

February 21, 2010 AM

WE CAN BE IMITATORS OF GOD

“Anchors Of Our Faith”

Ephesians 5:1-20

“Be imitators of God therefore as dearly loved children and live a life of love...understand what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:1; 17)

The changed life we talked about last week makes it possible for us to imitate God. What does it mean, “Be imitators of God?” It means I live so much “the Christ life” He is seen clearly in me. God gives us insight into the nature of God and says we ought to have the same nature.

I. God is love: Live a life of love.

“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.” (Ephesians 5:1-2)

Is it hard? It is for me. The more I am passionate about Jesus the more passionate I will be for people.

A. The foundation for my love: Jesus’ love for me!

“...as dearly loved children...”

1. My love for anyone is built upon knowing that God loves me.
2. God loves me and I matter, no matter what.
3. People who can’t love are usually people who do not feel love.

B. The commitment to love.

1. God does not want us to simply be receivers of love, but givers also.
2. It has to be an act of my will to choose to love.
3. Love is not a feeling; it’s an action and an attitude.

C. The example of love.

1. Jesus showed us how to love.
2. Read the gospel and see how Jesus loved.

II. God is holy: Live a life of holiness.

“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.” (Eph. 5:3-7)

A. Be holy in the way you act.

1. The word holy means separate.
2. God’s children are to be different.
3. He specifically gives us three things that will ruin our life, our witness and our testimony.
 - Sexual immorality.
 - Impure actions and motives.
 - Greed.

***NOTE** How did greed get on the list of things to avoid if we are going to be like God? Isn’t that the American way? Because greed is the exact opposite of faith. Greed says I have to get more and more to be happy and secure. I have to trust things I have, rather than having faith, trusting God will provide for my life. Greed is saying, “I’m going to meet the needs of my life....I have to meet my needs.” Faith is saying, “God is the only one who can meet the needs of my life.”

4. As Christians we have the capacity to be set aside for God.

B. Be holy in the way you speak.

1. No obscenity: Literally filthiness. This is the idea of the words coming out of dirty hearts.
2. No foolish talk. This is idle talk that's hurtful and harmful and of no value.
3. No course jesting: This has to do with telling dirty jokes.

"There are two signs of character in a person's life: What makes a person laugh and what makes a person cry." ... Warren Wiersbe

You may not have a choice in hearing a dirty joke, but you do have a choice in how you respond. Our mouth is made to give praise and thanks to God.

"...but rather giving of thanks..."

When I commit to using my mouth as an instrument of praise, God will return it.

Two enemies to Holy living:

❖ Listening to empty words.

"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." (Eph. 5:6)

Empty words are words without truth, "designed to deceive." For example, the Gnostics taught it does not matter what you do with your body, it only matters what you know. Empty words are designed to approve your sin.

To listen means you make a choice to hear, receive it and make a place for it in your mind.

❖ Partnership with evil people.

"Therefore do not be partakers with them." (Eph. 5:7)

Don't be part of the heathen false gods at the celebration that the culture celebrates. You can know lost people but don't "run with them." Don't do what they do. Refuse to

socialize with people who profess Christ, yet live ungodly lives. We are to treat them as an unbeliever.

“But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone who is called a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or idolators, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, do not even eat with such a person.” (1 Cor. 5:11)

Why?

- ❖ Because a professed believer has more influence on your life as a believer than an unbeliever. They justify their sin and you will start to justify yours.
- ❖ Secondly, because when you go along with them, it sends the wrong message about your testimony.
- ❖ Finally, if you don't expect it, you will be used of God as a voice of conviction. You then can involve them in the process of church discipline.

III. God is light: Reflect God's glory.

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light⁹ (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.” (Eph. 5:8-13)

A. They pursue godly character. (vs. 8-9)

B. They invest their life in what pleases God.

1. They want the smile of God upon their life.
2. They avoid evil actions in their life.
3. They expose evil actions in others lives.

“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.’” (Eph. 5:12-14)

***NOTE** What does it mean “expose evil?”

- We don't do it by pointing out darkness in a dark world. We don't make the world light by describing the darkness; it is dark but just saying it is dark doesn't change it.
- We don't expose darkness by hiding our light from a dark world. We can't just come into the church with floodlights and close the door.
- We do it by shining out our light. By going into the dark world and reflecting the glory of the Lord Jesus. People love darkness so evil won't be seen. They may not like your light, but “shine anyway!” A little light can make a major different.

C. They live wisely.

They live their life knowing that the steps of a godly man are ordered of the Lord. We consider where each step will take us. Wisdom is the practical skill of putting God's principles at work in my everyday life. I find God's precepts and principles in God's Word. **“Your word is a lamp unto my feet; a light to my path.” (Ps. 119)** “Look for opportunities God gives you!”

D. They understand God's will for their life.

“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.” (Eph. 5:15-17)

1. What God's will is not:

- It's not a feeling: Mystical approach. **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9)**

Feelings are very unreliable.

- It's not a formula: Mechanical approach.
 - That doesn't work.
 - Formulas often contradict.
 - There is no room for mistakes.

- God's will is a friendship.

“God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:9, LB)

Not rules but a relationship.

Not a life map, but a lifestyle.

Not an agenda, but an attitude.

2. God's will begins by being filled with the spirit.

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit...” (Eph. 5:18)

Let the Holy Spirit influence the way you act, walk and talk; God working in me. The Holy Spirit is not a power, but a person.

“...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.” (Eph. 5:19-21)

How do I know I am filled with the Holy Spirit?

- I will speak the things of God; how I talk to others.
- I will praise God in my heart; how I talk to myself.
- I will have a heart of thankfulness and gratitude to God; how I talk to God.