**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**Imitators of God - There Is No Other**

 **Ephesians 5: 1 - 10**

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

**Ephesians 5:**

1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;

 **2** and walk in love,

just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us,

an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

From his house arrest in Rome, waiting for his trial by Caesar (61-62 A.D.),Paul continues in his letter to build-up his friends in Ephesus, focusing on God and His incarnation as the Christ/Messiah. This is accomplished by the aforementioned gifts from God’s Holy Spirit functioning in their lives. Here, in verses 5:1ff, Paul has additional instruction and observations about the Believer’s life practices.

 What better way to encourage someone to have a successful life than to imitate God? Godly character starts with love, grace and forgiveness as opposed to selfish unforgiveness, bitterness and hate.

With this goal, Paul describes the Believers in Ephesus as *children of God* who are to live life in the *love of God*. It is of note that God wants us to see ourselves as His children which establishes our parent-child relationship with Him. The responsibilities of parents are to guide and protect their children. God is depicted as the Father of all Believers. Obviously, He created us and has provided guidance to follow His plan for our lives. First, God asks us to choose to surrender our hearts to Him. God asked Adam to do this in Genesis 2:17 when He gave Adam instructions not to eat from the forbidden tree. To comply with God, Adam was challenged to surrender his will to God’s will. Adam and Eve through their God-given free-will choice did not follow God’s will. They “*prided-up*” and chose their own way. However, it was not their way. . . they chose to follow the Deceiver’s way. . . that is Satan. In reality, we do not have our own way. Satan deceives people into believing that it is their choice to rebel against God. However, it is the Deceiver at work in them.

When we surrender our will to God and His plan for our lives, we receive a layer of protection from this fallen world. We still blunt the effects of this fallen world but we our greatly insulated from its full effects. With God’s Spirit functioning through us, we are better prepared to face the daily challenges life brings. Faithful Believers willingly pursing God’s family plan. With this administration, the *father’s* lead position in the family is to protect and guide his wife and children. Reading ahead in Ephesians 5, we see this in verse 25, where the husband may be called to give his life in protection of his wife and by extension his family. This is accomplished physically and for the most part through spiritual instruction.

 **Proverbs 22:6** Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.

**Ephesians 6:4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

**Psalm 78:5** For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children,

In verse 2, Paul highlights the sacrifice of Christ as the ultimate love offering. From Paul’s Jewish roots - he points to the Jewish sacrificial system as a portrait (fragrant aroma) to symbolize the payment price for sin in the sacrifice of Christ. He uses the Greek title “Christ” for Jesus because the sacrifice on the Cross was the main mission of the long-anticipated Messiah (Hebrew word for Christ). The Jewish sacrificial system was a symbol of what the Cross actually accomplished. We know that the animal sacrifices never were intended to pay the price of sin (Hebrews 10).)

**Idolatry Causes an Ungodly Life**

In the following verses, Paul returns to warning the Ephesians of wrong sinful-life-choices that are not in God’s plan for them. Once again, we see that Paul is concerned about the behavior of people he knows from years of living within their community. Paul must have knowledge that some of them continued practicing life under the influence of the popular culture around them. Verse 3 depicts an alarming portrait of people within a Christian assembly. Paul’s words are strong. He concludes that God will not allow such people into His kingdom. I see this as a historical problem throughout Church history. . . in that people claim and want to be Christian but they hold onto their former lifestyle to some degree. This is consistent with 1 John 1: 6. Please observe (v.5) that the catalyst for such an ungodly life-style. . . Idolatry.

 **3** But **immorality** or any impurity or greed

must not even be named among you,

as is proper among saints;

**4** and there must be no **filthiness** and silly talk, or **coarse jesting**,

which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

 **5** For this you know with certainty,

that no immoral or impure person or covetous man,

who is an idolater,

 **has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**

I recently listened to a sermon preached by Billy Graham that was delivered in Denver in 1987. He likened idol worship to America’s life-addictions of drugs, immoral pursuit of money, immoral entertainment and political party power politics to name of few. His warning to America is that people had slipped into idol worship by the lifestyle they pursued away from God. The Evangelist Billy Graham made it clear that many things in our modern life can become an unhealthy spiritual focus that takes us away from God’s plan for our lives.

 Speaking of idol worship in pagan life . . . It is easy to think of idol worship to be a person praying to a rock or a rock image. By the way, the Muslims are supposed to bow down and pray five times a day to Mecca. Most people do not know. . . that the Kaaba (Black shrouded structure) they pray towards . . . has a black rock in the eastern corner. Faithful Muslims are to touch or kiss this black rock at least once in their life as they circle the Kaaba in their pilgrimage journey to Mecca.

 The traditional Islamic explanation about the black stone. . . is that Muslims kiss the black stone in the fervent belief that it came from Allah in paradise. In addition, because it was the usual custom of the prophet Mohammed to kiss the black stone. Muslims believe on the Day of Judgement that the black stone will have two eyes and a tongue to intercede and to speak for those (Muslims) who had touched the stone with sincerity. With this teaching, Muslims have placed the black stone as a mediator between Allah and people. Did the real God and His Word not say that Jesus was the only mediator?

**1 Timothy 2:5-6 5** For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, **6** who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

This black rock was brought from Petra when waring Arab fractions disputed who would be in religious control in about 721 A.D. Through tradition, Muhammad died in 632 A.D. The history of this black rock traces the origins of the religion called “Islam” away from Mecca. We do not have enough time this morning to accurately present the facts. So, back to Paul.

**Deceptions**

 **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 be partakers** with them;

 **8** for you were formerly darkness,

but now you are Light in the Lord;

walk as children of Light

 **9** (for the fruit of the Light

 consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

 **10** trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

 Deception is Satan’s tool to tempt people away from God. We see this deception starting with Adam and Eve in the Garden and continuing today. Satan does not have any boundaries in his plans to destroy God’s creation. Satan comes to God, as Jesus, in the wilderness with three tests (Matthew 4). We know that Jesus was not tempted and demonstrates to us how to reject Satan with Scripture. Jesus rejects Satan in Matthew 4:4 by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, and in Matthew 4:7 by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, and then in Matthew 4:10 by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13. This is our Scriptural Road map to victory when Satan attempts to deceive us.

In John’s Gospel, we read an account of Jesus discussing Abraham with the Jews. The discussion leads to who is following the teachings of their *father*. Jesus challenges them. . . that if they are Abraham’s children. . . then why are they trying to kill Him? So, the question is . . . who is their *father*? Jesus tells them who their *father* is in verse 44.

**John 8:42-44**

**42** Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

**43** "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.

**44** "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

 From this discourse, we can see how people can be deceived by Satan into following their own understanding (or Satan’s schemes) and not God’s teaching as given in Scripture.

 What are some of the biggest deceptions with which Satan challenges us? Like Adam and Eve. . . Satan will **test and tempt** us to be selfish by thinking our position is **separate** from God, and we need to preserve and advance our standing in life ahead of God. This is called “**selfish-pride**”. God gives us a **healthy pride** to feel good about ourselves and have satisfaction **about the work He has called us to**.

Satan will spin God’s Word into deception. Example, Satan told Eve . . . “*You shall not eat from any tree of the garden* '?" (Genesis 3:1). Eve did respond that it was from *only* the forbidden tree they were not to eat from because they would die if they did. Satan crafted a response that was a direct lie. “*You surely will not die*”. Satan followed with a divisive view of God’s instruction. Satan pitted Adam and Eve against God, and they swallowed the deceit hook-line-and-sinker. Satan told them . . .*"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* Then Eve, **selfishly, rationalized** that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to her eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make her as wise as God or wiser. So, she took from its fruit and ate; and she also gave the fruit to Adam, and he ate. Then both of their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. So, they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings (Genesis. 3:1-7).

Is this not the way Satan attempts to work in all of us? Deception is a lie that rationalizes the situation in life and challenges us to think and act with a “me-first” attitude. So, we need to balance our decisions with the plan God has for our lives and consider how our thoughts and actions impact our lives and the lives of others.

After Jesus rejected Satan’s test in the wilderness, Satan left Jesus. Jesus never was tempted with Satan’s test- proposals. Meaning that Jesus did not contemplate Satan’s offer. Jesus immediately rejected Satan with Scripture. The good news is that angels came and ministered to Jesus (Matthew 4:11). This tells us that when and after Satan engages us, God is there with His angels to minister to us. Remember, **Scripture is God’s presence**. My view is that angels can come in the form of our Believing friends and family members as well as spiritual beings.

We shall not forget and shall hold close to our hearts, the words of Jesus at the great commission. . . *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:19-20).

**AMEN**