, it becomes apparent when we try to think about sexual ethics, right? Because in a world that does not acknowledge God, there's no vertical accountability to God, so we could only speak of horizontal accountability to one another, right?

In such a society, only criterion that's acceptable to everyone for sexual ethics is consent, right? So if it's non-consensual, then that's bad.

Well, if it's consensual, then that's fine, right? That's really the only acceptable norm if there's no vertical accountability and only horizontal accountability. And that's a woefully inadequate basis for sexual ethics.

[5 : 32] And let me give you some examples why. So what if a pubescent girl consents to have sex with a 60-year-old man, okay? Who is to say that's wrong?

It's consensual. How can you say that that's wrong, right? Think about it. I mean, what if a young man consents to have sex with his mother?

Most of you will agree that that is wrong, but on what basis can you say that that's wrong if it's consensual? Or what if an aspiring young actress has sex with a very powerful film producer?

Let's say he didn't do anything to force it, but it happened. It was consensual. There was a clear power imbalance there. Is that ethical, right?

I mean, in all of these examples, if consent is the only thing that functions to define our sexual ethics, it's a woefully inadequate basis, right? There's no basis upon which we could say that those things are wrong.

[6 : 33] Yes, non-Christian sexual ethicists will try to still argue that those things are wrong, but they have no basis for it. If it's consensual, who are you to say that they can't do what they want to do, right?

That's why we need this vertical ability to guide us. The fact that we desire illicit sex doesn't mean that we should indulge that desire. The desire for something doesn't prove that it is right to do it.

The fact that we feel that, we want to do it, doesn't mean that it is right. So if you're engaged in any form of this, and this is very common, and the population decides there's probably people involved with some versions of this, then I encourage you to renounce it today and to turn from it, repent of it, come to God, and find resources to help you, help in that.

Because these are not inconsequential sins. Fornication and pornography cheapen sex and destroy marriages. Adultery destroys families. Homosexuality destroys the image of God in man and woman.

And such sexual immorality, he says, must not even be named among you. And then Paul names a third vice that is distinct from sexual immorality and impurity. So he reuses the conjunction or.

[7 : 44] But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you. Right? Covetousness can be described as greed. Right? That jealously longs for the possession of another.

Right? A covetous heart is never satisfied. It always wants more. Because it trusts not in God. It loves not God but money. It trusts.

The covetous heart trusts in money. And the Christian should not be characterized by covetousness but contentment. Right? Paul describes this in greater detail in 1 Timothy 6, 6-10.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

[8 : 42] For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Right? This is a sin that I think Christians often turn a blind eye to because our culture is so consumeristic and materialistic. But scripture warns against this in the sternest terms. Right? It says love of money is the root of all kinds of evils.

So don't desire to be rich. Wanting to be rich is not a biblical desire. Don't desire to win a lottery. Why? Why would you seek temptation for yourself? We should flee from temptation.

Right? This is such a countercultural value for the Christian. And Jesus himself personified money. Right? As a god. Right? He called it mammon in Matthew 6.24.

It said no one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other. Or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. And because of that, that's why Paul describes those who are covetous as idolaters.

[9 : 43] Right? Because if you are, right, I mean, seeking your happiness from money, if you think that money can buy you security, if you think that money can buy you joy, then because of that you hoard money and stash them away in your bank account like, you know, pagan worshipers stash away their little idols in their sanctuaries.

Then, yeah, we're serving money. We're thinking of money like an idol, like a god. And then there's more. In verse 4, right, Paul describes more vices that Christians should put away.

The ESV that we read from breaks up verses 3 to 4, but they're all under the same main exhortation, which is that they should not be named among you. So these are also vices that should not be named among us.

And he says, So the word filthiness refers to anything that's shameful, obscene, or indecent.

It's similar to the word impurity, but because in these next set of words, Paul seems to be focusing on sins of speech, it probably refers to filthy speech. And so that's what he mentions, explicitly mentions filthy talk in the parallel passage in Colossians 3.8.

[11 : 00] And foolish talk would cover any kind of idle talk, right, or worthless chatter. I was trying so hard to come up with examples of this. I've been part of so many of these conversations, but I couldn't come up with a solid example.

But it's just, it's idle talk, worthless chatter, any conversation that's pointless. I don't think Paul's referring to small talk, right, because small talk is polite talk that usually is an on-ramp to something more substantial, deeper conversation.

I don't think he's saying don't do small talk. He's saying don't do pointless talk, right, like buffoonery, like idle talk, like anything that's unprofitable, idle speculation, right? That's the kind of things he's talking about, foolish talking.

Related to this is crude joking, which Paul also mentions. And the word translated here as crude joking is based on a Greek word that means to turn.

So it's very similar to the English idiom, a turn of phrase, right? So he's referring to something like a suggestive witticism or an innuendo is what he's referring to here, right?

[12 : 03] So it's, and Aristotle actually commended this as a virtue. So Paul is taking a very decisive stance against that. No, that's not a virtue. That's not a sign of intellectual sharpness.

That's a sign of a debased mind. That's what he's saying, to have this. And in our culture, many people think that, you know, as long as it's a joke, anything is passable, right? It's not.

Stop being such a prude, they say. It's a joke, right? I mean, but we, that's why I think comedy nowadays has so much vulgar content. But there are good types of humor.

That's not what Paul is talking about. But he's often these double entendres, right? And innuendos, they stray into territories that are risqué or profane or caustic and biting, right?

And these should have no place in Christian community, right? Avoid all salacious or malicious talk. That's what he's saying. And notice how strong he puts it.

[12 : 59] He says, don't let these things even be named among you, right? By that, he doesn't mean don't talk about it. I mean, because that's what he meant. That he shouldn't have written about it and I shouldn't be preaching about it.

That's not what he means. He means that, you know what, like, if outsiders looked at you, looked at our church from the outside looking in, these things, there should not even be an occasion for these things to be observed or named.

That's what he means. Like, to do such things, of course not. Let's not even go there. Don't let them even be named among you. That's how strongly Paul is putting this.

And as Paul consistently does, in a more positive note, he enjoins a corresponding virtue to the vices that he prohibits, right? And the virtue that should replace this vice.

He says in verse 4, but instead, let there be thanksgiving. Isn't that so interesting? Right? It might seem odd at first to think of thanksgiving, right, as the antidote to sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking, right?

[14 : 04] And we would expect something more like, instead, let there be chastity, right? Or instead, let there be holiness. But instead, Paul says, instead, let there be thanksgiving, right?

This is a key insight because sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking, they're all expressions of a self-centered, unsatisfied appetite, right?

While thanksgiving acknowledges God's generosity and is therefore an expression of fullness and satisfaction, right?

So that's why these are two opposite things. So according to Romans 12:1, ingratitude is evidence of an inadequate appreciation of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

So conversely, thanksgiving is evidence of an appropriate appreciation of what God has done for us in His grace toward us. And because of that, when we are full of thanksgiving, when we're remembering God's grace toward us, we give thanks to Him.

[15:07] It fortifies our minds and our hearts against temptation. That's why New Testament so often enjoys thanksgiving upon believers. I mean, this makes sense, right, if you think about it, right?

If you think about your workplaces, it's always the underpaid, unsupported, ungrateful employees that are unmotivated at work. Are they not, right?

So they underperform in their tasks. They take longer breaks than they should, right? They take all the sick days even though they're not sick, right?

Because they're not motivated. They're not supported. They're ungrateful, right? And it's a similar way. It's the Christian who truly recognizes how bountiful and gracious, generous God has been toward him or her that lives willingly in obedience, right?

Because we're filled with gratitude. So make this a regular habit, right, with your spouses, with your friends, with your roommates, in your community groups. Make it a regular habit to give thanks to God and remember how good he has been to you.

[16:15] I mean, he's adopted us who are orphans, spiritual orphans into his kingdom and made us heirs with him, right? He took us who are rebels, who are once enemies, and reconciled us to himself so that we could not sit at his table as part of his family.

That's what God did. When we remember that, then we're full of thanksgiving. And when we're full of thanksgiving, there's no room for sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking to creep in.

That's the character of holy living. And then in verses 5 to 14, Paul teaches us about the basis for holy living. He says in verses 4 to 6, 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. Sons of disobedience, he's not contrasting disobedient sons from obedient sons.

The sons of disobedience is an idiomatic way of referring to people who are living in disobedience. And they have no place, no inheritance in the kingdom of God, so they're actually not sons at all, not sons of God.

[17:33] And Paul warns us against false teachers. He says there will be false teachers who will use their eloquence and charisma to deceive you with empty words, he warns us. And there are people who rationalize sins, right?

They do some kind of crazy exegetical acrobatics and use unsound theological reasoning to rationalize sin. There's many people who do that. There are many people today who will try to, many Christian teachers today, who will try to justify sexual immorality and all impurity.

They say as long as you love each other, no one else can tell you what's right or wrong. They say, oh, the Bible doesn't condemn homosexuality, only condemns homosexual abuses.

Oh, no, the Bible doesn't condemn cohabiting. Hey, there's wisdom in testing things out before you get married.

Nonsense. That's unbiblical. Don't be deceived by the teachers who will deceive you with empty words. Similarly, many teachers today, Christian teachers, will try to justify covetousness.

[18 : 40] They say God wants you to be rich. God wants you to have all the luxuries that the world has to offer. Look at Abraham. Look at all the patriarchs.

Being rich is a sign of God's blessing. Now, if you give money to my ministry, then God will bless you and make you rich. Nonsense. That's unbiblical. Many false teachers will try to rationalize sin and deceive you with empty words.

So Paul warns us, let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. And note this, guys.

This is so important that we note this. Paul's not threatening us here. That's not the flow, the logical flow of his argument. Because if you don't obey, you're going to be disinherited.

That's not what Paul is saying. Because he made it very clear in chapter 1, verse 14, that the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.

[19 : 40] So he's not here motivating Christians with fear of losing their status. Rather, Paul is motivating us with the assurance of our new status in Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that people who live in this manner are not heirs of the kingdom.

And therefore, because you are heirs of this kingdom, you shouldn't live this way. That's what Paul is saying. That's why look at verse 7. Therefore, do not become partners with them. Right?

He's not talking to believers. He's saying don't partake with that. Paul used the same word to become partners earlier in chapter 3, verse 6. He said, we have become partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

So Paul's saying since we have already become partners with Christ in the gospel, don't become partners with the sons of disobedience. So he's not threatening us. He's motivating us with who we now are in Christ, with our new identity in Christ.

And this is why over and over again he uses the language of out of place or improper. Right? So look at verse 3. He says, sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness. Avoid that because that's what is proper among saints.

[20 : 46] And look at verse 4. He says, filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking are out of place. Why is that out of place? Because we're saints. Saint refers to holy one.

And holiness at the root of it, at the base of the meaning, it means to be set apart. We're holy because not because... When God calls us saints, he doesn't mean that we're holy intrinsically, that we're holy like in who we are now, but rather that we are called to him in holiness.

It's the justifying grace of God that counts us as holy. And it's the sanctifying grace of God that continues to make us holy, call us to holiness. We are people who are set apart for God, for his special purposes.

And because of that, we should live in a way that pleases him and honors him. We're consecrated for him. And for such people as that, it is improper to have these vices. It's out of place to practice these things.

And Paul elaborates on this new identity in Christ in verses 8 to 10. 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.

[22 : 04] He uses the imagery, the common imagery of darkness and light to refer to the radical transformation that is taken within the believer. And it's notable that Paul doesn't say, you were in darkness.

He says, you were darkness. He doesn't say, you are in the light. He says, you are light. This is so insightful because it means when we were living in sin, we weren't just hapless individuals who inadvertently went into the darkness.

No, we embodied that darkness. We had sin within us. We were darkness. And it's, but then now we are in Christ.

We're children of light. We're not merely in the light, but we are the light. But notice that this light is not intrinsic to us, right? The way Paul describes it, he says, now you are light in the Lord.

Right? Where we become light, we have light by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ. It's not our light, right? It's because God is light, 1 John 1, 5 says.

[23 : 11] In him is no darkness at all. Because in John 8, 12, Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. And because of that, when we believe in Jesus, renounce our ways and say that we're going to live for Jesus and hold on to him and we're united to him by faith, that's when we have the light of Christ.

That's when we become the light of Christ. It's kind of like the moon, right? That doesn't have light intrinsic to itself, but reflects the light of the sun. We reflect the light of Christ.

We get the light of Christ by virtue of our union with him. So get this, if you're a believer, the goal of this passage is not to discourage you or to cast doubt on your assurance of salvation.

It's rather the opposite, right? It's saying, and if, because look at it, it's at one time you were darkness, but you are now light in the Lord. And this is intended to motivate obedience.

A decisive change has taken place. I mean, let's think about that imagery a little bit more, right? When you get home late at night and all the lights are off in the house, right, you have to kind of walk gingerly so that you don't trip over anything and you have to grope around for the light switch and then you flick on the light switch, right?

[24 : 27] I mean, that's how you live in the darkness because you can't see anything. But wouldn't it be out of place, improper, when the light is on and you still walk around like gingerly, like you don't know where you're going and you grope around like you can't see?

That's what Paul is saying. The light is on. You have the light of Christ. Why grope around in sexual immorality? Why live in blindness?

And if you are struggling with sin and you wonder why it's so hard for you to overcome certain sins, you can kind of think about it this way, right?

The Scripture describes our transformation, our conversion as being given a new heart, right? We are regenerated. We have new hearts. And so you could think of it like a heart transplant, right?

When a patient goes through a heart transplant, they don't just immediately start breathing on their own with the new heart. They are kept on ventilators and catheters because it takes time for their body to get used to working with the new heart, right?

[25 : 42] Let's think about it that way. So like we have new hearts, right? But it takes time for our flesh, which is accustomed to our old ways of living, to be weaned off of the ventilators and the old ways of living.

But we have the new heart. It doesn't change that fact. And the process of sanctification is lifelong. It's that process of being weaned off that so we can live fully in the fullness of the new life that Christ has given us.

That is a lifelong process. And that means we will sin at times and we will falter and fall short of the standard that God has placed in us. But the fact that we have a new heart, the fact that this decisive change has taken place means we should never despair.

We always have hope because there's sufficient resources in Jesus Christ. Everything we need for this lifestyle that Paul enjoins is in Jesus Christ.

So we don't despair. So this is supposed to fill you, not with doubt, but with hope, with faith, because you have been made new in Jesus Christ.

[26 : 52] And if you're not yet a believer, then it's an opportunity for you to repent and turn to him because you can work really hard to find new habits, but you can never get for yourself a new heart.

That's something only God can do. This is the reason why we are called to walk as children of light. Paul describes what this looks like in verse 9.

For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. The children of light bear fruit, and that's contrasted with what he said earlier, right, about the unfruitful works of darkness.

And all that is good and right and true, they're pointing to attributes of God. Throughout Scripture, they're all attributed to God. Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good, right?

Many Psalms say that. Deuteronomy 32.4, it says, God is a God of truth without iniquity. Just and right is he, right? So because God is good and right and true, we should bear fruit that is good and right and true because we are his children.

[27 : 57] We have his light. Children of God should resemble God, reflect the family traits of the family of God. That means goodness, righteousness, and truth.

We don't define that for ourselves. We have to define it according to God's character and God's standards revealed to us in Scripture. And that's why discernment is necessary, right?

He says, try to discern. It says, verse 10, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. But this runs contrary to what we normally conceive of when we hear the word discernment, right?

When you hear discernment, you think of crucial crossroads in life, right? Okay, do I marry this person or not? Do I take this job or not? Do I move out of state, out of country or not?

We think of discernment in those categories, but Paul thinks of discernment as a daily activity, regular activity, the daily practice of sifting through our life's experiences and trying to bring all things into conformity with the will of Christ, with what pleases Him.

[29 : 04] And the word discern, it's to test, it's to approve, it's the word that is used to the refining of silver and gold. You test it, prove it, to make sure that it's genuine.

That's what we are to do. Because scripture is sufficient for us for equipping all of us for every good work, but it's not exhaustive, right? Because God wants us to grow in discernment, to know His will, to be characterized by His will.

So when you're thinking about taking a job, right? I mean, the scripture doesn't tell us whether you should take that job or not, right? But it does tell us, right? To pursue honest work. So you can ask yourself, is this work honest?

Is it good work? It doesn't tell us which job to take, but it does tell us that the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Does this job help you do that better?

Or does it take you away from doing that? In order to make those decisions, we need to use discernment. And that's something that Paul prays for believers to grow in in Philippians 1, 9, 11.

[30 : 11] It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment so you may approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ through glory and praise of God.

One of the downsides of the proliferation of social media is you see an abundance of lack of discernment. You see it and you're like, wow, there's no discernment.

That's part of Christian maturity. We need to grow in that. Pray for that. The saints of God should walk in the light of Christ. And if we discern what is pleasing to the Lord and walk in the light, that will also mean, it says in verses 11 to 12, that we will take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

This is similar to John 3.20 where everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come into the light lest his work should be exposed. So when Paul teaches this, he's really reflecting Jesus' own teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Beatitudes, when he says you are the light of the world, and you don't hide the light under a lamp.

Rather, you put it on a stand and let it shine for all to see. So in the same way, Jesus said, let your good works shine before men so that they may see your good deeds and give praise to your Father in heaven.

[31 : 36] So good works. We're supposed to do good works, and that's supposed to shine the light on the darkness of this world. It's supposed to bring conviction to the watching world. It's supposed to reprove the watching world through our good works.

Now, this doesn't mean, however, that each Christian should act like zealous private investigators in order to point to all kinds of evil and just go, oh, evil, evil, condemned, right?

No, that's not what God's calling us to do, right? Because the goal of this exposing is not condemnation. It's conversion. It's transformation, right?

Look at verses 13 to 14. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore, it says, awake, oh sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Sometimes Christians seem to enjoy confronting unbelievers and proving themselves to be in the right.

[32 : 41] But the motivation for exposing work should be love, not self-righteousness. It should be for the purpose of winning the person over, not winning an argument.

The goal is to make them visible, to make them light. And that means the most crucial way in which we expose the darkness with the light of Christ is in verse 14, right? Awake, oh sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

The light that will shine, the most important way in which we expose the darkness is with the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Right? This quotation is probably an early Christian hymn, which was itself taken from various passages in Isaiah.

And it speaks of Christ shining on them. And Paul uses that expression in other epistles. 2 Corinthians 4, 46, he speaks of the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

He says that God has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. So we are to walk in the light and expose the darkness.

[33 : 52] And we do that not merely by doing good works that serves as a contrast to the works of the world. We also need to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. It's not enough to do good works.

We need to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ because God's light, the light of Christ, shines most brilliantly in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Because when you see the cross, when you look at the light that shines forth from the cross, where our sins, our evil, our wickedness, it's so heinous that the Son of God has to die and be crushed under the weight of it.

And that cross also shows, on the other hand, the deep, abiding, persisting love of God that God is willing to go to such lengths to save us.

The cross of Christ shows both of those things. In doing that, it displays the light of the glory of Christ in the best possible way. So we're to shine that.

And if you're not a believer in Christ today, then I urge, I plead with you today to walk in that light. Come to the light. And if you are already a follower of Christ, then that light that we are now in Christ is the basis for holy living.

[35 : 09] The saints of God should walk in the light of Christ. So Paul's told us about the character of holy living and he has told us about the basis for holy living. And then in verses 15 to 21, he tells us about the means of holy living, how we can actually live like this.

He says in verses 15 to 16, look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

Paul returns once again to the metaphor of walking and tells us to look carefully how we walk. We need to carefully examine our lives to make sure that we are not living unprofitably.

And the expression, the word that's translated make the best use of the time, it can be more literally rendered, redeem the time, purchase the time. You may have seen that expression or heard that expression somewhere, right?

It's the language of commerce and transaction. So it's similar to the proverb that we have, right? It's time is money, right? Yeah, time is money, right? If we waste time, we're wasting money, right?

[36 : 17] But that's a true statement. But this is much more profound than that, right? Because time is not just money, right? Time is eternal currency. It's currency that pertains to fruit of righteousness that has eternal consequences.

Right? We often think of time as an imperishable commodity that constantly replenishes itself, but it's just not true. It's eternal currency.

And when we fritter away time, right, when we dilly-dally, we doodle away time, we are not living as if the days are evil.

Every day, with every place, teems with possibilities for evil, as Paul makes clear here in the following chapter, that Christians live in a state of perpetual spiritual warfare with the evil forces, of spiritual forces of evil.

The days are evil, the bullets are flying overhead, and bombs are dropping by our size, and then we doodle away our time. No, remember, the days are evil.

[37 : 30] Redeem the time. Purchase the time. Saints of God should walk in the light of Christ. And he continues in verse 17, Don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Commit not to be foolish and understand what the will of the Lord is, similar to the earlier expression, discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Right? So Christianity is not about blind passion and doing what feels right.

We need to think carefully and understand what the will of the Lord is. And then in verse 18, because Paul knows that we can't do any of these things without the power of the Holy Spirit, he says, And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

Wow, that's a powerful image. That's a powerful contrast. Right? He says, In the ancient world, the fermentation of grape juice was quite the natural process. Right? It kind of happened because they don't have refrigeration.

They don't have hermetic sealing. So if you have grape juice, I mean, in a matter of days, it'll be fermented and you have wine. Right? And in fact, we've had that happen to us before. We use grape juice in our communion and one week, people drank it.

[38 : 40] They're like, Oh, it kind of tastes like wine. Ooh, sorry, that's just old grape juice. So it's like, I mean, that's what happened to a lot of people back in the day. But nowadays, we have this artificial process of distillation.

So the alcoholic content for all the beers and wines that we have today is so much higher than any drinks that they had in the ancient days. And so if they have to worry about drunkenness, we have some problems.

We have to be really vigilant about drunkenness. And drunkenness is described as debauchery. Like, the word refers to waste. It's excessive.

It's a senseless waste. It's the opposite of making the best use of our time. And isn't it so fascinating that he contrasts being drunk with wine with being filled with the Spirit?

Right? Because a lot of linguists speculate that the word alcohol originated from or was derived from the Arabic word for al-gal, right?

[39 : 36] Which means spirit. Right? A lot of Arabic speakers back then believed that intoxication, drunkenness, occurred from a spirit taking possession of them.

Right? And so whether that's true or not, the etymology highlights the useful contrast between being filled and controlled by wine with being filled and controlled by the Spirit.

In both cases, you are ceding your lordship, your possession of yourself to something else. I met a homeless man this week at Dunkin' Donuts and had a chance to hear his story.

And even though his breath smelled of alcohol, he was actually very sober in his assessment of his situation. He told me, alcohol controls me. That's what happened. You cannot be drunk with alcohol.

We cannot be drunk because if you are controlled by alcohol, you will not be controlled by the Spirit of God. And if you have trouble with moderation, drinking moderation, then there's good reason and wisdom for abstinence altogether.

[40 : 45] But what does Paul mean that believers who already have the Spirit should be filled with the Spirit? I mentioned to you a few weeks ago that while the New Testament speaks of every believer as being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that it does not speak of every believer as being full of the Holy Spirit.

That's why in Acts 6.3, believers who are full of the Holy Spirit are singled out for a particular ministry because of necessity, by definition, not everybody is full of the Holy Spirit.

And so this exhortation is quite similar to the exhortation to walk in the light, right? It's people who have been made light in the Lord that should walk in the light and it's people who are indwelt by the Spirit that should increasingly and continually be filled and controlled by the Spirit of God.

And this is the most important exhortation of the second half of this passage because it's this exhortation that it's the force of this exhortation to carry through the rest of the book about the exhortation about the various relationships and how we have to relate to each other.

It's all based on this be filled with the Holy Spirit. But it's kind of abstract, isn't it? So, I mean, like you can go to a sink, right, to fill your jar or cup with water.

[42 : 02] I mean, where do you go to be filled with the Holy Spirit, right? How can you get filled with the Holy Spirit? It seems so abstract to us but wonderfully and to our great relief, Paul actually tells us in verses 19 to 21 how we get filled with the Holy Spirit.

It says, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

That's four different means that Paul specifies by which we are filled with the Spirit. First, we are filled with the Spirit by addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

So, of course, when we are worshiping in song together as a church, we're addressing God because we're worshiping Him. But there's also a horizontal aspect of our time of singing. He's saying that we're addressing one another.

It's the same word that he used earlier to say, speak the truth to one another. He says, speak to one another in song. So, he's saying, so it might be odd to think of singing in that way for us, but when we're singing, we are rehearsing important truths about God and about our lives and about ourselves.

[43 : 21] And we are addressing one another. We're making these truths to bear on our lives, on each other's lives. And that's why the songs that we sing are selected carefully, not just for their melody and singability, but for their lyrics.

Because the time of singing is not merely about the emotions, but it's also about our thoughts. We need to use our minds when we sing. And Paul seems to have diverse genres of songs in mind because he mentions psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, right?

So the psalms likely refer to the Old Testament psalm, the Psalter. Hymns likely refer to kind of the early church hymns, kind of like the one that he quoted earlier. And then the spiritual songs is probably a more generic reference to all kinds of songs of a spiritual nature, of a Christian character.

And not only do we address one another in song, he says, we are to be filled with the Spirit by singing and making melody to the Lord with our heart. And he adds an important qualifier, with your heart.

Ronald Allen, he's a Christian author, he makes an important distinction in his book on worship. He says, worship is a state of heart. Musical sound is state of art.

[44 : 35] I'm so grateful to God for people who serve on the music ministry team and the use of their gifts. But I'm even more grateful that so many of us I see every week sing with their hearts.

not all of us sing in tune, let's be honest with ourselves. Not all of us sing in beat or rhythm, but many of us sing with our hearts and that matters to God.

He desires that. And that's a means by which we are filled with the Spirit. And you have probably experienced this, right, if you've been to church for any appreciable number of times.

Like if, when you're singing, right, the truths that seemed once distant and theoretical just becomes immediate and present and real.

You're being filled with the Spirit. And Paul's making a remarkable claim when he says this because he's saying that our regular act of gathering together in corporate worship is one of the divinely appointed means by which we are filled with the very Spirit of God.

[45 : 49] Like this was the case in the Old Testament, right? Remember 2 Chronicles 5, 13 to 14, it describes the worship in the temple. It was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

And when the song was raised and with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments in praise of the Lord, the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.

That's the background that lies behind this passage. God's glory filled the temple when his people praised him, worshipped him in song and gave thanks to him. Likewise, we, the church, we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit as the Bible says in many different places and when we worship and lift God's praises in songs, we become filled with the Spirit.

Yeah, our Sunday worship service looks very ordinary. And our time of singing might look humdrum to some outside onlookers, but there's something extraordinary and supernatural happening in this weekly gathering of corporate worship where the people of God are being filled with the very Spirit of God, where there's an exchange of the Holy Spirit with our spirits.

We commune with him. This is amazing. So as the days get colder in the winter months, resist the urge to sleep in, stay cozy under the blankets on Sunday mornings.

[47 : 30] Oh, I don't want to get up today. I'll just stay home. Guys, this is not a chore. This is not a chore. This is a privilege. This is a joy.

Sunday is my favorite day of the week. And I mean that with all my heart because this is a privilege if we're filled with the Spirit of God. The third way in which we are filled with the Spirit is by giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We talked earlier about the importance of thanksgiving, how it fortifies our minds and hearts against temptations. Paul calls us to give thanks here again. Not sometimes, but he says always.

And not for some things, but for everything. That means we acknowledge God's gracious and sovereign hand in things that we like and things we don't like and in things that are great and things that are small.

And so in all things and all times, we thank God. And when we do, we are filled with the Spirit. The fourth means, and it's so important, by which we can be filled with the Spirit is by submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[48 : 45] As verse 21 says, let me first tell you what this doesn't mean and then I'm going to tell you what it does mean. It doesn't mean that since we're all called to submit to one another that no one should be invested with any sense of authority to lead in the church.

Paul says very clearly in other parts, where Hebrews 13, 17 says, instructs church members, obey your leaders and submit to them, same word, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account.

So while every Christian is to submit to one another, there is a particular way in which we are called to submit to the leaders of the church. Similarly, even though husbands and wives are called to submit to one another in the context of the church, as we'll see in the next passage for next week, there's a peculiar call to the wife to submit to the husband.

So this call to submit to one another does not abrogate authority, doesn't nullify authority. However, it does prevent and preclude authoritarianism because everyone is called to submit.

Every Christian is called to submit to one another. It tempers, constrains our authority. There's no room in the church for overbearing leadership, authoritarianism.

[50 : 03] Because every single one of us is called to mutual submission. And so what does it mean? I'm talking about the submission gets a bad rap nowadays, but it's an eminently Christian virtue because it's what Jesus, our Savior, modeled for us, right?

Philippians 2, 3 to 8. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God, another translation, the very nature of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant and being born in the likeness of man and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus was equal to the Father in all authority, deity, attribute. He was fully God yet for reason unknown to us simply by virtue of his position as the Son he submitted to the Father.

And it's because he did that, it's because he emptied himself, it's because he humbled himself, now we become beneficiaries of eternal salvation and relationship with our loving Father.

[51 : 41] In a similar way, when we yield to one another, submit to one another, when we sacrifice for one another, when we humble ourselves and consider others' interests before ours, when we do that in the daily living together as a church community, that opens the doors for the filling of the Spirit of God.

that's really the crux, that's really all there is to it, that's the Christian life.

God doesn't want anything less than to fill us with himself, to unite us to himself, so saints who have the privilege of being set apart for God, let's all walk in the light of Christ, and be filled with the Spirit of God.

Let's pray together. God, we ask you to capture us with a beautiful vision of your sacrificial love, Lord.

we want our church to showcase both the Father's benevolent, gracious, humble leadership and authority and convey and portray the Son's humble, sacrificial submission because it's beautiful to behold.

[53 : 21] the triune love of God. Lord, please fill us with an increasing measure of your Spirit this morning. Help us to walk in the light of Christ in every area of our lives so that we can be witnesses to the watching world of your goodness, of your truth, of your righteousness.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.