



## Living Obediently

As we've seen a number of times throughout Paul's letter to the Ephesians, our behavior as believers matters. A professing Christian is called to live by a high standard which reflects Christ in a dark world; the subsequent obedience and agape love is a sweet aroma and fragrance around the Father's throne (cf: [Eph 5:1-2](#)).

***But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. [Ephesians 5:3-5](#) NASB***

Before we really examine this passage, it's important to remember that just a few chapters earlier Paul tells us that ***"by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast"*** ([Eph 2:8](#)). Knowing, believing, and understanding this fact helps us realize what Paul is stating here is not a list of directives we must follow to maintain our salvation. Our salvation is sealed fully and completely in the blood of Christ which He shed on the cross (cf: [Eph 1:13](#)). Instead, what Paul is talking about here is how Christians must act as they abide in Christ. As we read in [James 2:14](#), ***"but someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."*** We are not saved by works, but our works are the evidence that we are saved.

Obedience is one of the most valuable works for a Christian. Like Christ, obedience is how we carry out the Father's will ([John 6:38](#), [Luke 22:42](#)). Inward faith combined with outward obedience is the key to living a life that honors God and shines a light in the world. And in today's passage we're once again reminded that God expects His children to be different. When Jesus prayed His high priestly prayer, He said of His disciples, ***"they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world,"*** ([John 17:16](#)). Being like Jesus means we must live differently than the world does, both inwardly and outwardly.

It's easy to see how the world lives. It celebrates immorality, impurity, and greed. Money, power, sex, pleasure, and possessions are the primary ambitions of those who live for what the world offers. The world relishes filthy behavior, self-indulgence, and lifestyles of ungratefulness and entitlement. It is no wonder at all why Paul says that those who live this way have ***no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God***, because they are not saved.



While we may be tempted to hold some pride because we don't deliberately strive to satisfy our immoral and greedy flesh, none of us are immune to these sins (see [Matthew 7:4-5](#) for an example). In fact, some of these very things are so ingrained in our society that they may not even look like sin! In our first-world nation we are programmed from childhood to spend our entire lives working hard and building up wealth so we can enjoy the riches of the world. We work and hope for the latest toys, bigger houses, nicer cars, more exotic vacations, and years of salary stored in our 401k. We want the best food, clothing, and furnishings. We are trained from a young age to keep up with the Joneses. The American dream!

But is this not greediness? Is this not idolatry? Do any such activities honor God in even the slightest way? Should a Christian really work so hard and put so much effort into these worldly pursuits of selfish gain? Or should we instead be living in such a way that our extra money and resources are treated as a tool to bless others? Imagine the good we could do for our brothers and sisters who are truly in need if we lived as though the blessings we've received are meant to bless others just as much.

And shouldn't the words that come from our mouths always honor and bless God? Why then do we allow our conversations to be laced with crude humor and give ourselves a pass when we let a curse word or slanderous gossip slip from our tongue? Oh! how challenging it is to walk this narrow path! Lord, please help me!

There is much to prayerfully reflect upon in the warning Paul gives in this passage. Yes, we are indeed ***saved by grace through faith!*** We were once dead in our sins and only Christ our redeemer was able to free us from that eternal grave (cf: [Eph 2:4](#)). Praise God! But now, as believers fully justified and being sanctified, we must turn our attention to *obedience*. Obedience to the Father's will in all things: our bodies, our speech, our time, our money, our pursuits. Everything we claim as ours must be laid at the feet of our blessed Lord with the confession, "Thy will be done."

While certainly difficult, living a life of obedience and submission to the Lord's will is immensely more rewarding than what the world offers, and it is the only way of fully recognizing the sealed assurance of our salvation in Christ.

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