

# SN Be Imitators of Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] And we'll be looking at the first seven verses of this chapter this evening. This is the time of year when people make New Year's resolutions. I don't know if any of you have been involved in making resolutions.

They say something like 8% of them are actually followed through with throughout the year. But the fact that people make resolutions is really reflective, that the turn of the year provides an opportunity to reassess and to evaluate and to think about your choices and what you're doing and whether or not you're happy with what you're doing and identifying ways that you might desire to change.

And so that's what drew my attention to this passage, to preach from it tonight in this first Lord's Day of a new year. So I want to read the first seven verses of Ephesians chapter 5.

Follow as I read. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children, 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.

But among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people, nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

[ 1 : 24 ] For of this you can be sure. No immoral, impure, or greedy person, such a man as an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore, do not be partners with them.

Let's pray and ask God to illuminate his word and open it to us tonight as we look at it together.

Let's pray together. We come to you, Lord, crying out for your grace, recognizing that we need you, that apart from the work of your spirit in our hearts, we will come and go tonight without being moved spiritually, without growing in grace in the ways that we ought to grow.

And so we pray that your spirit would be with us, that the same spirit that caused these words to be written by holy men who were carried along by the spirit would pick the words up from the page and plant them in our hearts and work into our souls a deep desire to please God and to live as children who are dearly loved and to be imitators of God in every way.

And so we pray, Father, that you would use your word in our hearts tonight, that your word would be a sanctifying influence, that your word would convict us of our sin, that it would sharpen our focus on your callings to us as your holy people, that even as we have reflected tonight on the unfeigned praise of God and the thrice holy God and the presence of God at the end of all time, that we would be people who are preparing ourselves for that day by striving after holiness in every way.

[ 3 : 16 ] And so we pray, Father, that you would use your word, that it would speak to us and teach us tonight. We ask this for Christ's glory. Amen. Well, I have five things for you, and I'll try to – one of them is quite long.

The others will be faster. I want to look at the foundations of the exhortations that we have in this passage. I want to look at the three put-offs. There are three put-offs in the passage.

There's one big put-on in the passage. And then there is a series of warnings. And then, finally, a couple of implications. So starting out with the foundations. The foundation of the exhortations that we have here in Ephesians 5, of course, is the grace and power of the gospel.

And really, the background for this text is found clear back in Chapter 4 as Paul is extolling and contrasting two radically different ways of living.

And in Chapter 4, verses 17 to 19, he talks about those who live like the pagans live, those who are spiritually darkened and lack understanding.

[ 4 : 24 ] They're futile in their thinking, and their lifestyle reflects insensitivity and indulgence in sensuality. And then in Chapter 4, verses 20 to 24, he talks about the transformation that grace brings.

And I want to just read this to you and comment on it briefly. He says, And those words are really describing the change, the transformation that grace works in the people of God.

And you notice the transformation is not primarily in behavior or not simply a change in behavior.

That's the kind of transformation most religious systems produce.

They provide rules that you ought to follow. But Christianity changes people from the inside out.

And it's that kind of change that Paul describes here.

It's being changed internally by the power of God and by the power of the gospel. So in Christ, we are made new. We're a new self with new thoughts and new attitudes of mind.

[ 5 : 53 ] And that's what grace does for us. Grace transforms us internally. God's grace works within us to make us what God wants us to be.

And so he works within us so that we value the things that God values. We see the supremacy of his worth. We've sung of his supremacy tonight. And our hearts are moved by those songs because we see the supremacy of his worth and his value over our own worth and our own value.

And we want what he wants. That's what grace does within us. Now, there are three broad categories of put-offs in this passage. And these themes from Chapter 4 spill into Chapter 5 where these put-offs and put-ons continue.

And our text gives us three broad categories of put-offs. The first is sexual immorality or any kind of impurity. The second is greed.

The third is obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking. But you'll notice that Paul begins this chapter by reminding us of God, by calling us to imitate God, to live a life of love.

[ 7 : 07 ] God lived a life of love, and we're to imitate him. And he reminds us of the magnificent love of Christ for us. And we are called to love because we are children who are dearly loved by our Heavenly Father.

And Christ has demonstrated his love for us. And to remember that we are children of God, dearly loved, is an incredible joy. And it's a powerful motivation for living in the ways that God calls us to live.

Because Christ sacrificed himself for us. He was this fragrant offering. Paul uses that Old Testament metaphor of an offering, this fragrant offering, an offering that fully satisfies God.

And in Christ's life for us and his death on the cross for us, we have been forgiven and we've been made children of the Heavenly Father. We've been made children in whom the Father is fully satisfied.

And we're to imitate him as children who are dearly loved. It's amazing. It's just staggering to think about that God looks at us through Christ and Christ's life and sacrifice for us.

[ 8 : 18 ] And he looks at us and he sees his Son in whom he is satisfied. And he smells the fragrant offering and sacrifice of Christ. He's fully satisfied with what Christ is.

So Paul begins taking us into the heavenlies, reminding us of the love of God and God's grace and kindness to us. We're children dearly loved. Christ has loved us and he's been a sacrifice and a fragrant offering in the presence of God.

But in relationship to that, verse 3 almost seems like a stark come down. It begins with the word but, and he says, but, but all that is true of you, but among you there should not even be a hint of sexual immorality or impurity or greed or obscenity or foolish talk or coarse joking.

So we go from the rarefied air of God's love for us and the call to be imitators of God and to meditate on the sacrifice of Christ for us.

And with a single word we're brought back to earth. But, but among you, we're brought into the contemplation of things that are ugly, things that are unseemly, things that should never be in our lives.

[ 9 : 40 ] Now, why are passages like this in the Bible? Why such negative passages? Are they really necessary for us? Wouldn't it be enough to simply contemplate the goodness of God and the grace of God's sacrifice and Christ's love for us?

Wouldn't that be enough? Couldn't we just, if we really got a hold of that, would we really need the negatives? Of course, the answer to that question is no. We know that's the answer because of the presence of this, of this call in this passage.

We need to be brought back to the realities of a world that is hostile to God, of a world that hates God, of a world that is out there seducing us and enticing us and tempting us with things that ought to never be named amongst the people of God.

And so Paul reminds us of the reality of our daily struggle. And passages like this one are essential for us because God's not just concerned with our peace and be brought into a relationship of peace with God.

He's also concerned with our holiness. He's chosen us in him before the foundations of the world that we might be holy. First Peter says we are to be holy just as our heavenly father is holy.

[10:58] Titus chapter 2 reminds us that we are to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age. We can't just enjoy being forgiven and dearly loved without applying the faith to the issues of daily walk and daily life.

And so Paul's reminding us in this passage that our Christian profession must be expressed in daily living. So this passage emphasizes things that ought to never be present in the life of a Christian. It reminds us, though, that we're in a battle. There's warfare going on where the Christian life is a fight of faith. Later in chapter 6, he talks about the armor of God that enables us to fight.

We have to battle and watch and pray. Enemies surround us on all sides. And the enemies are both without and within. And so we have to be on our guard.

And so these three categories Paul gives us that we are identified for us in verses 3 and 4. Among you, there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people, nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking.

[12:16] So I want to look at each of those. And I've divided them into three, organized them in that way. The first is this matter of sexual impurity. And Paul uses two words for sexual impurity in this passage.

The first is just a word that refers to unlawful, inappropriate expressions of our sexuality. It could be adultery, fornication, unlawful sexual intercourse.

And the other word is a word that describes more broadly types of sexual impurity. And Paul's statement is intentionally very broad, because he wants to embrace the whole range of sexual perversion of every kind.

And not only adultery and fornication, but also illicit affairs, clandestine relationships of any sort. None of that should be named amongst us.

We live in this very strange period of history. And I think it's hard for us, and maybe especially hard for young people who have grown up in this strange period, to have any sense of how strange it is.

[13:23] But throughout human history, all religions have been uniform in their testimony against sexual immorality. Marriage has been something prized and valued.

And yet in the past 30 or 40 years in Western culture, we have given sanction, even encouraged, and now are even called to advocate for all sorts of sexual promiscuity and sexual activity that has traditionally been disregarded by any people of faith, regardless of the faith, and recognized as wrong.

And I don't know how to communicate this clearly enough, particularly for young people, that the idea of sexual freedom that exists in our culture is so utterly irrational.

And it's something that except for this little blip of history in which we live, people have regarded as wrong. The idea that someone would engage in sexual intimacy with someone with whom they have no commitment ought to be shocking to us.

Because God has designed things in such a way that sexual intimacy is to take place in the deep spiritual intimacy of the commitment of marriage.

[14:44] And it's in that deeper intimacy of marriage that our sexuality can be expressed in ways that are holy and delightful and proper and beautiful.

And the marriage bed, as the writer of Hebrews says, is holy and undefiled. And it's a picture of the true union that exists between Christ and his bride.

But that union is defaced and disintegrated when people engage in sexual intimacy outside the bonds of marriage. So I want to urge you and urge us all to not be drawn into the ways that the culture has spoken such lies to us.

And in writing this, Paul's goal is not to reform the world, but Paul's goal really is to call the church to purity. And these things are written to Christians. This is truth Christians need to hear.

And obviously, God's holy people are not to be involved in sexual immorality or impurity. But notice with me the passage even goes further than that.

[15:59] It says, among you, there should not even be a hint of sexual immorality. So in terms of standards for dress and modesty, not even a hint of sexual immorality.

In our manner, even in our casual interaction and the banter we have with one another, there should not even be a hint of sexual immorality. In our lives, there should be no innuendo or thoughts or entertainments that involve sexual immorality.

I often think about the fact that a TV program that is inappropriate for the children to watch is inappropriate for you to watch or for me to watch. And we need to guard our hearts because things that are sexually explicit are not appropriate to hear or see or to be entertained by.

And in a culture where perversion is mainstream entertainment, we should be finding it necessary to say, this is not appropriate entertainment for me.

And if you're not finding yourself doing that, then either you don't own a TV or go to movies or you're watching things you should not watch.

[17:17] But it's impossible to avoid the fact that there are things we ought not to be part of. They should not be, not even a hint of sexual immorality.

The second heading is covetousness. And I'm told that the word that is translated greed here in our English translation literally means to overreach.

It's commonly used to describe a person that is hungry for money. But it also describes someone that is demanding, someone that is determined to satisfy their own desires. It's a self-centered way of living.

And people who are covetous are willing to do things that are not even good for others in order to obtain things for themselves that give them joy. Someone said one time, and I was struck with this statement, that greed is living at the level of your means.

It's not living above your means. It's living at the level of your means. Because if you live at the level of your means, then it means that you have nothing to share with those who are in need.

[18:26] You've made a decision not to have extra to share with those who are in need. There's nothing left to share. It's really the opposite of what Paul talks about in chapter 4, verse 28.

Remember, he says, let the thief steal no longer, but let him work with his hands so that he may have something to share with those who are in need. We ought to manage our income and our living in such a way that we are able to share with those who are in need.

And later in this passage in verse 5, Paul calls the greedy man an idolater. And what is the connection between idolatry and greed? Remember how Paul says in 2 Timothy 6, the rich should not put their hope in wealth, but to put their hope in God.

And I think he makes the connection there. Riches create an illusion of security. It means that I'm not hoping in God and God's capacity to care for me, but I'm hoping in my financial security. Wealth has given me this sense of joy, this sense of security. It's my source of blessedness. And that's where I'm finding my security.

[19:39] I'm not putting my hope in God. I'm putting my hope in riches. And people do the same thing with money that they ought to do with God. They trust in it. They hope in it.

They find comfort from it. They feel secure because of it. Now, none of that, of course, is a call to be poor. That's not what we're being called to in this passage. As you know, in the Old Testament, there are many patriarchs who were men of great wealth.

Even in the New Testament, we have a woman like Lydia who apparently was a very successful businesswoman. But what the passage is getting to is the fact that a Christian cannot be a person who is preoccupied with getting and keeping wealth.

If that's what he's trusting, if that's what he delights in, if that's what makes life sing for him, he is an idolater. But his praise must be for God, and his life must be for God's glory.

The third category here of put-offs is sins of speech. Verse 4 speaks of obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking. We have nothing to do with speech that is shameful or ugly or polluted.

[20:50] And that would include things that are sexually perverse, obviously, but even speech that is just coarse and vile and inappropriate.

And some commentators even believe this statement, foolish talk, is referring to speech that is empty, frivolous, senseless, thoughtless, just drivel, running off at the mouth.

My father used to say, don't just be running off at the mouth. It's that kind of speech where we're just thoughtlessly speaking. Remember in Matthew chapter 12, Jesus says that we will give an account for every idle word.

What a sobering thought. And the word translated here, coarse joking, has the idea of turning a phrase. It's a double entendre. It's these little quips that we throw around, things that have double meanings.

And if someone picks up with a double meaning, then we'll say something to them like, oh, your mind must be in the gutter. That's not what I meant. But it is what we meant. And that really is being forbidden in this passage.

[ 22 : 02 ] And Paul says it's self-evident that these things are wrong. And referring to these three areas, he makes three statements that I think are very fascinating. In verse 3, he says, these are improper for God's holy people.

In verse 4, he says, these are things that are out of place. In verse 5, he says, for of this you can be sure these are things God's people should not be involved in. And do you see his appeal?

No. The appeal he's making is that it is self-evident that these things are inappropriate for God's holy people. It's self-evident. These types of behaviors, these things we are to put off are completely inconsistent with any profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

And it's impossible for someone to experience the grace of the gospel and the transformation that the gospel produces and the radical internal transformation that grace brings and yet conclude that these simple practices are appropriate and somehow acceptable.

Grace makes you hate sin. Grace makes you disgusted with perversion. Grace teaches you that these things are not appropriate for God's holy people.

[ 23 : 19 ] And that sense of conviction you may feel when you're watching something and you hear languages you shouldn't hear and you think, well, maybe that'll be the only one or maybe it's not going to be that bad or we'll fast forward through this scene.

That sense of conviction really comes to you because grace teaches you these things are not appropriate for God's people. And giving oneself to sexual impurity or to a lust for possessions or to filthy speech is a life of self-indulgence.

It's a life of self-worship. It's a life in which joy is pursued in things that are degrading and prudent. It's making a God of one's passions and desires and saying, I choose to indulge myself, that I have the right to indulge myself, that these lusts are more satisfying than God.

This is what I prize. This is what I value. Paul says this lifestyle of lust and self-indulgence is unarguably wrong for any Christian person.

And the statement in verse 5, Paul says, this you know. Paul's appealing to a deep sense within the heart of the Christian. He's appealing to something within you that is the result of grace working within that says, this is wrong.

[ 24 : 38 ] This is wrong for me as a child of God. That transformation that grace brings means that godly people cannot do these things.

And we're all clear on that. If you've learned anything of Christ, then you know that sense of it's wrong for me to be involved in this.

And, you know, even non-Christians know it. Have you ever been in some place where you said some unguarded or inappropriate thing at work or in front of others or maybe were involved in something a little deceitful and underhanded and you've had a non-Christian say, I didn't expect that from you.

That didn't sound very Christian to me. Boy, what do you, even the world knows. That was inconsistent with the Christian profession.

And that's why people make those kinds of comments. Or did you ever notice the delight that the news media takes in the public shame of a Christian who's had some public Christian who's had a scandal in their life and they exploit it because they're aware of the hypocrisy and the disconnect between true Christianity and the public scandals of Christians.

[ 26 : 05 ] And, of course, this line of argument, you know this is wrong. This line of argument is made again and again in the New Testament. Let me just give you some citations. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says, It says,

Because grace transforms us so radically internally. There's a point of appeal he can make when he says, These things are improper for God's holy people.

These are things that are out of place. They don't belong in our lives. For this you can be sure. These things Christians cannot do.

So we have those three put-offs. But there's one put-on. And the one put-on is Thanksgiving. So notice the alternative to self-indulgent ways is thankfulness.

Think about that. Thanksgiving is exactly the opposite of an orientation towards sexual sin or greed or obscenity.

[ 28 : 43 ] All those sins are rooted in pride and crass self-interest. They all turn things in on ourselves that reflect a way of life that is totally focused on pleasing myself in wrong ways.

Thanksgiving is the polar opposite of that. It's focused on gratitude and wonder at the mercies of God, at the grace of God and the goodness of God. And the sins of this passage are ugly sins and self-serving sins.

But Thanksgiving is turned to God with praise and adoration and worship and awe and delight. Thanksgiving recognizes God's mercy and kindness and responds with gratitude to God.

Now there are some warnings that Paul gives in this passage. And we have a series of warnings. The first warning is in verse 5.

He says, What does it mean to inherit the kingdom?

[ 29 : 53 ] What's he talking about? What he's saying is they're not in the kingdom. Paul is assuring us that if a person's habitual conduct is marked by these things, by sexual immorality, by greed, by obscenity and foolish talk and coarse joking, if that's what marks their habitual conduct, they are not Christians.

These things are out of place. They're improper for God's holy people. And if they mark a person's life, if their life can be characterized in that way, then they're not believers.

Now, obviously, Paul's not saying that anyone who ever fails in any of these sins is not a Christian. If it meant that, then there would be no hope for any of us.

But what Paul is saying is that if these things describe a person's life, if this is the atmosphere of their life, if this is characteristic of how they live, if these things are the realm in which they find happiness and fulfillment and the things they are drawn to, the things they seek, the things they long for, then they have no inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ.

Because God's purpose is to transform us, to make us people who are zealous for good. Now, maybe someone's thinking, wait a minute, Ted.

[ 31 : 31 ] Aren't we saved by grace through faith? Are you denying justification and taking us back to works and works righteousness? Aren't we justified by grace?

It's absolutely true. We are justified by grace through faith. But justification and forgiveness are the beginning of the process.

We are saved in order to be sanctified. God's purpose is our sanctification. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that we should follow after holiness without which no one will see God.

So we're called to sanctification. Justification deals with the guilt of our sins. Sanctification deals with the power of sin.

And the God who justifies is the God who sanctifies. And you know, you can't see the reality of your justification. We believe by faith that we are justified by Christ's life and death for us.

[ 32 : 33 ] But you can see the fruit of sanctification in a person's life. Sanctification shows up in a lifestyle that reflects the power and grace of the gospel.

But this passage is more than just a test of the believer. It's also a means of our sanctification.

When the passage tells us that the grace of the gospel transforms our lives and that those who are transformed by the gospel will inherit the kingdom of God, it causes every true child of God to take notice.

It's a sanctifying reminder to us that grace must change us. That we can't live with our sin and be indifferent to sin or failure.

It's a warning. And the warning in the passage, implicit in the warning, is a motivation for us to pursue holiness.

The second warning of this passage says, the wrath of God is on people who practice sexual immorality, greed, and obscene speech.

[ 33 : 48 ] It's really an extension of not inheriting the kingdom of God. Because if we're not forgiven through the grace of the gospel and therefore inheritors of the kingdom of God, then we are still under God's wrath and God's judgment.

And consider for a moment the wrath of God. Because the wrath of God, the anger of God towards sin, the punishment that God brings on sin is something that is woven throughout the scripture. It's one of those threads of truth we find everywhere in the Bible. It's there in Genesis, and it's there in Revelation, and throughout the scriptures. It's taught by the patriarchs and the prophets, by the kings, by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, by every one of the apostles.

You can't believe the Bible without believing in the wrath of God. And we must never think, when we think of the wrath of God, we shouldn't think of something like human anger that is horrible and uncontrolled rage and violent temper.

God's wrath is his attitude towards sin and evil. God is holy. We've sung of his holiness tonight. And God has a settled hatred of sin.

[ 35 : 08 ] God's wrath is his determination to punish sin and to eradicate evil. It's the reaction of a holy, eternal, unchangeable God to evil. God cannot be a holy God without the hatred of sin and evil.

And if he would wink at evil or countenance evil, he would cease to be holy. And we understand that even in the human sphere. If someone is good, he can't stand by idly and countenance that which is wicked.

A man who stood by and allowed another man to beat a woman and her children and did nothing to try to help would not be regarded as a good man.

He would be seen as a monster. He would be seen as complicit in the evil. And there's something interesting about this text because it says, for because of such things, God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

When we think about that statement, maybe our temptation is to go immediately to the end of time when the devil and all of his minions are consigned to the lake of fire. But the verb tense is a continuous present.

[ 36 : 27 ] God's wrath comes in the here and now and in the future and in eternity. And in many of the circumstances, in many circumstances, we can see and acknowledge God's wrath on evildoers.

That sense of remorse that you feel when you sin and it catches up with you is part of the wrath of God. That's God bringing a limited wrath against your sin.

Think about the physical suffering of a hangover the morning after. That's the wrath of God. We know the thorns and thistles in our lives. The ways that work is always thwarted and frustrated by things that constantly go wrong as part of the wrath of God on sin.

The spiritual condition of Western nations that have rejected the word of God is judgment. I've been persuaded for some time that we are a nation under judgment.

One of the things that explains the chaos of our whole political system and the trajectory of our culture away from God and away from Christian consensus is judgment.

[ 37 : 40 ] We are under judgment. God is judging us even now. That's in the present. But the future manifestations of God's wrath will be even greater and ultimately more devastating because God will ultimately and utterly destroy and eternally destroy all evildoers and all sinners along with the devil and all of his minions.

In that day of God's righteous judgment, men will call for the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. And only those who are under the blood of righteousness of Christ will be spared.

So here's the question. What is the function of these warnings? Why? Why are these warnings here? What's the purpose of these statements? People that do these things shall not inherit the kingdom of God for because of such things God's wrath is on the disobedient.

What's the purpose of those warnings? Verse 7 tells us, doesn't it? It says, Therefore, do not be partners with them. The purpose of God is for us to take that next step and say the clear implication of the fact that no one who does these things will inherit the kingdom of God.

That God's wrath is on the disobedient both in the here and now and ultimately and eternally on the disobedient means do not be partners with them. Turn away.

[ 39 : 07 ] God, what God purposes to tell us through these words is that we as people cannot live with sexual immorality or greed or obscene language.

We are called to be holy. Now, some implications real quickly. There's a warning to this passage that I haven't addressed. It's warning.

It says, do not let anyone deceive you with empty words for because of such things God's wrath is on the disobedient. What would be deception by empty words?

What would that look like? What would that sound like? How does that apply in this context? Paul's warning us about being against being deceived by those who might say to us don't be so legalistic. There's a little language in this movie. You're going to have to overlook the language. It's a good movie and a couple bad words won't hurt you. Don't be deceived by empty words. Or maybe the jokes on Comedy Club are a little risqué but this guy is really clever.

[ 40 : 13 ] Don't be deceived with empty words. God's not going to condemn you for a little self-indulgent. I mean, on balance, you're a pretty generous fellow. Don't be deceived with empty words.

God's not against fashion and style. Surely, he doesn't expect me to look like a Mennonite. Don't let anyone deceive you with empty words. You see, we can talk ourselves out of almost any conviction of sin.

And the person who speaks to you the most is you. We're talking to ourselves all the time. Others speak to us too but, and there may be others who are deceiving us with empty words but sometimes we deceive ourselves with empty words and we say, oh, what this passage forbids, it's not that big a deal.

I'm saved, I'm saved by the grace of Christ. God's not going to send me to hell for this. The warning is to be alert to anything that persuades you that these things are not a big deal.

Don't let anyone deceive you with empty words for because of such things, God's wrath is on the disobedient. Think about why this is so important.

[ 41 : 33 ] See, indulgence in these sins is really a reflection of what is important to you and what really matters to you and to me. Because it's really a statement about what captivates my mind, what captivates my imaginations, what delights me.

And these sins expose a lifestyle that is oriented towards self-gratification and self-indulgence and self-worship. And those sins are expressed in pleasure and sensuality.

They expose pride. And so it's a one of the reasons why this is so important is that if I'm giving myself to these things, the appetite for them exposes things in me that are wrong and show me how profoundly I need the grace of God.

And the warnings of this passage are designed to be just that. They're designed to be a means of grace for us. They refocus our hearts and minds on what's important. God uses passages like this to focus my heart, to rebuke me, to focus my mind, to focus my thoughts on God and all that he is to me in Christ, to remind me that my needs are met in Christ, to remind me of the foundations in verses 1 and 2, be imitators of God as dearly loved children.

That's what I am. I'm a dearly loved child of God. I'm to imitate my heavenly father and I'm to live a life of love just like Christ who loved us and gave himself up as an offering and a fragrant sacrifice to God.

[ 43 : 19 ] Christ fully lived this passage. In him there was never a hint of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity. He was never self-seeking, never filled with greed, never any speech that was inappropriate, coarse, flippant, prudent, never indulged in coarse joking, never spoke idle words, fully obeyed the law of God, lived a life of moral purity as a man and he lived that life for us and he bore the wrath of God for us.

The father turned his face from the son and the son experienced being abandoned by God so that you and I would never be abandoned by God and the father turned his face away from the son so that he might turn his face toward us.

Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. He laid down his life for everyone who would ever repent and believe God's purpose is that our life be transformed internally so that we are people who are zealous to do what is good.

People among whom there's not even a hint of sexual immorality or impurity or foolish talk or coarse joking but rather giving thanks. Let's pray together.

Father we pray that we would hear the exhortations of this passage. The passage addresses things that we are all confronted with on a daily basis and we've all known the temptation to these things and we have times when we have failed and we have succumbed to things that we should not have succumbed to and so we pray for your grace and pray for your spirit to work in us and pray that you would work this passage out in us that the warnings of this passage would be warnings that we would take to heart and that the love of God that is expressed in this passage would be wooing us

while the warnings turn us away from sin.

[ 45 : 34 ] We pray Father that we would be people who are holy people who live a life of love just like the Father who loved us and the Son who gave himself as a sacrifice and fragrant offering to God.

We pray this for his glory. Amen. Amen. Amen.