



Ephesians

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Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. Ephesians 5:1

“Therefore” is given for us to consider what has been said and then to apply it to what will be said. Paul spoke about learning of Christ in verse 4:20. That led into the appropriate walk for believers. A description of how to conduct that walk was then broken down for us in verses 25-32. In those verses, we are instructed in how to walk properly and thus to be sound in our learning of Christ. The verses ended with, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

With that final thought, we are then told, “Therefore be imitators of God.” In doing the things which were described, we are imitating God. Those final words of “forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” were explained in detail. It was noted that our forgiveness is to be universally available, but not necessarily universally applied. We are not required to forgive those who do not repent of their conduct toward us, just as God does not forgive those who do not come to Him through Christ. The forgiveness is potentially unconditional, but it is not actual until it is requested.

To prove this, we can go just a couple verses down in Chapter 5 where Paul will say –

⁵“For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”

A person who has no “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God,” and upon whom “the wrath of God comes,” is obviously not forgiven. And so, in order to be imitators of God, we are to hold to that which is good, refrain from that which is evil, and to forgive openly and freely, but not unwisely. In so doing, we will be “as dear children.

A child who is dear is a child who emulates his parents in the ways they instruct. He further emulates his parents after seeing the way they behave. If we openly “forgive” someone who is violently opposed to the Christian message, who is a fornicator, an unclean person, a covetous man, or an idolater, without them first being willing to come to Christ and turn from those things, then we are not emulating our Father in heaven. We are, instead, condoning their lifestyle, and thus actually working against His intent and purpose for these people.

However, this is what modern churchianity has come to. Doors are swung wide open to those who practice such things, and there is no hint of condemning the conduct in which they are engaged. Supposed blanket forgiveness of sin is handed out, and the example of God, which is given to us in Christ, is ignored.

Life application: When we are asked to be imitators of God, it does not mean that we are to only assume what others might consider the “positive” aspects He possesses, but all of His attributes. We are to have a moral sense of righteousness, justice, intolerance towards sin, and the like. If we fail in this regard, we are not upholding the words of Scripture, and we are not glorifying our Father who is in heaven.

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. Ephesians 5:2

In order to be imitators of God, as the previous verse demands, we are to walk in holiness and to accomplish those things which were given to us to heed in the previous chapter. But in addition to that, we are to “walk in love.” Love is the tie which binds all of those other aspects of our walk together. This is seen in Jesus’ words of John 13:34, 35 –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

But this love is defined in a special way by Paul now with the words, “as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us.” Jesus didn’t just command us to love, but to do so with a type of love which is self-sacrificing. He made this known to us explicitly in John 15:12, 13 –

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”

We are to follow in His self-sacrificing love. This does not mean that we all have to literally die for our friends, but that our sacrifices are such that we would be willing to die for them. In Christ's death, Paul next brings in the Old Testament system of sacrifices and offerings to show us that what was in the Old only prefigured the greater and more perfect work of Christ. He says that Christ gave Himself for us "as an offering and a sacrifice to God."

The offering was His life, lived under the law and in fulfillment of the law, which was given to God on our behalf. He fulfilled the law perfectly and completely without ever failing in any precept. The sacrifice was then His death in satisfaction of the law. This is referred to in Hebrews. Chapter 10 of Hebrews explains it quite well –

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,

But a body You have prepared for Me.

⁶ In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin

You had no pleasure.

⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—

In the volume of the book it is written of Me—

To do Your will, O God.'" Hebrews 10:5-7

The sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament were mandated under the law, and yet they are not what the Lord desired. Instead, they only pointed to the life of Christ. This is seen in the words, "a body you have prepared for Me." These words of Hebrews 10 were written by David in Psalm 40:6-8, and they show us that David understood the temporary, transitory, and prophetic nature of the law's sacrificial system. In Christ, they find their fulfillment. In His death then, there is "a sweet smelling aroma."

This term goes back to the sacrificial system which is detailed in the Old Testament, especially in Exodus and Leviticus. When a sacrifice was made as a burnt offering or a sin offering, the portion that was burnt on the altar before the Lord was deemed as "a sweet smelling aroma." These offerings were given in anticipation of the cross of Christ. It was His cross which is the true and complete "sweet smelling aroma" to God. Through Him, full and complete restoration to God is made for the people of the world. Through His cross, we are made acceptable to God once again.

This perfect offering is what we are to emulate. As Christ walked, so are we to walk. And His perfect sacrifice, based on His perfect life, is what we are also to emulate. In our walk, we are to be willing to offer ourselves to God and in the service of others in love.

Life application: It is a very high calling to which we have been called. Are we willing to put aside our petty differences and hold our fellow Christians in high esteem as we have been

asked? Are we willing to expend ourselves, serving others even as Christ served us? Let us remember these words and think on them as we interact with other believers.