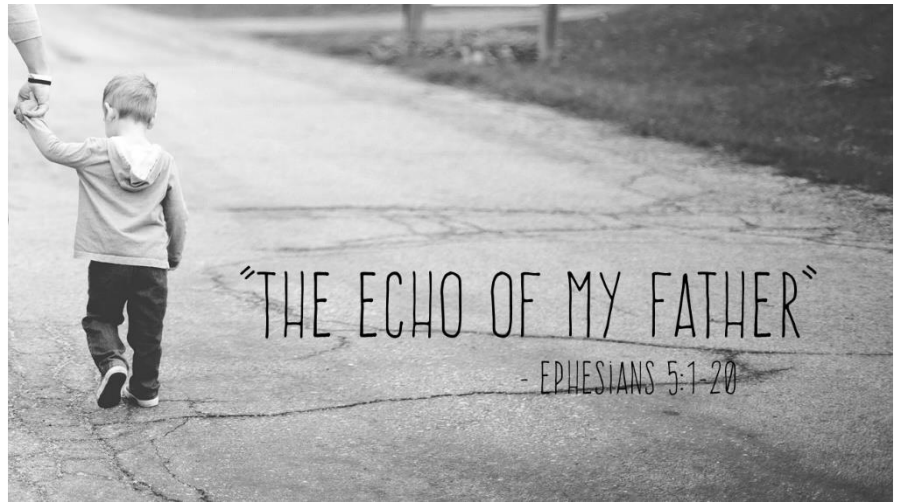


# “The Echo of My Father”

## Ephesians 5:1-20

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
at Believers City Church  
in Menomonie, Wis  
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**Ephesians 5:1-20** *1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 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. 3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 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. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now [you are] light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit [is] in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose [them]. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord [is]. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.*

### 5:1

**Galatians 4:6** *And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, **Father.**”*

Paul begins once again with “therefore.” What therefore? What is leading Paul to this point and this statement?

Paul ended chapter 4 with the statement “...forgive one another, just as God in Christ forgave you...” So chapter 5 begins with the idea that because of that forgiveness...we should **therefore** be ‘imitators of God.’ Because of all He has done, **we are to be like our Father.**

The simplicity of the Christian ideal is often lost in the muddle of doctrinal battles and denominational hurdles. What is the ultimate goal and design of the Christian life? I can give it to you in three words: ...*be... like... Dad.* Everything in the spiritual discipline, effort, and decision process comes down to that simply premise. If we just kept our eyes on that singular goal! A decision to make? *Be like Dad.* A battle to fight? *Be like Dad.* A priority to set? *Be like Dad.*

However, in order to even *attempt* this daunting call, we must actually know Him and know His ways and characteristics. How can we even attempt to be like him if we do not truly know who and what He is! Dabbling in church attendance and hanging out with His other kids is not going to suffice.

One of the final and climatic aspects of aging is when you look in the mirror and you see your fathers face. That may be a good thing or a bad thing...a comforting thing or a shocking one, but it is always startling. It doesn't happen overnight...just slowly, *gradually*, you morph into your Dad. Paul is essentially calling us to experience the same with our heavenly Father. *Are you?* As the years have passed, do you see more and more the face of Christ in the mirror of your life?

We are reminded herein that we are not called to *feel* God or even to *experience* God, but we **are** called repeatedly to **know** Him! He is to be special to us...unique to our experience...a 'personal' Redeemer! That does not mean 'personal' in respect to 'individual'...as in '*of my own design and making.*' That's idolatry and the sin of the Hebrew nation in the wilderness when they made a golden calf. We cannot 're-invent' God into an image of our own invention...making Him up as we go along...outside of scriptures explicit description and directions. Oh, but how so many of us try! We don't spend our days getting to know our Father, but often instead spend our days looking for ways to get Him to up our allowance and to stay our past curfew.

I have seen a lot of people depart from this fellowship over the years...and for a lot of stated different reasons. But the bottom line...seemingly across the board if they left disgruntled, is that they desired ...and then subsequently 'invented,' a Father who was different than the one expressly presented in the Bible. Theirs was on some level 'tolerant of sin' or at least *theirs*. He was supportive of their situation no matter the cause and the contrary scriptural position. Their Father rolled with their changing appetites and looked the other way through gossip and lies, dividing of the brethren, failure to lead their families, failure to take their place in a church body and essentially when they did nothing and gave nothing to further the kingdom of God. '*Their father*' is OK with all of that and much more, while the scriptural Father is not.

The only way He can be a true "Father" is by allowing Him not only the position of Savior...*we all like that one*...but the place of master, teacher, disciplinarian and authority in our lives. He has to be more than the "birther" to be a real Dad. Letting Him be a real Dad allows Him that proverbial place wherein "He has brought you into the world, and He can take you out!"

Paul is calling us to do something that frankly we just simply and inevitably do in the natural realm: *we become like our Father*. Called to be like our heavenly Father, as children are when they grow up with their earthly Father. We just seem to naturally mimic our Dad's ways and attributes...often His temperament, His language, and His passions. This phenomenon happens only between a Father and child in close relationship. It does not happen when we are distant from our fathers. And it does not happen when we are distant from our heavenly Father!

If you had the privilege of meeting my earthly Father, you know that I am my Father son. His humor, His focus, His relentless drive, His energy, His passion and temperament. I became like Him because I was always there beside Him. He earned my admiration and I gave it to Him.

## 5:2

"And *walk in love*..." We like that part of the passage! At least philosophically. It is pleasing to our ears like a nice poem. Because of its pleasant and appealing attribute, it has become the mantra...the 'by-line' of the greater church today! We hear it repeatedly...the call to 'just love each other.' But what does that really mean?

Who is to define just what 'love' is anyway? Because frankly, if we are going to let Dad define that term and its manifest practice, then we as the greater church today are failing miserably in its reflection!

Most often the definition used is earthly and human. It is the version of the Hollywood movie or the internet porn and is always gray and nebulous in its presentation and emotionally fluid in its expression. It does however have some static "across-the-board" characteristics: it always feels good and innately contains copious amounts of tolerance. When we say 'no'...or when we call into biblical accountability...when we correct or even rebuke...we are inevitably accused of as "un-loving." Yet what parent...*what father*...if he is good and Godly, would accept such a definition when it comes to their child? Is it love to let your child play in the street or eat poison? Is it love to let them get eaten by a wolf? Is it love if I let *you* be eaten by a wolf? The world apparently say "yes"...

We want a different Father. The argument goes like this: *Betty's dad lets her do it...go there...have that.* We feel we have the room to reject the scriptural version of love because the proverbial "church down the street" agrees with *our* definition, so...

The verse says "*walk* in love." Not sit in it or just 'believe' it. This clearly calls us to a version of love that is more than a theory or belief but one that actually moves. Paul even gives us a further explanation of that movement; move "...as Christ also has *moved in love* for us and *gave Himself* for us, *became* an offering and a sacrifice to God... *became* a sweet-smelling aroma."

The love that we are to practice is the same version with which our Father loved us! We think love should be "modern, hip, and tolerant." Let me ask you something...how modern, hip and tolerant is Jesus? How *does* Christ love us? Protective, emphatic, endless, guarded and patient, and so much more...

*Our* love is to mimic our *father's* love! One that embodies the surrender of ourselves...*in our totality*, as an offering and sacrifice to God. Please note that fact! Because many of us are saying we love God and love others, but are quite unwilling to give ourselves to further His plan and agenda or to place others interest before our own. According to God's definition of love...our version is therefore just a lie.

The true believer is to practice a form and definition of love that overtly and innately gives himself as an offering and a sacrifice. THAT is Father love! Seeing such clearly presented in scripture certainly renders our reluctance and our resistance to service and self surrender as more than foolish and misdirected...but presents such as anti-god...as *contrary to Him and salvation!*

### 5:3-5

Fornication is one of those big Biblical words for a big Biblical sin. Though most of us don't really think it is anymore. Again, we think that because we don't actually **know** Dad, we just know what we *believe about* Him. And naturally we think if we believe it, then it's fact.

Basically, 'fornication' is premarital sex. Much of the greater church has surrendered to this as a lost battle. But I am struck by Proverbs 6:32, where we are told that those who involve themselves in illicit sex aren't "making love," as the world likes to put it, but rather they are destroying their very soul! "...*the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys himself.*" Wow...quite a difference in the view between man's version of love and our Father's! Man's version of Christian love tolerates such...and certainly doesn't get all up in the individual who is involved in it and still calling themselves a child of God. After all...we shouldn't judge right? WRONG. Read 1 Corinthians 5!

The practice of sex outside of our marital partner should absolutely not be a part of our walk or a part of our church community. I'm sorry if that is a bummer for you. If you want to refuse this, I have no doubt you can find a church somewhere that will look the other way. But it won't be this one.

Now if you are not born again, I'm not coming for you on this. Just keep your hands off of our sisters, and for that matter ladies...keep your hands off our brothers. But we get it. You are lost and should by all means enjoy whatever little pleasure you can find, because that is all you will ever know...just a little pleasure...in this life or the next.

But if you are calling yourself a child of Christ... and you say "I am Believer's church," then no...you have to keep your pants on until you are married. Because a person who makes a practice of this "has no inheritance in the kingdom of God." Whoa. That's harsh and blunt huh? Yes it is...yet Paul and Christ Himself tells us this out of real Fatherly love. But again, you may need to redefine your definition of love before you can accept that fact.

This passage though, is not addressed to only the sexual immoral. Those who are innocent of that crime need to remember that. It includes all uncleanness...that would include the likes of pornography and premarital sex outside of intercourse. And then it goes on to include those that covet ...the overt desire for something that belongs to another...that can be a thing or something like talent, a possession, or a boyfriend. It goes on to include those who practice any form of idolatry...that would be the worship of anything other than the true and living God, including money, career, your boyfriend, or a statue of some form.

Paul goes on to include the sins of the mouth...because after all, as Matthew 7 reminds us, it is "what comes out of man that defiles the man." Matthew 12:34 tells us that what is on our lips is in our heart!

### **5:6-7**

Now the implication here is that this was not only happening, but it was happening *within that congregation*. This issue baffles me, because so many of us seem to refuse to believe that this is a danger! We entertain the words of known liars and deceivers, without regard to the danger. It is a pride that thinks we are way too smart to be so deceived!

Jesus warns us in Matthew 24 of this very issue, saying that there would be those who would literally come out of the church...out of religious world that would, if we give them the chance, deceive the "very elect"...that's us gang! This issue will become even more prevalent as we near the end of days. Because more and more people will flock to those who will tell them what they want to hear rather than the truth. Paul actually warns us of this repeatedly...in Colossians, Galatians, Thessalonians, and Titus. Timothy, and John warns us also in their letters, and Peter in his. The fact is, we are in our human state quite slow to accept the truth and quick to receive a lie. It is further proof that we need salvation, not just desire it!

God is more than just 'displeased' about such. It says clearly that these folks will experience God's wrath. That's some serious judgment! Many will claim that they have a real good reason to disobey God's directives...but we know that there is no such thing. These liars operate up close in our backyards as well as widely in the pseudo-religious political realm. On the large scale today we see scriptural sins being whitewashed due to political and new 'socially correct' standards.

In our personal realms we still listen to the angry disgruntled individual dis' our church, it's doctrine and it's leaders when we bump into them in the store. We in leadership here call that "sucker-punched." You go in with your guard down and your hands in your pockets and they take you out because you didn't discern the danger. What will it take to break us of this ungodly practice? Will it take God's wrath?

People will use enticing and religious terms...they will say that they and you can indulge in what the bible says is sin because you are "under God's grace." But that's not what grace is for, and even Paul points that out in Romans 6:15. They will tell you that such behavior is ok because "God loves me...", and again, such only shows that they are using a different definition of love than that of scripture.

**Wayne Barber says** *"First of all for me to be deceived, I am going to have to trust you. I am not going to be deceived by someone who I already have a question about. It is going to be someone who has my ear. It is going to be someone who has my time. When I am listening to them, then I am going to be deceived. The word "deceive" means to be led astray. You are walking on a path and all of a sudden something gets your ear. You trust what you are hearing and all of a sudden you start turning that way. That is what it means to be deceived."*

The classic response on this issue is "well, I'm just loving them! Jesus still loves them, so I am doing as He does." When I go to the zoo, I love the wolves and the lions and bears...but I do not crawl into the cage to pet them! We are not to hate them nor are we to walk past them at the grocery store and fail to acknowledge them. But that is a long way from standing and having a 'chit chat' with them like they are your friends when they openly practice a distain and overt attacks upon what you profess to love. The text says clearly "Do not be partakers with them."

### **5:8-10**

Paul points out that at one time you were part of the darkness. Not just that you *lived* in the darkness, but rather that you were actually *part of that darkness*, just as these deceivers are now. But he goes on and says...*addressing the true born again believer*, that "you are now the light." And if that is the fact, then we are simply called to live it! If we are the light, then live like it. We cannot claim to be light while we open our mouths and darkness pours out! Paul is calling us to live out our confession, not just "talk to the talk." If we are really born again, then the "fruit if the Holy Spirit's indwelling" will pour forth from our lips and our actions! These are "goodness...righteousness ...and most importantly, the truth!"

### **5:11-12**

Now you know that all of this tends to just really upset a lot of folks. They want to hold hands with everyone and sing a verse of "we are the world." We don't want to believe that there are bad people, or that we are in danger by warming up to them. But what does the scripture say? It says "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." So naturally such a truth just riles a lot of folks! The idea of "exposing their darkness as darkness"...exposing other's lies, is just absolutely unthinkable. And they can become embittered against me for suggesting such.

But please note this critical fact: these are not my words, but words of the Bible! When I am forced to identify a danger, a wolf, or a lie, I do so not out of pleasure, but out of obedience first and out of love for the flock. What kind of man would I be if I knowingly allowed you to enter into a dangerous situation without warning you? You may respond by saying... "Ya, but pastor...you sometimes name names." Yes, sometimes I do. Just as Paul did, because sometimes there is no other way. But I assure you, that just as in 2 Corinthians, public restoration is always available with public repentance!

The hard part of this passage is that it goes beyond merely avoiding them, it says we are to “expose their darkness.” Not just me...but you too! So if you love your brothers and sisters, you will warn them when there is a wolf in the room!

I fully realize today that some folks will blatantly reject this passage. But be warned that this is only one of many such passages. So to reject it, is to reject God’s words...to actually therefore “reject the Father.” I desperately wish this was not part of our faithful walk. But it is. There are those who are doing the devils work...whose “*God is their belly, and their glory is their shame*” (Php 3:19)

**2Pe 2:3** *By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.*

### **5:13**

What these wolves do not want, is their words and deeds brought out into the public arena. They want to operate from behind closed doors. Through the anonymity of email, social media, and the web. Through private phone calls and whispers and innuendo’s.

In the light of day...the openness of the public display, the truth is made manifest. Accusations are easy to check out when they are public and open. These folks don’t want that. They want darkness and secrecy, not an open discussion. When rebuke is given...their deeds exposed, it causes them to come out into the light, or retreat further into the darkness. Jesus declared that... “*For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.*” (Jn 3:20-21)

This is why we have always tried to deal with these difficult matters in the open and in the community of believers. We have nothing to hide. It is often just a matter of ‘turning on the light.’ For it is then that ‘cockroaches scatter.’ Countless times we have made offers to sit down as Christians and discuss an issue that divides us. I cannot remember a time when anyone took us up on the offer.

This direction is hard. It will not happen with the immature or uncommitted. But it will happen with those who seek maturity...to grow up...to not be a “Peter Pan Christian.” “***Whatever makes manifest is light.***” Does that describe you? Are you operating your faith in the light or in the dark? Are you willing to shine the light on the truth?

### **5:14-16**

Paul knows that this stuff is hard. But he...and our Father, want us to wake up. It’s easy to just shut our eyes to this stuff and avoid the difficult aspects of the walk of faith. But we are called here to wake up and look around. We need to see the truth and face the ramifications of it. If we don’t, we are told we are ‘a fool.’ That’s what we become when we shut our eyes and pretend that this stuff doesn’t happen. If we seek the honesty that comes in the light, then Christ will indeed cause us to actually see the truth. Or, our choice is that we attempt to live out our faith in the dark. For many of us, it’s long past time to grow up in our faith...

### **5:17**

Our Dad is directed this to each of us today. Are we willing to receive it and truly “be wise?” Paul is saying ‘stop acting as if you don’t have the ability to understand the situations that occur in your life and how God wants you to respond’ because you do have that ability now in Christ, in the New Man. Second Timothy tells us we are not like people who are lost but have minds that have been saved. We can understand what God wants us to do. The question is only “***will we do it?***”

## 5:18

Paul is continuing to move the spiritual into the practical, and here he takes a very clear and down to earth direction: **don't get drunk**. He goes on to say that instead we are to be "filled with the Spirit" of God. The original text is literally, "...be ye, being filled." Meaning it is an ongoing condition and activity. Filled is a condition, not a title!

As a born again individual, we have the Holy Spirit available to us and guiding us. This is a positional state that is guaranteed upon our redemption. (John 14:17, Eph 1:13) But being "filled" with the Holy Spirit is something else. This evokes the idea of being 'possessed by' and 'under the control of,' the spirit of God.

Such is clearly manifested in this passage. When drunk, an individual is under the control of the alcohol. One "filled" with the Spirit, is under the control of the Spirit. This is not an issue of "getting more of the Spirit," but rather an issue of the Spirit getting more of you! It is an issue of being "under the control" of the spirit, not just having Him around!

How do we know we are **filled** with the Spirit? Galatians 5:22-24 tells us...*But the fruit (or, "the evidence") of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

## 5:19-20

Notice that the first sign of being filled with the Spirit is the words that come out of our mouths! It would seem to follow that we can have some barometer of our filling by the Spirit by the words that come out of our mouth. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones said "*It shows that in the writer's opinion the "Spirit-filled" life is not to be measured merely by one's private morality or even by one's private spiritual experience but by how one conducts himself or herself with other persons.*"

We easily forget this fact and often attempt to live out our lives in a spiritual bubble. We think that having a "personal" relationship with Christ means that only the vertical relationship matters and not the 'horizontal.' But scripture clearly teaches that such is not the case!

John Calvin wrote that... "*As the soul does not live idly in the body, but gives motion and vigor to every member and part, so the Spirit of God cannot dwell in us without manifesting Himself by the outward effects.*" There is one thing we cannot imitate...and that is we cannot imitate being filled with the Holy Spirit! If we are truly our Father's son or daughter...such will be evident to all those around us...