

# Followers of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now let us turn to Ephesians chapter 5 from the beginning. Ephesians 5 at the beginning. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, 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 sweet-smelling savour.

These then are the words of the Apostle by way of advice to the Ephesians. Be followers of God as dear children, and walk in love.

Now you know how it is that there are houses for sale, and there they are, waiting to be purchased. Now someone may go there and see a house, and buy it. But that doesn't mean to say that they are going to move into the house, not perhaps for some considerable time.

But what has happened to the house is this. It has been transferred in ownership to the person who has purchased it. And although it may not look as if it did belong to the owner, yet in law it is that person's house.

[ 1 : 29 ] And the person who has purchased it is interested in it. He is as interested in that building as if he had actually moved in, and taken it over himself.

And indeed the person who has purchased this property may have very noble plans for it. And it lies there, the property, in its undeveloped state.

But nonetheless, the property is going to be developed. And as you pass by that property, you will not see any notice up for sale.

It has been bought. You might see a notice. And what the notice might say on that property is, this property is being redeveloped.

And isn't that how it is with a Christian's life? It has been taken over. The life of the Christian has been taken over by God.

[ 2 : 44 ] Christ Jesus has come into possession of it. Christ's Father has given to him this property. And Christ has purchased it at the cost of his own blood.

And not only so, but that property has been sealed. And it has been sealed by the Spirit of God until the day of redemption as it is put.

In other words, a notice has been put up over the property. Sealed by the Holy Spirit. This property now belongs to God.

And so, that being so, there is a change that you will notice in the property. And this is what the Apostle Paul is talking about when he goes on to declare, this is how you as Christian people at Ephesus should live.

Be followers of God as dear children and walk in love. And so he is talking to us about the standard of the Christian's profession and the way the Christian must live.

[ 4 : 05 ] Let's look at that. Now, we must ask ourselves, to whom does the Christian look for guidance? Where does the Christian derive knowledge to show him how he is to live?

Well, where are you going to look? Where am I going to look if we are Christians here in this building today? Where are we going to look for guidance and for knowledge and for understanding? Well, we are certainly not going to look to the church.

The church may be helpful to us. And the church may enable us to interpret the truth of God. But if you were to depend upon the free church of Scotland to guide you unerringly through life, I would be very sorry for you.

And I would be very sorry for any man or any woman who would look to any church, no matter what that church might be. It's a pathetic thing to see how people depend upon the teaching of the Roman church to guide them unerringly through life to the kingdom of God.

As if fallible men could sit and pronounce God's truth just like that, it can't be done. So it's not to the church that we look for guidance.

[ 5 : 35 ] Nor do we look to the example of others. This is something that some people might be inclined to do. They might say, well, look at so-and-so.

He's a good professing Christian. Or look at this other person. She's a good professing Christian. I must try and look and walk like them and do what they are asking me to do. I would say this to you. You mustn't look to people. No matter how godly that man may appear to you, he's still a fallen son of Adam, redeemed by grace. You mustn't look to that godly woman, no matter how attractive her witness for Christ may be.

She's only a fallen woman in Adam. She hardly can guide herself, let alone you. So it's not to the church that we look.

Nor is it to the example of others that we look for our Christian discipline and Christian guidance. We must look to God. And that is what the apostle is saying to the Ephesians.

[ 6 : 47 ] And we must not just look to God, but we must imitate God. Be ye therefore followers of God.

God. The apostle might have had some reason, at least you and I might have thought this, to have said to these Ephesians, be followers of me, or be followers of Peter, or be followers of John. But he doesn't say that. He says, be ye followers of God as dear children. And what does the word follower mean?

Well, it can be translated, imitator. And that is what the apostle is saying to these people, be imitators of God. Try and be like God.

Copy God. Place your life alongside of God's. And since we are God's children, if by the grace of God we are through conversion, we have to emulate him, copy him.

[ 8 : 06 ] Isn't this what you see in a family? This is what you see perhaps a little boy doing. He copies his father. Sometimes he even goes to the length of trying to walk like his father.

To express the same mannerisms as his father. And if his father is going to do a job, you'll find him there. And he wants, if it's a hammer, he wants a tiny hammer.

If it's a pen, he wants a pen to write. He's imitating, you see. And it's the same with this little girl. There she is, and she follows her mother into the kitchen.

She sees her mother doing something. It may be baking. It may be cooking. She wants to do it. She wants to imitate. And this is precisely what Paul is saying that we as children of God have to do. We have to imitate our father. We have to copy him. In other words, the standard which the apostle sets before us for our Christian profession must not be less than God.

[ 9 : 19 ] It obviously cannot be more than God. In other words, you cannot better God. But you must try to reach up to God.

You must imitate him. You know how our day is a day that has got a craze. And the craze is for breaking records.

And there are people, and they'll do anything to get into what is called the Guinness Book of Records. They'll try every effort to surpass everyone else in their achievements.

Just lately, the last craze was for a young man to climb all the Monroes in Scotland and to do it in a winter. And he's done it.

And he's got his name into the history books. Or rather, into the record books, I should say. And so there is this craze to break records.

[ 10 : 25 ] This craze to go beyond the standard, if it's possible. Well, a Christian knows perfectly well that he cannot go beyond the standard. He cannot even attain to the standard, let alone go beyond it.

But the standard is there. And God has set the standard. And that is the standard to which every Christian must strive.

He must try to be like God. And God has commanded it. You remember how God says, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

And so we must try to imitate God. In what sense? Well, in the sense of reproducing by God's grace.

In the sense of reproducing the life of God in our own lives. That's what our aim must be as Christians. To reproduce God's life in our lives.

[ 11 : 39 ] And so that's why the Apostle says that as far as the Christian profession is concerned, there must be no fornication. No uncleanness.

No covetousness. No filthiness. No foolish talking, jesting, and so on. You see, he's placed the standard so high because that is what God, that's what God is like. And what we are to do as Christian men and Christian women if we have been regenerated by the power of God is to reflect something of the glory of God in our lives. We've got to try and reflect by the grace of God something of the measureless love of God in our lives. And that leads me on to this point. We've been looking at the standard that the Christian has to attain. He has to be like God. He has to imitate God. Now what is the sphere in which the Christian exercises his profession? [ 12 : 51 ] What I mean by that is that the Christian has to walk in love. That's the sphere where he exercises this God, this God, this God, godly standard.

He has to walk in love. Be ye therefore followers of God, imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love.

And what the apostle is surely saying to the Ephesians as he is saying it to us is this, we must express our Christianity by a life of compassion. Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

there in Christ you will see compassion. A compassion that you cannot see anywhere else and it's in Christ. And the apostle is saying you must exercise that compassion in your life.

[ 14 : 06 ] In other words as the apostle says elsewhere we are to be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

And that is where I find it so very difficult to exercise my Christian profession within that sphere of love. It's all very well for me to make my profession of my faith in Christ and to say that I believe this about God and I believe that about God and I believe in Christ as my saviour and Lord.

But then I have to ask am I exercising a life of compassion as a believer in Christ? And if I am exercising that life of compassion it ought to be seen in a kindness of life.

and isn't that where so many Christians fall down because they're not kind and there are so many Christians and they're not even tender hearted and there are so many Christians and they're not even ready to exercise a forgiving spirit towards one another.

and yet this is what is expected of us just as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us so we for Christ's sake ought to forgive others.

[ 15 : 56 ] And we ask ourselves today are we expressing our Christianity by a life of compassion walk in love and again are we exercising our Christianity by a life of self-giving just like Christ's?

Here the apostle says as Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

That's the way says Paul you are to be. Christ gave himself he didn't hold back himself for his people he saved them and greater love says Christ hath no man than this than that a man laid down his life for his friends and we ask ourselves today are we expressing that Christianity of ours in self-giving?

Am I prepared to give myself to others? Now I find that extremely difficult I must confess I don't want to be bothered with others I want to be left alone to live my own kind of life and I don't want to become too involved with other people and with their problems I have enough problems of my own I say why should I be bothered with other people's problems?

Why should I become involved with their situation? And yet this is precisely where I must exercise my Christian profession in that kind of sphere of love when I am prepared to give myself to others and for others maybe they need my help am I prepared to give it?

[ 18 : 11 ] Maybe they need my counsel my advice am I prepared to give it? Maybe they need a little practical help from me am I prepared to give it?

And so the implications here are immense enormous and yet this is Christianity come alive and this is what is expected of us and this is what the apostle was saying to these people at Ephesus be followers of God be imitators of God as dear children and walk in love just like Christ and so express your Christianity he says by a life of compassion express your Christianity by a life of self-giving and we also have to express our Christianity habitually it's not just a non-and-off thing because here is the word that he uses he says walk in love and when you walk there is perpetual motion and perpetual movement you are moving onwards all the time when you are walking and what the apostle surely must be saying to the

Ephesians is go on and keep going on in this way keep going on being imitators of God walking in love walk in love today you might be full of good resolutions today but come Monday morning you might not have the same good resolutions and you might be falling back to your old ways and to your old ideas well come Monday you must go on walking come Tuesday the same and so on right through the years so you and I have to exercise our Christian compassion and our Christian self-giving and our imitation God we've got to go on exercising these things in the place where we live so that in our home life our people round about us will see something of God in us something of Christ in us even in the place where we may play and fulfill our recreations we must carry God into that sphere too where we work we must carry God and we must carry our Christian profession into our sphere of work and you know this is where Paul sets before Christian people the highest standard and we might say it's the highest standard in all the world and yet that is what a Christian standard is the highest standard in all the world and so I come back to the illustration that I gave at the beginning of the sermon you've been taken over if you're a Christian by God you are his property you're no longer there for sale God as it were has put up the notice sold the price was paid in terms of his son's blood and now there is a notice over you this property is being redeveloped by the owner and you must show that you are being redeveloped by the owner by exercising these Christian standards and imitating the one whom you now belong to God if he is your father you must imitate him Christ if he is your saviour then you must walk in love even as he did may that then be the standard that we have set ourselves by God's grace as Christian men and Christian women but are you not a Christian well the notice is still up on your property for sale and be sure of this the devil is after it he doesn't like to see any properties lying vacant he'll snatch them all up he'll take possession of them and if Christ is not your owner then there is only one other who can be your owner may that not be so of you but may we all gladly surrender ourselves to Christ and become his property and the property of

[ 23 : 49 ] God our father let us pray may thy blessing rest upon each and all of us oh lord and be with us as we go our several ways to our different homes and grant that these lives of ours may be under the control of thy gracious spirit may we oh lord be owned of thee and grant that we may show by these lives of ours that we are imitators of God and that we are exercising our Christianity in the sphere of love be with us now and bless us as we return here in the evening in Jesus name we ask it amen amen to amen amen some are with