

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Read Ephesians 5:1-11

Introduction

When children are little, they begin to mimic their parents. Little toddlers will put on their father's shoes and make big pretence of taking big steps in them. They play house, play store, play church, play school, play war, and in so doing they begin to learn -- by imitation.

This passage is a continuation of the previous lesson's discussion of the specific behaviours that Christians are to "put on" like clean clothing, and ungodly behaviours which need to be "taken off." Here, Paul concludes the thought from Ephesians 4, where he described how Christians should relate to one another.

Imitators of God

"Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children. 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." (vv1-2)

What a wonderful picture of learned godliness! The Greek word for imitator refers to one who uses someone as a model, imitates, emulates, follows. This is a common theme in the New Testament.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...." (Philippians 2:5)

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." (1 Peter 2:21)

"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)

The idea is simple – that we are to make God our example and model. We can't content ourselves comparing ourselves among men. We must heed the idea of 1 Peter 1:15-16: *"as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."* It does not say, "Think about God" or "Admire God" or "Adore God," though those are all important Christian duties. This is a call to practical action, going beyond in our inner life with God.

It is important to see that God is far more than our example. Many errors come into the church when Jesus is presented only as an example of behaviour. We are not saved by the example of Jesus, but once saved, His example is meaningful to us. God is more than our example, but He is also our example.

Dear Children:

Paul's picture in Ephesians is of little children imitating their father. And not just children, but "beloved children" (NRSV, ESV), "dearly loved children" (NIV), "dear children" (KJV). As we follow the Father, we will learn to love as He loves, and begin to "...walk in love, as Christ also has loved us...." Imitation is another way to look at the learning posture of discipleship -- "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). We will learn to live the kind of life Christ lived when He ministered to people and ultimately gave Him up as a "sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." When we live lives of love, our lives are like the temple worship of sweet-smelling incense in God's presence (Philippians 4:18).

A Contrast to Walking in Love: Conducts Not Fitting for the Christian.

“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 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. 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 be partakers with them.” (vv3-7)

Reading verses 3-5 from the Message Translation, the words of Paul might just hit home better for those desiring simpler read of these verses:

“Don’t allow love to turn into lust, setting off a downhill slide into sexual promiscuity, filthy practices, or bullying greed. Though some tongues just love the taste of gossip, those who follow Jesus have better uses for language than that. Don’t talk dirty or silly. That kind of talk doesn’t fit our style. Thanksgiving is our dialect. You can be sure that using people or religion or things just for what you can get out of them—the usual variations on idolatry—will get you nowhere, and certainly nowhere near the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of God.” (vv3-5 MSG)

Paul groups together these ideas of sexual sin and dishonesty (or bullying greed, covetousness), indicating that none of these are fitting for saints and should not even be named among God’s people.

Paul used a comprehensive list of sexual sins:

- Fornication (porneia), a broad word describing sexual sin which includes unlawful sexual intercourse, prostitution, unchastity, and fornication.
- Uncleanness, another broad word for “dirty” moral behaviour, especially in a sexual sense.
- Filthiness, which has much the same idea as uncleanness.
- Coarse jesting, which has the idea of inappropriate, impure sexual humour.

We must notice the theme of the moral appeal. It isn’t **“avoid these things so that you can be a saint.”** Rather, it is **“you are a saint; now live in a manner fitting for a saint.”** The constant moral appeal of the New Testament is simply this: **be who you are in Jesus.**

Paul also included covetousness and foolish talking in this list because of their close association with sexual sin. The desire to have something that doesn’t belong to us, and foolish speaking have both led many people into sexual sin. Yet covetousness and foolish talking also have relevance beyond their relation to sexual sin.

These Acts Robs Us of Our Kingdom Inheritance

This is a serious warning that every Christian should bear in mind – *“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.”*

We see a similar solemn warning in 1 Corinthians 6:

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revellers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

The people mentioned in Ephesians 5:3 have no inheritance in God's kingdom. If God's kingdom is alive in them, a transformation has occurred so that they cannot rest in the habitual practice of these things. To keep practicing these things reveal that the necessary saving transformation has not taken place in them.

Deception

Paul especially warned about deception where some may say, it doesn't matter how you live your life so far as you have been saved once or you have responded to an altar call of salvation one time or the other in your life or you can always repent afterwards i.e., after every intentional sinful acts as mentioned in Ephesians 5:3.

In verse 7, he says: *“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 be partakers with them.”*

We cannot allow empty words to excuse or minimize the judgment due to the practice of these sins. It is certain that because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them.

Walk in the Light

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” (vv8-11)

As Paul condemned those who practiced fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness as the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 5:6), he also recognized that this was the exact darkness Christians had emerged from. But now, having been enlightened, we are to walk as children of the light.

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth: In contrast to the walk-in darkness and wrath is the fruit of the Spirit, more fully described in Galatians 5:22-23 (*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*), goodness, righteousness, and truth should mark us because we have the Holy Spirit in our life.

How can the fruit highlighted in Ephesians 5:3 and the fruit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 flow from the same person? Our lives should exhibit who we are now in Christ Jesus which is goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Instead of associating with ungodliness, we expose the unfruitful works of darkness. However, we do not do this for the purpose of merely talking about them (which is shameful), but for the purpose of educating ourselves enough to avoid them and correcting those who should know better.

