



Ephesians Week 8- Ephesians 5:1-2

October 29, 2023 - Pastor Greg Wallace

You may have noticed we skipped part of chapter 4. Don't worry! We are coming back. The beginning of Ephesians 5 Paul gives us a **principle** to help us interpret the overall idea of unity that he is trying to get across. This idea is full of direction on HOW we should act in order to maintain unity and live on mission together and it starts in the last half of chapter 4 and continues through the rest of the book. So we are visiting his explanation of the principle first before we start working through all of the details of how. We will go back to the end of chapter 4 next week. It will all make sense.

Review:

Paul's letter is encouraging so far. We've seen Paul: declare just how amazing and powerful God is; pray that God would give the people wisdom so they would be able to understand how great God is; and as a result of this wisdom, now celebrate one of God's greatest miracles - He made people who should be enemies into one family where everyone is shares equally in the Father's house.

Now, here's the fact - we should not be in the same room together right now. Just in this room - we represent so many differences. Based on history, some in here are justified in hating others.

But God. Instead of revenge and hate, God has re-introduced a kingdom-based respect that can lead to space for respect, forgiveness, and even trust. Unity is a God-thing. A planned and executed flat-out miracle.

Paul now is stepping off into some advice on **how** to participate with God in maintaining this miracle of unity and diversity. This means is we have to figure out how to live and work together.

From Ephesians 4:17-6:9 Paul gives a number of examples of things that will either encourage unity or make it fall apart.

- Some are small, maybe obvious notes such as: "If you're a thief stop it"
- And some are more involved such as "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church."

In the middle of these examples (Ephesians 5:1-2), Paul gives us a **principle** to help interpret the overall idea he is trying to get across:

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NLT) **"Imitate God, therefore,** in everything you do, because you are his dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God."

There's our overarching principle: Imitate God

"Imitate God"? How in the world am I supposed to do that?

V. 1 "...THEREFORE"

When we see the word "therefore" we need to ask: "What is it there for?"

This one is relatively easy: we can jump back 2 verses to get the help we need for understanding.

With this in mind, now we read it all together like this:

Ephesians 4:31-32, 5:1,2 (NLT) "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.
5:1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children.
 2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God."

To imitate God I need to:

- Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander AND also get rid of evil behavior, AND instead, be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.
- Who will be honest and share how difficult this is?
- What kinds of things makes people hard to treat right, let alone, love?

MEME: Pastor Greg shared a letter from a small child to God:

"Dear God, I bet it is very hard for you to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only 4 people in our family and I can never do it." --Nan

How are we supposed to do live out these ^^ verses?

Answer according to v1 "Just as God through Christ" and v2 "following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us."

The key looks to be that we remember what has been done FOR us MORE than what has been done TO us.

- What did He do FOR us?

We need to rethink the story of our lives and change the narrative.

- What if in your story - your memories - everything began with: "So, Jesus raised **me** from the dead. He saved me from darkness. I was lost and now I'm found. I was blind and now I see." How would that change your "now"?

What if, because of your miracle story, your mission was realized as: "I want to be **LOYAL** to One who found me, freed me, and leads me."

"Loyal" is like "faithful" which seems to involve "faith."

Faith is not blind. Faith isn't some wish for magical things to happen. Faith isn't intellectually agreeing with the idea of God. Faith isn't simply belief - it is BELIEVING.

The effect of faith is loyalty and trust. That loyalty and trust affects what you value and how you think about things and others.

So, having faith - trusting God - is loyalty to Him because HE loves you and cares for you and sees a future in, for, and through you.

I wonder what we could call this love, care, and hope that God has for each of us?

Grace.

Think about grace for a second - just the word if we weren't talking about it as a theological concept.

- What do you know that exhibits grace?

-How about a deer running?

-A dancer?

-What do we do when we see that beauty - that grace? How do we respond?

-You ever see something amazing, and it cause you to stop? Or encounter something that made you be quiet?

-What I'm asking is how does someone properly respond to this grace?

How about this: I once witnessed an elderly missionary who had chosen to not be married or have a family of her own so that she could spend her life on the foreign mission field. I saw her slowly climb the steps to stand at the church pulpit, with a harpsichord, and I heard her sing of how she loved her God. As a result of the grace given by God to her, she loved him with her whole life. And even at the point where we would say her work was done, she, still in response to the grace given her, showed her faith and love as she sang. *This is the beauty of grace.*

Grace is the beautiful existence of God that when we truly meet it - we must respond.

- So how should we respond? We have to remember what has He done with and for us. Is there any challenge too great? Any task too hard?

- Pause and think on what He has done for you and through you. Share what comes to mind. Do these thoughts awaken the beautiful grace of God in you?

Going back to v1: what does he **actually** ask of us? What does it look like to successfully imitate God?

Be kind to each other. Be tenderhearted. Be forgiving.

We are being challenged to be full of grace because of whom we follow and what He has done for us.

We are to remember Jesus giving His life so we could have hope and life.

In the next few weeks, we are going to hear challenges from Paul on how to live our lives and how we can view the responsibility of managing of our households. **These challenges and instructions must be viewed through the lens of "IMITATE GOD."**

When we get to **Ephesians 5:5** and you hear "Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you," you may be tempted to think of "those" people who do "those" things. But this letter is written to "US" - NOT "them".

We are being called to no longer live dark lives, but are called to live out the principle of IMITATE GOD which is also challenging us to live out the wild grace God has given to us.

We have to live from that point of view.

Not live to "get mine" BUT die to ourselves.

We are being called to no longer live dark lives, but are called to live out the principle of *IMITATE GOD*, which is also challenging us to live out the *wild grace* God has given to us.

Not fight for our rights BUT love sacrificially so that someone, some way, somewhere might hear and find life.

This, I think, is in some way what it is to IMITATE GOD.

He loves. So, we love. He gives. So, we give. He accomplished this crazy miracle of unity. So, we agree with it and maintain it.

- How? Is Holy Spirit showing you ways He wants you to fight for unity?

So, what can you do with this today?

Believers who have gone before us have found ways to not only endure, but to endure with hope.

I personally struggle to see the good in this world when everything seems chaotic.

In my struggle, though, I get to choose.

- Will I be part of the good?

- Will I choose to deny hopelessness and instead embrace peace and joy and love?

- Will I fiercely defend and fight for right-ness and goodness?

As for me, keep your conspiracy theories and your fear hype to yourself.

Keep your gossip and whining away from me as if you would make my will as weak as yours.

As if I should wrap my life up in the same things terrifying you.

Instead help me see the hopeful and I will do the same for you.

I will help strengthen you with words and stories of the strong who have battled for good before us and you can do the same for me.

Then we can fight side by side, knowing we are on the same side, the side of good.

There IS some good in this world. And it's worth fighting for.

Fight for unity and for mission.

- Do you need help accepting God as kind, patient and full of grace toward you?

- Do you know you need help to find freedom from the anger you feel toward those whom Jesus is calling you to love? You know you can't hide from it anymore.