

Ephesians 5:1-21

In today's society, the institution of marriage is under attack.

Not only has the media dragged down our morals, but many of our schools of higher learning, so-called, have relegated marriage to the status of irrelevance.

But marriage isn't irrelevant.

It was instituted by God Himself, and predates all other relationships.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Genesis 2:24

And families, which God intended to be nurtured within the framework of marriage, are also His idea.

And spiritually speaking, this is the same relationship that binds every child of God to his Heavenly Father.

And this is the spiritual relationship that Paul refers to in Ephesians Chapter 5 and Verse 1, when he admonishes the believers to be "**--- followers of God, as dear children.**"

Later on, and in this same chapter, he will lay down the ground rules that should govern human families, at least as far as Christians are concerned.

But let's start at the beginning, where God's spiritual family is in view.

Ephesians 5:1 "**Be ye therefore followers (or imitators) of God, as dear children.**"

I have a nephew who is a farmer.

And when his son was just a wee lad, it was quite amusing to see him following his father around the farm.

He walked like his dad, and he talked like his dad, and I'm sure he *thought* he was a farmer already.

Of course, at his tender age, he really wasn't a farmer.

There's no way that little fellow could run a farm.

But that didn't stop him from imitating his dad, and dreaming of the future.

And there's no way we can be like our Heavenly Father.

But that shouldn't stop us from being imitators **"of God, as dear children."**

And you know what?

We already have a head start.

You see, every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and Ephesians 5: 9 tells us --- **"the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."**

And isn't goodness and righteousness and truth some of the very attributes of our Heavenly Father, and aren't those the very attributes that the Holy Spirit wants to reproduce in us?

So then, we really do have a head start in that noble pursuit.

And not only can we be imitators of God, but we should be followers of Christ.

And that's what the very next verse is all about.

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."**

If we look carefully, we will discover that there is a twofold aspect to this example of Jesus' love.

First of all, He "**loved us, and hath given himself for us.**"

And from our somewhat selfish point of view, that's the part we are most interested in.

Yes, we are so thankful that Jesus was willing to become "**sin for us, who knew no sin,**" that we might be made the "**righteousness of God in him.**"

And if we study the Old Testament sacrifices which were offered in the tabernacle, we will discover that the sin offering depicts this very aspect of Christ's sacrifice.

However, the sin offering is not a sweet savour offering.

Because Jesus became "**sin for us,**" His Heavenly Father, who cannot look upon sin, had to turn His back on His Son.

No, there was no sweet savour for God in the sin offering.

There was only separation, and the anguished cry of His Son ringing in His ears, **"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"**

And so, if the first part of Ephesians 5:2 pictures the sin offering, why does the last part talk about **"--- an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour"?**

Well, that's the other aspect of Christ's Calvary love.

Certainly, He loved us and was willing to die for us, but the real driving force behind Calvary was Jesus' love for His Father.

Yes, it was that fervent desire to do His Father's will that directed His steps to Calvary.

And that wasn't only true of Calvary; it was the guiding principle behind everything that He did.

Yes, He could certainly say "**--- I do always those things that please him.**"

So then, both in His life and His death, Jesus was a constant source of pleasure to His Heavenly Father.

And not surprisingly, there is a sweet savour offering to depict both of these aspects of His devotion.

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First of all, the meat offering, more properly called the meal offering, as it contained fine flour, not meat, depicts His perfect life.

The fine flour speaks of the evenness and balance of Christ's character, the perfection in which no quality is in excess or lacking.

The oil that anointed the meal offering pictures the Holy Spirit who came upon Jesus at His baptism.

And the frankincense, as its smoke ascended to heaven, gave a sweet smelling savour.

However, this sacrifice also includes salt, an ingredient that arrests corruption.

How characteristic of our Lord Jesus, Who always spoke the truth, even though it rubbed salt into the corrupt consciences of His enemies.

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The next sweet savour offering I would like to talk about is the peace offering.

It depicts one of the major aspects of Christ's finished work.

Yes, His atoning sacrifice on Calvary has secured peace between a righteous God and hopeless sinners.

Colossians 1:19-22 "For it pleased the
Father that in him should all fullness
dwell;

20: And, having made peace through the
blood of his cross, by him to reconcile
all things unto himself; by him, I say,
whether they be things in earth, or
things in heaven.

21: And you, that were sometime
alienated and enemies in your mind by
wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22: In the body of his flesh through
death, to present you holy and
unblameable and unreprouvable in his
sight:"

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However, in today's lesson, I would like to
focus on the burnt offering, for I
believe that's the offering that is

being referred to in the last part of
Ephesians 5: 2.

You can read about this offering in
Leviticus 1:1-17.

The burnt offering, like the sin offering,
was offered on the brazen altar, which
is a picture of the cross.

However, unlike the sin offering, the burnt
offering was a sweet savour offering.

And there's another distinction which sets
the burnt offering apart from all other
offerings.

We can read about that difference in
Leviticus 1:8-9 --- **"And the priests,
Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the
head, and the fat, in order upon the
wood that is on the fire which is upon
the altar:**

**9: But his inwards and his legs shall he
wash in water: and the priest shall burn**

all on the altar (and there's the distinction), **to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD."**

Yes, unlike the other offerings in which the priests had a share, the burnt offering was entirely consumed upon the altar.

It was a sweet savour offering exclusively for God.

Certainly, as believer priests, God wants us to partake of His Son.

He wants us to feed upon Him on a daily basis.

But the absolutely unique aspect of Christ's sacrifice, depicted in the burnt offering, can only be appreciated by God.

It pictures the all-consuming desire of His blessed Son to do His will.

No, Calvary was not about Jesus' personal well-being.

It was about His Father's will.

That is so evident when we hear Jesus' agonizing cry in the garden --- **"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."**

No, in spite of the terrible separation and the crushing burden of our sin that loomed up before Him, **"--- when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."** Luke 9:51

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And that was the love that Paul was talking about when he said in 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."

And even though we cannot comprehend such love, much less duplicate it, it is the Christian's privilege and responsibility to **"walk in love."**

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And there's another Christlike attribute that should characterize a Christian. It's the attitude of humility.

In Philippians 2:3-8, we read --- **"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.**

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

5: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6: Who, being in the form of God,
thought it not robbery to be equal with
God:

7: But made himself of no reputation,
and took upon him the form of a servant,
and was made in the likeness of men:

8: And being found in fashion as a man,
he humbled himself, and became obedient
unto death, even the death of the
cross."

Once again, Christ's example is our
motivator.

Yes, not only should we be imitators of God,
but we should be followers of our
gracious Lord.

It's all part of being in God's family.

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Well, that's one family, but there's another
family living in the world.

In Ephesians 5:6, Paul calls the members of that family, "**the children of disobedience.**"

In this case, I believe he is referring to the non-Christian residents of Ephesus. And not surprisingly, the Ephesian believers were to have nothing to do with their lifestyle.

Ephesians 5:3-6 **"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."

As you can see, Paul is warning the believers against the sexual sins that were so prevalent in their society, and I might add the sexual sins that have become far more acceptable in our day than in our parents' generation.

Ephesians 5:3 **"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints."**

Yes, these sins should be unthinkable in the life of a Christian.

However, because of our old nature, such sins are possible.

For instance, King David, who was a man after God's own heart, committed adultery.

And in an attempt to hide this sin, he even resorted to murder.

However, unlike Saul, who refused to admit his disobedience, David repented and found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

But he still had to reap what he sowed.

Yes, even though he found forgiveness, and unlike Saul was not cast aside, there were repercussions for the rest of his life.

And that's also true of the Christian who falls into sin.

No, he will not lose his salvation; he will always be a child of God.

But he will suffer repercussions.

No, God will not countenance such sin in the life of His children.

As a good parent, He will chasten His child, sometimes very severely, to bring him into line.

And I don't believe backsliding Christians can be truly happy.

They're grieving God's Holy Spirit, and He will make His displeasure known.

They may act like pigs, but they'll never be content *living* like pigs.

So then, a Christian may fall into sin, but he will not continue in sin.

If a professing Christian does continue in sin, then it's a sure sign that his profession is false.

He's not a child of God, but a child "**of disobedience.**"

Make no mistake about it.

These are the sins of the unsaved.

Ephesians 5:3 ---"**But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not**

be once named among you, as becometh saints."

I'm sure some of us are wondering why covetousness has been included in this list of sexual sins.

We usually associate covetousness with material possessions, or personal privileges that others have and we want. But in truth, covetousness *does* belong in this list.

And not only does it belong, but it is the root sin of which sexual sins are the unholy fruit.

It is the sin that is quite prepared to ruin the lives and marriages of others in order to gratify its own uncontrolled desires.

No doubt that's why the 10th Commandment, dealing with covetousness, includes "**thy**

neighbour's wife" in its list of forbidden conquests.

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Ephesians 5:4 **"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks."**

Certainly, a Christian must be wary of foolish talking and jesting.

However, I don't believe a Christian's life must be devoid of natural humour.

And I'm quite sure, if we put V 4 in context, it will become quite obvious that the subject is still sexual sins.

No, I don't believe Paul is condemning all humour, but rather off-coloured jokes and dirty inferences.

And we must always remember that God judges our thoughts as well as our actions.

That's why Jesus said "**whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.**"

Therefore, our minds, and as a result our conversation, should not be taken up with such "**filthiness,**" but rather the giving of thanks.

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V 5-7 "**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."

No, Christians should not be **"partakers with them,"** and it is certain that they will not be partakers with Christians.

And by that I mean, **"the children of disobedience,"** those who reject God and His gift of salvation, will have no **"inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."**

But they will inherit the **"wrath of God,"** and for these very sins.

"Be not ye therefore partakers with them."

Such sins should **"not be once named among you, as becometh saints."**

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Ephesians 5:8 **"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."**

Paul didn't say *they used to reside in the darkness, but now they were living in light.*

No, it wasn't their environment that had changed.

It was their essential being.

They used to be darkness, but now they are light.

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In John 8:12, Jesus made this statement ---

"I am the light of the world."

And certainly He has proven that to be abundantly true.

But what might surprise us is His statement in Matthew 5:14 --- **"Ye are the light of the world."**

However, that is equally true.

Today, in this Age of Grace, Christians **"are the light of the world."**

Just like the moon, they reflect the true Light in a very dark world.

Yes, Jesus made a very important point here, and I think we should pause for a moment to meditate on it.

Not only will we gain some valuable truth, but we will pick up some pointers on teaching.

Matthew 5:14-16 **"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.**

15: Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

First of all, Jesus makes a definite statement --- **"Ye are the light of the world."**

It wasn't something His followers could look forward to becoming.

Nor was it some lofty goal to be attained.

It was what they were already, because it was what He had made them.

And then Jesus points out two everyday examples of physical light.

There's no doubt that a city that is built on a hill will radiate its light far into the night.

And that's also true of a lighted candle.

So then, it would only make sense to mount a candle on a candlestick, not hide it under a bushel.

And then He makes His application, or rather His commandment --- **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."**

So then, it's not what we do, it's what we shouldn't do.

We are lights already, and we shouldn't hide that light.

But why would we ever do such a thing?

Why would we hide our light under a bushel?

Well, for the same reason people used blackout blinds during the Second World War.

They hid their light so they wouldn't get bombed.

And yes, if we hide our light, we'll probably avoid a lot of trouble, but we'll be disobeying our Lord.

Wouldn't it be far better to simply trust God for the outcome and **"walk as children of light"**?

It's the natural walk of a born again believer.

It's the walk that will draw unbelievers to our Lord.

And as Ephesians 5:10 tells us, it's a walk that is **"acceptable unto the Lord."**

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Ephesians 5:11-13 **"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.**

12: For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

13: But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light."

We're still talking about light and darkness, aren't we?

And just as natural light dispels darkness, so the naturally occurring light of a Christian is a reproof to the **"unfruitful works of darkness."**

Yes, whether we like it or not, unless we
hide our light under a bushel, we'll
make unbelievers uncomfortable.

And by that I don't mean it's our job to
make unbelievers uncomfortable.

Certainly we should reprove evil if it rises
up in opposition to truth.

However, I don't think it's our job to wag
our finger in the face of an unbeliever
and insist he act like a Christian.

No, we must simply let our light "**shine
before men.**"

And as we might expect, our action will
produce a reaction.

First of all, if we walk "**as children of
light,**" which would include having "**no
fellowship with the unfruitful works of
darkness,**" we can expect opposition, and
even persecution.

Jesus was quite clear about that.

In John 15:20-21, He pointed out the fact that **--- The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.**

21: But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."

Yes, **"all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light,"** and mankind resents the invasion of his darkness.

In the case of Jesus' incarnation, John 3:19 said **--- "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."**

So, if they didn't like Jesus' light, they won't like ours either.

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But there's another possible reaction to our light, and that's the one Jesus talked about in the Sermon on the Mount.

He said, if they see your good works they will **"glorify your Father which is in heaven."**

That's quite different, isn't it, but it's a definite possibility.

When the unsaved experience your good works, when the love of Christ shines out through your life and touches them, it might have a positive effect.

It might open up their minds to the Gospel. And lastly, there's yet another reaction to our light that's quite different from the other two.

It's the reaction of no reaction; a total indifference to spiritual things.

Perhaps that's the most devastating reaction of all.

In that case, all we can do is let our light shine, and continue to hold them up in prayer.

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But you know, there's something very special about light.

In the natural world, light extinguishes darkness, but darkness doesn't extinguish light.

In fact, if you take a lighted candle into a dark room, it will shine more brightly.

So, in spite of the consequences, **"Let your light so shine before men."**

Without that light, the unsaved will go on in their darkness.

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And then Paul addresses another situation.

Certainly we should be walking **"as children of light,"** but what if a Christian is not walking at all?

What if he's sleeping?

Well, that's what Ephesians 5:14 is all about --- **"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."**

No, Paul isn't talking to the unsaved.

He's addressing sleeping Christians who are not living in the light of Christ.

And if the things of Christ no longer give them pleasure, then the things of this world soon will.

Like the children of Israel in the wilderness, they will remember the leaks and garlic of their old life of slavery. And while they're sleeping, and dreaming of worldly pleasures, precious opportunities will be slipping by.

Hence Paul's warning in Ephesians 5:15-17 --
- **"See then that ye walk circumspectly,**
(or with exactness) **not as fools, but as**

wise,

16: Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17: Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Yes, the time is short, and the labourers are few.

Can we be so unwise as to not understand **"what the will of the Lord is?"**

He's told us to let our **"light so shine before men,"** and He's commanded us to go **"into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."**

So let's be up and doing!

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Ephesians 5:18 **"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."**

Once again, we see the contrast between the old life and the new.

Certainly, for some of these Ephesian believers, drunkenness must have been a factor in their former life.

But now they were living under a new Master. Now they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and should **"be filled with the Spirit."**

And by that I mean, they should be operating under His control.

The old drinking songs should have given way to songs of praise.

As Paul puts it in Ephesians 5:19-20, you should be

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20: Giving thanks always for all things

**unto God and the Father in the name of
our Lord Jesus Christ."**

I can still remember my early days as a
young believer.

There was so much to learn, and I was
continually discovering some new truth
in God's Word.

At this point in my life I was attending a
very small gathering of Christians.

We sang from a little red hymnbook called
Sacred Songs and Solos compiled by Ira
D. Sankey.

How stabilizing these hymns were, as their
authors seemed to reach down through the
years and establish me in the truths I
had just discovered.

Today, much of this solid teaching has been
replaced by more superficial themes.

Today the great hymns of the faith gather
dust in the back of our pews, while we

concentrate on the catchy melodies and often self-centred themes of our new songs.

We have lost a great deal!

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As you will recall, Paul began this chapter by emphasizing our responsibility within our spiritual family.

We were to be imitators **"of God, as dear children."**

And now, in Ephesians 5:21, referring to the human family, and in this case the Christian family, he begins with the words --- **"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."**

This word submission is quite unpopular in our modern individualistic society, isn't it?

But submission, as it applies to the
Christian family, does not suggest
tyranny.

So what does it suggest?

Well, we'll have to wait until next time to
find that out, when we'll be examining
the interpersonal relationships between
husbands and wives, parents and
children, and even household servants.

I hope you can join us.