

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 5:1-7

Session 41: Student Notetaker

Ephesians 4:1 – 5:17 the perfecting our godly living in view of:

- Eph. 4:1-6 _____
- Eph. 4:7-16 _____
- Eph. 4:17-32 _____
- Eph. 5:1-7 _____

Being a Follower of God means: _____

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Ephesians 5:1-7

Session 41: Being Followers of God

In Ephesians 5:1, Paul exhorts us to be “followers of God.”

So today, we are going to learn two main things:

1. What all is entailed in being a “Follower of God,” what is Paul asking us to do?

And secondly, we will discover:

2. The unbelievable glory of being a “Follower of God.”

Understand that Satan is actively working to keep us from being “followers of God.”

So, how important is this issue? Very important! For some, being a “follower of God” is the next important step to achieving “wise man” status in your sonship life. And that should be very exciting.

But for others, this may be the place where your spiritual life stalls and you wind up quitting your sonship life.

Do you understand what I am saying? I am saying that becoming a Follower of God is not automatic, but it will require something of us beyond merely listening to this session.

And I am saying that this is one of those issues where it is easy for Satan to lie to us, in this case: that God is asking too much from us. And when Satan puts this idea into your head, he will do so in a way that makes you think this is your idea, not his.

And it better not be your idea because if this is the way you are thinking, then he has you laboring on his behalf to promote his agenda in the world. You are his puppet. And if that is true for you, then you desperately need this session. So, let’s start with a word of prayer.

For those of you who are following the doctrine, let’s lay it out.

Ephesians 4:1 – 5:17 perfect our godly living in view of:

- Eph. 4:1-6 –the unity of the Spirit.
- Eph. 4:7-16 –the measure of the gift of Christ.
- Eph. 4:17-32 –putting on the new man.

The next two sections will complete the doctrines for perfecting our godly living.

- Eph. 5:1-7 – As dear children, we perfect our godly living by being followers of God who walk in love.

Let's start by reading the passage.

Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; ² And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. ³ But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴ Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. ⁷ Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

Now, looking back at vs. 1, what does it mean to be “followers of God?”

Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

When we look at God and consider His being and nature, exactly how are we supposed to be followers of God? Does this mean that we go around telling people we are Christians? I think it is more than that. I take this to mean we are supposed to be like Him (godly), not just follow Him around. There were many that followed Jesus around but never incorporated his teachings into their life. And eventually, He asked something they thought was too much, and they quit.

John 6:60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? ⁶¹ When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

John 6:66 From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

How can we be like God? We can be like God in His moral attributes.

There are some moral attributes of God that we cannot possess simply because we are the creatures and not the Creator. God's eternal nature, His glory, His infinite majesty, His omnipotence, His omnipresence, His omniscience; these are attributes we cannot possess. As such these attributes belong to God alone.

But some of God's attributes are communicable. These are the ones we are to understand if we are to be "followers of God" in the general sense of the term.

What are some of these communicable attributes? Holiness is a communicable attribute, and so God says "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Righteousness is another communicable attribute.

God is righteous, and He has made us to possess the righteousness of His Son, and because we have His righteousness, we can be righteous in our conduct.

Paul actually puts these two moral attributes together in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in **righteousness and true holiness**.

We can also be like God in our character.

Taking on the character of Christ because we are God's children is something the world knows nothing about. This is the essential difference between Christianity and mere morality. There are unsaved people in this world who are living uprightly, who lead moral lives and are satisfied with themselves. But that is the very opposite of Christianity; it is goodness for the sake of goodness.

And while they may be very good people, what Paul is teaching here is something about which they know nothing at all. It is because of who we are, children of God, that we are to refrain from some things and do other things.

God's justice, goodness, kindness, love, mercy, compassion, tenderness, longsuffering, lovingkindness, faithfulness, and forgiveness; we can possess all of these – and we are supposed to manifest them in our daily lives.

We are meant to put them on display, as they are part of our life and living, or, more accurately they are part of Christ's life being lived in us. And when we do, we are being "followers of God."

It is important to realize we are not being asked to be good people, we are to be followers of God! What is the difference? The difference is first in the motivation. (Another difference is the source of our actions – which is the Lord Jesus living His life in us. Another difference is the means by which we do this – which is the word of God working in us. Another difference is the agent of this work in us – which is the Spirit of God within us. The world of positive thinking, etc. has none of this.)

Why are we to be followers of God? Why are we, in our daily lives, to be as He is? What is our motivation for doing this? On what basis are we supposed to be followers of God? Paul gives us the answer in the verse: We are to be followers of God first and foremost **because we are God's children!**

Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, **as dear children;**

In other words, the thing that ought to motivate us to be followers of God is the fact that we are God's children. That is the godly motivation. The natural thing about children is that they want to be like their parents (boys want to be like their dad, and girls want to be like their mom).

If we realize the truth of this relationship, **our greatest desire will be to be like our heavenly Father.** Just watch a little boy who loves his father and knows his father's love to him; his great desire is to be like his father. He likes to sit in his father's chair, walk like his father, speak like his father. He wants to grow up to be a man like his father. This is human nature, is it not? This is ordinary human love at its best.

But if you take ordinary human love, clean it up and multiply it by infinity, you will discover what the apostle Paul is telling us to do; become followers of God – and why? – because God is our Father!

Now that we have a heavenly Father, the natural tendency for us as His children is to be like Him, and we should. As we “grow up,” God’s table of likes and dislikes becomes ours. And as our likes and dislikes line up with His, we are being “followers of God.”

This idea of being God’s children and what that means to us is not a new idea which Paul is suddenly introducing us to, here in Ephesians 5. In fact, we saw it back in the first chapter of this epistle.

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto **the adoption of children** by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

This is echoed in the 2nd chapter as well.

Ephesians 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and **of the household of God**;

Do you get what I am saying? We are children of God! We have been adopted into the household and family of God, we belong to God, we are related to God as His adopted sons and daughters! And if we miss this point, then we will never understand Paul’s appeal for conduct and behavior.

As Christians, we are not mere believers, we ARE believers; not merely those who have believed a certain body of doctrine, but we have been made to be something in connection with that doctrine. What has happened to us is after the pattern and the image of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! Remember chapter 4?

Ephesians 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which **after God** is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We are children of God; sons and daughters who have been adopted into His family. We are partakers of the divine nature! Christianity is not some moral code imposed upon us – we are followers of God because we are children of God. That is what it means to be God’s son or daughter.

Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, **as dear children**;

But we are not just His children, we are His “dear children.” Here, Paul tells us that we are not just children of God in the sense of an actual legal relationship, but we are children beloved. God has shown His love toward us and He continues to do so. He cares for us. Do you realize you are dear to God? Do you understand that God’s interest in and concern for His children is infinitely greater than the greatest, noblest, natural parent’s interest in his or her child?

This is not a mechanical relationship. Paul says that God’s relationship to us is that of dear children because of His great love wherewith He loves us.

What, then, is our response to God’s love? I believe the greatest desire of my life should be to show my love for God, and to please Him in everything. Nothing gives God greater joy than to see His children living in a manner that is worthy of Him.

Is there anything in this world that is comparable to the fact that we are children of God, that we belong to God’s family, the household of God? This world is not our home, our citizenship is in heaven; that is where we belong. But God has left us in the world for a time, but at the same time, we have been called out of its darkness. We have been taken out of the kingdom of Satan and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. We are adopted into the heavenly family.

And as you work, walk down the street, sit in your home, you should say to yourself, “I am a child of God. I am His son/daughter. I belong to His family. Men and angels are looking at me and watching me, and they will be judging God and Christ by what they see in me.”

One final question – how are we to be followers of God? Paul tells us we do it by “walking in love.”

Ephesians 5:2 **And walk in love**, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

The whole of our conduct and conversation must be carried out in the realm and in the sphere of love.

Is it enough to love them which love you? Do you only love those who are nice to you? We love our enemies; which means we value and esteem them for who they are to our Father. Even when they persecute us, we love them. Even when they treat us in a cruel manner, we forgive them and our conduct toward them is like our Father's toward His enemies in this dispensation of the grace of God (DoGG). As followers of God, we can love those who are unlovable.

Paul is teaching us that the whole of our life is to be ordered in love. All of our professions and activities must be measured by the yardstick of love. Love is the test. Everything in our life is designed to bring us to this condition. We are to be like God, as His children. Therefore, the greatest characteristic of our life is to walk in love.

It is in the work of Christ on our behalf that we see the highest manifestation of God's love.

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, **as Christ also hath loved us**, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

As soon as Paul tells us to walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, he goes on to show how the Lord has demonstrated that love to us in three particular ways:

1. He has given Himself for us **an offering**.
2. He has given Himself for us **a sacrifice**.
3. He has given Himself for **a sweetsmelling savor**.

These are the three issues we must look at. Do you find it odd that in the midst of this practical doctrine, Paul suddenly launches into statements concerning the Atonement? Be glad he did, for after he gives us some objective statements about the Atonement, he is going to show us how that doctrine is meant to influence us and become our example as sons and daughters of God.

When we look at the last half of verse 2, we are looking at Paul's doctrinal exposition of God's love. And since what we do is determined by our doctrine, this is what Paul is setting out to do, present to us doctrine which will result in us being followers of God who walk in love, for that is exactly what Christ was doing in the Atonement.

Do you want the love of God working in you? Then realize that the love of Christ is to be measured by the extent to which we are manifesting this love in our lives. Christians may sing about the love of God, but you prove you have it as you behave in your home with your family, in your school, in your workplace, everywhere. It is easier to sing about it than practice it, but it is the practice alone that proves you are really doing it.

The statement of doctrine is: Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. Consider that it was Christ's love for us that produced his activity on the Cross. Paul does not say the measure of Christ's love is that He loves the Father. The measure of Christ's love is that He loved us! (The Father was lovable and deserving, but we were not.)

And you won't get the full impact of His love for you until you understand just how unlovely we all were. There was nothing in us to recommend us to Him, nothing attractive – only that which is ugly, vile and foul. When we realize the result of sin and what horrible creatures we were as our inheritance from Adam, only then can we begin to understand the meaning of the love of Christ for us.

Paul says in verse 2, that He loved us and gave himself for us. He not only set aside everything in order to take on the form of a servant, humbled himself, to become a man, but he gave Himself – His life – He gave it all up as an offering to God and a sacrifice.

An offering is a gift that is presented to another. Paul says that Christ gave Himself as an offering to God.

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us **an offering** and a **sacrifice** to God for a **sweet-smelling savour**.

But the word offering is not sufficient in itself to convey the whole of Paul's meaning. A second term is needed; a sacrifice.

To discover the meaning of sacrifice, we have to go back to the Old Testament (OT), into Israel's time past program. A sacrifice was something offered by a priest upon an altar. An animal was taken – it had to be a perfect animal, free from all blemish. The high priest, representing the people, put his hands upon the animal's head,

symbolically transferring the sins of the people to the animal. The animal was slain, its blood poured out and collected in a bowl. The animal was slain due to the guilt of the people's sins.

The high priest took the bowl of blood and offered it to God in the innermost sanctuary of the temple, before the Ark of the Covenant. The body of the animal was placed on the altar in the outer courtyard and burned, where the smell ascended up to the presence of God. And there is our last term: sweetsmelling savor. This is the concept of the pleasure and satisfaction this sacrifice gave to God. As a "sweet" smell, it was an indication that it was satisfactory to God.

So, what was happening on the cross? Was it just the death of Jesus as a great pacifist? Was it just the death of some good and noble person whose teaching was much too good for mankind? A person centuries ahead of His time, who taught this wonderful ethic and practiced it in His life? No!

Jesus said no man takes His life from Him, but He lays it down of Himself. He is the Lamb of God – He is an offering – He is a sacrifice. He is the One to whom the sins and guilt are transferred, who is smitten and slain.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Unless we understand and believe the substitutionary and penal doctrine of the Atonement, we really cannot comprehend the love of God and the love of the Lord Jesus.

So, what is the lesson for us? Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us.

Philippians 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Don't let your focus be on your advancement, but on how you can advance others; not on how you can help yourself, but how you can help others.

This is what our Lord did. He did not consider Himself, He did not demand His rights, He did not consider His innocence, He did not defer to His feelings, His comfort was not an issue; He did not consider Himself at all. He gave Himself up!

Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God.

The Lord Jesus accomplished His work for us in spite of us. There is no merit in loving those who love you. There is nothing wonderful in being kind to those who are kind to you. What makes us followers of God is that we do to others what He has done for us!

It means when you and I meet difficult people, who have nothing to recommend them at all, people who are vile and objectionable, who attack us and persecute us and deal with us spitefully – we are to deal with them as our Lord dealt with us. Walk in love. Pray for them. Bring yourself to have a burning desire within you that they may be delivered because they are the victims of sin and Satan. Love your enemies! Bless them that curse you!

Is there anything in the world comparable to the privilege of being a son or daughter of God? We are asked, and invited, and called upon to live as Christ lived, and we are the only people in the world who can have Christ live His life in us. What a privilege, what an honor, what a high calling to be “followers of God!”

Now, all of this has to do with the general sense of what it means for us to be followers of God. But here in Ephesians 5:1-7, I think there is a more specific sense in which Paul means for us to be followers of God, and we will look at this next time.