

## Be Followers And Imitators Of God.

Text: Eph 5:1-9

Suggested Hymns:

199, 339, 384, 346, 361

1) Walk In Love

2) Avoid Uncleanness And Covetousness

3) Do Not Be Deceived With Vain Words

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Ephesians 5:1-9, <sup>1</sup> *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.* <sup>2</sup> *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.* <sup>3</sup> *But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;* <sup>4</sup> *neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*

<sup>5</sup> *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.* <sup>6</sup> *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* <sup>7</sup> *Therefore do not be partakers with them.*

<sup>8</sup> *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light* <sup>9</sup> *(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth).* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*“Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us.”* In these words Christ is placed before us as an example in love. These words and similar expressions in the Holy Scriptures are often grossly abused in our day.

Christ’s mission upon this earth is represented as if it consisted in nothing more than to teach love and to furnish a living example of love for all the children of men, and a person is considered a true Christian who merely follows Christ in love and performs good deeds. What a soul-destroying error!

We are all sinners, we are lost and condemned forever in our natural state and condition; and what would Christ benefit us if He had done nothing more than to give us an example of love? All the deeds of love which we perform cannot do away with the fact that we are sinners, born in sin, polluted with sin, and doomed to eternal destruction for our sins.

No; what we poor lost and condemned sinners need first of all is not a good example whereby we are taught how to love and do good, but a Saviour from sin. This was Christ's first mission and His principal mission upon this earth, to save us from sin and its terrible consequences, to redeem us from the curse which rests upon us all because we have sinned, to fulfil for us the commandments of the Law which we have not kept, and to bear the punishment which we deserve for our sins, and to suffer and to die that we might live, as Christ says Himself: ***“the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”***<sup>1</sup>

O blessed is the person who has found in Jesus the Saviour, who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ with a true heart and in His great redemptive work for the salvation of fallen mankind! Such faith will rid him from the guilt of sin, and make him an heir of eternal salvation; ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”***<sup>2</sup>

And having received Christ first of all as the Saviour, you must follow His example also. For though He came, first of all, to save that which was lost, He also came to give us an example that we should follow in His steps. He distinctly said in John 13:15, <sup>15</sup> ***For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.***

Peter says in his First Epistle: ***“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”***<sup>3</sup> And the same thing Paul exhorts us to do in our text, ***be imitators of God as dear children.*** To be an imitator you need to follow, so he who follows Christ follows God also.

Our theme is ***“Be followers and imitators of God.”*** May the Lord bless our meditation.

## **1. To Be Followers Of God We Must Walk In Love**

To be followers and imitators of God you must, in the first place, walk in love. The Apostle says, <sup>1</sup> *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.* <sup>2</sup> *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.*

Walk in love! What a beautiful example God has set before you in love! We are God's dear children, as the Apostle says; dear, not because we had loved God first; for by nature we have all been enemies of God and did not love Him, but hated and despised Him in our sinfulness. On the contrary, we are God's dear children because we are dear to our God, because God loved us and is kindly inclined to us in spite of our sins.

And how has God manifested His love to us? By giving us His only-begotten Son. God is holy, He cannot bear sin, and when the human race fell into sin and all men were made sinners by the disobedience of our first parents, we became an abomination in His sight, and He had to pronounce upon us the curse for our sins.

But God's love to us poor mortals was so great that He could not see us wander into eternal perdition. He desired to make us dear to Himself, to make us fit objects of His love. To this end Christ gave "*Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma,*" as the Apostle says.

As the offerings and sacrifices that were made in the Old Testament by His command and in the right spirit were for a sweet-smelling aroma to God, that is, as God was highly pleased with these offerings and sacrifices, so He was pleased and highly gratified with the great offering and sacrifice of His dear Son. Jesus Christ, the Son of God left His divine throne, and came into this wretched world, and led a life in perfect obedience to the Law, and suffered and died on the cross for our transgressions.

How great the love of Christ must be for us, to bring for us such an offering and sacrifice, and how great the love of God must be for us, to spare not His own Son that He might redeem us and make us dear children of our heavenly Father! O let us not receive the grace of our God in Christ in vain!

Let the love of God which He has manifested in His dear Son move and induce you to walk in love as His dear children! Show, my friends, that you love God who has first loved you; show it by a regular attendance at the house of God

to hear His life-giving Word; show it by worshipping Him with the voice of praise and thanksgiving; show it by serving Him faithfully in your own homes with prayer and with holy living.

Let the love of God which He has manifested in His dear Son move and induce you to walk in love as the followers of God. Imitate God in His forgiveness and in His loving spirit. *“Let your ordinary life be spent in an atmosphere of love. Drink it in from heaven, as plants drink in the sunshine; radiate it from eyes and face; let hands and feet be active in the service; let looks, words, and acts all be steeped in it.”*<sup>4</sup>

Walk in love to the neighbour! Bear no malice and ill-will against anybody. We learn in 1 John 4:20–21, <sup>20</sup> *If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?* <sup>21</sup> *And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

So be loving and kind and *“do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*<sup>5</sup> Then you will be a follower of God walking in love.

## **2. To Be Followers Of God We Must Avoid Uncleaness And Covetousness**

And you must avoid all uncleaness and covetousness if you are to be a follower and imitator of God. This is the second part of our discourse.

The Apostle says, <sup>3</sup> *But fornication and all uncleaness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;* <sup>4</sup> *neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*

The sins which the Apostle mentions here are of such a disgusting and repelling nature and are such an abomination in the sight of God that, as the Apostle says, they should not even be named among Christians, that is, they should be unknown among Christians, and Christians should feel loath even to speak of them for shame.

And which are these sins? They are the sins which were so commonly practised among the highly educated Greeks and Romans, who were so dignified and refined outwardly, but rotten within, rotten to the core as to morality.

They are the sins which to this day are so common among those who live for this present world only, and do not believe that in the yonder world they will be punished for their evil deeds done in this life. They are the sins of fornication and uncleanness, or unchastity, and covetousness, and miserliness.

Not only should all uncleanness be unknown among Christians, but covetousness also, the love of money, the unlawful desire to acquire wealth by any method should be unknown among them. They should be so free from this detestable vice that nobody should think of charging them therewith.

And linked together with uncleanness and unchastity is “*filthiness, ... foolish talking, ... coarse jesting, which are not fitting,*” as the Apostle says. Christians should be clean in speech, they should avoid things that are obscene, dirty language, and never let words come across their lips by which unchaste thoughts are roused in others. They should avoid foolish talking and jesting which are not fitting, that is, they should neither tell nor listen to dirty jokes by which they defile themselves and others.

And why should Christians avoid and not partake in uncleanness and covetousness? The Apostle says, <sup>5</sup> *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.*

Uncleanness and covetousness are sins which necessarily must exclude from the kingdom of Christ and of God. How can a person be a subject in Christ’s kingdom and a follower of God, who is not on their guard against covetousness, who is an idolater, who does not believe in the true God in heaven, but in the “*almighty dollar*” on earth?

O how careful Christians should be therefore not to be defiled with these terrible sins of uncleanness and covetousness which, as experience proves, make slaves of people and binds them to the devil with cords which no human power can tear asunder!

Nothing in this world can overcome and save from these terrible sins except the grace of God in Christ apprehended in a true faith. For the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.<sup>6</sup>

### **3. To Be Followers Of God We Must Do Not Deceived With Vain Words**

Finally, do not be deceived with vain words if you are to be followers and imitators of God. This is the third part of our discourse.

The Apostle says, *“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* Do not be deceived with vain words! How necessary this admonition is for the Christians of the present day!

Are not the children of disobedience as active today as they were in the days of St. Paul to deceive the Christians and to lure them into sin and shame with vain words? We will not say anything now, about the unbelieving children of this world who laugh at your Christian faith with scorn, and make all a matter of fun at you if you refuse to go with them to places where Christians should not be seen, or to do things which your conscience forbids you to do, because they are a violation of God’s commandments.

But are not children of disobedience found sometimes even among those who bear the Christian name? Beware of such would-be Christian friends who sneer at you because you want to do that which is right, and refuse to join them in doing wrong, who seek to deceive you with vain words when they say that a person must not be over-conscientious, that you do not need to do all things that are commanded in the Bible, that because others do it you can do it, and so forth. Such deceivers are more dangerous than open unbelievers who make no attempt at concealment.

And why should Christians not be deceived with vain words? Why should they not listen to the voice which would seduce them into sin? The Apostle says, *for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partakers with them. <sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth).*

Look, God threatens His wrath upon the children of disobedience, upon all who sin with malice and intention. And how terribly He punishes the sins of uncleanness often upon this earth already!

In the Bible we have the example of the flood, when the whole world was destroyed, and because of their wickedness all were drowned, with the exception of Noah and his family who were saved in the ark.

And we have the example of Sodom and Gomorrah whose inhabitants were so steeped in wickedness, and especially in the sin of unchastity, that God destroyed them with fire from heaven.

When people therefore seek to deceive you with vain words, think of the wrath of God and of the punishment which may come upon you, and do not be deceived! What part have you with the children of darkness? Let them go their own way if they want to serve the devil and do the devil's works. You know better.

You have publicly renounced the devil and all his works and all his ways on the day of your confirmation. You are light in the Lord. You are a follower of God and not a follower of the prince of this world. Walk, then, as a child of God, and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit which is in goodness, in righteousness, and in truth. Imitate God in true holiness, and let the Spirit of God guide and govern your thoughts and your actions. Then no deception will be wrought upon you, and you will remain God's dear child.

May the Lord, then, grant us all His grace that at all times we be and remain followers and imitators of God, that we walk in love, beware of all uncleanness and covetousness, and are not deceived with vain words. And having followed God in this life, we shall see Him in that life which is to come, and see Him face to face in eternal bliss. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 19:10

<sup>2</sup> John 3:16

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 2:21

<sup>4</sup> The Pulpit Commentary, Spence H. D. M. Eph 4:1

<sup>5</sup> Galatians 6:10

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 1:7