

**The Family of God**  
**A Solemn Demeanor (Ephesians 4:17–5:21)**  
**By Pastor Jeff Alexander (2/21/2021)**

**Introduction**

1. God’s spiritual family is to be trained to live in holiness (Hebrews 12:7–11). Like all children, God’s offspring naturally tend to be flippant and silly, particularly in situations where they are not disciplined to respond correctly. In such cases, laughter becomes a cover for their superficial and hollow standing. Rather, God’s children should “*attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that they may no longer be children*” (Ephesians 4:13, 14).
2. Carnal flesh loves conduct that is often accompanied with mirth and song, jesting and foolish talk. Such flippant behavior often hides the ever-fretting uneasiness of conscience because the maxim of those who desire to soothe their ruffled minds is “*eat, drink, be merry*” (Luke 12:19).
3. Some believers succumb to worldly frivolity out of neglect of spiritual vigilance. Some revert to their former worldly ways to ease conviction of their own sin and disobedience. Instead of facing the truth in brokenness, repentance, and confession, their prideful defense is to behave according to old habits.
4. We are called to something higher than we may realize. Understanding this solemn calling should awaken us to exhibit proper behavior in our conduct. We live, not for ourselves, but for others (Ephesians 4:29). Believers must recognize the glorious and important station to which God has called them and thus to “*be imitators of God, as dear children*” (Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 2:14–16).

**I. We Must Forsake Futility Mind**

1. We are to live no longer according to our former lifestyle characterized by *futility* of mind—a mind devoid of truth and appropriateness (1 Corinthians 14:20). Scripture informs us of our past demeanor in the world.
  - a. We were full of *darkness* (*ignorance* in understanding concerning what is true and right) because we were *alienated* from the life of God. Our walk was inappropriate because of this ignorance. The unregenerate do not know God and thus do not understand His will, which was a consequence of their willful and stubborn rejection of Him (Romans 1:21).
  - b. We were *callous* (a hardened insensibility and apathy), given over to *sensuality* (incontinence driven by fleshly desires), practicing what is impure or unclean with respect to holy standards (Romans 1:24, 25). *Uncleanness* is related to holiness and was strictly forbidden of those anointed to the service of the thrice-holy God (Leviticus 20:3). Christians have been anointed to holy service to God. So, how many have considered their compromises as making His sanctuary, the church, unclean and thereby profaning His holy name?
  - c. We were *corrupt* (being in a state of *defilement* that led us away from holiness) through *deceitful desires*.
2. Now, it is not in futility of mind that we learned Christ. Rather, Paul uses language of the child-training process employed by the Lord to conform us to the image of Christ (Hebrews 12:10).

- a. In learning Christ, we are trained to *put off* once and for all the old self—a deliberate act of the will to quit the old life to pursue a new life in Christ. Paul assumed his readers had heard about Jesus and were taught *in* Him (through their vital union with Him) “*as the truth is in Jesus.*” He is the truth, and truth must characterize those who follow Him.
- b. We are to practice renewing the new spiritual mind. Renewing the mind is how we are transformed into the imaged of Christ (Romans 12:2). Again, we must understand the context of this passage. Christians have been anointed by God to holy service. We must have a deportment that complements that calling—a “*holy priesthood*” ministering in the Lord’s spiritual house (the temple-church) offering up “*spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 2:5; Romans 12:1). Our qualification for this service of worship is our being united in our great High Priest, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:10).

## II. We Bear His Image in Serving

In the instruction of verses 25 through 5:21, we find four basic warnings.

1. We are not to *give opportunity* to the devil (vv. 25–28).

The devil is a liar and the father of liars (John 8:44), thus we are to “*put away* [once and for all] *falsehood.*” There must be no division among His people (Zechariah 8:16, 17).

2. We are not to *grieve* the Holy Spirit of God (4:29–5:2).

God’s children are to behave themselves in their speech. We are the *salt* of the earth (Matthew 5:13) and our speaking must not be *corrupting* (rotten, putrefied, thus, bad, unfit for use, and worthless (Colossians 4:6).

3. We are not to *partner* with the sons of disobedience (5:3–13).

God’s children are no longer subject to the wrath of God as are the children of disobedience. Therefore, they must not partner with them in their shame and ignorance. Rather, as children of light, we are to walk in the light (truth) and expose the deeds of darkness.

4. We are not to be *foolish* but understand what the will of the Lord is (5:14–21).

God’s children are to be controlled (filling does not relate to volume, but control), not by the flesh or by external influence (wine), but by the Holy Spirit. Walking in the Spirit enables us to be careful in these evil days. “*For this is the will of God, your sanctification*” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

True Spirit-control is evidenced in the body when the body comes together and celebrates the Lord (v. 19). It also involves consistent gratitude to God and “*submitting of one to another* [who has authority] *out of reverence for Christ*” (v. 20).

## Conclusion

1. Is your spiritual deportment childish or mature? Are you quick to react to negative things said to you or about you? Do you respond in bitterness with wrath and anger, quick to slander others or God?
2. Can others witness the growing holiness and Christlikeness in you? Do you walk wisely as a Spirit-controlled believer, deporting yourself as one doing the will of God to the glory of God?