

Ephesians 14-08-17a

This is Sunday, the 17th of August, 2014. It is a rainy thunderstorm day in Plano, but we are gathered together in a spirit of appreciation for the Lord Jesus and the opportunity to learn things about Him and about our relationship with each other through Him that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Laodiceans and the Colossians and has been brought down to us in the book of Ephesians. We resume this morning in chapter 5. We're looking at the first few verses there.

What does it mean to be an imitator of God as dear children? Let's go to the Lord in prayer and dedicate our time of fellowship and our concentration to this imitator of God. Father, thank You for the wonderful provisions that You make for us. We thank You for the rain.

We thank You for the principle that it represents. Even in looking at the phenomena of nature, we see Your character. We see Your grace.

We see the perfection of Your design. We see Your accommodation to the fallenness of this world. We see Your patience.

We see the common grace that is bestowed on all men. The rain falls on the just and the unjust. And we appreciate this opportunity to spend time together to look at the truth of Your Word, to fortify our souls, to refresh our perspective on why we are here and how we can make the best use of the time that You have granted to us.

We thank You for this passage of Scripture. We ask Your blessing on us as we study it together. May each one of us find here a motivating and compelling truth that will change us, transform us and renew our minds and equip us for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Ephesians chapter 5, Therefore be imitators of God, like 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 is fitting for sanctified ones, those who have been cleansed, those who have been set apart, anointed for special service. That's what saints means. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather the giving of thanks.

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor 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.

Therefore do not be partakers with them. You can see here as you look at this little section that it's sort of an inclusio, it's kind of a chiasm. What does verse 1 say? Be imitators of God as what? Like what? As children, as sons.

What does verse 6 say? Don't let anybody deceive you because of these things mentioned above, the wrath of God comes upon a different kind of children, a different kind of sons. So one of the questions we can ask ourselves is, what are we a son of? What are we a son of? What kind of child are we? And this isn't necessarily physical heritage. In fact it's really not physical heritage.

This has to do with the concept in the ancient Near East especially, if you were a son of Belial, Belial was a Canaanite god. He was a false, idolatrous focus of worship. And if you were a son of Belial, that meant that you shared his characteristics.

You partook of his corruption and the evil that surrounded the worship that pertained to him. If you are a son of perdition, as Judas is described, perdition meaning loss, missing out on everything, disqualification, separation, that is the, it tells us what being a son of something means. So he says, be imitators of God as sons of God, as children of God, as those who reflect God and God's character versus the sons of disobedience.

What happens to the sons of disobedience? What is their fate? Well he's going to tell us. So we talked about this last time, being an imitator. What does it mean to be an imitator? Anybody remember? Remember the definition that came out of the lexicon? Doers of what you have seen done.

You see somebody else do something and that's what you do. That's the best definition. It's not imitators like an impersonator.

You know, didn't they have a movie where a bunch of guys dressed as Elvis all jumped out of a plane, the flying Elvis's or something. They get up there and do those geometric falling through the sky patterns. Not that kind of imitator.

We're not Elvis imitators, we're not Sinatra imitators, we're not Cary Grant imitators, not James Cagney imitators. I don't know who they imitate now. See a lot of people, those guys are so old.

But when I was growing up that's what the great impersonators did. Rich Little and Frank Gorshin. Frank Gorshin was in the Batman franchise, but he got his start as an impersonator.

The guy had dead on impersonations of other people. But this was a common form of entertainment in decades gone by to bring to life famous celebrities. And they were called imitators.

That's not the kind of imitator that's been spoken of here. We don't just sort of evoke godhood on an occasional basis. You don't just say, you know, Jude, Jude, Jude and then it's gone.

It's over. It's like a five second impersonation and then it's over. Yeah, and to put something on in a superficial way.

Be those who do what they have seen God do. Well, in what category? I'm not going to be spinning up any galaxies and solar systems and planets and creating life from non-life. What sort of deeds are we looking at when we say be doers of what God has done? This is in the realm of how we treat each other, right? What is the Lord's prayer? Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, sanctified be your name, respected and worshipped be your name.

Thy kingdom come, Jesus said, disciples, when you are praying, remember you're looking ahead. You're reaching forward. If you watch the Philippians study on Friday night, that was one of the themes in that particular passage is reaching forward, looking ahead.

And Jesus uses prayer as theological review, as perspective gaining objectivity. Prayer isn't just, oh God give me this, oh God help me with that, oh God save me, oh God I'm scared. It is a tool for orienting us back to true north.

It is a tool for orienting you. You get disoriented, you get thrown for a loop, you get surprised. How do we stabilize? You go to the Lord in prayer and you start with our Father.

That's relationship. I've got a permanent, inalterable father-child relationship with the God creator of the universe, Father of the Lord Jesus Christ who implemented, designed and implemented salvation for me. My name is written in the book of life, our Father who art in heaven, in heaven, above any circumstance or situation.

He sees the end from the beginning. He knew it all before it happened. This is stabilizing information.

Think about what you say. Even if you're just repeating the Lord's prayer, what does it mean? What a privilege to go to the creator God of the universe and say, Father. By the way, did you notice that he doesn't say, my Father? Why is the first word of the Lord's prayer plural, our Father? Because prayer is good when it is shared.

Isn't it? Well, but it's all in my mind. I'm just going to go into my inner chamber and get all by myself and say, oh my Father who art in heaven. Jesus said when you pray, pray this way, our Father.

Share burdens with one another. Pray for one another. Intercede and contend and argue with God.

Yes, argue with God. Don't just say, oh God, please do thus and so. Present an argument.

Present a case. Why should God honor your request and answer your prayer? He has made precious promises. Claim the promises.

Say, Lord, please help so and so because you have promised. Because here is someone who is an organic part of the body of Christ and when they're down, a lot of other people are down. Lift

them up.

Heal them not just for their own sake, but for the sake of the body of Christ. For the sake of the gifts that you've given them that bless others that are currently offline because they've been hampered in some way. They've been taken down by a virus.

Pray like you would argue, make an argument, make a case with somebody real because God is real. He's really up there listening and he says, well, why should I? Not because he needs convincing. It's not for his benefit that we make the case.

Who gets the benefit when we put this together in our minds and present it to God? We do. It's objectivity. It's divine structure.

It's the bones and the framework of God's plan that we call to mind and it benefits us. We grow. We are stabilized.

We are better equipped when we think in this way. Our Father who art in heaven, relationship, overarching status, eternal knowledge from the beginning, hallowed be your name. Everything that I am about to ask ought to reflect glory on your name.

If it doesn't reflect glory to God, why are you praying it? Everything should be to the glory of God. And in the light of what is coming, your kingdom come, your will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

Sustain us so that we can keep on going. And, what? Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive you forgive those who trespass against us. That's a pretty strong statement.

Lord, forgive me to the extent that I have forgiven others. Jesus said pray that way because we will only be forgiven to the extent that we have forgiven others. It's a fact of the plan of God.

Forces humility doesn't it? It forces objectivity. I can't hang on to stuff because if I hang on to stuff, it's like the parable of the unkind servant that was forgiven a lot and he wouldn't forgive his servant a paltry amount. And the master said, guess what? That big forgiven debt that I told you about, it's unforgiven.

You're back on the hook and you're getting thrown in the prison until you've paid every penny. So, this is what we have seen God do. Be those, remember this is a noun, this is an identity, it's not just an action, it's not just a function.

Be people who do what they have seen God do. This is the kind of thing that we have seen God do. Jesus imbues the Lord's prayer with all of those things, many of those things.

So, and walk in love as Christ also has loved us. So, be those who do what you've seen God do and walk the way you have seen Christ walk. Walk in love the way Christ also has loved us and

given himself for us.

Now here's what's interesting because we kind of skipped over the last part of verse 2 when we moved on down to verse 3, but there's two parts this morning. We're going to look at this last part of chapter 5 verse 2 right now because can you pick up a cross and go get crucified? No. Can you offer yourself as an atonement for the sins of others? No.

So, what does it mean when it says walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us? What exactly does it mean? We say, well, it's just the ultimate example. Greater love hath no man than this and a man lay down his life for his friends. That is a case you can make, but what does the verse say? Walk in love as Christ has loved us, given himself for us as what? An offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma.

For a sweet smelling aroma. Hmm. There are whole burnt offerings that go on the altar and the blood is shed and God looks at the blood and says the blood covers without the shedding of blood there is no remission.

It doesn't mention that aspect of the sacrifice here, does it? There's no mention of blood. Bleed on behalf of your fellow believers is not in view here. Christ in his walking in love, in his prioritization of the interests of others, what did he do? He offered himself an offering and a sacrifice to God.

What aspect of Christ's work is in view here? It's multifaceted, right? There's redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, there's atonement, there's all kinds of things going on on the cross. So almost any time you look at the work of Christ you're going to be picking one aspect or scripture is going to suggest one aspect. What aspect of the work of Christ is suggested here? He offered himself to God for a sweet smelling aroma.

Okay. Aroma experts. Everybody has a nose, everybody's got olfactory senses, right? You can walk into an environment blindfolded and tell where you are.

Walk into a hospital, smells like a hospital. Walk into a barbecue joint, smells like a barbecue joint. Walk into a pizza joint, smells like pizza.

Walk into a beer joint, smells like beer. How do I know that? I've heard. So sweet smelling aroma.

What is the deal with this sweet smelling aroma? Because that's the aspect of Christ's work that is being suggested to us in this one anotherness. So what's the deal with a sweet smelling aroma? Well, what's the first mention in the Bible of a sweet smelling aroma? Can you think of one? Is there one back in Genesis, for example? Turn back to Genesis chapter 8. It always helps to find the archetype, the original introduction of a thing in the Word of God because this usually sets the tone and the standard. When you get to chapter 8 you say, aha, we're in the time of the flood.

How apropos as the thunder rolls behind us here. Chapter 8, Noah's deliverance. Then God remembered Noah.

If you look in the previous chapter, chapter 7 is all about the great flood. Another one of those chapters you ought to be able to kind of call to mind. Where does the Bible talk about Noah's flood? Chapter 7, Genesis chapter 7. Chapter 8 is the aftermath.

God remembered Noah and every living thing, all the animals with him in the ark. God made a wind to pass over the earth and the water subsided. Skip down to verse 13, came to pass in the 601st year, in the first month, first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth.

Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked and indeed the surface of the ground was dry. And in the second month, 27th day of the month, notice this is about two months later. Start at the first month, first day of the month.

Now we're in the second month toward the end of the month. The earth was fully dried. God spoke to Noah and said, Go out of the ark, you and your wife, your sons, your sons' wives with you.

Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds, cattle, creeping things that creep on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth. A reiteration of what He had told the original people, be fruitful and multiply, right? So Noah went out, his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark.

Then, verse 20, Noah built an altar to the Lord and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. How was he able to do this if all the animals went into the ark two by two? Remember, clean animals, how many did he take? A little Bible trivia fact, often overlooked. Not all of the animals went in two by two.

There were seven, right, of the clean animals. The Lord smelled a soothing aroma. The Lord smelled a sweet-smelling savor.

A soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in his heart, how do we know what the Lord said in his heart? How do we get this information? Just asking. The Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

As the eight people stand there and as the animal kingdom disperses from the location of the ark on Mount Ararat, God says, they're still corrupt. It's still a fallen world, right? But in chapter eight, verse 21, the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. We have two different forces at work here.

On the one hand, after all of the destruction and judgment of the flood, it has not eradicated evil.

God says the imagination of man's heart is still evil, and it's evil from when he starts out, from his youth. Nevertheless, I will not destroy every living thing as I have done.

Why? What prompts God to say this? He smelled a soothing aroma. What is the principle of air freshener? Does air freshener eliminate the source of a bad smell? No. Does air freshener make the presence of a bad smell tolerable? Yes.

Does air freshener eliminate the source of a bad smell? No. Does putting on perfume change the natural aromas that emanate from a human body? No. Does perfume shampoo eliminate the dog smell on your dog? No.

What does it do? It makes it tolerable. It makes it tolerable, right? This is the principle of the sweet smelling savor offering. You can find this.

I could spend the rest of the hour talking about Leviticus chapter 1, Leviticus chapter 3, talking about the whole burnt offering, and the trespass offering, the meal offering, the fellowship offering, all the other offerings. We've been through it. The offerings study is up on the website.

It's very fruitful. We may do that again one of these days. I think most of us have kind of lost the immediacy of that, and it's really, really powerful.

This was God's Bible for ancient Israel was the sacrificial system. The feasts and the offerings, that was the Bible. They didn't have one of these to carry around with pages and covers.

They didn't have a tablet where they could pull up all kinds of stuff. What did they have? They had the graphic, vivid demonstration repeated throughout their lives of the offerings and the feasts. That was the Bible that people carried in their minds, and they learned a lot from it.

We can learn a lot from it as well. Here's the point. What is the principle of the sweet-smelling savor? It doesn't eliminate what is bad.

It makes it tolerable. So, back to Ephesians chapter 5, verse 2. Not only do what you have seen God do, be the people who do that. That's your identity.

That becomes a noun. You are doers of what you have seen God do. As beloved children, you have a happy relationship with your Father.

It's getting more difficult to suggest, especially in some cultures, that God is the Heavenly Father, because people have had such a bad experience with their father that this is a negative association. But, this is dear children. This is the best father you could imagine and beyond.

Do what God does 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. I don't know if you've noticed or not, but since you got saved, since you became a believer, did you ever notice that you still sin? Did

you ever notice that the fallen nature is still there with its allurements and its enticements and its temptations? Eat the fruit. It'll be fun.

Do this fun thing. It's going to feel so good. It's going to be so great.

It's going to be such a gratifying, fulfilling. And we bite it and it turns to ashes in our mouth over time. Seems great in the moment.

It's like drugs. Like any false promise, it delivers momentarily and then all of the tragedy lasts sometimes a lifetime. But after we got saved, we're still corrupt.

We're still fallen. We injure each other. We sin against each other.

We sin against God. We trample the law of God. And I ask myself, why? Why is that? If I place my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior, and if I am washed and I am sanctified and I am regenerated, God the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in me, why do I still sin? Even more pertinent to me, why does everybody else still sin? I wouldn't mind being a sinner myself if everybody else would clean up their act and quit sinning.

If I had a choice, me not being a sinner anymore or all of you guys not being sinners anymore, I'd pick you because you'd have to forgive me all the time. You'd have to tolerate and put up with me. I wouldn't have to be the one tolerating and vice versa.

But why is it? Why doesn't God just save us to the uttermost right at the beginning? Well, when you step back and look at the larger plan of God, we are getting an inoculation. We are getting a vaccination for sin because God is not going to strap down your volition. He is not going to screw down the switch on positive throughout the eternal future.

We are going to be on our own recognizance. We will still be individuals. We will still have free will.

So what's to prevent us from doing the Satan thing or the Adam thing or the Judas thing somewhere down the road, somewhere in the eternal future? You say, oh my gosh, you mean 110 days into the Millennial Kingdom, I might have a bad thought and sin and fall and then what? What ensures that we will never again in the future history of God's infinite Kingdom, that we'll never choose sin the way Satan did, the way Eve did, the way Adam did, the way we do on a daily basis? What's going to prevent that? We are living a life now, saved by grace, provided all the things that God has given us, all of the resources we need by God, but we are still in a sinful environment, inside and outside. And the more we grow, the more hateful it becomes. And we say with Paul, who will deliver me from the body of this death? Remember that in Romans 8? Who will deliver me from the body of this death? 6 through 8 somewhere in there.

Who will deliver me from the body of this death? But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, we're here on purpose to be exposed to sin. How do we get

through it? How does God tolerate us when we are still corrupt and sinful? You accepted my son, I gave you my word, I've put my spirit in you and you still foul up on a regular basis.

Time for another flood. Time to turn the earth into a fiery mini-star. I'm just going to melt the elements with a fervent hammer and get rid of all of you ungrateful, corrupt, fallen individuals.

You accept my grace and then you trample it. You accept my son and then you ignore him and disregard him. I've had enough.

What keeps God from doing that? Jesus Christ is seated at the Father's right hand constantly interceding and He says, Father, I died for these people. I am what makes their presence tolerable. I am the sweet smelling savor.

Why do you think Jesus has to sit so close to the Father? I'll tell you why. Same reason if you have one of those propeller driven off gadgets that creates a cloud of immunity for mosquitoes, you better keep that thing close and you better figure out which way the wind's blowing and get it upwind and make sure that the cloud of safety covers you. Don't miss a spot if you're spraying.

The Lord Jesus is close to the Father. Why? He is the sweet smelling savor. It's not just His retroactive work on the cross 2,000 years ago.

It's not the blood that dripped down and soaked into the ground. It is not alone the redemption, reconciliation and propitiation. It is the ongoing intercessory presence of the Lord Jesus that keeps us tolerable.

He is the sweet smelling savor. What is the application of that for you and me? If we are to do what God does, what does God do? God accounts the presence and the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ to us when we don't deserve it. We don't deserve it.

Do you deserve your salvation? Do you deserve any forgiveness for sin? Have you earned it? Do you merit it? Are you, hey God, I'm not like the rest of the human race. I'm really such a good person. I'm sure you would just forgive me just because of who I am.

Wrong. Dead wrong. What is the basis on which we don't get instantaneously human combustified out of existence? Spontaneous human combustion.

That's what God ought to do. Why doesn't He? It is the ongoing sweet smelling savor. The sacrifice that Noah offered, the sacrifices that the Levitical priests offered, the sacrifices that the patriarchs offered, the sacrifice in every generation culminating and looking forward to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself along with everything else that it does, forensically, judicially, in substitution for us, vicariously.

What else does it do? It creates a sweet smelling savor and God can live with us. God can accept us. So if we are going to walk in the footsteps of God and walk in love, love being the operative

policy between us and we're going to do it the way Christ did it, what are we going to do? We are not going to operate on the basis of what is deserved.

We're not going to operate on the basis of guilt or commission or omission in the realm of sin. We are going to honor and be a part of the principle of the sweet smelling savor. What Christ has done in making us acceptable to God is also sufficient to make us acceptable to one another.

The sweet smelling savor means it is sufficient. I can tolerate the imperfections, the failures, whatever it is that constitutes sin, whether it is in myself or in others, it is tolerable because of the sweet smelling savor, the aroma of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on our behalf. If God can put up with us because of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can put up with each other.

Not on the basis of each other, the source of the smell, the source of the stench in us has not yet been eradicated, has it? That's future. We still stink, but the Lord Jesus Christ has made us acceptable. We are accepted in the Beloved.

One of those in Him blessings is we are acceptable, we are tolerable. That's why this last part of verse 2 is so important. If we're going to do what God has done, God has said, I will accept the sweet smelling savor of the Lord Jesus Christ and not give you what you really deserve.

In the same way, we should accept the sweet smelling savor, and in some cases we need to be the sweet smelling savor. Remember I said there are many aspects. The aspect that is presented to us here is being willing to overlook what lies under the sweet smelling savor.

It's not gone. Somebody who fails will probably fail again. I fail, I will fail again, but there is sufficient sweet aroma for acceptability, for tolerance, for goodwill, for fellowship, for productive interaction, for family loyalty because of the sweet smelling aroma.

Now, there are some things that perfume will not cover. Perfume is good to a point, but there are some things, I don't care how much you can empty a can of Glade in there, it is not going to fix it. And that's where we pick up in verse 3 after the break.