

Ephesians 14-08-10b

We pick up our study now, we're formally in Ephesians chapter 5 with the word therefore. This will be the fifth therefore section that we are addressing this morning. And reading this next section, which is verses 1 through 6, how do I know that? How do I know this next section is verses 1 through 6? Next therefore is in verse 7, right? My mama taught me to watch for the therefores.

So therefore, in verse 1, be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as in Genesis, is fitting for saints, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, covetous man, who is an idolater, has any 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." Anything look familiar there in that coverage? Have we talked about our identification as priests? Have we reviewed sort of the analogy of our lives before God as priests, and how that conditions the way we look not only at our relationship with Him, but our relationship with one another? We have, haven't we? What about the talking and jesting that are not fitting? We saw that in the previous section. Let no one deceive you goes back to verse 25, doesn't it? Don't fall for the deception. Don't be fooled.

Because of these things, the wrath of God comes. Have we talked about that? If we aren't careful to practice the things that we've learned in chapter 4, if we don't control our wrath, if we don't ensure that we deal with these things properly, whose wrath is going to come? It is the wrath of God that is waiting to descend on those who don't follow proper procedures. What happened to the guys that tried to bring strange fire before God? They carried away their smoking ashes on their cloaks, and they hammered their little smoking fire censers flat and used them to plate the altar.

So, verse 1, chapter 5, Therefore, in light of the previous four therefores, can you summarize those with me? The first therefore was position, which reviews the first three chapters. Second therefore, there is provision. There's provision made.

He gave gifts. He gave. He gave.

We have assignments. We've been provided with identity. We've been provided with function.

We've been provided with definition. We know whereof we speak. We know what we're supposed to be doing.

It's been provided for us, position, provision. What else? Preparation. There are some things we need to do.

We've got to get dressed. We've got to get ready. We've got to put on.

He's going to revisit this a bit later in chapter 6, as we saw in our memory verse review this morning. You've got to take some things off and put some things on. You don't just wear your jeans to go up and do sacrifice.

There is a uniform. There are priestly robes and garments. There are specific things that we are to do by way of preparation.

Many, a bad thing has happened because someone went off unprepared. Did you ever kind of pack hastily and go off on a trip and then open up your luggage to discover, I forgot my medication. I forgot my shaving kit.

I forgot my underwear. I forgot some pretty important stuff. I went off and left my phone, heaven forbid, my link to the rest of the world.

I am cut off. I am a stranger and a pilgrim in a land of non-digital disconnectedness because my phone got left behind. Or almost equally bad, I left my charger behind so my phone, I'm eking the last dot out of the battery symbol before it dies.

Preparation is important, yes? Preparation. Therefore, here is the practice. Here's how we get it done.

But as soon as we start practicing, even though we have position, even though we have provision, even though we have preparation, there are going to be, and this is an alternate title for this section, problems. There are problems in the practice, right? Because we're fallen. We're made of clay.

We are beset by our own nature. We're beset by the devil. We're beset by the fallenness that is inherent in us and around us, and problems are going to crop up.

So even as we practice putting away the deception and speaking the truth, there are going to be problems. There is responsibility on both sides of a problem. The person who has taken what was not theirs, the person who has taken to themselves a, this is what the other Levites did.

Are we not also qualified? Why can't we do what the sons of Aaron do? Because it's not your assignment. You're taking to yourself something that doesn't belong to you. You are arrogating to yourself an importance or a priority that does not belong to you.

This is always the case. Anytime we sin, we have taken something. We've taken away obedience that belongs to God.

We've taken away consideration that belongs to others. It's always theft when we sin. You name any sin, I will tell you how it is a theft.

It's easy to construct. So what happens? There's responsibility on both sides. Let him that stole, steal no more.

Quit it. Repent. Hebrews 6, not laying again the foundation of change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God.

Turn away from something. Turn toward something else. How many times have we talked about the fact that you can't just turn away from a thing? You have to turn toward.

The most effective way to quit a bad habit is to replace it with a good habit. Don't just sit there saying, not going to do it, not going to do it, not going to do it, not going to do it. Because all you're doing is thinking about doing it and trying not to do it.

Replace it. Shove it aside with something else. Let him that stole, steal no more, but let him work.

If I find that I am a taker, I need to find myself some work and throw myself into it and become somebody who produces a profit that can be shared with others. Find a way. Nobody in the body of Christ should be a sycophant.

Nobody in the body of Christ has been designed by God to be a parasite. The body of Christ has no parasites. It's not a parasitic relationship.

We all from time to time are temporarily embarrassed and we can share with those who are in need. But the neediness is not permanent. It is episodic.

It is temporary. If you try to meet that need in an illicit way, you're a thief. Quit stealing and start doing it right.

Work. Find something to do so that you can share good with others. And good can be in any category.

It's not necessarily monetary. Let him labor working with his hands. This is always the biblical model.

If you want to get rid of bad behavior, start throwing yourself into good behavior. Don't sit there in a vacuum. By the way, if you are trying to encourage good behavior in others, if you are a parent and you're working with children, if you are an employer working with employees, if you're a military officer and you've got subordinates, if you've got any form of authority over others and bad things are happening in and among those others, you don't just sit there with a bunch of negative commands.

Give them something productive to do. It's a biblical principle. And notice it says, let him who stole in verse 28 steal no longer, but rather let him.

It doesn't say you who stole steal no longer, but you start working with your hands. It says, let him stop and let him start. What does this mean? It is one of the encouragements and one of the edifications and one of the speaking truths that the body can do to help point out or even create those opportunities.

If you're going to let him work with his hands, find an opportunity and offer it. Now, if he doesn't do it, it isn't, well, there just wasn't anything. No, it's been offered.

And if you willfully refuse to work and to labor in whatever way for the productive benefit of others, that's on you because we have let you stop and we have let you start. We've been supportive. We've provided it.

And if it's provided and rejected, our responsibility has been fulfilled and it is on that person. Right. That's why notice to whom this is addressed.

It's addressed to the group. Let him that stole steal no more. If you've got to change the passwords or take things out of the way and remove obstacles that are causing someone to stumble, and that's the nature of the thing and the group can do it, the believers in the vicinity can do it, they should do so.

If they're actively leaving a situation there that is playing into the weaknesses of somebody else, fix that. Let him that stole steal no more. Don't leave that opportunity there.

Sometimes this is one-on-one. Somebody is taking advantage of you. Change the circumstances so that they don't continue to do so.

Let him that steals stop it. And when he's talking to the people who are letting it happen, rather let him work. Sometimes it's just pointing in a direction.

Sometimes it's just encouragement. Sometimes it's actually creating and implementing an opportunity, especially with children. But whatever it is, notice this isn't addressed personally in the second person to the thief because he's already screwed up.

This is addressed to the people who are in a position to help him with his change of mind away from dead works, faith toward God, starting to walk in the right direction. So we're back to chapter 5 now. Be imitators of God as dear children.

You may be familiar with this Greek word. Therefore, be imitators. This isn't be, it is become.

This is not a me, E-I-M-I. This is become. It is a present imperative, which means keep on becoming.

Therefore, in the light of these things that we have reviewed, position in Christ, unity with others, all of the position and provision and preparation and practice and the problem-solving procedures

that have been given previously, keep on becoming imitators of God. Now, this is more than meets the eye, being an imitator of God. We tend to think, well, if I'm an imitator of God, I'm just going to be really, really holy.

I'm going to just be going about doing good. Stop and think. Is that all God does? God does send the rain on the just and the unjust.

But is God beneficial and sacrificial and always ready to help and intervene to just anybody? This says, keep on becoming memetai. It's a noun, imitators of God. Here is the meaning of memetai in the Greek language.

This is what it means. People say imitators. Imitator has a negative connotation in English.

Often imitated, never duplicated, right? He's an Elvis imitator. He's a Frank Sinatra imitator. You think that is a bad copy.

All the time you're watching an impersonator or an imitator, you're thinking, boy, sure makes you appreciate the real thing, doesn't it? Yeah. It's a weak, it's a mimeograph copy. Anybody remember mimeograph? Yeah, you can get high off the purple copies.

If you really want to have difficulty, do like they did at our school and put the mimeograph machine in a very small center block room with no windows and be the person assigned to make the copies. You'll come out of there, you know, seeing elephants dancing on the lawn. But imitators is not a good, in my opinion, my suggestion is this isn't really a good way to think of this verse.

Memetai, this is what it means in Greek. This is straight out of the theological dictionary of the New Testament. This is a word for word quote.

Memetai, doers of what you have seen others do. A memetai would see someone else do a thing and would learn to do it by observation. Friday night, I mentioned the yoke and how the Lord Jesus says, take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

Each side of the yoke, you have the strong, experienced ox on one side, you have the young, inexperienced one on the other, and he learns by walking side by side with one who knows how it's done. This is often the best way to learn a thing, is to be with somebody who knows how to do it and they show you. This is how pilots get trained, is by pilots who know how to fly.

This is how instrumentalists get trained, is by somebody who gives lessons because they have mastered the instrument and hopefully they know what they're talking about. Memetai is not, oh, let me see if I can imitate that. I'm going to be one of these guys that does Cary Grant or some famous actor's accent.

This is doing what you have seen others do. So if he says, therefore, reviewing what is ahead,

keep on becoming those who do what they have seen God do. Keep on being doers of what you have seen God do.

Kind of changes the whole emphasis of it, doesn't it? Keep on becoming ones doing what you have seen God do. Think about that. What have we seen God do? God blesses and God judges.

God enters into relationship and God cuts off and distances himself, doesn't he? Keep on becoming doers of what you have seen God do. That is the best translation I can offer you for Ephesians 5, verse 1. And walk in love. Walk is not *pateo*, it is *peripateo*.

Peripateo means to, *peri* means around, right? The perimeter is the meter around a thing. *Peri* means around. Walk around.

Walk around. This is a present active imperative. Keep on walking around.

This is a constant state. This is a metaphor for living life, for functioning in the day. As you go about your business, go about, walk about, keep on becoming those who do what they have seen God do.

Of course, you have to be looking so that you know what God has done, right? This is part of why we spend so much time in Scripture. And keep on walking around in love. Walking around in love.

Don't step outside of love. Walk around in the sphere of love. This is where you walk.

It's a locative idea here, the location of where you're walking. Walk around in love. Wherever you're walking, make sure it's in love.

Just as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us. Now, let's think about this. Do what we've seen God do.

God sacrificially sent the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, who is God, gave himself on behalf of others. We're good so far.

How many people benefit from the self-sacrificial love of Christ? Is there any criteria at all or is it just universally dispensed? Is everybody given the gift of eternal life? Is everybody entered into relationship with God? Does everybody enjoy the in-hymns that we saw in chapter 1? Is everybody united together as we saw in chapter 2 and into chapter 3? Does everybody enjoy those things? Yes or no? No. Why not? God is in his heaven. God is all-powerful.

Why doesn't God freely dispense that love and those privileges and all of those benefits to everyone without distinction, without reservation, without limitation? Why doesn't he give it to everybody? And if he doesn't, first-class condition, if he doesn't, what is the criteria for exclusion? Who is excluded from this expression of God? God so loved the world, gave his only begotten Son. Well, if he loved the world, gave his only begotten Son, how come the world isn't in him?

How come the world is not universally saved, universally blessed, universally gifted, universally granted the privileges of prayer, relationship, future with God? What excludes people from this sphere of God's love, this bounty of provision and position in him? What excludes them? Where does God say, no, sorry, not you? Where is it? This you know. There are those who disqualify themselves.

There are those who reject and refuse. So, for example, back in verse 28, let him who stole steal no longer. What if he does not change his mind? What did Peter say in Acts about the remission of sins? When you look at the opportunity for remissions of sins, what did he say? Change your minds and be baptized with a view toward the remission of sins.

Hebrews chapter 6, the foundation is change of mind away from dead works, if someone does not change their mind. Now, back in the last section of chapter 4, somebody has malfunctioned, somebody has taken, irrigated to themselves what does not belong to them, whether it is privilege, pride, consideration, whatever it may be, they have malfunctioned, they have sinned against the body, which is ultimately a sin against Christ, which is a sin against God. Something's got to happen.

People are going to be, people who are closely related to God, have the mind of Christ, are going to be angry about that, but they're not going to go in a sinful direction with that anger. They're going to let the anger subside, and they're going to offer the opportunity for change of mind. Let him no longer steal.

Give him the chance to change his mind. Give him the opportunity to do something productive. If they do not take up that opportunity, if they do not have a change of mind, which is usually accompanied by godly sorrow, but not always.

If we acknowledge our sins, hopefully we have some regret. Hopefully there's some sense that I shouldn't have done what I did. That's called regret.

Shouldn't have done that. I messed up. I failed.

I acknowledge that to God, and I want to go back to 1 John 1.7 where I am walking in the light. But if I'm just constantly in the darkness and throwing up a quick list of what I've done wrong to God, expecting him to forgive me, it's not going to happen. If we walk in the light, 1 John 1.7, if we keep on walking in the light, it's a present.

If we keep on peripatēō-ing in the light, as he keeps on being in the light, we keep on having fellowship. And if we keep on walking in the light, he keeps on forgiving us. The blood of Jesus Christ will keep on cleansing us from all sin if we keep on walking in the light.

Guess what? If you're walking in darkness and you think 1 John 1.9 is a license to sin, you're not forgiven because you haven't had a change of mind, and forgiveness is predicated on change of

mind. Hear me now, and then look down at verse 32. Forgiveness from God is predicated on acknowledgement and change of mind.

It is predicated on it. That's the way God forgives. What's the very next verse? Therefore, what you have seen God do, you do.

If you're going to forgive, forgive predicated on change of mind and an effort to walk in the light. That's what forgiveness is based on. Forgive one another.

Be gracious to one another in the way that God has been gracious to you. Is God gracious to us the way He's gracious? Is He that gracious to everybody in the world? Everybody get the same grace that you and I get as believers, and hopefully growing, motivated believers, narrow road, straight gate believers. Is God gracious to any old criminal thug in the way that He's gracious to us? No, He is not.

Be gracious to each other in the way that God is gracious to us. God has standards. God has limits.

God has criteria for His grace, and God has criteria for His forgiveness. Therefore, do and be doers of what you have seen God do. It's the very next verse.

The way God in Christ has been gracious to you, you do that to others. Which means that there is a time in a group of believers, whatever defines that group, it can be the local church, it can be any arena where believers have to make decisions about each other when there has been wrong, or there is being wrong committed. Wrong is being committed.

Somebody is malfunctioning, has malfunctioned, continues to malfunction, whatever that may be. A decision has to be made, and it should be made on the same basis and the same criteria that God uses. God is not universally gracious, and He does not universally forgive.

He has made the opportunity available to all, has He not? God so loved the world that He gave His Son. He has let Him who stole steal no more. He has let Him labor, working with His hands, so that He can share good with others.

God has made that opportunity available, but it is up to the person to lay claim to it. And if the person says no, there remaineth no sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment. Hebrews chapter 10.

You're not to do different than what God does in this regard. Make the opportunity available, do it without anger, don't aggravate the situation by putting a bunch of bad talk into it, don't pollute the situation with your tongue. Leave that opportunity so that if it is not seized and exploited by this person for forgiveness and restoration and positive contribution, if they don't do it, it is not your fault.

You didn't garbage it up with loose talk, with corruption of your own. Does God? How many times does God throw old sins up to people who have repented? Jeroboam's sins are going to get mentioned. We're going to see this in 2 Kings.

Sins of Jeroboam caused Israel to sin. Sins of Jeroboam did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam caused Israel to sin over and over again. Why does Jeroboam get this constant refrain? Because the guy never changed his mind.

And God says, I have not forgotten or forgiven the sins of Jeroboam or anybody else who perpetrates them because they are unrepentant. Repentant people, you don't hear David getting a bunch of grief for his failures. You don't hear Abraham getting grief for his failures.

You don't hear people in the Bible who had spectacular failures having those failures brought up to them by God. God does not let any corrupt word proceed out of His mouth. He speaks what is necessary for edification.

And the only time you have to bring up old sin is when somebody has not yet turned from it. And the only way to build them up is to point out by speaking the truth in love, this is still a problem for you. And here is why you are being put at a distance.

This is why I am having to treat you as a heathen and a tax collector, not in an ugly way or a persecuting way, not in an angry way, not with par or gizmos, but I've got to put distance between me and you in the same way that Isaiah 64.6, where all is an unclean thing, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. The Lord's arm is not shortened that He cannot save. His ear is not heavy that He cannot hear.

Your iniquities have separated between you and your God. Your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear. What you have seen God do, be doers of that.

And this section in the last part of chapter 5 is talking about that problem in the practice of our faith, in our one anotherness. Problems are going to occur. When we are the perpetrator of that failure, we should be repentant.

We should change our mind, especially if somebody speaks the truth to us in love and points out where we have erred. We should dedicate ourselves to working to be productive and to have something to offer that is a positive contribution to our fellow believers. If we do not have that mind, if we are apathetic and indifferent, if we are self-centered, guess what the group, the fellow believers near at hand should do? Put a distance.

Because that's what God does. God does not forgive unconditionally. God does not dispense grace unconditionally.

It is conditional. And what we have seen God do, Ephesians chapter 5 verse 1 is not just a happy

little refrigerator magnet verse. What you have seen God do, therefore, you be doers of.

Walking in the sphere of love. Sometimes love demands pushing someone out. The father of the prodigal son loved him and gave him what he knew would be the means of the son's own destruction.

But that's what he wanted. He wouldn't change his mind about it. The father says, I love you.

Here's your stuff. Go. The guy wastes his inheritance.

The father never stops loving him. But the father let him go. The father let him do his own thing.

The guy could have died out there amongst the swine, been trampled by the pigs, chopped up and fed to them. But he has a change of mind. When is the father gracious? Does the father send servants to drag the guy back and say, I knew you were going a bad way.

Does he send the other brother back to bring him in and counsel with him and mentor him and hold him accountable? The guy made a decision. God in love lets him go his own way. And there is a distance between that son and the father.

When does the distance close? At the point of change of mind. At the point of return. At the point of appreciation.

That's when the father can be forgiving and gracious. And he is. And that's our model.

Walk in love. As Christ loved us and gave himself for us. But for us, not for all the world.

All the world has the opportunity, but not all the world avails themselves of that opportunity. And to those who refuse it, God is not gracious. And God doesn't continue to send love in that direction.

Love in the sense of benefit. Love in the sense of unconditional favor. Not going to happen.

Be gracious to others in the way that God in Christ has been gracious to us. And that has very specific parameters and limitations. And we are commanded to do what God does.

This is why in verse 3, here are the criteria. You want to know what it is that qualifies for separation and for casting someone out, putting them at a safe distance fornication, uncleanness, covetousness. And fornication is not what you think.

We're out of time for this morning, but next time we're going to look in detail at the word porne, pornaia. But I'll give you a preview. We will see this over and over again in scripture.

Porne, pornaia, that whole word group, pornos in Greek, translates the Hebrew word zana, the fundamental principle in this is not sexual impurity. The fundamental principle in both zana and

pornos and its word group is unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness.

That is the root meaning of it. We'll do a quick word study next time, but we're going to cover exactly what unfaithfulness, and this is a specific kind of unfaithfulness. This is not apostia, faithlessness.

This is covenant breaking. This is promise breaking. This is commitment defilement.

This is trampling obligations voluntarily entered into and then disregarded and trampled. This is an expectation. This is a reliance that someone has on someone else, and that someone else has no commitment to it, no loyalty to it.

Unfaithfulness. Now, these things we're going to see in verse 3 and following, uncleanness, covetousness, and fornication, these three things, this is the criteria. This is how you know how far to go in love.

This is how we know how far to go in forgiveness. This is how we know how to do the practice in the face of problems that we saw introduced at the end of chapter 4. How do you do what God does? How are we to be doers of what God does, what we have seen Him do? Well, these are the criteria, and we will see that these are the criteria that God has always used throughout Scripture. This is where God draws the line and says this far and no farther.

You have done this. I'm through. I have no further obligation.

I have no further grace to offer you. I have no further mercy. I have no further interest in holding up my side of commitment because you have crossed the pornos line.

You have crossed the akatharsia, the uncleanness line. You have crossed the covetousness line. How do we know what this line is? What did He just tell us in verse 1? What have you seen God do? That's the definition.

That's how we know how to manage relationships in the body of Christ. Are we close or are we separated? Are we embracing or are we not sharing meals? How do you know? When is the behavior and the attitude too much? It's specific. Paul is not just euphorically blandishing a bunch of platitudes here.

This is practical information. This is how churches should manage their group. This is how families decide when a child has crossed the line and is out.

This is how Christian groups of any type, of any size, associations of believers in any venue know how to behave when there is malfunction. It's very specific. It is based precisely on what we have seen God do.

That's why verse 1 is so important to understand what memetai means. What you have seen God

do, be doers of that. And that's why He goes back to this fornication and covetousness.

Here's the criteria. What have you seen God do in these situations? That's what you should do. As you read through the rest of this chapter, you'll see how this is borne out.

Well, we're out of time for this morning, but the Word of God is so practical and it is so comforting to have the information. We talked at the beginning this morning about when you get something and you don't really know how to work it, you miss a lot of its features and a lot of its benefits and a lot of its advantages when we don't know exactly how it works. By the time we finish this chapter, there will be none of us that has any excuse for not knowing exactly how it works individually and collectively.

What is the proper response? How can we best please God, serve Him and reflect His glory? The answers are here in detail, explicitly, plain, bright, 100 watt light shining on it. No possibility for misunderstanding. It is clear.

It is definite. It's not nebulous. It's not wishy-washy.

It's not subject to interpretation. It's not situational ethics. There is a very simple criteria.

What does God do? Remember the old bracelets? What would Jesus do? Well, the Apostle Paul is on board with that. What you have seen God do, that's what you are to be doers of. Well, we've got 66 books of the Bible that show us what God does.

In these situations. We'll do a quick survey of that next time as we continue our study of chapter 5. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You that You have not left us orphans with the departure of the Lord Jesus. We have, if it's possible, something even better which is the individual, ongoing, constant presence of Your Spirit and the power and the illumination of Your Word with us every moment, every day to show us the path, to lead us in the way that we should go, to convince us of sin and righteousness and judgment, to enable us to be more than we could possibly be on our own, to be more than the sum of the parts as a collection of believers, to both individually and collectively reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus and Your glory as we avail ourselves of the provision and the promises that You have made to us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these things in our hearts moment by moment in the days ahead.

May they become a part of our regular practice. May they be a source of comfort and encouragement and guidance as we face the challenges and the opportunities of each day. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.