

## EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS

### Message #15

### Ephesians 5:1-7

I have personally been spending some time trying to get into shape by swimming. I am not a great swimmer, but I take it seriously and I try to do workouts that pump my heart and pulse up to an aerobic and anaerobic level. I try to swim about 30-40 minutes several times per week. Because I swim in a public pool, I have to go into a locker room to change into a bathing suit.

That men's locker room affords me the opportunity to overhear some of the things that men of the world think about and talk about. I have heard such topics as health, jobs, sports, bars, medical issues, airplane flights, cocktail hours and women. On a few occasions I have had opportunity to witness and defend biblical truth. In fact, just this week a man asked me about a Bible verse from Matthew. It would appear to me, by general observation, that most of the men in the locker room are not interested in discussing truth about God and the Bible. Although I don't know the belief system of everyone there, most do not discuss Jesus Christ and it would seem that most do not care if they truly live their lives in ways that glorify God.

Now we do not expect the unsaved world to love the Lord and live for the Lord, but God does expect His people will. God does want believers to love the Lord and live for the Lord and reflect His grace to this world. That is exactly what this practical section of Ephesians is all about. What Paul communicates is this:

**GOD WANTS US LIVING OUR LIVES REFLECTING THAT WE ARE HIS GRACE CHILDREN, AND THAT MEANS WE DO OUR BEST TO IMITATE HIM AND NOT PARTAKE OF THE TYPICAL THINGS THAT DOMINATE THE REST OF THE WORLD.**

God wants us living our lives demonstrating that we are children of God and this passage tells us how we are to do that. How do we walk as imitators of God so that we reflect we are His children?

The challenge of **verse 1** is that we are to continually mimic God so that we show the world we are His beloved children. That word "mimic" (μιμητης) is one that means we are to imitate someone in a good sense like an actor would seek to imitate another person (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 293).

We cannot deny that there are some talented actors and actresses in this world. God has given tremendous thespian skills to certain people. The problem with most of them is that they are not interesting in honoring God with their skills. But regardless of whether they are or not, God has given certain people artistic abilities to so act a part that they can bring tears to your eyes.

Now what is amazing is that when the story is about some person such as Abraham Lincoln, not only do the actors speak as Mr. Lincoln spoke, but they look just like he looked. I read that when Gary Cooper was going to play the part of a decorated war hero, he actually went and spent weeks with him just to learn his mannerisms so he could portray him accurately.

That is the word used here by Paul. God wants us to learn all we can about God from His Word. He wants us analyzing God's Word and mannerisms so that we can mimic Him as His beloved children.

Now the word "children" (τεκνα) speaks of a very young child, like a baby. Babies love to imitate what their parents and grandparents do. They want to be where you are and they want to eat what you eat. We have a little grandson and when I am working on the fire in the fireplace we have to keep our eyes on him because he wants to come right over there and help. If Mary goes into another room he is right after her. That is the way it is for a little child; they want to be with you and mimic what you are doing.

That is exactly the imagery Paul is painting here—we are to be like little children who mimic God. We are to follow His Word and His will. We are to reflect grace to this world in such a way that they see we are His beloved children.

Now there are four specific ways we are to walk, that truly do imitate God that are spelled out here:

**(GOD MIMIC WAY #1) – Imitate God by walking in love. 5:2**

The thing that should always characterize us that truly does reflect God is that we should be loving and forgiving people. As we said last week **the most God-like thing we can ever do in this life is to love someone and forgive them.** The word "love" (αγαπη) seeks the highest good for the one loved.

Now Paul qualifies how we are to walk in love by using the greatest standard one could ever use, Jesus Christ. There are two points Paul brings out about Jesus Christ:

**Christological Point #1 - Jesus Christ loved us. 5:2a**

We have already been told by Paul in this book that we are loved by God the Father (2:4) and now here is the first place in the book where we are told we are loved by God the Son.

Now let's just think about this for a moment. Jesus Christ loved us enough to leave the Throne of heaven, where He was honored as second member of the Trinity and came to this earth in the form of a man and suffered the humiliation of this world and then suffered crucifixion. He did that because He loved us. This kind of love that He had for us put His feelings aside because who would feel like going through all of that? Out of highly calculated love He chose to do that for us.

Now think for a moment just who we are that He loved. He didn't love a bunch of prize catches of perfection, He loved a bunch of struggling sinners who aren't even close to perfection. If Christ loved us, then we should live our lives loving others too.

**Christological Point #2** - Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for us. **5:2b**

Jesus Christ not only loved us, but He gave Himself up for us as an offering and a sacrifice for our sins. This idea in Greek means that Jesus Christ in and of Himself handed Himself over by His own initiative to lay down His life for us. That prepositional phrase “for us” (υπερ ημων) means that Jesus Christ took our place and willingly became our substitute.

What Jesus Christ did for us because He loved us was to pay the total and complete price of our sins. He fulfilled all of the sin offerings and sacrifices necessary to save sinners. His sacrifice is that which makes us no longer a stench to the nostrils of the Holy God, but a fragrant aroma to God.

One of the best ways to show that we are children of God is to be loving and forgiving people. One of the things that will really help us is to realize how much God has forgiven us and the sacrifice Christ made to make our forgiveness possible.

**(GOD MIMIC WAY #2)** – Imitate God by not being immoral or impure. **5:3a**

The Ephesians were living in a very lustful, immoral and impure world. It was a world pretty much like ours. As one writer said the sins here are “the common sins of the world today.” Many of the Ephesians struggled with moral things. Their past lives had been filled with wild immoral parties. It is a wonderful thing if you have never struggled with these things, but it is a serious dog fight war if you have. One area that really reflects God’s character and one area that can truly damage our character is that of sexual morality and purity.

Now the word “immorality” (πορνεια) speaks of having an immoral relationship outside of the boundaries of marriage. In classical Greek this word was used to describe homosexual practices and prostitution. This word is sometimes translated “fornication” (Smith, p. 373). Harold Hoehner says it is best to view this word to refer to any kind of “extramarital relationship” (*Ephesians*, p. 652).

The word “impure” (ακαθαρσια) speaks of that which is ceremonially and morally unclean and impure (Smith, p. 16). This particular word was used by Paul in Ephesians 4:19 and there it had to do with perverted, sensual things.

Paul says one of the best ways to reflect that we are a child of God is by not pursuing immoral and impure things. Don’t let anything immoral or impure be named among you once.

Now the verb “named” is present tense. What that means is that there are those people who continually and habitually pursue this kind of lifestyle and God wants His children pursuing a life in which not only do they not continually pursue this, you cannot even name this one time against them.

In other words, no one should ever be able to say—there is a man or woman of God who cheats on his/her mate and pursues immoral, impure and sensual things.

Now suppose you are here and you have fallen in this area. What is the solution? You go to God and you confess it. Go to God and lay it all out. Confess the truth and admit your depraved desire for that which is evil. Tell God about your instability and your immorality and when you get up from your knees, you will be clean again in your relationship with God. As Jesus said, “Go and sin no more.”

J. Vernon McGee said “if there is conviction in your heart, you can rise and go to your Father as the Prodigal Son did. You are a son of the Father and only sons want to go to the Father’s house.”

**(GOD MIMIC WAY #3)** – Imitate God by not being greedy. **5:3b**

The word “greed” (πλεονεξια) is one that refers to the character and conduct of one who covets and aggressively desires more and more and more.

The opposite of being content with what you have is being greedy for what you don’t have. This kind of greed is in a context with things immoral and impure, which shows how evil it is.

God’s own people can be greedy and covetous and when they are, they are not reflecting they are a beloved child of God. God’s people can covet someone’s house, mate, wealth and possessions. There are those who can covet someone’s education or position. There are those who covet someone else’s looks or accomplishments. We need to know that covetousness is a dirty rotten sin that is in our old nature.

Paul says don’t let this greed be named among you because this is not fitting for a child of God. What is fitting for a child of God is to give thanks for all God has given you.

**(GOD MIMIC WAY #4)** – Imitate God by how we talk. **5:4**

God does not want us talking in sexually immoral and dirty ways. He does not want us joking about immoral things. Dirty jokes and dirty things have no place in the vocabulary of a believer who reflects the glory of God. Neither does “course jesting” which is a word that means to ridicule and cut people down just for a laugh. There is nothing wrong with laughter, but there is something wrong when someone speaks in a filthy degrading way to get it.

There are people in this world who think nothing of taking God’s name in vain. They will say “oh my \_\_\_\_\_” and think nothing of it. There are people who curse and use perverse language as part of their daily vocabulary. They tell dirty jokes and discuss and laugh about perverse things. There are those who will cut people down and ridicule them and embarrass them in public if they think it can get a laugh. This kind of stuff has no place in the life of a believer.

J. Vernon McGee loved to play golf and he said that he had a Christian friend who would often invite an unsaved person to play with them. On several occasions after hitting terrible shots, the unsaved man would ask God to pronounce a condemnation and damnation on the entire golf course. So Dr. McGee's friend would say "praise the Lord, bless the Lord" as soon as he would curse. Finally the unsaved man asked why do you always say "praise the Lord, bless the Lord"? His friend said "every time I hear a man ask God to damn something, I praise and thank God for something to balance the budget down here." He said the man stopped cursing.

Silly and sensual talk should never characterize a believer, but serious and spiritual talk should. It is not fitting for a child of God to talk like a dirty, filthy person of the world. It is not right.

Now Paul gives two simple reasons why we should imitate God and stay away from immorality, greed and evil talk:

**Reason #1** - Because we can lose our future inheritance . **5:5**

Now many take the position that Paul is just addressing the fact that no unbeliever who pursues this lifestyle will be in heaven. However, it seems to me that it is a serious warning aimed at children of God.

Now a key question that should be asked here is what inheritance does Paul mean? We already know that Paul said that every believer has already been predestined with an inheritance of heaven. Paul said in Ephesians 1:11 "we have obtained an inheritance." He said in Ephesians 1:18 that he prayed that we would come to know "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." So just exactly what inheritance can a believer actually lose?

It seems to me that a key is in the text which says no person who pursues this kind of lifestyle has any inheritance "in the kingdom of Christ and God." **This is the only place in Scripture where two persons of the Godhead are mentioned in regard to the Kingdom.** There is one article "the" before both proper nouns Christ and God, which means both members of the Trinity are Deity and responsible for the Kingdom. The noun "Christ" refers to the fact that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah.

That would suggest that the outworking of this missed inheritance would occur when Jesus Christ reigns on this earth in the Millennium. The believer who has pursued this kind of lifestyle will miss out on the inheritance he/she could have had. I don't see this as a warning to unbelievers that they won't go to heaven; I view this as a warning to the believer that they will miss out on their rewards they could have inherited when Jesus Christ reigns on this earth during the Millennium.

God wants His children thinking very seriously and very eternally about not being immoral or greedy or using evil language. These kinds of things can cost us a future inheritance. Let me say it this way—if we are a child of God and we do not deal with immoral things or greed or the way we speak, we will throw away our inheritance. We will be in heaven, but we will not be rewarded with an inheritance in heaven.

Now I know that this goes against most modern day preaching in most modern day churches. Ministers love to talk about how God loves everyone just the way they are and they should do whatever makes them happy and joyful and they should live a fulfilled life any way they want. Paul warns God's people that if you do not pursue a morally pure life, if you are greedy or use speech that is evil, there will be some serious consequences.

**Reason #2** - Because of God's future wrath. **5:6**

Paul says we need to realize that the wrath of God is going to come against unbelievers who have lived their lives in an immoral, impure, greedy way. This is why God is going to pour out His wrath.

It is completely illogical for a child of God to live life in a way that would cause him to get before God, having pursued the very things for which God is pouring out His wrath upon the world.

Just imagine being in heaven after the Rapture and you know the Tribulation is taking place on earth. You are standing before the Throne of God, realizing the reason God is pouring out His wrath on earth is for the very lifestyle you pursued as a believer while on earth.

We do not want to be a believer who was known as one who was a partaker of the world, but one who reflects that we are an imitator of God.