

075, Be not Deceived by Vain Words

Ephesians

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Bible Text: Ephesians 5:5-7
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Book of Ephesians 5. Book of Ephesians 5.

Now in our previous studies in Ephesians 5, we have considered that God is to be the model we pattern ourselves after and the example that we follow in the area of our moral behavior. We read in chapter 5, verse 1,

1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

It says that we are to be imitators of God. Just as children would imitate their parents, so we are to imitate God, and just as children copy and imitate the behavior of their parents, we are to copy and imitate the moral behavior of our heavenly Father.

Now, having considered together that responsibility, we then went on to develop what God's moral behavior consists of. If we are to imitate God, we must know how God acts. And so we have discussed two categories of God's moral behavior thus, we considered, first of all, that we are to walk in love and this, of course, was by following the example of Christ. Verse 2 says,

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

So the first way in which we are to imitate God is we are to walk in love by following the example of Christ of displaying love to God and love to our fellow man.

The second category we saw is that we are not only to walk in love but that we are to walk in purity. God is a holy God and we are to imitate him in the area of his holiness and we are to walk in purity by fleeing the wickedness of the lost, and we saw this in verses 3 through 7 where it says,

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Now, unsaved people, wicked people conduct themselves in a certain fashion and he tells us two areas of conduct that we are to avoid following their example in. He says we are to flee the wickedness of the lost, first of all in the area of their behavior, and he lists some of those behaviors in verse 3: fornication and uncleanness and covetousness. He says we are to have a zero tolerance for such things. They are not once to be named among us. It is utterly contradictory of what it means to be a saint, a holy one, to engage in the worst kind of filthiness and uncleanness.

Then we are to flee the wickedness of the lost not only in the area of their behavior but also in the area of their speech. Verse 4,

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient

So he's saying that obscenity and absurd and vain speech and inappropriate humor, all of these things are to be rejected, but rather we should put in the place of them an attitude and spirit of thankfulness. He says,

but rather giving of thanks.

Now this type of behavior, this type of speech that Paul has described in verses 3 and 4 is characteristic of those who are not Christians. Those who are not Christians are fornicators and unclean and covetous and in their speech obscene and full of foolish talking and inappropriate humor.

Notice verses 5 and 6. He says,

5 For this ye know [and it's very emphatic in the Greek, for this you certainly know, you know this beyond a shadow of a doubt, he's saying to them], that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Now, people ask the question, they say, "Well, don't Christians sin?" And the answer is yes. "And don't Christians fall into these particular kinds of sin: fornication and uncleanness and covetousness?" And the answer is once again, yes, they do. But these sins are not characteristic of the Christian.

Allow me to illustrate it by bringing it out in a different context. It is one thing to tell a lie, it is quite another thing to be a liar. "Liar" is a term that describes the characteristic behavior of a person as being one of deception, whereas the word "lie" describes a single act. Now one may tell a lie and yet it would be both unfair and untrue to call that man a liar. The word "lie" is an act, the word "liar" is a characterization that describes an ongoing series of acts. For example, you remember Noah after the flood, Noah got drunk but it would be utterly unfair and untrue to call Noah a drunkard. He was not characterized by that.

Now notice the terms here in verse 5. It says, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God." These words "whoremonger, unclean person, covetous man, idolater," these are all descriptions of character. These are all characterizations of a person's behavior in life. They are not single acts. It is important for us to realize that character is not a snapshot. The best people can look the worst at particular points in time in their life and the worst people may look the best at particular points in their life, and so the best may look worst at times, and the worst may look best at times but the real issue is how do they look over time? And if over time they look to be a whoremonger or an unclean person or a covetous man or an idolater, then what he is saying here is that such a person has no inheritance in the kingdom of God, that is, that he is unsaved.

Now we just read in our Scripture reading this morning Galatians 5:19-21 where it says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these," and he lists, "adultery, fornication, uncleanness," and remember the list, "Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, envyings, murder, drunkenness," and all sorts of things and he says, "of the which I tell you before as I have told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Now the word "do" is a very interesting word. It means "to practice." It means "to go on doing." It's the Greek word "prasso." It means "to perform repeatedly and habitually over time." And he says, "Those who habitually and repeatedly over time perform such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Now someone may say, "But, but, but, I'm a Christian. I have received Christ as my Savior. I'm trusting in Christ." Paul says, "Don't buy it." Look at verse 6 of Ephesians 5, he says,

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Now there are two things that are being addressed here in verse 6. He's addressing, first of all, the person who says, "But," in spite of him being a whoremonger or an unclean person or a covetous man who is an idolater. He's saying if that man lives in that fashion but still professes to be a Christian and claims to be a Christian, are you to receive him as one? Are you to accept him as one? Paul says, "Not on your life." He says, "Let no man deceive you," and the word there is "delude or bring you into a false perception of the matter with vain words." You see, they are called "vain words" or "empty words" because they're words that are contradicted by reality. If I said to you there is a pink elephant standing in the front of this room, those are words that are devoid of any reality; they're empty; they're vain. You know there's nothing there and so my words to you don't deceive you and you don't start believing that there's a pink elephant there contrary to all the evidence of your senses, and so it is when a man lives contrary to all the evidences of the transforming work of Christ and yet he claims to be a Christian. Those words are empty words, they are vain words, deceptive words and we are not to be drawn in by it.

Now the other thing he's addressing here is it says, "Let no man deceive you with vain words." There were those who were teaching that you could be a Christian and it really

didn't matter how you lived because, after all, Christianity had to do with the spirit and so therefore the sins of the flesh had no relevance or relationship to your relationship with God because God dealt with us on the basis of the spirit. Or others were saying, "Ah, but salvation is of grace. It is free. God deals with us on the basis of mercy and grace. We need not fear his judgment, irrespective of how we live." So there were all these things that were floating around that were being taught or that people were claiming and Paul was saying, "Let no man deceive you with these vain words."

Now he says that these are vain words, he says, "for because of these things," because of fornication and uncleanness, covetousness and idolatry, regardless of what one may claim, because of these things, "cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Now notice what people who engage in such behavior are called, they are called children of disobedience. They are not called children of God because they are not children of God. The word "disobedience" here means "one who is unpersuaded, unyielding and untrusting." Someone comes to him with a command, he doesn't trust that command, he doesn't obey that command, he doesn't yield to that command. He is disobeying that command, that's what the word "disobedience" means, and children who have as their father not God but obstinate, rebellious unbelief in the commands of God regarding their moral behavior, those are not children of God, rather those are children of disobedience.

The word "of" here refers to source. If I am a child of God, that means that God is my Father and I derive my relationship as a child from him. If I'm a child of disobedience, that means disobedience is my father and I derive my paternity from it.

Now, turn back to Galatians 2 and we'll see this exact same phrase used. It says describing their former manner of life in verse 2. Did I say Galatians? I'm sorry. I meant Ephesians. Ephesians 2. I wondered why everybody was turning so many pages. Ephesians 2, it says in verse 1 that they "were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in," and here's our phrase, "the children of disobedience." It's the same phrase and so what he's saying, the children of disobedience are who? Those who walk according to the prince of the power of the air, that is, Satan rules them, and they walk according to the course of this world, they are slaves to the world, they love the world and the things of the world, and they are those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

So these people that Paul is describing in Galatians 5:5-6 are those who fall into the category of the people described in Titus 1:16. In Titus 1:16, you might turn there for a moment because he expands on this idea. Titus is just before the book of Hebrews, actually just before Philemon, but for all intents and purposes, just before the book of Hebrews. He talks here about those who are in verse 10, it says, "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers." So notice how he characterizes them and then he goes on in verse 16 and he says of them, "They profess that they know God." They make a claim, "I am a Christian." It says, "but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Now when it says here that they are

disobedient, it is the exact same word that is used in Ephesians 5:6 when it calls them children of disobedience, "for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon," who, "the children of disobedience."

So he's speaking of the same type of people here. They profess, you see, they claim and proclaim that they know God, that they have a saving relationship with him. Now it's important for us to understand that these people are not atheists, okay? These people are not scoffers at religion. These people are professing Christians. They profess that they know God but their behavior is a contradiction of their profession. It says, "they deny him by their works, they are abominable," and this speaks of idolatry, they are "disobedient," unyielding to his will, "and unto every good work reprobate," that is, they disapprove and reject that which is good.

So we as Christians must be aware that just because we profess faith in Christ doesn't necessarily mean that we're saved, and just because someone else professes faith in Christ doesn't necessarily mean that they are saved. The real determining factor as to whether or not someone is saved is not what they claim but rather it is the demonstrated reality of obedience to Jesus Christ in their life that determines whether or not they are a child of God or a child of disobedience.

Now, this condition of self-deception and deceiving others is not uncommon. We're not talking about some strange and unusual case. There are multitudes that are in this condition of professing to know God but denying him by their works. When we read, for example, in Matthew 7 where Jesus is speaking of those who profess and claim to follow him, turn with me to that passage, Matthew 7:21. It says here in Matthew 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord," they profess that they know God, "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Those are the ones that are going to enter the kingdom of heaven, those who did the will of the Father.

Now notice the first word in verse 22, it says, "Many." I want to pause there for a moment. Many people are in the condition that Jesus is about to describe, possibly even you, possibly even me. When we read these passages, we don't need to think of them as being somebody somewhere out there. It is important for us to take these passages to ourselves and examine them ourselves, ourselves in light of them. He says, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out demons? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Now there are two things that mark these people. Mark 1 is that they say, "Lord, Lord." They acknowledge Christ as Lord. They prophesy in his name. They cast out demons. They do wonderful works in his name. These are people who profess to know God and who profess to serve God. That's the first mark that characterizes them but the second mark that characterizes them is that when Jesus speaks to them, he doesn't contradict their claims that they just made but he says, "You are characterized as," what? "Workers of iniquity." He says, "depart from me, ye," what? "You workers of iniquity." You see, these

are people who thought that they could have both God and sin at the same time; that they could live in an habitual practice of following a course of iniquity and yet at the same time serve and follow God.

We read recently in the newspaper about a "minister" who was a practicing homosexual in private and a minister in public and he was characterized by homosexuality for years and years and years and years and he finally died of AIDS, and yet all this time he was doing, what? Prophesying in the name of Christ. Doing wonderful works in the name. Everybody said how wonderful he was and yet he lived in this unrepentant course of conduct. Now, here is an example of a person who would fall into such a category.

Now notice verse 17 through 20. Jesus says, "every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." And I might add, wherefore by our fruits we shall know ourselves. Now the principle is this: those who are characterized by sinful behavior, now I'm choosing my words carefully, those who are characterized by sinful behavior have no grounds to believe that they are saved regardless of what they profess. That is the teaching of our passage in Ephesians 5.

Now let's turn back there for a moment and see how Paul deals with his exhortation to the Ephesians. In Ephesians 5 he says in verse 6, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things," that is, because of this habitual practice of being a covetous man or an idolater or a whoremonger or an unclean person, all of which terms we have defined in our previous expositions, because of these things, "cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Now notice what he says in verse 7. This is fascinating. He says,

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

Now you see, he said in verse 5 and verse 6 in order to get to the exhortation in verse 7, Paul clearly understood that the Ephesians were not in this category of persons who professed faith and yet lived in an unrighteous fashion. He told them, however, to beware lest they fall into that category because to fall into that category would expose them to the wrath of God, would expose them to expulsion from the kingdom of God, and would expose them to be false professors of faith in Jesus Christ. You see, he is saying to these Ephesians there is a real danger. He is warning them of a real danger and the danger is that if they partake in their sin and in their self-deception of these unsaved people, that they will also partake in their exclusion from the kingdom of God and become the objects of the wrath of God. So we cannot say, "Well, I'm saved by grace and Christ has paid the penalty for all of my sins, and therefore I can live anyway I please because justification is not on the basis of my performance, it's based upon the performance of Christ and that performance is perfect, and therefore I have nothing to fear."

Now, in order to clarify these matters further, I want to consider, first of all, the basis of salvation and then, secondly, the transforming nature of salvation. First of all then, the basis of salvation. Now many people are confused at this point and they say, "Well, isn't salvation from sin on the basis of faith apart from works?" And the answer to that question is, yes, it is. By all means.

Let's look at a couple of passages to confirm that. We can just turn back to the book of Galatians in chapter 2 and in verse 16. Paul says here very clearly, he says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." And so Paul is very clear on this point, that our acceptance with God has nothing whatever to do with our performance and with our obedience to God's law. Nothing whatsoever. The same principle is echoed in our own book, Ephesians 2 and verses 8 and 9 where he says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." So once again, he says that our works, our performance are entirely ruled out as the basis of salvation but rather it is by grace through faith. It has nothing to do with our performance, rather it is a gift of God. And in another passage is Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." So in three passages and we could adduce several more but for lack of time we won't.

Romans 3:19-28 is very clear on this matter. Paul specifically and carefully rules out any type of our behavior as being a grounds of our justification and acceptance with God. In each passage works, performance, behavior and law-keeping are all ruled out as the basis of acceptance, approval and justification before God. Well, then the question naturally arises then, "Why am I in danger of the wrath of God and in danger of exclusion from the kingdom of God if my behavior is wrong? Aren't you, in fact, preaching justification by performance? That I must live in a certain fashion if I am to be saved?" Well, such questions arise from a confusion between two things: a confusion between the basis of salvation which is faith alone entirely apart from works and performance, and the transforming nature of salvation which issues forth in a changed life.

So having considered the basis of salvation is free grace entirely apart from works, in the second place, we want to consider together the transforming nature of salvation because salvation is not merely a legal transaction, it also has a profound impact upon the Christian's behavior. It provides for him not only deliverance from the penalty of sin but transformation of his nature with reference to sin.

Now, let's look at these particular sins that we have been speaking of in the book of 1 Corinthians 6. Turn there, please. 1 Corinthians 6. In 1 Corinthians 6:9 he says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Now what is he talking about when he's speaking of the unrighteous? Well, he explains. Notice his next three words, "be not deceived." Now why does he say that? I'll tell you why, because there is a tremendous danger of being deceived in this matter and so he warns them, "Don't be

deceived." He says, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Now, notice he's using terms of characterization. He's characterizing these people by these names. Now you can call me a preacher. It would be fair to make that characterization of me because I do that over and over and over again, but if John preached one time and then I called him a preacher, that would be inappropriate. He preached but he's not a preacher. And so look at these terms, he's not saying someone who committed fornication one time or idolatry one time or two times, he's using terms of characterization and this is what these people...he says if they are these things, they will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now notice verse 11. He says, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And what he's saying is that these Corinthians used to be these things but he says they're different now. They are now no longer what they were and they cannot be characterized by these descriptions, and what he is saying here is that their justification can be proved by their transformation. The two always go together. Notice they were washed, that is cleansed from their sins, sanctified, delivered from their sins, and justified, declared to be righteous in the eyes of God in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. And justification is never found separate from sanctification and if a man has been justified in the eyes of God on the basis of faith and faith alone, then what will happen is he will be able to say, "I was that, but I am now no longer that. I cannot be characterized by those titles any longer."

Now salvation is by free grace but what does that free grace teach us? Turn to Titus 2. In the book of Titus 2:11 it says this, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us." Now this grace, this free grace that saves us, has something to teach us and it teaches us that we can go on in sin because, after all, we're saved on the basis of grace. Now that's not what it says, it says, "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Why does the grace of God teach us to deny ungodliness and live soberly and righteously and graciously? The reason why is because the grace that saves us conveys to us the benefits of Christ's atonement and Christ had a very clear-cut purpose in his saving work and that purpose is told to us in verse 14, speaking of Christ, "Who gave himself for us." Why? In order "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Now, Christ purchased a particular type of salvation. He had an intent when he accomplished that salvation and that intent was to redeem us from iniquity, remove from us the penalty of sin, but also to purify to himself a people who were zealous of good works. Now when Christ applies his atonement, he doesn't apply the first half without applying the second half, and no one has any reason to believe he's been redeemed from all iniquity if he is not also a holy person who is zealous of good works because the two-

pronged intent of the death of Christ and his atonement which he purchased is always applied in its entirety to the redeemed sinner and so indulgence in iniquity is contrary to the whole saving purpose of Christ and to the whole saving effect of Christ's atonement that he accomplishes in people's lives.

Now turn over, please, to the book of 1 John and we'll conclude with this passage. 1 John 3. Once again, we see the nature and effect of Christ's saving work. It says in verse 4 of 1 John 3, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he," that is, Jesus, "was manifested to take away our sins," purpose 1, and then declaration, "and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him," that is, has a saving relationship with him, "sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you." Do you see it there again, how he keeps bringing up this idea of deception over and over and over again? Don't be deceived. Don't be deceived. Don't be deceived. He says, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous." How do I know if I'm righteous in the eyes of God? Because I do righteousness. And if I do not do righteousness, I have no grounds to believe that I am righteous.

Now, once again, he's speaking here of characterizations. These are all present tense verbs, "Whosoever sinneth," that is, whosoever goes on sinning as a habit of life it says in verse 6, "abideth in him not. Whosoever goes on sinning has not seen him, neither known him." It says, verse 8, "He that committeth sin," he who is characterized by the commission of sin, once again, present tense verb, "is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And if the Son of God has done anything in my life, one of the things he's done is destroy the works of the devil, and what is the work of the devil? It's to produce in me an ongoing life of commission of sin and so our paternity is determined by our behavior.

Now verse 9 says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed," that is, God's seed, "remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." A Christian cannot go on in a life of habitual sin. Why? Because it is utterly contrary to his nature. He cannot sin because he is born of God.

Verse 10 is the capstone verse, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." Now that's pretty straightforward.

To be a partaker in fornication and uncleanness and covetousness or idolatry as a habit of life is to demonstrate that we have never been saved by faith in the first place because the faith that saves also transforms. It transforms the attitude. It transforms the character. It transforms the nature. It transforms the behavior. It transforms the paternity. And it was the intent of Christ's saving purpose to redeem a people who were purified and zealous of good works and that is the never-failing result of those who are redeemed by him. So I do not avoid such sins in order to be saved, I will certainly avoid such sins if I am saved because God's seed remains in me and I cannot go on in that pattern of behavior. Now

that's a great comfort to the Christian. Do you know what that means? That means that your life if you are saved, will not be characterized by ongoing sin, by perpetual, habitual characteristic sin.

Now turn back to Ephesians 5 and we'll draw this matter to a conclusion. Ephesians 5. He says verse 7, "Be not ye therefore partakers with them." He says, "Don't think for a minute that you can go and engage in those sins too." Verse 8, he says,

8 For ye were sometimes darkness,

You see, that's how he's describing people who engage in fornication and uncleanness and covetousness and idolatry, they're still in darkness. He said, "You were once like that," he says, "but now something's happened to you.

but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: 9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

Once again, a tree is known by, what? It's fruits, and if there is goodness and righteousness and truth in my life, then I have some reason to believe I am a child of light. God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

So we may and we must, we may and we must reason backwards from the effect to the cause and in increasing sanctification and holiness of life, a departure from sin, an engagement in goodness and righteousness and truth, are all the fruit and effect of a finished justification. You see, Christ has made unto us, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:30, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. We don't have the righteousness of Christ and the redemption of Christ without also having the sanctification of Christ.

You know, of course, from time to time we'll stumble into the mud but it's the nature of a horse that he's never very happy there and he climbs out as soon as he can, whereas when a pig stumbles into the mud, he's delighted to be there and has no intention of getting out. And so it is with the Christian. You look at someone like King David and others, Samson, who fall into the mud, and some more notoriously than others, and yet when God characterized David's life, what did he say? "Here's a man after my own heart." A guy who committed murder and adultery and lying and all sorts of things? But was he characterized by them? Not at all and a lot of people look at these men of God, Abraham lied and Moses, he messed up many a time, you look at the lives of these people and you say, "Okay, they fell into sin, therefore it's okay for me to fall into sin." Well, that's not true. If a person tries to justify their ongoing continuance on sin on the basis of the great people of God who have fallen into sin, then they are very foolish because if they are going to claim that they're saved like those people, not only does their sin need to be as notorious as their sin was but their repentance needs to be as notorious as well, you see, and if my life is like David's in the beginning and my life is like David's in the end, then I may comfort myself if my life is like David's in the middle.

So what Paul is saying here is that salvation is by grace and by faith alone, but the salvation that saves so transforms a man that he cannot and will not go on in a life of habitual sin, and while you can take a snapshot here and a snapshot there and it looks pretty bad, when you look at the moving picture of their life over time, what is it? Goodness, righteousness and truth. That's the nature of those who are children of light.

Well, may God help us to examine ourselves and take seriously this warning regarding self-deception. Now I don't think of any of you as being deceived and please don't take this as a personal statement regarding any particular individual, but these are general exhortations Paul gave to the church and these are general exhortations we must give to our church and to ourselves, and I must take these things seriously and examine myself and see whether I be in the faith. So let us not engage in good works as a means of justification, but let us pursue good works as the outworking of that justification that God has accomplished in our life and let us never believe that we are justified if those good works are not the habit and characteristic of our lives.

Shall we pray together?

Father, thank you for a Savior who saves us from our sins, from their penalty and from their practice and from their power. And Father, thank you that the grace of God teaches us not to presume upon it but to forsake ungodliness and to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present age. And thank you, Father, that when Christ saves, it is the intent of his salvation to deliver him from his sins. So Father, we pray that if we are righteous, that it will be manifested by us doing righteousness. Father, may we never trust in our righteousness and grow proud or arrogant because of them, but realize they are but the fruit of the work of another, and even in the very doing of them, it is God who is working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. So Father, we look upon our obedience as just another manifestation of your grace and of what you have done for us and in us and we give you the glory and the praise for those victories over sin and that conquering of lust and of wickedness that arises in our hearts. Father, we ask that that victory might be increasing, that it might be ongoing. And O Father, when we stumble into sin and fall into it grievously, O Father, may you be pleased to have mercy on us and to restore to us the joy of our salvation. Give us grace then, Father, to walk with you and guard us against self-deception. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Shall we turn in our hymnals, please, to hymn #472. Hymn 472 is a prayer to God that God would preserve us from sin. We recognize that the battle is the Lord's and he must grant us victory or else we shall certainly fail, but let us cry out to him as he has prescribed for us to do and ask him to deliver us from our remaining sin. Hymn #472.