

## *“Ephesians & You: Your New You!”*

### **The Family of God**

Ephesians 5:1-9

Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

July 3, 2020

**Jeff:** Greetings, men. I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and hope you are well during this time. You and I both know that this is the Fourth of July weekend. And it looks like our government has put a damper on not just the celebration of the Fourth of July, but also businesses as well. We need to be praying for those we know and those we don't know who have businesses that are struggling right now and have been so excited to reopen. And now, at least those in Allegheny County, face another week of closure. That has to be discouraging. So we need to be praying for those who are business owners, and certainly pray that our economy would thrive for them.

But more importantly, I think, we need to be praying for our country. We need to be seeking God. We need to be praying for repentance. We are a country who has sinned grievously. And I'm not talking about particular sins like racial inequality, though I am talking about that kind of thing. I'm also talking about sexual sin. Those kinds of things are part of the history of our country. And yet more grievously we have sinned before the living God in all sorts of ways, ways that are both public and private. And I would encourage you men to be praying for the repentance of our country. And that really starts with individuals. Be praying and repenting for your own sins particularly, as the Westminster Confession says.

You know, a Puritan author once said that it's easier to grieve for your sins before God and repent of them, rather than to grieve for the plagues and the punishments that come in their wake. And right now we're grieving the punishment that has come in sin's wake. And would it not have been better for us to grieve for our sins before the living God, that we might not be put in this situation? And yet we are in it.

And the question that we have to ask ourselves is a very simple one. Do I hate the consequences for my sin more than I hate my sin, more than I hate that which put me in this position? And if we only hate the consequences of our sin and we don't hate our sin, then we are still no better for it. And so we need to ask God to confront us in His word and by His Spirit with a spirit of repentance, asking Him to grant that to us, that we might find ourselves repenting and enjoying communion with God as individuals, and then praying that our neighbors would do the same, and our neighborhoods and our cities and our counties and our states and all of the United States together.

That's what we need to do, brothers. We need to be praying to God that He would grant us forgiveness.

Well, that's really unfortunate that the phone is ringing behind me. I'm pretty sure that's Don Maurer. And Don, if you're watching, please hang up and I'll call you back later. It's unfortunate that you would do that right now, knowing that I'm in the middle of such an important study. Thank you, Don; I appreciate it.

## ***“Ephesians & You: Your New You!”***

All right. I’ve spent too much time talking to you about things other than our study. But let me now get to Ephesians chapter 5; let me read it for you. And I’m just going to read the first fourteen verses. Listen now to God’s word.

*“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love,. As Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

*“But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness or foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. 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. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them.*

*“For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.”*

And I’m going to stop there instead of proceeding on. So let me just begin with something of an introduction to chapter 5.

Let me ask it this way. What must life have been like for the Ephesian believers back then? I think that is difficult for us to imagine. But I think that we have to ask ourselves. Can we imagine it? And can we be helped to imagine it?

And I think we can. There are good scholars who oftentimes help us with those things. And it’s at this point that I need to talk to you about extra-Biblical literature and its place in helping us as Bible scholars to understand God’s word better.

I want you to think about it like this. And you know what? Don, I still don’t have my chalk. So I need to find some. I just stand in front of this blackboard because it makes it look like a classroom setting. *(Jeff laughs.)*

There are good scholars who help us to understand the Scriptures. But we have to use their work carefully. And I just want to say a word about how to use that work when we study the Scriptures.

Now we oftentimes talk about the Scriptures in two ways. When we talk about its content, we talk about *the doctrine of Scripture*, and then we talk about *the phenomenon of Scripture*.

Now I want to put that very, very simply for just a minute. When we talk about the phenomenon of Scripture we’re talking about things like geography, places of cities, and the archaeology that goes into developing what those cities were like—where streams and rivers and lakes were, where boundary markers were. So there’s the phenomenological aspect of Scripture, and that’s one aspect.

And then there’s another, and that’s the doctrine of Scripture. And the doctrine of Scripture is really what the Scripture says about itself and what the Scripture says about what we ought to believe.

Now I want you to think about that for just a minute. When we use extra-Biblical literature we use it to help us understand the phenomenology of Scripture. In other words, archaeology, which is an extra-Biblical discipline, helps us to understand things about Galilee or Jerusalem—phenomenological things, those things that pertain to the life

## *“Ephesians & You: Your New You!”*

setting of the culture at the time. Those kinds of things are legitimate for reading that extra-Biblical literature and helping us to be informed by what the Bible says.

However, when we think about what the Scriptures say, let me just go back and hit the pause button for just a minute. We need to understand that the archaeology and all of the other disciplines that are extra-Biblical, if they contradict what the Bible says, then we defer to the Scriptures and not to archaeology or science or anything like that. So that's a really important piece.

Now let's get to the doctrine of Scripture, what Scripture says about itself, what Scripture teaches about what we should believe.

Oftentimes scholars will do this sort of thing. They'll say, “Well, you know, can we really understand the Jewish understanding of the afterlife? Unless, for instance, we study the documents of the first century, which were called Second Temple Judaistic sources?” In other words, can we understand what the Jew thought about the afterlife in the day of Jesus apart from those extra-Biblical sources?

And what I would encourage you to understand is this. I would encourage you to understand that when we want to understand what God has said about the Bible and about the things that we ought to believe, then we ought to go to the Author of the Bible, God Himself. We ought to look at His book.

And oftentimes what scholars have a tendency to do is that they have a tendency to do this. They have a tendency to say, “Well, the Bible is helpful. But we need other sources to help us to understand the Bible.”

Now I want you to think about that like this. I'll use a little illustration. Let's say, for instance, that we have a primary source from a scholar. Let's say, for instance, that I want to understand what B. B. Warfield says about the Bible. What did B. B. Warfield say about the Bible. And so I want to study Warfield. I want to study what his theology was.

Well, in order to do that I would go to his book or his articles on the theology of Scripture. But there are scholars out there, and not good ones, who study only the secondary sources. In other words, they would study the sources that were written about B. B. Warfield and what he thought about Scripture.

Now you see the difference. And you see the disparity in the approaches. If you want to know what Warfield says then you go to the source; you go to Warfield himself, and not what people have said about him. Well, in the same way, if you want to know what God says to us about what we ought to believe about the nature of Scripture and the nature of doctrines, well then it obviously stands to reason, Biblical reason, that we would go to the Bible itself to discover what God says about these things, and not to secondary sources like Second Temple Judaistic sources.

So it's really important that we understand that, because what begins to happen is this. People begin to read those extra-Biblical sources. And then they begin to say, “Well, this changes what we ought to believe about the nature of Scripture.” And what they say is, they say this. They say that in studying these extra-Biblical sources that tell us not just about the phenomenon of Scripture but also about its doctrine, that means that the doctrine of Scripture, what the Scripture says about itself, well that's tentative and always changing. And you see, that's not a Biblical understanding of Scripture. A Biblical

## ***“Ephesians & You: Your New You!”***

understanding of Scripture is that it is the infallible, inerrant, authoritative word of God. And it stands in judgment to all other sources. If you want to know what God says about the Word, if you want to know what He says about doctrine, then you go to the Bible and you study it, and you’ll know.

If you want to know about Galilee, then go to the Scriptures and see what it says. But you might also want to consult archaeology and other things to tell you, to fill in the gaps, and so on.

Now the reason I bring that up is because when I asked the question, what must life have been like in Ephesus?, well, one of the things that we can do is we can go to these extra-Biblical sources. This is a phenomenological question. What must life have been like in those days?

And there’s a scholar by the name of Clinton Arnold. He wrote a book called *Ephesians: Power and Magic*. And what he does is that he contrasts the Christian understanding of power with the pagan understanding of magic. So what he does is, he goes through the Scriptures for the Bible’s understanding of power, the power of God. And you don’t have to search real hard looking in Ephesians to discover that Paul uses the language of *dunamos* or power repeatedly, in order to teach us about the power of God.

And what he’s doing is, he’s setting up a contrast. Paul is saying that the power of God is greater than pagan magic. And so Arnold develops that for us. And what he does is that he develops a Biblical understanding of power from the Scriptures. And he develops a pagan understanding of magic from extra-Biblical sources. And so you find this contrast in the Scriptures and you find this kind of development.

Now Arnold starts his research because he notices that disparity in the book of Ephesians, but not just in the book of Ephesians. When you go to Acts 19 which tells us about the church of Ephesus, or rather the town of Ephesus, you notice that it says in Acts 19 that a number of those who practiced the magical arts were converted. And so he’s clued into the fact that pagan magic was very popular, very big at the time. And so he contrasts the Christian perspective of power with the pagan perspective of magic.

Now this cult of magic is connected to the cult of Artemas or the cult of Diana. Now which is it? Is it Diana or is it Artemas? Well, you know as well as I do that if you study the Greeks and the Romans they oftentimes have the same god. To the Greeks Zeus is Zeus, and to the Romans I think he’s Jupiter. But my point is that you have these two different cultures that share the same mythology and yet name it differently, and so forth.

For instance, to the Greeks this particular god in Ephesus was Artemas, and to the Romans she was Diana. And so it’s the same god. She was an Olympian. I think there are twelve gods on Mount Olympus in the mythology, and she’s one of those twelve gods. She’s the twin sister of Apollo. And the interesting thing about her is this. She’s called “the protectress of the dewy youth.” In other words, she’s the goddess of maidens.

What’s interesting about her is something that’s interesting not just about her, but about all of the Greek gods. We find that they’re oftentimes just like human beings, only their sinfulness is exacerbated because their gods. So she is very fickle. She is capricious, despite the fact that she is the patron god of the youth. You find stories, for instance, of

## ***“Ephesians & You: Your New You!”***

Greeks being ready to leave port and maidens being sacrificed to her so that they're able to leave port and enjoy the safety of the waters.

Now doesn't that sound capricious? Here's this goddess of the maidens, this goddess of the dewy youth, demanding that maidens, young girls, be sacrificed to her for the enjoyment of their safety.

Edith Hamilton wrote a book on Greek mythology, and it also has sections on Norse mythology, and so on. It's an excellent book for bringing together all of the sources. But Hamilton says in her book on Greek mythology that Diana or Artemas was connected with deeds of darkness. *“Ghostly places of evil magic”* is how she describes it.

And, for instance, in some ways she was very helpful to her followers. And the question is, how so? Well, it's interesting. When you read some of the discoveries that were made in connection with the cult of Diana, Clinton Arnold discovers that there was a papyrus scroll. And it was a papyrus scroll that had Diana in view. And it had Diana in view not just in what was written, but also in what was drawn on the scroll. There was a figure with bulbous images; let's put it that way. There was an image with bulbous objects on the figure; let's put it that way. Obviously Artemas was portrayed as a very voluptuous female. And you get the clear and distinct impression from this text that here is a fertility god.

And so think about this. These people were converted out of this Artemas cult which was immoral and impure. We find that in verses 3 and 5. And Paul says this. This is interesting when you think about this in connection with what Paul says. Paul says that these things shouldn't even be named among you. In other words, these things that characterize the Artemas cult should not be characterized by the Christian. They have no inheritance with the Christian church.

And so what he's doing is that he's introducing this Artemas cult for us to set up a contrast. Now what we're going to do is, we're going to deal with that contrast the next time that we get together. But until then, the Lord bless you and keep you.