

AVOID INCOMPATIBLE BEHAVIORS, PT. 2; EPH. 5:5-7 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE WRAP UP OUR LOOK AT THIS NEXT PARAGRAPH OF EPHESIANS, ~ 5:3-7.

▶▶ As we know, ~ in this paragraph Paul's main point is that we are to avoid behaviors that are totally incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

▷▷ Paul focuses on and discusses six behaviors that are completely alien to our new natures that God has given us ~ and to the kingdom into which we have been forever transferred.

▷▷ These behaviors are sinful and belong to "the domain of darkness" from which we have been forever rescued.

▷▷ Engaging in them is totally incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love. ~ And therefore they must be avoided.

▶▶ What's more, ~ as we noted, ~ these six sinful behaviors represent all sinful behaviors.

▷▷ This means that in 5:3-7, ~ Paul is saying that all sinful behaviors are totally incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

↪↪ So all believers must abstain from all sinful behaviors.

▶▶ Last time we looked at verses 3-4.

▷▷ And we noted that sexual immorality, ~ impurity, ~ greed, ~ obscenity, ~ foolish talk that accomplishes no good purpose, ~ and quick-witted, ~ clever humor that has gone too far ~ ↴↴

↪↪ are totally incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

▶▶ Today we'll take up verse 5-7.

RECALL IN 4:17c-19, ~ PAUL GAVE A DESCRIPTION OF UNBELIEVERS.

HERE IN 5:5, ~ PAUL PROVIDES A FURTHER DESCRIPTION OF UNBELIEVERS.

▶▶ "For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." ↴↴ 1/8

BEFORE TURNING OUR ATTENTION TO EXAMINING PAUL'S PURPOSE FOR THIS further description of unbelievers, ~ it would be good to clarify something.

▶▶ When Paul says "everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous," ~ he is referring to the habitual practice, ~ or unbroken pattern, ~ of sin, ~ which characterizes unbelievers.

▶▶ In 1 Jn. 3:6, ~ John says, ~ "No one who abides in him ~ [i.e., ~ in Jesus] ~ keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him."

▷▷ John assures us that genuine believers do not keep on sinning.

↳↳ I.e., ~ genuine children of God do not continue living in a habitual or unbroken pattern of sin.

▷▷ On the other hand, ~ "no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him," ~ John says.

↳↳ I.e., ~ a person who persists in living in a habitual or unbroken pattern of sin has neither seen nor known Jesus. ~~ I.e., ~ the person is an unbeliever.

▶▶ And that is who Paul has in view here in Eph. 5:5.

NOW WE CAN TURN OUR ATTENTION TO EXAMINING PAUL'S PURPOSE FOR THIS further description of unbelievers in verse 5.

▶▶ Paul says those who habitually practice sin, ~ who live in an unbroken pattern of sin ~ i.e., ~ unbelievers, ~ have "no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

▷▷ Back in Eph. 1:11a, ~ Paul said, ~ "In him [Jesus] we [believers] have obtained an inheritance."

▷▷ And part of our inheritance is "the kingdom of Christ and God."

↳↳ In Matt. 25:34, ~ Jesus said that believers are going to "inherit the kingdom prepared for [us] from the foundation of the world."

▷▷ Believers will inherit the kingdom. Unbelievers in their position and experience are sinners. ~~ And they will not inherit the kingdom.

▶▶ So, ~ this is what Paul's saying. ~~ But why is he saying it? ~~ What purpose does this further description of unbelievers serve? ↴↴ 2/8

▷▷ Well, ~ if you'll recall, ~ in [4:17-19](#), ~ Paul exhorted believers to no longer live like unbelievers do ~ and then launched into a description of unbelievers.

↳↳ And as we noted, ~ the description served the purpose of providing a rationale or reason why we should no longer live as unbelievers do.

▷▷ Here in [5:3-5](#) we see the same pattern. ~~ He gives us a list of sinful behaviors from which we are to abstain. ~~ He then gives a description of unbelievers.

▷▷ So basically, ~ Paul's point is the same. ~~ And, ~ with a little variation, ~ we can pretty much say the same thing as we said there.

↳↳ Paul's further description of unbelievers in [verse 5](#) serves the purpose of providing a rationale or reason why we should abstain from sexual immorality, ~ **impurity, ~ greed, ~ obscenity, ~ ¶¶**

→→ foolish talk that accomplishes no good purpose, ~ and quick-witted, ~ clever humor that has gone too far.

▷▷ Unbelievers, ~ i.e., ~ those who live in an unbroken pattern of sinful behaviors like these, ~ will not inherit "[the kingdom of Christ and God.](#)"

▷▷ We, ~ i.e., ~ those who have confessed . . . will inherit [. . . .](#)

↳↳ We are "[heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,](#)" ~ as Paul puts it in [Rom. 8:17](#).

→→ So why would we, ~ believers, ~ and this is what Paul's getting at here, ~ I believe, ~ why would we, ~ believers, ~ live as if we weren't going to inherit it?

▷▷ My brothers . . . ~ God has not "[rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,](#)" ~ given us new natures, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ and made us heirs of the kingdom ~ in order for us to continue living as if we were still residing in "[the domain of darkness](#)" and excluded from inheriting the kingdom.

▷▷ Paul's description in [verse 5](#) no longer describes us. ~~ In [1 Pet. 2:9](#), ~ Peter declares that God has called us "[out of darkness into his marvelous light.](#)"

↳↳ And since this no longer describes us, ~ we are to abstain from all sinful behaviors.

▶▶ In line with his main point of this paragraph, ~ Paul's description in [vs. 5](#) also vividly points out that sinful behavior is totally incompatible **with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love. ¶¶ 3/8**

NOTICE IN VERSE 5 THAT PAUL CALLS A COVETOUS PERSON AN IDOLATER.

▶▶ Idolatry is not limited to the worship of false images, ~ but it is placing anything or anyone before God as the object of allegiance and devotion.

▷▷ A greedy person's insatiable desire to acquire more and more, ~ whatever the object, ~ and regardless of need, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ causes them to put money and earthly things before God as the object of their allegiance and devotion.

→→ Money and earthly things become the false gods that a covetous person worships and serves in the place of the true God.

▶▶ In Matt. 6:24, ~ Jesus said, ~ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

▷▷ It is possible to devote oneself wholly to the service of God. ~ And it is possible to devote oneself wholly to the service of acquiring money and earthly things.

↳↳ But it is not possible to devote oneself wholly to the service of both.

▷▷ Of course, ~ many people do try to do both, ~ but ultimately one will eventually win out and exercise control over the person's life.

IN VERSES 6-7, ~ PAUL WARNS BELIEVERS TO WATCH OUT FOR "EMPTY" arguments.

IN VERSE 6a, ~ PAUL SAYS, ~ "LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU WITH EMPTY WORDS."

▶▶ "empty words" refers to arguments used by those who try to excuse sinful behavior.

▶▶ In line with his main point of this paragraph, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ Paul is specifically warning us to not be deceived at any time by any one who argues that sinful behavior is compatible with living a life that is filled with ~ and governed by ~ Christ-like love.

▶▶ The much broader principle here is that Paul's warning would include watching out for any arguments that justify any sinful behavior, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that say believers can take sin lightly, ~ or that say there will be no negative consequences from engaging in sinful behavior. ¶¶ 4/8

▶▶ These peoples' arguments are "empty," ~ Paul says, ~ meaning they have no truth or reality. ~~ There are no underlying facts to them.

▷▷ They state what is not so and therefore mislead people.

ONE OF THESE EMPTY ARGUMENTS GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

▶▶ "You were saved by grace! ~~ God's grace is wide enough to cover every sin."

▷▷ "Therefore let us go on sinning, ~ for God's grace can wipe out every sin. ~~ In fact, ~ the more we sin, ~ the more chances God's grace will have to operate."

▷▷ IOW, ~ this argument says that God's grace freely bestowed on believers gives us a license to sin; ~~ and the more we sin, ~ the more grace we receive.

▷▷ This argument is a distortion of what Paul says in [Rom. 5:20](#).

↪↪ "Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."

▶▶ Paul meets this argument head on ~ and shows that it has no truth or reality, ~ no underlying facts behind it.

▷▷ [Rom. 6:1-2a](#) ~~ "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!"

↪↪ This is Paul's emphatic rejection of such absurd logic.

▶▶ He then asks rhetorically in [verse 2b](#), ~ "How can we who died to sin still live in it?"

▷▷ Just as death transfers a person to another realm, ~ so believers have been rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of Jesus.

↪↪ And sin has no place in this kingdom.

▷▷ Paul does not mean that believers are unable to sin at all or that believers will not sin. ~~ He means that believers must not sin. ~~ To deliberately continue sinning is abhorrent.

▶▶ It is inconceivable to think grace encourages sin.

▷▷ When we really understand and have really tasted God's grace in our lives, ~ it actually has the exact opposite effect. ↯↯ 5/8

▷▷ When we truly understand and have truly tasted God's grace in our lives, ~ we will be so grateful that the last thing we want to do is sin.

▷▷ It will actually make us want to live a life that is pleasing and glorifying to God.

ANOTHER EMPTY ARGUMENT THAT SAYS SINFUL BEHAVIOR IS COMPATIBLE WITH living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love, ~ ❗❗

▶▶ that justifies any sinful behavior, ~ that says believers can take sin lightly, ~ or that says there will be no negative consequences from engaging in sinful behavior, ~ ❗❗

▷▷ goes something like this: ~ "Sin does not matter since believers are under grace, ~ not law."

▶▶ Paul has a clear and unmistakable answer for this empty argument too.

▷▷ Rom. 6:15, ~ "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!" ~ This is Paul's emphatic rejection of more absurd logic.

▶▶ Freedom from the Law does not give believers a license to sin.

▷▷ Grace does not free us to do anything we want. ~ It does not provide the opportunity to live apart from all restrictions.

▷▷ Freedom within the context of salvation is not the exercise of unlimited spontaneity.

↪↪ It means to be set free from the bondage of sin in order to live in a way that reflects the nature and character of God.

▷▷ Peter points this out in 1 Pet. 2:16. ~ "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up ~ [i.e., ~ an excuse] ~ for evil, but living as servants of God."

▷▷ Gal. 5:13, ~ "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh ~ [i.e., ~ do not use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature], but through love serve one another."

ANY ARGUMENTS THAT SAY THAT SINFUL BEHAVIOR IS COMPATIBLE WITH LIVING A life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love, ~ ❗❗

▶▶ any ... that justify any sinful behavior, ~ that say believers can take sin lightly, ~ ❗❗

▷▷ or that say there will be no negative consequences from engaging in sinful behavior are just "empty words." ❗❗ 6/8

▶▶I.e., ~ they have absolutely no truth or reality to them. ~~ There are absolutely no underlying facts to them. ~~ They state what is not so and therefore mislead people.

IN VS. 6b, ~ PAUL PROVES THAT SINFUL BEHAVIOR OF ANY KIND IS TOTALLY incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love, ~ ¶¶

▶▶and that arguments to the contrary are "empty words."

▶▶He does this by showing that negative consequences come from sinful behavior.

▷▷And thereby also refuting arguments that justify any sinful behavior, ~ that say believers can take sin lightly, ~ ¶¶

↳↳or that there will be no negative consequences from engaging in sinful behavior.

▶▶Verse 6b, ~ "for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience [i.e., ~ unbelievers]."

▶▶Think about it. ~~ If sinful behavior was compatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love, ~ ¶¶

▷▷one would expect, ~ and rightly so, ~ that good consequences would come from God for it.

▷▷Rather, ~ sinful behavior brings the wrath of God on unbelievers, ~ as Paul points out here in [verse 6b](#).

▷▷And for believers, it breaks fellowship with God and brings His discipline down on us.

↳↳Is. 59:2, ~ "but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."

↳↳Heb. 12:5b-6, ~ "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

↳↳And Rev. 3:19, ~ NIV ~ "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent."

▷▷Paul has proven his point. ~~ Sinful behavior is not compatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

↳↳And all arguments justifying sin are simply "empty words." ¶¶ 7/8

▶▶ And let's think about one more thing before moving on. ~ If sinful behavior brings down the wrath of God upon unbelievers, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ why would we, ~ believers, ~ ever think that sinful behavior is compatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ that we could justify any sinful behavior, ~ that we could take sin lightly, ~ or that we could get away with sin?

IN VERSE 7, ~ PAUL DRAWS THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION FOR BELIEVERS IN LIGHT of what he said in verse 6.

"THEREFORE DO NOT BECOME PARTNERS WITH THEM."

▶▶ I.e., ~ "Because God judges sin, ~ do not be partners with unbelievers, ~ i.e., ~ those who live in an unbroken pattern of sin."

▶▶ Paul does not mean that believers should have no contact with unbelievers. ~ 1 Cor. 5:9-11

▷▷ "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

▷▷ His principal concern is that we do not participate with them in their sinful behavior. ~ I.e., ~ because God judges sin, ~ we are not to participate with them in their sinful behavior.

CONCLUSION.

IN THIS ¶, ~ 5:3-7, ~ PAUL'S MAIN POINT IS THAT BELIEVERS are to avoid behaviors that are totally incompatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

▶▶ And this clearly implies that Paul is also calling upon us to engage in behaviors that are compatible with living a life that is filled with and governed by Christ-like love.

▷▷ And that involves putting Peter's exhortation in 1 Pet. 1:14-16 into action in our lives.

↳↳ "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

LET'S PRAY 8/8