

# Sermon on Expected Behavior of the Believer

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**Text:**

**Ephesians 4:17 - 5:6** <sup>17</sup> So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup> Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. <sup>20</sup> You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. <sup>21</sup> Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. <sup>25</sup> Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. <sup>26</sup> "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold. <sup>28</sup> He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. <sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**Ephesians 5:1** Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. <sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person-- such a man is an idolater-- has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

## **Introduction**

We continue with the epistle from Paul to the churches in Ephesus and Asia Minor. We look at Ephesians chapter 4:17 – 5:6, which contrasts two ways of living. One way is the gentile sinful behavior and the other is the believer's behavior. Certain forces and situations drive a person to behave one way or the other. Paul gives a detailed list of these driving forces and situations. These forces and situations constitute the person's worldview and therefore as he operates in a particular mode it is normal to him. You cannot therefore convince him of the error of his ways because that is what is normal to him. To him your way is foreign.

### **1.1 What drives gentile sinful behavior?**

An unbeliever, therefore, has a gentile or Satanic worldview and that drives his sinful behavior. Paul describes this worldview as follows:

- They have a dark understanding.
- They are ignorant in their thinking.
- They are hardened in the heart.
- They have lost all sensitivity to spiritual things.
- They focus on sensuality and lust.
- As a result they are separated from God and are in the darkness.

### **1.2 What drives the believer's behavior?**

As a believer you are expected to have a Godly worldview that drives your behavior. Paul describes this worldview as follows:

- You must put off the old self.
- You must renew your mind. Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
- Put on the new self with a newly recreated image of God in you.
- As a result imitate God and so live in the light.
- Be filled with the spirit.

## 2 Three categories of behavior

Paul then gives instructions on behavior expected of a believer operating with a Godly worldview, which may be categorized into speech, morality, and character. The behavior is influenced by a Godly worldview or a Satanic worldview as explained in Romans 8:5, “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”

Due to time constraints we’ll analyze a sample of the behavior’s within each category.

### 2.1 Speech Behavior

- 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Avoid petty lies and tell the truth but as Ephesians 4:15 suggests, use sensitivity in telling the truth where it might create strife.

- 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
  - Do not practice the art of discouragement
  - Do not be a person who only presents negative thoughts
  - Do not be a person who belittles other people’s performance. Offer encouraging praise liberally.

James 3:5-6 <sup>5</sup> Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. <sup>6</sup> The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

- 5:4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

- Some people have church house language and home/work language. One is holy lingo and the other is language indistinguishable from a worldly person.

## 2.2 Moral Behavior

5:2 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

5:5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person-- such a man is an idolater-- has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

This passage equates greed with sexual immorality in level of severity and is also classified with impurity. So greed is serious. You want to be the only one who gets everything. Greed leads to jealousy, which leads to rebellion, which the Bible says is demonic as stated in 1 Samuel 15:23, “For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.”

To live morally requires you to let the Holy Spirit guide your life’s choices and behavior:

Galatians 5:16-17 <sup>16</sup> So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. <sup>17</sup> For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

## 2.3 Character

- 4:26-27 <sup>26</sup> "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold.
  - It is okay to be angry but it is your reaction to anger that may cause you to sin.
  - Anger creates stress which is not good for you and so you preserve your health by letting go before sundown!
- 4:28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

People steal indirectly by duping others and/or duping the church:

- someone deliberately presents duplicate receipts to the church for reimbursement or exaggerates the expense without producing supporting documentation.
  - Someone makes up a story in order to get you to gift them money.
  - A man on two occasions approached me and told me how someone stole his cash at the hotel, money that he needed to buy things for his upcoming wedding.
- 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage [meaning violent explosive anger] and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

All these behaviors constitute malice, which means “a desire to harm others or to see others suffer.” If you are someone who talks bad about other people you are in this category and must cease. Some people have made themselves experts on everything and everyone and convince people of their truth, which in actual fact it is not the whole truth.

### **3 Conclusions**

Now that we are believers and have a different and Godly worldview, Paul exhorts us strongly to live a life that is holy and acceptable to God when he says in Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.

This is a call to live an honest life of integrity, which means “steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code.” “The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.” (Proverbs 11:3)

And in Ephesians 4:17 which introduces our segment he is emphatic when he says “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.”