

# **EPHESIANS**

Part 9: “A Sacrifice to God”

Ephesians 5:1-20

Sunday, October 14, 2018

By David A. Ritchie

## **Scripture Reading**

**5** Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. **2** And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**3** But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. **4** Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. **5** 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. **6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. **7** Therefore do not become partners with them; **8** for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light **9** (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), **10** and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. **11** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. **12** For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. **13** But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, **14** for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

**15** Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. **18** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, **19** addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, **20** giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>

*Almighty God, we thank you that your Son Jesus gave his life for us. May your Spirit teach us how to live our lives for him. We pray this in Jesus' mighty name. AMEN.*

## **Introduction**

---

<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Eph 5:1–20.

- I remember after I became a Christian committing to read the Bible cover-to-cover. I would try to talk to other Christians about what I was reading and tell them what books of the Bible were about.
- Genesis was about the beginning of the world and the beginning of God's people.
- Exodus was about the redemption of God's people, the nation of Israel.
- Leviticus was about...how God likes his meat cooked?
- Sacrifice is an odd thing if you think about it.
- But sacrifice, even in ancient times, pointed to a deeper truth.
- Sacrifice acknowledges an estrangement between God and man that needs reconciliation that comes through the life and blood of another.
- Sacrifice entails a giving of something that is precious to us unto God, as a way of worship
- Even in the Old Testament, much of sacrifice was meant to convey gratitude.
- God has always wanted his people to look at their lives as a form of worshipful sacrifice.

*"... Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22, ESV).*

- That is what we will talk about today.
- 1<sup>st</sup> half of Ephesians (1-3): what Christ has done and how he has transformed us.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Ephesians (4-6): how we must respond to God's work.
- Ephesians 5 is about seeing our life as a sacrifice of loving worship.

*"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:1-2, ESV).*

- I think many Christians would say they agree with the idea that our lives are to be a form of worship.
- But this can be an often intangible concept and idea.
- This passage is going to show some guiding principles of how to live lives of worship, by giving us some key questions to ask ourselves.

## **Exposition**

### **1.) What is proper?**

*"But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place..." (Ephesians 5:3-4, ESV)*

- We are to see ourselves as "saints" (those who are set apart and holy).

- Then, we are to act according to what is “proper” to that role.
- It is obvious we behave differently than the role we have been given
- In the old comedy movie *Dumb and Dumber*, Jim Carry and Jeff Daniels go to a very fancy fundraiser event, and it is very obvious that they do not belong
- There are three types of sinning Paul calls out here for saints to avoid: sinning with sex, money, and words.
- These are some of the most common issues in life.
- Sex, in particular, was a big deal in Ephesus “...since the Greek goddess Artemis, ‘Diana of the Ephesians,’ was regarded as a fertility goddess, sexual orgies were regularly associated with her worship.”<sup>2</sup>
- The Greek word for “sexual immorality” is *porneia* (πορνεία).<sup>3</sup> Together with “impurity” (ἀκαθαρσία) these two words “...cover every kind of sexual sin, in other words, all sexual intercourse outside its God-ordained context of a loving [covenantal] marriage [between one man and one woman].”<sup>4</sup>
- To God’s people are to view their sex lives as something submitted under the Lordship of Jesus. We are to take the gift of sexuality (which is something God created) and let that reality exist only within the context of God’s created design, whether that means being faithful to God in a marriage or faithful to God in our singleness.
- This was a counter-cultural idea in Ephesus, where Artemis was worshipped.
- This is a counter-cultural idea in today’s culture, where sex is worshipped.
- I have heard it said that sex is to our culture what money was to the rich young ruler (cf. Mk. 10:17-27).
- Another sin listed covetousness which can mean greediness.
- In this text, it is also directly equated with idolatry (5:5); the sin of putting something within creation in the place of the creator; looking to money or material as a substitute for God.
- Paul also lists different ways we can sin with our words
- Filthiness – obscene or dirty language
- Foolish speech – “morologia” (μωρολογία), moronic words literally<sup>5</sup>
- Crude joking – the idea that it is okay to say bad words as long as it is funny
- If we are known for anything, it should be gratitude: “...but instead let there be thanksgiving” (Eph. 5:4).

---

<sup>2</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 192.

<sup>3</sup> “unlawful sexual intercourse, *prostitution, unchastity, fornication*” William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 854.

<sup>4</sup> Stott, 191.

<sup>5</sup> “(μωρός, λογ[ε]ία; Aristot., HA 1, 11; Plut., Mor. 504b; Jos., C. Ap. 2, 115) *foolish/silly talk*” Arndt et al., 663.

- And if being saints isn't enough to motivate us, Paul then gives some sobering words:

*“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” (Ephesians 5:5–6, ESV).*

- “Be sure of this” – this means this is something we are often unsure of.
- Those who make these sins their practice and identity will not share in the inheritance. They don't get to come into the eternal promise land.
- “Let no one deceive you” – this means this is a topic that we can be deceived.
- Sin is why judgment is coming.
- Just because you sin doesn't mean you are not saved.
- Just because you are prone and consistently tempted toward sins doesn't mean you are not saved.
- But if sin is your identity (the sins in 5:5 are listed as identities), you should be convicted and spurred to repentance.
- And if you are consistently sinning and unrepentant, you should be very concerned.

Elsewhere the New Testament says: *“Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:7–9, ESV).*

- It is possible to know about God, but not know God. Do you know him? Have you seen evidence of his life in you? If not, trust in Jesus today.

## **2.) What is pleasing?**

*“Therefore do not become partners with them; 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.” (Ephesians 5:7–10, ESV)*

- Husbands, imagine it is a significant wedding anniversary.
- There are two scenarios: You ask, “what do I need to do for you not to be mad at me?” or “What can I do to show you how much I love you?”
- Which route will lead your relationship to a better place?
- Likewise, there is a distinct motivational difference between: “What can I get away with” vs. “what is pleasing to the Lord” mindsets.

- This too begins with an identity issue: once you were in darkness; but now you are light.
- Walk as children of the light.
- Walking in the light pleases the Lord.
- The fruit of the light is obvious – what is “good and right and true.”

*“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’”* (Ephesians 5:11–14, ESV)

- The reality of God should awaken us to a new way of life.
- We are called in such a way that if everyone knew the real you that you would not be ashamed.
- Expose the darkness; live in the light.
- This implies walking in honest Christian community; having people that you can be honest with about your struggles.
- Confession naturally helps us to walk more righteously and in a way that pleases God.
- The Apostle John says it this way in the book of 1 John:

*“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:5–7, ESV).

### **3.) What is prudent?**

- If this gospel is true, we cannot live as if it is some side hobby.
- That is, we must walk prudently.

*“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,”* (Ephesians 5:15, ESV)

*Understand the primary importance of wisdom (“not as unwise but wise”)*

*“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her”* (Proverbs 4:7–8, ESV).

- All blessings flow from wisdom.
- Wisdom begins in a posture of humility and a willingness to learn and listen.
- If you don’t have wisdom, ask for it (James 1:5).

### Understand that time is a finite resource

- “*making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*” (Ephesians 5:16, ESV)
- Are you living in such a way that you are cognizant that time is one resource you will never get to renew?
- Are you living in for the important or for the urgent?
- Are you valuing what is critical for your life or for what is comfortable and convenient in the moment?

### Understand the will of the Lord

- “*Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*” (Ephesians 5:17, ESV)
- This requires mindfulness, meditation on the word of God, and intentional thinking and reflection upon one’s life, not just a reactionary posture to our circumstances.
- This implies a life prayer to God and receiving wise counsel from others.

### Understand your need for the Holy Spirit

- “*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,*” (Ephesians 5:18, ESV)
- Why this comparison and contrast?
- John Stott did a really good job of unpacking this phrase, so I will quote him at length: “...there is a superficial similarity between the two conditions. A person who is drunk, we say, is ‘under the influence’ of alcohol; and certainly, a Spirit-filled Christian is under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. But there the comparison ends and the contrast begins. Of course in the heathen cult of Dionysus intoxication was regarded as a means to inspiration. But it is a serious mistake to suppose that to be filled with the Spirit of Jesus Christ is a kind of spiritual inebriation in which we lose control of ourselves. On the contrary, ‘self-control’ (*enkrateia*) is the final quality named as ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ in Galatians 5:22–23. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we do not lose control; we gain it.”<sup>6</sup>
- Oftentimes people seek alcohol as a way of escape and comfort.
- Paul is saying this is a dangerous way to look at alcohol (or any substance).
- But we should seek the Holy Spirit for our peace.
- The verb “be filled” (πληροῦσθε) is in the present tense with an active aspect. This implies that this is an ongoing, consistent daily activity. We are to seek dependence upon the Lord daily.

### How do we seek the fullness of the spirit?

“*addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, 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*” (Ephesians 5:19–20, ESV)

---

<sup>6</sup> Stott, 204.

- These are means of grace by which the Holy Spirit fills us and empowers us to live the Christian life
- Fellowship = “one another”
  - spiritual community; mutual encouragement and prayer
- Worship: Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs
  - Singing makes truth memorable
  - Singing connects the truth of our mind with the loves of our heart<sup>7</sup>
- Cultivating gratitude and thanksgiving
  - Habits of thankfulness need to be embedded into community
  - Be thankful, not just in general, but unto the Lord

## **Conclusion**

- Thanksgiving is a major topic of this passage (Eph. 5:4,20).
- All of the Christian life a worship flows not from the attempt to earn, but gratitude.
- The word “giving thanks” in verse 20 is “eucharisteo” (εὐχαριστέω).
- We derive the word Eucharist from this word.
- The Lord’s Supper is not just something we do.
- When we remember the love of Christ, we are cultivating ultimate gratitude by remembering the ultimate sacrifice.
- The cross was the ultimate sacrifice that reconciled us to God.
- We give our lives for the sake of the one who gave his life for us.
- May live our lives in worship! May we live our lives in gratitude! AMEN.

## **Community Group Discussion Starters**

***1. In your own words, summarize some of the main ideas of Eph. 5:1-20.***

***2. Eph. 5:3 talks about that which is (and is not) “proper among the saints.” A saint is one who is set apart for the purposes of God. Why is understanding our sainthood so important in motivating us to live righteously?***

---

<sup>7</sup> “Singing, whether aloud or in your heart, was, he thought, an excellent way of actually practising the faith. If you don’t want your garden to grow weeds, one of the best ways is to keep it well stocked with strong, sturdy flowers and shrubs. If you don’t want your mind and heart to go wandering off into the realms of darkness, one of the best ways is to keep them well stocked with wise and thankful themes, so that words of comfort, guidance and good judgment come bubbling up unbidden from the memory and subconscious.” Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 62–63.

3. *In reference to Eph. 5:10, what is the difference between asking yourself “What can I get away with?” versus asking “What is pleasing to the Lord?”*
4. *A major emphasis of this passage is thanksgiving (Eph. 5:4, 20). What are some habits that you can incorporate into your daily life in order to cultivate greater gratitude?*

## Bibliography

- A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*. Ed. Michael J. Kruger. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016.
- Barclay, William. *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*. The New Daily Study Bible. Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Calvin, John, and William Pringle. *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010.
- Hughes, R. Kent. *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990.
- O'Brien, Peter Thomas. [\*The Letter to the Ephesians\*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Stott, John R. W. [\*God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians\*](#), The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.
- Wright, Tom. *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004.