

## **Be Imitators of God**

Ephesians 5:1-2

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, August 30, 2020

I want to invite you to turn in your Bibles this morning to a book that talks about that. It talks about the church and exciting things that happen in it. And that's the book of Ephesians. That's the book we're in this morning. We're in the book of Ephesians, and we're in chapter five; so if you want to open your Bibles up to Ephesians chapter five. I'd like to read this to you before we get started, just to get your minds around our passage for today. But Ephesians chapter five, says this,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 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.

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 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.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says,

“Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

We'll stop the reading of the word there. Just to say a few words about this passage, I've told you before that the book of Ephesians has been called Paul's Magnum Opus. It's been called the greatest thing that he ever wrote about. The apostle Paul wrote 13 letters in the New Testament; he wrote 13 books in the Bible, but some say Ephesians is the best. Some say Ephesians stands

head and shoulders above all the rest because of its simplicity, because of the clarity of the book. And you can get a feel for that by reading a passage like this. And by seeing how the book is laid out, you can see this in the outline of Ephesians. For instance, the first half of the book gives us our position in Christ, and the second half gives us our practice of it. That's the outline of the book. That's how it's set up for us. Chapters one through three, tell us who we are now that we're saved, now that Christ has come into our lives. The second half, chapters four through six, tell us what that looks like now. They tell us how to live that out.

I've heard a number of people tell me recently that they've been blessed by the sermons. They've really enjoyed them because they've been so practical. They've been so applicational; and that's because we're in the applicational section of the book. We're in the practical part of Ephesians. First part was doctrinal, this part is applicational. And chapter five falls into the application section. If you're reading the book, from start to finish, this chapter falls into the practical part. And here's how it begins. Chapter 5:1 says,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

I'll explain that a little more in a minute, but Paul says this is how you practice all that we've looked at so far. This is how you apply the doctrine. You need to imitate God. In other words, you need to copy Him and do what He does and act like He acts, which is if you think about it is incredible. I mean some passages you just read over and you just kind of pass them by; but this is one of the passages in the Bible, you need to read this, and stop, and let it kind of sit in for a minute.

Paul is telling you as a sinful, fallen human being, to imitate God. I mean, it's one thing to imitate another Christian, but it's another thing to imitate God. It's one thing to imitate Paul, or Peter or James or John or maybe your pastors or elders, but this is something else entirely. It takes it to another level, yet this is what this says. One commentator put it this way. They said, "This is the highest standard of Christian doctrine that's ever been written in the Bible. It is staggering in its contents, astonishing. In fact, it makes you pause for a moment and hold your breath and wonder did Paul really say this? And the answer is 'yes.'"

And just to show you what he's saying here, if you look at the surrounding passage around Ephesians 5:1, you can see that the theme of this passage is sin. That's what Paul's writing about here. The theme of the passage is, now that you're Christian, now that you're saved, you need to get rid of your sin problem. You can't hold on to it anymore. That's how you practice your position. That's how you apply what you've learned. You need to put off your lying and lusting and stealing. You need to put off your bitterness and wrath and anger. The world embraces all of that, but not you. The world loves it and cherishes it and nourishes it, but you can't do that. You put off your sin at all costs.

If you read all the verses around chapter 5:1, and you read chapter 4:25 and the following, and then you read the verses that come in chapter five:3-5, that's just the world. That's what unbelievers look like. But Paul says this is not for you anymore. You don't look like that because you are to be imitators of God. In other words, Paul says you need to hate your sin as much as God does. That's the connection here. That's the bridge between chapter four and chapter five; you need to despise sin as much as Him.

And the order of this is important here, I want you to see this. The context is important because Paul does not say that you need to do this in order to be saved. He's not saying you need to do this in order to be a Christian. He says that you do this because you are one. Does that makes sense? Everybody following me? You do this because you are saved. It's a done deal; a finished thing. You just need to live like it now. There's a reason chapters one, two, and three come first, and these chapters come later. Because salvation comes first.

I mention this because a lot of people don't get this today. I mean, so many people in churches don't understand because they say, "If I just do more stuff, God will accept me. If I just do more good deeds and good works and good things, give my money to charity, go on a mission trip, whatever it is, then God will receive me." That's not what this says here. That's not what Paul tells us. Paul says, if you're in Christ, God has already received you, God has already made you a Christian, and now all that stuff comes afterwards.

I mention this because a lot of people also say, "I just need to try harder. You know, when I mess up, and when I sin and when I fail and do all these things that are talked about in the book of Ephesians, when I fail at this, I just need to try harder I need to do more." That's not what it says either. Paul says you don't need to try harder, you need to think harder. He says the problem is not what you're doing on the outside. The problem is what's going on inside because you're forgetting what God has done for you in Christ. If you remember what God has done for you, you will stop sinning. This is not about you, this is about Him. This is not about what you do for Him. This is about what He's done for you.

To say it another way, this is important as well, the greatest problem with our sin at the end of the day, the greatest problem with our flesh is that we are selfish. We're simply ungrateful for all God has done. That's the problem. When we sin, we say "I want to sin, so I'm going to sin. I want to do this, so I'm going to do it. I don't care what you've done for me, God, I don't care how much it cost You, I want to lust so I'm going to lust. I want to get angry, so I'm going to get angry, get out of my way." That's what we're saying. It's an act of gratitude. It's an act of selfishness at the highest level. I remember the first time I heard a famous pastors preach, because he preached from the Gospel of Luke and he said, "When you sin, you don't fall into it, you plan it." It's not a mistake, you plot it out way in advance, and that's the horror of it. That's

the shame of it because you think about it way ahead of time. And you do that because you're ungrateful. As a Christian, you do that because you don't care what God has done for you.

And this is what Paul is saying in the book of Ephesians. This what he's telling us here. Paul puts this passage in here in this portion of the book to give you a gut check. To give you a wake-up call, to show you what your sin is, your sin is a slap in the face of God. Your sin is a mockery of Him because you're living for the things that He died for. When you sin, you're being entertained by the things that took Him to the cross. That's why chapter 4:30 says that this grieves the Holy Spirit when you do this. It saddens Him because what you've done is so repulsive to God. It's so ugly that it makes Him cry. It's a frightening thing to make God cry and

it's a terrible thing. That's what our sin does. Hebrews 10:29 also says that this tramples underfoot the Son of God. What we would say today is it throws Him under the bus when we sin. That passage also says our sin regards the blood of the covenant as unclean; that means it pollutes it. And Paul's point here is you need to get that and quit and repent.

I met a man in Georgia several years ago who was a good example of this because before he became a Christian, he was a drunk. He was an alcoholic to the point that he would drink all the time. I mean, morning, noon, and night, this guy was constantly drinking. In fact, he told me he got drunk every night and he washed it away with a beer first thing in the morning. It was that bad; but then he got saved and everything changed for him. He got saved and he stopped drinking and I asked him "Why? Why did you quit like that?" And I still to this day, remember what he said, he said, "Because I saw what my sin was doing to God. I saw how it offended him and I couldn't stand it anymore, and so I had to stop."

That's what our passage is about this morning. That's what this text is saying. You will never get over your sin problem until you see what it's doing to God. You will never get over the deeds of the flesh until you see how it offends Him. And that's what we're going to talk about today, so if you're taking notes this morning, in Ephesians 5:1-2, we're going to look at three reasons to imitate God. That's our outline for today. That's what this is about. If you're taking notes, we're going to look at three reasons to imitate God and put our sin away. We're going to talk about this because this verse is so daunting that it's so intimidating to talk about imitating God, that you need some motivation for this. And so, Paul gives you several motivations here.

The first one is this. Here's the first reason to imitate God, it's because you are God's child. Paul says this in a tender way; he starts us off with a tender note. He says the first reason to imitate God and put your sin away is because you're a God's child. Some people talk about sin and it's just, you know, boom! It's like getting slammed with something. Paul's not slamming you here. Paul's not hitting you upside the head; he's actually putting his arm around you and saying remember when you sin, you're God's child. He's your father; you're part of His family. And

when you imitate Him, you're just doing what a child does. This is just what comes naturally to you now. And if you read chapter 5:1 again, here's what he says. In his own words, Paul writes and he says,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

Just to walk you through this a little bit, if you notice, chapter 5 starts off with the word “therefore.” That's a familiar word in the book of Ephesians. It's used a lot, and it points you back to what he said before. It points you back to the previous passage, which if you look at the end of chapter 4:32 it says this,

Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

There's no break between these chapters in the original Greek, there's no separation between chapter 4 and chapter 5, so this is actually one long sentence. It goes together, and if you put it together, it says this,

Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

In other words, What this is saying is you need to be kind to others because God has been kind to you. You need to forgive others and love others and treat them with respect, tender heartedly, because that's what God has done for you. And you need to do this first and foremost, because you are His child. You need to imitate Him like a child does. The word “imitate” here it's a Greek word, *mimētai* from which we get the word “mimic.” It means to mimic someone, to copy their behavior. The word “mime” also comes from this. I don't think we have mimes as much today as we used to years ago, but if you've seen a mime before, you'll know what they do. They copy you, right? They follow you around. If you move this way, they move this way. If you do your hands like this, they do their hands like this. That's what this word means.

Paul says you need to do that with God. You need to do that with the Lord. You need to be His mime. God goes this way, you go this way. God does this, you do this. One writer said that we often hear the comments about a young man that he looks just like his father. And he walks like him and talks like him. Paul says, you should do that with the Lord. You need to walk and talk like God because He is your father now.

There are a lot of terms for God in the Bible. The Lord, King, Ruler, the Mighty One, Shepherd, The Rock. But this is one that might be the most tender hearted one in the scriptures. He's your Father.

Let me say like this, you know what, you can have one spiritual father at the end of the day and that's it. Just one, and it can be God, or it can be the Devil. There's no in between. There are no other options. If you remember, Jesus told the Pharisees in John 8:44 that "you are of your father, the devil." It's quite a thing to say to some religious guys, right? "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 so are you." And if you notice, the Lord brings a logical progression there, there's a train of thought, and that is you act like the devil, so you're of the devil. You act like Satan, so Satan can have you and that's what this is saying. Paul says it needs to be the reverse. You need to act like God so God can have you. Or you need to act like God because God already has you. You're His, and you need to imitate Him.

I remember when my son was born, my first son. We had a big yard at our house, previous house, that had I had to mow it every week, I had to spend several hours doing that on a big riding lawnmower. And every time I did that, every time I would mow the grass, I would look back at the house and I would see my son watching me in the window. Two little eyes, you know, and you go back and forth on the mower so his eyes would go back and forth with me. And it wasn't long before he convinced his mom to buy him a mower. It wasn't long before he convinced her to buy this little plastic thing he pushed around the house, pushed around the yard and said, "Just like Daddy." That's what he kept saying over and over again, "Just like daddy."

That's what a child does. That's what a son does. Daughters do that. They want to be just like their father. They just want to be like that, and we need to do that with the Lord. If we do that with our earthly fathers, how much more should we do that with our Heavenly Father? If we want to follow and copy a sinful man, how much more should we want to follow a heavenly perfect One? I don't know where everybody's at today in your relationship with your dad. For a lot of people that can be a sore subject, some people have had bad fathers. Well I'll tell you, if you're a Christian, you don't have a bad father anymore. You have a perfect One, and you have no reason to be bitter about this subject.

And this leads to a couple of applications here; just a few ways to apply this to our lives. For one. These are very simple, but we need to talk about this. For one. This means we need to spend more time with God. I think that makes sense. It's pretty obvious, but you can't imitate someone you don't know. You can't imitate a stranger so if you want to apply this to your lives, you need to spend time with God. You need to spend time in prayer. You need to spend time in His Word. You spend time in the church with other Christians, investing in things like the care groups and men's and women's Bible studies; but you're doing all that so you can know Him better and follow Him. When you come to church, it's not just a social call; you're coming here to know God. I think one reason we struggle with sin is because we don't do that. One reason we fight sin so much, it's such a battle, it's such an issue because we're not spending time with God. So when

the sin comes, we're not ready. When the temptation comes, we're so blown away by that. Let me tell you something, friends, if you spent more time with your father, you'd be able to tell the enemy. They say the closer you are to the Shepherd, the farther away you are from the wolves. You be close to Him and He'll take care of the sin

This leads to another application. Another way to apply this to our lives, and that is that you need to spend time with God for a purpose. You need to spend time with God for a reason, and that is to change. This passage is put in here to change you, which means you don't pray just to pray. You don't go to church just to go to church. You don't go through the motions and check off a box. You do it so it'll make a difference in your life. This needs to mean something to you; it needs to be personal. That's what a relationship is at the end of the day. That's what a family is, it's personal. God needs to be personal to you. We say all the time that you need to have a personal relationship with Jesus and that expression can be abused, and we have to be careful with how we use it. but it is right. It needs to be a personal thing. It's great if your friends are Christians, but you're gonna have to be one. It's great if the people in this room know God, but you need to know God.

It's been said that parenthood is not taught as much as it's caught, because that's what children do. They catch things. They pick up things by watching you, and you need to catch things from God. You need to pick up on things from other Christians. A friend of mine told me he got saved because of this. He became a Christian by watching other Christians. He said he had never read the Bible before. He had never heard of Christ, or didn't know much about Him, but he said he knew some Christians in his workplace and he knew some Christians in his neighborhood, and he watched them, and he could tell they were different. And when he asked them why, they said it was because of their Father. See, it was caught by him. You need to catch things.

Which leads to another point to talk about this morning. It leads to another reason to imitate God. And the first one is because you're God's child. You need to imitate God because you are His son and His daughter. He's your Father; you're part of His family now. And when you repent of sin, you're just showing that, you're just expressing that. You're showing which side you're on, God or the devil.

That leads to another point to consider for today, another reason to imitate God and this just builds on the previous one; and that is that you are God's beloved child. Not only are you God's child, and that's one reason to imitate God, but another reason is you are His beloved child. Which means you're a special child; you're the apple of His eye. God doesn't just love you a little bit, He loves you a lot. We sang about that this morning. There are so many songs about that as there should be. And if you read on in verse one, it says this,



Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you.

You know if you remember the context for this passage, you'll know this was written to the church in Ephesus. It was written to a church in a very sinful place. We'll talk about this next week, but the first century was an awful, vulgar time. And these people lived right in the midst of that; they lived in a very, very wicked town; so this would have been especially hard for them. Any talk of imitating God would have seemed like something from another planet. They could imitate the gods, but not God. It's a totally different thing. So, Paul had to keep giving them reasons for this. He had to keep giving them motivation, so they wouldn't be discouraged. And now he gives him another one. And he says, you should do this because you're God's beloved child. Not just His child, but His, you can see he's adding to this, His beloved child.

The word “beloved” here, it's the Word of God *agapēta* in Greek, which comes from the word *agape*. It's used three times in this passage. It's used over and over again, which is interesting because it was the highest form of love in the Greek language. It was the highest form of affection that they had. The Greeks had three or four words for love, depending on how you look at it. One was *eros* from which we get the word “erotic;” it means sexual love, sexual passion. Then there was *philia* from which we get Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love because that's what that meant. Love of a brother or a friend – friend love. And then there was this word *agape*, unconditional love. It was love that was given for love's sake. It was love that was given without any thought of love in return. It's the kind of love you just give and give and give. You just serve and serve. And in fact, it was so unusual that the Greeks hardly ever mentioned it. If you read Greek literature, you almost never see this word. It's used 500 times in the New Testament. Some have said that the Apostles pretty much reinvented the word because this is a love God has for you in Christ. This is the quality of the affection He has for you. He loves you with an unconditional love. You are His *agapēta*; you are His beloved children. It's one thing to love a child. It's another thing to love a child like this. It's one thing to love a sinner. It's another thing to love a sinner like this.

And just to show you again, to add even more to this, how amazing this is, this is the same thing God said about Jesus earlier in the Bible. It's the same thing He said about the Lord at His baptism in the Gospel of Matthew when He said, “This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” This is the same word, beloved. Paul says the same thing about us here. God loves you like you are His beloved son. And there's a difference there because Jesus is the second person of the Trinity and you're not. He's the Son of God and you're a son of God. There's a difference there, but the point is the love is the same, the affection is the same. Paul says,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love.



That's the second command that we see in here, the second order. The first one is "Be imitators of God." That's the first command. Second one is walking in love. In other words, Paul says, since God has done this for you, you need to do this for others. Since God has loved you like this, you need to learn to love them that way. In fact, you need to walk in it; and the idea of walking is you do it every day, over and over and over again, because God loves you over and over and over again. Paul says when you practice this, you're not doing anything foreign to you. You're not doing anything strange. Every time you come to church, you come to church because God has loved you with agape, and so that's what you give to others. Every time you turn away from your sin and ask for forgiveness, there's the agape again, and that's what you give.

This is so different from the Roman and the Greek gods. This really is something from another planet. The Greek gods did not love their people. and the Greek authors said that. Plato said that "Our men are better than our gods. Our men treat each other better than the gods do." It's true. And now Christianity is offering this.

The story is told of the time two little boys came to school with the same last name. They both had the last name Jones, but they looked different. They had two different skin colours and so the teacher asked them if they were related, and they said, "Yes, ma'am, we're brothers, but one of us was adopted." So the teacher asked them, "Well, which one?" And the boy said, "We don't know because our daddy said that on the day he brought us home he kissed us and then he forgot." Friends, do you know that that's what God has done for you? That's what Christ has done. He's kissed you and then He forgot. He brought you home, He adopted you, and now He remembers your sin no more. No more. So, you should do the same with others.

You know, I've counseled people and talked with people who, they work so hard to earn God's favour. Day in, day out, it's like a monster on their back. Remember the burden in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*? Can't get it off. There are people like that. They come into your office and they're just stooped over with grief, guilt. They struggle with sin; they battle with it.

They say, "I feel so guilty. I feel so bad after what I did. I can't move on. I can't get past it. And I have to remind them over and over again gently and with a shepherd's heart as best I can, "You can get over it because God already has. You can get past it because He's already gotten past it. He left it at the cross. Stop bringing it back up again. You're acting like you got to bring Jesus down and nail Him all over again. You don't have to do that."

Other people say, "You know, what I did was so horrible. I can't forgive myself. What I did was so terrible. I can't let it go." God's already let it go. If you're in Christ, He's forgiven, and you have to do the same. And let me tell you what will happen if you don't do that, just to maybe shepherd you a little bit. Let me tell you what will happen if you don't think that way: you will never change. You will never get past this cycle of sin and regret, sin and regret, sin and regret.

You'll be like a high and low all the time. One minute, your high. One minute you feel great because you're walking with the Lord and doing the right thing. And the next minute you're low because you sinned again, and you blew it again. God doesn't want you to do that. He doesn't want you to live like that. He's moved past it, so can you.

In one of his books on this, Jerry bridges, he says that “Our sin has been put away. To use the language of Scripture, our sins are removed, put behind God's back, blotted out, remembered no more, and hurled into the depths of the sea. And there is no use in us fishing them out again. There's no use in us getting a rod and going underwater to try to pick them up. He says leave them in the sea. Leave them with Christ.”

Which leads us to another point to consider this morning. Another reason to imitate God, again. These are just one motivation after another to do this. The first one is because you are God's child. The first reason to imitate God and put yourself sin away is because you are God's child. Which means He's your Father now. He's your Dad, and when you when you turn away from sin, when you put away sin, you're just acting like a son does. It just comes naturally to you. Second, not only that, you need to remember you are God's beloved child. You are the apple of His eye, His special child. He doesn't love you a little bit, He loves you a lot. He doesn't love you with an *eros* type of love, or a *philia* type of love. This is *agape* love. It's repeated over and over again in this passage. The pagans had no idea what that meant. No clue. You do. You know what this word means because God has loved you that way.

It leads to one more point to consider this morning. One more reason to imitate God and put our sin away, and this is the greatest one of all. Paul just builds, he's like climbing a mountain here, and this is the greatest one of all; and that is because He gave Himself for you. The third reason you should imitate God and put your sin away is because God gave Himself for you. Which means that He didn't just talk about loving you, He actually loved you. He didn't give His riches or His possessions; He gave himself. It's one thing to say “I love you,” and write a check. Or say “I love you” and here's some money or something like that. It's another thing to give yourself. That's what God did. If you read on it says,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 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.

If Paul hasn't given you enough motivation for this yet, if he hasn't given you enough reasons, he gives you another one here. And he says, “Walk in love just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for you.” It shows the depth of His love. It shows the cost of it, and to kind of walk you through this, these are some images from the Old Testament. Paul is borrowing from the Hebrew Bible here. These are things any Jew would be familiar with because every time you

sinned in the Old Testament, this is the connection to sin again, every time you messed up, this is what you had to do. You had to bring an offering to God; you had to make a sacrifice. We don't really think about that today because looking around the room, nobody in here brought a goat with you to worship or a bull. But that's what they would have done. That's how they worshipped God because when you sinned, you had to kill an animal and then another one when you sinned again. And when you messed up or you failed at something, you had to go back and do it again. It was an ongoing thing for them; it never ended. It's been said that there were no seats in the temple because the priest could never sit down, could never stop killing things. He was a professional killing machine. The temple was just one big bloodbath because people keep sinning.

And when you would offer a sacrifice or an offering and the Lord accepted it, it was called a fragrant aroma. That's what we see here. Some of your translations may say a sweet-smelling sacrifice, which is actually kind of a play on words there. It's kind of an ironic statement because sacrifices didn't normally do this, they didn't normally smell good. They were very smelly. But if it was done out of a pure heart, if you did it out of the right reasons and motivation, it smelled good to God. He approved of it.

And what Paul says here, is putting all these Old Testament images together, is that this is what Jesus did for you. This is what He did on the cross, He brought a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God. He didn't ask you to bring a sacrifice, He brought the sacrifice. He didn't ask you to bring an offering, He brought the offering. In fact, He *was* the offering. He brought Himself so that you didn't have to keep bringing animals over and over and over again. How tedious would that get? How monotonous, especially if you live outside of Jerusalem? I mean, how much money would you pay in gas? Take an animal back and forth to kill them. Paul says this is how great His love was for you. This is how deep His love was. Jesus offered one offering, one sacrifice for all time. And now Paul asked the question, "How can you keep sinning in light of that? How can you keep going back to your lust and your anger and all these other things?" One commentator said, "How can you keep sinning against the sin forgiving God? How can you be that wretched? How can you be that miserable?"

Friends let me tell you, if we're ever going to get past our sin, if we're ever going to defeat it, you're going to have to stop looking at sin as a bunch of rules. You're going to have to stop looking at it as a bunch of do's and don'ts. You know, I kept my commandments today. Check, check, check, check, check. You can't think of it that way. Paul doesn't present it that way. He doesn't say, "Here's a bunch of rules, now go do them." He says you need to do this out of love for God. This is a relational thing. This is a personal thing. Your sin affects your relationship to God, and that's what you have to deal with.

In my studies this week, I came across a list of 35 reasons to avoid sin, 35 of them. I'm not going to read them all for the sake of time, but they were very good. It was a helpful list and it said several things like you know, we should avoid sin because it's contagious. Sin never stops; it always spreads. If you sin over here, you're going to sin over there. If you give it a little bit, it's going to take a lot. We should also avoid our sin because it brings on the discipline of God. When we sin, it brings us chastisement; that's another great reason to stay away. It's also a waste of time; when we sin, it's a total waste of time. Proverbs talks about casting your bread upon the waters, it just, it's pointless. And then it said this reason this was the greatest reason it had in the list. We should avoid sin because it breaks the heart of God. We should avoid sin because when we sin, it grieves Him. It crushes Him because He did all this for you, and for you to sin is to say, "I don't care." He did all this for you and for you to go back to your sin is to just slap Him in the face. Which leads me to ask you know, do you see that today? Do you understand what this passage is saying? That your sin breaks the heart of God. Does that bother you? If it bothers you, you need to repent. Right? If it bothers you, you turn away from it. With a broken heart, but with a heart that knows He forgives.

To say it another way, you know, and get real personal here, if you're struggling with sin this morning, I mean, what sin are you struggling with? If you look down in the list here between chapters four and five, all these things we've been talking about, we're going to talk about some more sins next week, where do you see yourself in the list? Do you struggle with lying lusting, stealing? Do you struggle with anger? We talked about that last week, bitterness. If you do, let me tell you what you need to do with that, you need to stop being selfish. You stop being ungrateful. Remember what God has done for you and go back to that now.

You know, in the 1800s, a lady named Francis Havergal was visiting Germany with her family. She was there on holiday and she saw a painting of Jesus hanging on the cross. With these words written under it, it said "I did this for thee, what hast thou done for me?" And she said that that stuck with her. She left Germany, went back home, and couldn't get it off her mind, that statement. And so she wrote a hymn about it. Entitled "I Gave My Life for Thee." It's not a very well-known hymn today, but some of you might have heard of it. And the lyrics go like this. She wrote this,

I gave My life for thee,  
My precious blood I shed,  
That thou might ransomed be,  
And raised up from the dead;

I suffered much for thee,  
More than thy tongue can tell,

Of bitt' rest agony,  
To rescue thee from hell;

And I have brought to thee,  
Down from My home above,  
Salvation full and free,  
My pardon and My love;

I gave, I gave My life for thee,  
What hast thou done for Me?  
I left, I left it all for thee,  
What hast thou done for Me?

My friends, can ask you the question this morning, how would you answer that? What would you say? If God said, "What have you done for Me?" What would you tell Him? If He asked you, "What have you gave?" What would you say? Paul says there's one thing you can do. There's one thing all of us can do. You can repent of your sin. If you want to know "What can I give to God, what can I bring to Him?" That's one thing you can bring. You can bring your own broken heart over it, and confess to the Lord, and turn away from it. Will you do that this morning? Will you bring your sin to the Lord? Let me pray that you would and ask for His grace in this in our lives.

Heavenly Father, when we think of what You have done for us, our words are not adequate. We can't express it; we can't explain it, and that's why it's so good to have the Bible because the Bible does that for us. Your word explains it. And here, Father in the clearest way possible, Paul says You've loved us. That's what You've done in spite of our sin. That's what You've done to defeat it. You've loved us on the cross. We thank You for that this morning. We are humbled by that. It makes us want to sing; it makes us want to pray.

Lord, I pray for those who are here today who have heard this message and read this passage, maybe those who are watching online, that if they are in Christ, and they're wrestling with any of these sins, or they're wrestling with discouragement or defeat, or depression, whatever it may be, Lord, would You please remind them of what we've talked about today? You have forgiven them. If they are in You, their sin has been thrown as far as the east is from the west, and it's not coming back. You're not going to bring it back over their heads. It has been punished in Christ; and may they live in light of that Lord. May we walk out of here joyful believers as a result.

I also pray for those unbelievers in this room, if there's any who were here who are lost, and that their hearts would be crushed. That they would see that they don't have an offering for sin. They

don't have a sacrifice there. They're like the Jews who had to keep bringing them back and back and back to the temple. And Lord draw them to Christ.

Father, we thank You for this morning, for these times we can talk about these things. And we asked that You would help us to change in light of that. We want to come into Your presence, and we want to go away different. Would You do that in us today? We pray this in Jesus' name and for His glory. Amen.