

Believers are to Imitate Jesus

by Alan Martin

This sermon emphasizes the importance of imitating God and Christ out of love, not fear, by walking in love and avoiding behaviors like sexual immorality, uncleanness, covetousness, shameful talk, and coarse jesting. It warns against being deceived by empty words that downplay the need for repentance, transformation, and holiness, highlighting the consequences of disobedience and the importance of seeking God's forgiveness through genuine repentance.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:1, Hebrews 6:11, Proverbs 13:20, Luke 16:15, 1 Peter 2:21, Romans 12:1, Matthew 13:40, Romans 2:5, Genesis 3:4

Topics: "Imitating God", "Walking in Love"

Description

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Transcript

Read our scripture passage together this morning, Ephesians chapter 5 verses 1 through 7. Ephesians 5, 1 through 7, be imitators of God like children who are dearly loved and walk in love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a as an offering and sacrifice to God, a sweet aroma. However, let there not even be named among you sexual immorality or any uncleanness or covetousness, just as it is improper for the saints, nor shamefulness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse or crude jesting, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For this you have known that every fornicator or unclean person or covetous man who is an idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Do not allow anyone to deceive you with empty words. Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them.

Amen. So the Greek word here that we translate either imitate or mimic is probably closer to mimic in the original language. It has the idea of the little child who's watching his mom and dad and he suddenly starts to walk like they do or talk like they do or cough like they do because he just finds it his pleasure to do what he sees them doing.

And that's what Paul is saying. Our love for Christ and God the Father should be such that we so adore him, we so look to him, we so study him, that naturally we begin to imitate him. We mimic.

We begin to speak like he speaks. We begin to serve like he serves. We begin to love the Father like he loves the Father.

We begin to love our brothers and sisters like Christ loves us. That's just we imitate him. And it's out of love.

It's not out of fear. It's just out of an adoration that we just long to be what we see. And Paul even often encouraged the believers to imitate himself.

Several places in his letters he called for the Christians he was writing to imitate him. Let's just look at one. 1st Corinthians chapter 4, 14 to 16.

If Ruth has that up there, Brother Rudy, you want to read 1st Corinthians 4, 14 to 16? I write not these things to change you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus I begot you through the gospel.

One more. I beseech you, therefore, be ye in the faith of me. Imitate the Apostle Paul.

So when we read, when we read the letters to the churches of Corinth and Galatia and in Philippi and Ephesus and Thessalonica, when we read Paul's letters to his servants Timothy and Titus, we need to read them like he's writing to us. We need to imitate what we can learn from our Apostle Paul in those letters. But we need to be careful about which role models we study because there are some pretty bad role models in the society today.

And we need to remember this scripture that Jesus made this statement in Luke chapter 16, verse 15. Can you read Luke 16, 15? And he said unto them, ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men. But God knoweth not your hearts.

For that which is exalted among them is an abomination in the sight of God. That's a pretty strong statement. That which is exalted amongst men is an abomination in the sight of God.

We're going to come back to that word abomination in a little bit. It may give you a little bit more understanding of what that word means from the original language. But first, I'd like us to look at a scripture in Hebrews chapter 6. Because this is where the biblical writer of Hebrews, and some people think it may have been the Apostle Paul, we don't know.

But the writer of Hebrews in chapter 6, verses 11 and 12, I'm going to ask David Knepper, can you read Hebrews 6, 11 and 12? And this tells us who we need to be modeling, who we need to be imitating. To imitate those who through faith and patience or faith and endurance actually inherit what's promised. Because there are some bad examples even in the scripture.

There's a whole generation of unbelieving Israelites that died in the wilderness and never entered the promised land. But then there are those like Joshua and Caleb, that in that same generation, they had a different heart. They were a different spirit.

They trusted the Lord. And we're to imitate men like that who inherit the promise. This is a scripture that I sought to teach my children very early on when we have our family devotions.

Proverbs chapter 13, verse 20. Sister Yolanda, can you read Proverbs 13, 20? I think I quoted to them from the NIV. He who walks with the wise becomes wise, but a companion of fools comes to ruin.

You pick the wrong friends and you will suffer the consequences. Because have we forgotten what the scripture says? Bad company corrupts good character. You can have good character.

You can know what's right and you spend the time with the wrong people and the wrong people's influence you will corrupt the good character that at one time was instilled in you by someone who loved you and sought to lead you and point you in the right direction. And we need to be aware of it. Studying and honoring men of the faith is the way that we picture their walk with God in our mind and we want to imitate, emulate, and model their faith.

So if Jesus is our hero, if he's more precious to us than John Belushi, than Dan Aykroyd, than the stand-up comics of the world, late-night television hosts, the guys that are great at making you laugh, or the guys that you can look at and their muscles, you know, pop out all over their chest, if Jesus is more special to you than all of them, he's the one you'll be living like and walking like. But if you emulate those people, the world, the famous of the world, you'll end up you'll end up walking like they do. You want to be great in the Lord's kingdom, in the Lord's service? There's a song we used to sing to our children and it's based upon this statement in Mark chapter 9 verse 35.

Sam Serta, can you read, what did Jesus say in Mark 9 35? You want to be important? Because the Greek word is proton. First, Tom, first, it doesn't necessarily mean first in order, but it means the most important. The proton is one of the most important elements in this universe that God has created.

And so do you want to be first? Then be last. Put yourself last. Put everyone else in front of you.

Make it your goal to be a blessing to them, to meet their needs, to look after them, and your own life will be enriched through that process. And then you literally make yourself a servant. Voluntary, not forced, voluntary.

You voluntarily serve, voluntarily serve others in love. That's what our Lord Jesus said. And isn't that what Jesus said? You can finish it with me.

It's more blessed to give than to receive. If you really want a rich and full life, give up trying to make yourself happy and live your life to be a blessing to others. There's a scripture, there's a proverb that's not on my slide that says, he who refreshes others shall himself be refreshed.

And this is so true. There is so much joy in serving the Lord, in serving others. It's something that you have to discover because it's a hidden life.

Jesus actually said, unless you lose that life of trying to serve yourself, you won't find it. But if you lose your life, he said, for my sake, lose your own desire to try to satisfy and make yourself happy. Find the life of being a blessing to others.

You will experience life on the level that those who have all the money and all the things that they could want are still without. They're still empty. They're still miserable.

They commit suicide because they can never satisfy that which the joy of the Lord and the peace of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit can produce in the life of one of God's servants. And we know this verse in

Romans chapter 12, one, it encourages us to do this. Sister Kathy, Romans 12, one, you can probably quote it.

You can read it. But just like Jesus, he offered himself a living sacrifice, a pleasing aroma to God. And what are we to do? We're to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, hold unacceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship.

And I guarantee that in doing that, your life will be richer than stubbornly refusing to serve God, trying to serve yourself. It's just, it's a mystery that not enough people have. And here's a longer scripture.

Let me read it because it's a little bit lengthy from 1 Peter chapter two, verses 21 to 24. 1 Peter 2, 21 to 24, you can follow along. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit done in his mouth.

And while being reviled, he did not revile in return. While suffering, he uttered no threats, but kept entrusting himself to him who judges righteously. And he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, in order that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

For by his wounds or by his stripes, you were healed. For you were continually going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and the overseer of your souls. Well, this is a Paul's exhortation to us in the first part of this passage.

Become imitators of God and of Christ, like dearly loved children, and walk in love as Jesus Christ did. He gave himself up as a offering unto God, a fragrant sacrifice, well-pleasing. And then Paul's going to continue with, just like Paul does, with his instructions of what not to do.

Here's what you do, and just in case you miss it and you need a little extra reinforcement, Paul wants to make sure you know this is not what you need to do. So here it goes on in Ephesians chapter 5, verses 3 and 4. David, Reverend Landis, can you read this passage again for us? Ephesians 5, 3 and 4. Right. So what can we learn from this? Follow me very closely.

There are those who say that the church should be a hospital for those who are sinners, and in one way that spirit is a beautiful spirit. The hospitals are there to try to cure people, not just keep them in the condition they enter the hospital. Is that right? That's not the way hospitals are.

So the purpose of the church is not to welcome in sinners and just leave them sinners, unchanged, untransformed. No, the church should never endorse nor willingly allow sexually immoral or unclean or covetous persons to be comfortable as members. They need help.

They need salvation. They need the knowledge of the Lord, and we can invite them to come to Jesus and to come to repentance. But if they're living in sexual immorality, I don't want them to be comfortable there.

If you're sinning against God, you should not feel like everything is okay, because it's not. And Paul makes that clear. It shouldn't even be named among you, sexually immoral, unclean, or covetous person.

If you name the name of Christ, you have given up that lifestyle. It's better not to name the name of Christ than to walk in that lifestyle. You remember what Paul said? It's not in the slides up here, but you remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians? If anyone names himself by the name, if anyone calls himself

a Christian and is sexually immoral or impure or a slanderer or a drunkard with such a person, do not even share a meal.

Do not live in fellowship with those who openly sin against God while claiming to love the Son of God. That's not to be. Paul is consistent in all of his letters to the church in this regard.

And we should know this. This is not new to us. I'm going to have Brother Ben, can you read 1 John 1, verses 5-7.

So this is something that all the apostles of the New Testament agree. It's not just Paul. Peter and John and James, all the writers of the New Testament agree with this.

Now what does John mean by if we say we have fellowship him and walk in the darkness? When I think of walking in the darkness, what comes to my mind, and I don't have it on the slide here, is what our Lord said in John chapter 3. This is the verdict. Light has come into the world, but men love darkness more than light. Why? Their deeds were evil.

And everyone who practices evil, there's the description, everyone who practices evil does not come to the light for fear that what he's doing will be exposed. So what is walking in darkness? It's doing things you don't really want exposed. You want to keep it as your little secret, what no one else can see, but nothing is hidden from God.

Amen. Nothing. There was a story one time of two young people and a youth minister, a true story.

And it was reported to him by another student that these, that a young man and a young lady were at Lover's Point committing sexual immorality in their vehicle. And so the youth minister approached them and said, listen, someone saw you doing that. And of course, they were shocked and horrified that someone would see that.

And so they, you know what they were more concerned about? Who? Who saw us? And he said, God. Like you forget, God doesn't see. God sees everything.

If you're, if you're trying to live in one way where men can see something different than what God sees every day, you're not walking in the light. Walking in the light means you are the same here. You're the same at home.

You're the same on the job. You're the same in your neighborhood. It's just, just who you are.

And you want, Jesus said, he who does the truth comes into the light that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done in God. And that's, that's walking in the light. We don't want to have any fellowship with the fruitless deeds of darkness.

But now let's spend some time this morning going over these terms that Paul uses. So we make sure we understand that. The, what he said, but let there, these things not even be mentioned among, that he mentioned sexual immorality.

He mentioned uncleanness. He mentioned covetousness. Then he talks about some other things, shameful talk, of course, jesting, other things.

Let's deal with each one just briefly. Let's take a look at them. So we'll understand.

First of all, sexual immorality. Are we clear on this? Sexual immorality is any sexual activity outside the covenant of a marriage between a man and woman. If you are not married as a man and woman, any sexual activity is sin.

God designed sexual intimacy to be between a married man and woman. And if you take what he meant for that and use it however you want, you are sexually immoral. And you're going to answer to God for using what he created in your own way for your own pleasure.

And of course, you may can do it and think I'm getting away with it. No, you're storing up wrath for the day of judgment because you're abusing what God intended to be used. And he made it.

Your body, every part of it. He made it. He designed it.

He has the authority to decide how it is to be used. Don't quarrel with him on that or you'll answer for that as well. So are we clear on that? Yes.

All right. Let's read a scripture together. Brother Mario Saldivar, will you read Hebrews 13, 4? The writer of Hebrews states this very clearly.

Hebrews 13, 4. You see that? Marriage is to be honored. Don't you, don't you, don't you throw marriage under the bus and say, well, we love each other. What does marriage mean? Listen to the scripture.

Marriage is to be honored by all. Yes, Rudy. What is the difference between adultery and fornication? Adultery is unfaithfulness between married couples.

Okay. Fornication is sexual activity among those who are not married. You can commit both.

A wife can commit adultery or a committed adultery while committing fornication. Be doing both the same thing. But if they're not married, it's not adultery.

It's only fornication. Okay. See? Got it.

Y'all got it? Got it. Okay. All right.

We understand those who honor God, honor marriage. It is to be honored by all. And God will judge the fornicator and the adulterer.

All right. The sin of uncleanness. What is this word for uncleanness? I'm trying to give you some help.

Think of them as sin infections. Types of sin that infect you. Sin pollution.

Types of sins that pollute you. Like pornography. Like abuse of medicine.

Whether prescription or non-prescribed drugs. Polluting things that make you unclean. I describe these as actions that defile the conscience and grieve the heart of God.

What this involves, it's the misuse of created things. The abuse of the very things that God has provided. And what causes this is a willful disregard that God made these things for a purpose.

And when you turn that purpose into you're just going to self-gratification, they make you unclean. Because they do things to you. They pollute your soul.

They dull your sensitivity toward God. And they lead men or mankind who are created to be in God's own image and likeness to be much more like the animals. They're just living for desire with disregard to God and his ways.

It becomes an animalistic base, desire-driven existence. More animal than human. And we're supposed to live our lives as those created in the image of God.

So that's the sin of uncleanness. I think more of us will be familiar with what covetousness is. Covetousness is just this.

I want more. Mas, imas, imas. Never satisfied.

More money, more things, more pleasure. It's a continual life of seeking one new stimulation after another. One new excitement after another.

You know what covetous people have? There's a word for covetous people have that you may not recognize. It's, I'm bored. Bored.

You know what boredom is? Boredom means you're not stimulated enough. You're not, you need something else to satisfy yourself. You're not content.

Whereas the scripture says, godliness with contentment is a great gain. To be content, to be satisfied, to be happy in Jesus. You know, it's not so much how much you have to make you happy, but how happy you are with what you have.

The rich man is happy with what he already has. In the poor man's eyes, he's never satisfied. A missionary one time went to a tribe in Africa.

These people were living in grass huts on dirt floors. And the missionary asked the chief of this village, what's your greatest problem amongst the members of your tribe? And he says, covetousness. He says, covetousness? These people have nothing.

No one, I don't know. I haven't seen anyone that's so poor. He goes, yeah, but the person with one cow wants two.

And the person with one wife wants two. And so it doesn't matter. Don't think that only rich people are covetous.

How grateful are you to God for what you have? Yes. Is covetousness the same as greed? Very much the same. Covetousness is very, very similar words.

Just different English words for the same thing. Yeah. Now, basically, the covetous person lives life to serve himself or herself.

It's about me. It's my body, my car, my house, my money, my job, my rights. It's about me.

That's why Paul called covetousness idolatry. Isn't that interesting? He says, covetousness, which is idolatry. What makes covetousness idolatry? Well, remember, if the covetous man says, it's my work, my money, my job, my body, my things, my car, my house.

You know what he is? He's his own little dog. And he lives his life for him. And that's why Paul calls it idolatry.

It's not your body. God designed his body. You're breathing his air.

You're seeing with his life. You're living on the earth he created. His laws sustain this.

His law determines how fast the earth rotates. It's distance from the sun. Life is not possible without God.

Nothing you do, nothing you have is possible without God. That's why he, that's what gives him the authority to declare how the things he has made should be used. And he made them so that we would recognize his goodness and serve him.

To turn those things around and make it all about us is to become your own little competing God. And you basically are worshiping yourself. That's why Paul calls it idolatry.

Basically, he did. Very much so. It's probably his spirit that has corrupted mankind.

All right, a couple more terms on our list. One of the terms is shamefulness. Well, I think you understand something that's shameful, it's disgraceful, it's dishonorable.

And here's where we need to be careful. Because what is actually shameful in the eyes of God is being flaunted by the world. For example, God designed sexual pleasure to be between a man and a wife in the privacy of their own home.

Not to be plastered on TV and primetime television. Not to stimulate pleasure in the eyes of others through the internet and the computer. Not to be put in magazines.

God made the body of women beautiful, but he didn't make it to be flaunted before the eyes of someone who's not your husband. Just because you got it to show it all. That's the attitude of the world.

It's shameful. And the world is actually flaunting and pushing the envelope things that should be handled with modesty and decency and properly. The world is pushing things that God never intended.

Perversions with gifts that he gave mankind that are actually being boasted about. It's our right to do these things. And they're kind of shoving it in our face and in our society.

But amongst the church should not even be shameful things. Shouldn't be. What is foolish talking? What is that? Well, the Greek word is morologia.

Moron. Where we get the word moron. And logia is speech.

So it's the speech of a moron. Moron is an old term that we say more in our day fool. A moron is very similar to a fool.

But the idea of moron is it's unprofitable. It has none effect. It's of no value.

So what kind of speech has no value? Which is unproductive. Well, I think we probably can understand this type of communication by looking at an example where the word moron was used. Or morose.

An adjective form was used. And you remember the parable about the ten virgins? It says five were wise and five were morons. Foolish.

They were morose. And what made them morose? Because this will give you the right picture. Don't think it means stupid.

Don't think it means stupid. Don't. No.

But they weren't careful. Because what made the five wise virgins? What did they do in their wisdom? They knew that they had been invited to the wedding feast. They knew that tonight was the night that the bridegroom was coming.

But what did they do? They thought through it, didn't they? What if he's late in coming? Let's take extra oil in case he's late. And the foolish virgins, they went with the group. There's five foolish and five wise.

What do you think the foolish virgins did when they saw the wise virgins carrying their lamps and oil? Well, but not at first. When they were still in town, when they were on the way, they had an opportunity. To me, I would have thought, why are you taking the extra? They had a chance to think about it, didn't they? And what did they choose to do? Ah, it'll be all right.

It'll be all right. And what actually happened? The bridegroom was late in coming. And then it says all the virgins fell asleep.

The wise and the foolish, they fell asleep. I mean, it was late. But the sound of the bridegroom coming woke them all up.

And when they all woke up, they all looked at their lamps. And all the lamps were going out. But the five wise virgins, they had oil.

All they had to do was add some oil. And there they go. And the foolish ones were watching this.

And what did they say? Hey, give us some. And the wise virgin said, I can't do that. Because if we give it to you, we may not have enough in ours to go out.

Go back to town and buy from those who sell and then come. Well, they didn't have any choice. So the five foolish virgins go to town.

And when they're gone, what happens? Here comes the bridegroom. And the five wise virgins followed him and entered into the wedding feast. And the door was shut behind them.

And then what happened later? Here comes the foolish one. They had to go to town, probably had to wake someone up, buy some oil. So by the time they get back, they get to the wedding feast.

And they're pounding on the door. And they have to probably knock pretty loud because probably the dancing and the celebrating and the feasting had already started. But they finally got someone's attention.

And evidently the bridegroom or the master of the feast comes to the door. And they yell, hey, we're here. Let us in.

And the master of the feast said, I have no idea who you are. And he would not open the door. Listen, be aware of talking to people, even in the church, who don't prepare you to meet the Lord Jesus, who don't

encourage you to live a holy life, who don't encourage you to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to make every opportunity while you can to sanctify your life, to grow in understanding and wisdom.

Be wary of people who just always want to talk about sports all the time. They want to talk about the weather. They want to talk about what's going on in the USA.

But they are not helping you grow in the Lord. Be careful. Foolish speaking, empty speaking.

Then there's another kind of speaking. It's called coarse jesting or crude or coarse jesting. Okay, here's the idea behind this, especially you young people, all you guys, Richard, Vincent, Jesse, Nathan, Christopher, Marina, all you younger ones, listen up.

This is that kind of communication, always trying to be funny, always trying to say something smart, always trying to be witty, saying things off the top of your head. You love a quick comeback, a quick comeback. Oftentimes it's a game of put down, put them down, say something sarcastic, say something smart, show how smart you are.

You know, guys that are good at this, women and men who are good at this, they become stand-up comedians. They enjoy being obscene. They enjoy pushing the envelope.

They enjoy being suggestive. But this kind of speech is damaging and it has no place in the life of a believer, especially, and hear me young people, especially this, do not take your pleasure from putting others down. That's crude jesting.

Yeah, you know who employs this kind of speech a lot? Bullies. Bullies use this to be funny while they're being mean. It has no place, no place in the church.

Don't learn that. Don't learn that. The scripture calls it crude and coarse jesting and it's out of place for the kingdom of God.

Now, I need to kind of turn the corner here. Let's read this script, the rest of Paul's passage back to Ephesians chapter five. That's where we are.

Let's read verses five through seven and see where Paul takes us. Follow with me, Ephesians chapter five, five through seven. For this you have known, that every fornicator or unclean person or covetous man who is an idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ.

Do not allow anyone to deceive you with empty words because of these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the son of disobedience. Therefore, do not be heartless with them. Now, it struck me, it kind of jumped out to me in my studying that Paul says these people have no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

Now, when you think of inheritance, don't you think of family? You have to be a family member to be an inheritance, an heir. But when, if you're an heir, in order to receive an inheritance, don't you have to be in the father's will? Can the father write you out of the will? I think so. If you're a family member who's been problematic, caused problems and you lose a relationship with the father, he can write you out of the will.

That's what I think is in Paul's mind. Sexually immoral, unclean, covetous, people that talk, use shameful, coarse jesting, crude talking. Such a person might be in our midst.

It may look like they're part of the family, but they will not receive any inheritance. That doesn't make sense to us sometimes, except if we think about it. There was a parable that Jesus said that, hey, there's going to be people in the midst of you that are not really going to be in the kingdom ultimately.

Remember the parable of the weeds and the tares? Remember that? The parable went this way, that a man sowed good seed in his field. And while he slept, an enemy came. And right where he had sown the good seed, the enemy scattered these tares.

And so no one knew until later, because when they all sprouted at first, they all looked similar. But as they mature, and as they begin to form the heads, the good wheat forms a big full head, and the tares form this little skinny, this skinny head. And then you can see, wow, how did all these tares get in the midst of this wheat? And the servants who saw it went to the master and said, master, didn't you sow good field in your seed? Where did all these tares come from? And the master said, an enemy has done it.

And you know what the reaction of the servants was? Master, do you want us to go right now and rip out all the tares? Remember what the master said? No. If you try to do that, you're probably going to damage the good wheat. Let them alone until the harvest.

At the harvest, we'll make a separation. At the harvest, and this is what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 13. Brother Joe, you're good at it.

Can you read Matthew 13 verses 40 through 42? So isn't that interesting? They will gather out of his kingdom. Those people weren't really following Christ. They just learned to be religious.

They had some kind of church membership. So to everyone else, it looked like they were part of it. Paul says, though, here's how you could tell.

If you're sexually immoral, if you're unclean, if you're an idolater, you use foolish talk, coarse jesting, shamefulness, if you do shameful things, although it may look like you're a part of the church, you're going to be separated out in the end. You're going to be taken out of the kingdom. There'll be no inheritance for people who live like that.

And that's what Paul makes very clear. Let me read this for you in Romans chapter 2 verses 5 through 11. Romans chapter 2, 5 through 11.

And this is the same person who wrote, for by grace you've been saved through faith. So there's no contrast here. There's no contradiction.

This is just another way of expressing by grace through faith. But this is what Paul was on Paul's heart in Romans chapter 2 verses 5 through 11. But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself for the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds.

To those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life. But to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, wrath, and indignation, there will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. But glory, honor, and peace to everyone who does good to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For God does not show partiality to anyone. And so Paul in this spirit, he does this. I want you to pay attention to this because this is where I as your pastor, I understand, I believe Paul's heart.

Do not let anyone deceive you with empty words. I'm looking at my brothers and sisters here and I want to say the same thing. Do not let anybody deceive you with empty words.

And it made me wonder, what kind of empty words would he be talking about? Because he says, do not let anyone deceive you with empty words because of such things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Well, that's what he's warning about. And the wrath of God is kind of being held.

It says the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth and unrighteousness. But it's not, it's kind of reserved. Like that song we sing, he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored.

It's not, we're not seeing the wrath of God unleashed. Although God is angry with the wicked every day, he's holding it back, giving them time to come to repentance because he does not want, he doesn't take pleasure in the destruction of the wicked. So this is something I was trying to understand.

What kind of empty saying might deceive us? And don't you think in Paul's mind, deceive you into thinking it's okay to be sexually immoral? Is there something someone here would tell anyone among us that it's okay for you to have sex if you're not married? Let me tell you people, do not let anyone deceive you with that. You're going to give an account to God. Don't let anybody tell you it's okay.

These are the kind of sayings that came to me that might be empty words. God loves you just the way you are. You don't have to change.

Just come just like you are, stay just like you are. God can't love you any more than he does right now. Jesus never judged people, but you don't judge me.

Jesus never judged anyone, did he? Yes, he did. That's an empty word. Yes, he did.

You know, once you're saved, you're always saved. You never have to worry about it again. You can go and do anything you want and it'll never change that fact.

You know what I think that is? I think that's an empty word. I don't think that turns someone from sin. I don't think that leads them to holiness.

Or obedience or righteousness. It sure makes someone feel better, but I think it's an empty word. Once you're a Christian, heaven is guaranteed.

You don't even have to worry about it. Even if you fall away, you are eternally secure. It's an empty saying to me.

And I think we're in danger of when those things, and here's one that I think is it, I don't know that it's so much expressed if it's more or less felt. God is love. He doesn't get angry.

God doesn't get angry. He loves you. I thought God loved the whole world.

Doesn't it say God's going to destroy the world someday? Evidently the two go together. They're not in contradiction to one another. So let me read you, or no, let me remind you as I wrap this up, and remind

you, follow me.

In the first temptation, when the serpent came to eat, what was the empty word he used to deceive you? You shall not die. That's it. You won't die.

God won't judge you for this. He didn't really. You'll be okay.

So we should beware. Let me give you some statements to beware of. Beware of anyone who offers forgiveness from God without repentance.

Beware of those who offer forgiveness without repentance. Beware of anyone who offers grace without calling men to humble themselves. God opposes the proud.

He gives grace to the humble. Beware of someone who promises salvation without transformation. If any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation.

Old things pass away, and all things become new. Beware of those who offer salvation without transformation, and beware of those who talk all of heaven and do not like to discuss holiness, because without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Heaven is the home of the holy ones, the saints.

Now, let me just try to take this home as we wrap it up. How might this be closer to our heart than we might realize? Do you find yourself praying for your children? Lord, bless them, even though they're not serving you. Lord, bless them.

Maybe you should be praying, Lord, break them. Lord, can you forgive them? Lord, please forgive them. Are you praying that the Lord turn them to repentance so that he can forgive them? You see the difference? I mean, we ourselves, we want them to experience the goodness and mercy and grace of God.

But let me remind us of something. God doesn't offer those things without himself. His grace, his mercy, his forgiveness are him.

You don't, that'd be like, Dad, I don't want anything to do with you. Just give me the car key. Just give me the bank account.

I'm not interested in talking to you. Just give me your thing. That's what we need to be careful about.

Seeking, talking about grace and mercy and forgiveness and salvation where God gets nothing out of it. Didn't he do all those things to restore people to himself? And isn't that what the church is supposed to be about? We are to be his people, his bride. And what's it? All of us already know that.

What is it? What is a bride very, very careful about in preparing for her wedding day? What's she very, very careful about? Not even having a spot or a wrinkle. Doesn't she want to be beautiful? She wants to be flawless, every hair in place, a glorious beauty. She wants to be stunning to the eyes of her groom.

And that's, that should be our attitude toward the Lord Jesus. Okay. We understand that.

And that's what Paul is saying in these verses. Look, don't, don't let anybody deceive you by changing the grace of God into something that leaves God's final purposes out of it. Okay.

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