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REFRAINING FROM UNGODLY PRACTICES

Conformity to Christ: Eph. 4:32-5:10

³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

5 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

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 sweetsmelling savour.

³ 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.

⁷ Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

REFRAINING FROM UNGODLY PRACTICES

Conformity to Christ: Eph. 4:32-5:10

1A. Conformity to Christ: 4:31-5:2

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

- 1b. Kindness: Literally, "be becoming kind," shows growth and development. The definition of kindness is love in practical action.
- 2b. Tenderheartedness: the spirit of compassion which gives rise to kind acts. It is a display of sympathy and compassion.
- 3b. Forgiveness: the supreme example and motif for a Christian's forgiveness is God's forgiveness. The believer needs to forgive and forget, not to penalize the person for past infractions.
- 4b. Imitation: Since we are children, we are to show the Father's nature which we received in the new birth from him. Paul uses the word *mimetay*, literally "mimickers," only here used in the N.T. of imitating God Himself. The point, who is the ultimate example of the believer? God Himself.
- 5b. Love: Christ not only made a sacrifice but was Himself the sacrifice. The two terms "offering" and "sacrifice" are related. Offering refers to any offering, sacrifice to a slain offering. Christ fulfills both types. He is said to have "given himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God." The preposition "for" here is *uper* which means "in the place of" (Philemon 13) or "for the benefit of." Another preposition is *anti*, which is clear "in the place of" (Mt. 20:28). The point is that Christ died for our benefit and in our place and thus we as fundamentalists cling to the concept of the substitutionary atonement.

We see in verse 2 the following:

The attitude of sacrifice—Christ died voluntarily.
 The accomplishment of sacrifice—He died in our place and for our benefit.
 The acceptability of the sacrifice—a sweet smell.

2A. The Contrast of Believers and Unbelievers:

- 1b. The children of darkness: 5:3-7
- 1c. The description of darkness: 3-4

Previously Paul emphasized sins against neighbors (4:25-31), and now we have the emphasis on sins against ourselves.

- 1d. Fleshly sins: 3

- 1e. Fornication: The Greek word *porneia* (pornography) refers to all that works against the enduring of the marriage bond. Generally it is used for unlawful sexual intercourse.
 - 2e. Uncleanliness of every kind: This is the opposite of purity, which is the control of the sex drive in accordance with the purpose of God.
 - 3e. Covetousness: This characteristic is really related to uncleanness. It is ruthless greed, unconquerable love of appropriation, here most likely of some illicit sex partner. The tenth commandment speaks to the issue, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife."
- 2d. Foolish words: "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks."
- 1e. The aspects of foolish words:
 - 1f. Shamelessness: This is speech opposed to purity. Late night shows are full of this type of conversation.
 - 2f. Foolishness: This refers to words without sense or profit. How much of our conversation is comprised of meaningless or vapid chatter?
 - 3f. Jestings: Paul refers here to coarse jesting, the witty repartee which approaches sin, double meaning.
 - 2e. The antidote to foolish words: Giving of thanks.

Thanksgiving is the opposite of speech that is impure, unprofitable or coarse. Giving of thanks is a result of the control of the Spirit, an evidence of the Spirit-filled believer (Eph. 4:18-20a). Thankless individuals are either unsaved persons or unspiritual believers.
- 2c. The destination of darkness: 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."
- The idea is not that none of these sinners have the possibility of being saved. One thinks of David who was a murderer, a fornicator and yet is definitely a believer in the presence of the Lord right now.
- These sinners have no part in the kingdom because:

1) It is these sins which keep men from salvation (Jn. 3:18: He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.)

2) It is for these sins that God can condemn them. They are not just by nature the children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), but also because of their sins. It is interesting that covetousness is connected with immorality and idolatry.

3c. The deception of darkness: 6

"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

The unbelievers here and in 2:2 are called "sons of disobedience." In 2:3 they are called the "children of wrath." Apparently the deception by vain words in 6a refers to the deception of the Gnostics who promised salvation and spirituality through a deep knowledge (*gnosis*).

4c. The departure from darkness:7 "Be not ye therefore partakers with them."

The reason for the departure from darkness is given in verse 8a.

2b. The children of light: 5:8-10

1c. The destiny of light: 8

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

Paul moves here from an indicative, "you are light," to an imperative, "walk as children of light." The believer is encouraged to manifest the characteristics of the Father, and thus we are light-reflectors, but we are also luminaries ourselves, "you shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). The believer so possessed and penetrated by Him who is light, that we are light in Him.

2c. The discernment of light: 9-10

"(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord."

What is stated here is a parenthetical thought. The fruit of the light will conform to the nature of the light. Are we walking in the light? Here is the test. Is our life characterized by goodness, righteousness and truth?

--goodness as opposed to evil passions and impurity relating to the sins in verse 3.

--righteousness is opposed to theft and covetousness, related to verse 5.

--truth is related to the sins of the tongue in verse 4.

Paul says, in effect, that the believer is "to test with a view to approving as befitting and actually choosing for oneself." Are we daily, hourly, choosing that which is well-pleasing to our God?