

Notes: Walk as God's Child (Ephesians 5:1-7).

Intro: The words, "be imitators of God as beloved children" resonate with the believer's heart. To the exalted status of sonship the believer is told God predestined him (Eph. 1:4). Through faith in Jesus Christ the child of God has been transformed from the inside out (2:10). Having the mind and heart of the children of God we must imitate our Father's likeness by putting off the attitudes that correspond the old unbelieving life and putting on those which correspond to the new (Eph 4:22-23). How necessary this is in the matter of sexual purity. Paul's compassionate straight-forward talk about sex is brief but helpful to the struggling believer.

#1: Treasure your identity (1-2). We must imitate God "as beloved children." We must imitate our heavenly Father not to be his beloved children but because we are his children through simple faith in his Son. Once again, as he has done throughout this letter, Paul says that the Christian's holiness is a matter of learning to be in action what God has already made him in his mind and heart. When sexual temptation intrudes, treasure your identity as God's children (cf. 1 Jn. 3:1). How necessary this is! Paul addresses the sins of lust by first reminding us of our exalted status! How might you warn a fellow believer not to indulge in such soul destroying lust? Would you command him not to? Condemn its practice? Both are appropriate and Paul will do both but not before reminding the struggling believer of his exalted identity as God's child! To ignore this family status can condemn God's struggling ones to a downward path of guilt, shame, and hopelessness. Our new identity empowers us to: Live as God's child. Think of it. Two thousand years ago, God sent his divine Son into our world clothed in our flesh. As the God/man he obeyed God perfectly. But then God punished his obedient Son to make the disobedient (you and me) his sons. On a Roman cross, God cursed and rejected his Son because of our disobedience so that he might love and receive us as sons because of Christ's obedience. Trusting in Christ's atoning blood, we are not only reconciled to God, we are also born anew as the children of God. Thus we must obey not to become God's children but because we are by faith. God has taken us into his family. He has given us his name. He has put the Spirit of his Son within us. He has granted us access to his throne of grace with boldness. We know the privilege of calling out to him in our time of need, "Father help me." Love as God's child. We must obey and we must walk in love. What empowers our love? "Christ loved us and gave himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." We must love God by drawing on the resources of his love which Christ's atoning blood purchased for us (Phil. 4:19). Drawing on the riches of God's grace, let us love God and his ways more than lust! This is path to life, joy, contentment (Ps. 37:4).

#2: Treasure your purity (3-4). Paul gives specifics about how God's child may experience the purity his new heart desires. The child of God hears Paul saying much more than "don't do these naughty things." Tempted as he is. Struggling as he may be, the believer is a new person--a "saint." This is because of what was said in chapter 2. God made the believer spiritually alive with Christ when he was dead solely according to his grace. He joined him to Christ by faith which he worked in him as a gift (2:8-9). He raised him up with the resurrected Christ to new life. The indwelling Spirit of God assures him that he is God's workmanship, created in Christ for good works. God is working in him to will and perform his good pleasure. Thus the believer's heart should resonate with Paul's view of sexual purity. As a new creation he cannot find happiness in the world's distorted views of sex. We must: Reject the world's low view of sex. The believer rejects the world's view not because he sees sex as sin but because he sees

sexual intimacy as one of God's great gifts which he gave man in the beginning (Gen 2:24). The Greek terms for "sexual immorality" and "impurity" together cover every kind of sexual sin—intercourse outside its God ordained context of a loving marriage between a man and a woman. Paul adds "greed" (covetousness) because sexual sin involves a greedy misuse of another's body for one's sinful gratification. Crude talk also degrades God's precious gift. Embrace God's high view of sex. "Thanksgiving" must replace filthy speech. Why? Commentators differ but it would seem that Paul is putting plainly the striking contrast between the pagan and Christian attitudes towards sex. Sexual intimacy as God's gift should not be cheapened, degraded, diminished but treasured within the marital relationship God created it for. To cheapen it by misuse is to settle for far less than God would have us enjoy.

#3: Treasure your security (5-7). Two stark warnings drive the believer to treasure his security in God's grace. Idolaters are: denied an eternal inheritance; assured eternal wrath. How fearful! How may we, weak as we are, have hope of our perseverance? Trusting in God's love which will not let us go. God chose the believer to be holy and blameless (1:4). The Holy Spirit indwells us as the guarantee of obtaining our inheritance (1:14). Jesus reigns and prays for us (1:22-23; Lk 22:31-32).