

Imitators of Jesus

Յիսուսի Նմանիլ

Ephesians 5:1-21

Last week we discussed.

1. Falsehood
2. Anger
3. Stealing
4. Corrupting Talk
5. Grieving the Holy Spirit
6. Forgiving each other

Paul moves forward saying: (remember there were no chapter numbers in the original text)

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Eph 5:1,2 ESV)

“To be imitators of God.” Paul is saying all these (chapt. 4,5,6) are not possible if we don't imitate God.

Q. How can you imitate someone if you don't know that “person”?

- Just start from the book of Genesis. God created us **in His image**. The original plan was that we should reflect God's character in our daily life.
- We rebelled against God, and Jesus came to bring reconciliation with God.
- Jesus is the way to know God and we imitate His character in our lives.

Then Paul gives more practical **pictures** how we can imitate God:

“And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us...” (5:2)

How can I walk in love if I have not tasted (experiences) the love of Jesus?

The key therefore is to know God, to know Jesus and to be **IN Jesus.** **By, and in, and with His Grace.**

Our character should identify with Jesus.

It will be useful to answer these three questions:

1. Who are you? (Your identity)
2. Why are you here? (Purpose)
3. Where are you going? (Christian hope)

Paul did not start this letter by asking the early church to behave and walk in the steps of Jesus (worthy of their calling). NO. He started in chapters 1,2,3 explaining who we are without God. The emphasis is To BE in JESUS: We are the adopted children of God. First, to BE, then to DO.

“If you want to keep the 10 commandments or the teachings of Jesus, you don't try to keep them; you try to become the kind of person who will keep them out of whom they pour naturally.” Dallas Willard (Interview with him about Divine Conspiracy)

- I am a piano player. I can watch thousands of hours of lessons about playing the piano, or listen to great piano performers. None will help me to become a piano player. Make sure you know who God is, who Jesus is in your life. You may attend the church service, you may listen to praise band, you may sing in the choir, but none will replace knowing God personally, and having an intimate relationship with Him.

Then Paul gives further commands about walking in a way worthy of our calling:

-Immoral impurities:

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. (3-4)

Two sins:

1. Sexual immorality 2. Covetousness. (both are in the 10 Commandments #7 and #10)

Those two sins have something in common: Greed.

-Sexual immorality: “The Greek words for sexual immorality (*porneia*) and impurity (*akatharsia*) together cover every kind of sexual sin -- in other words, all sexual intercourse outside its God-ordained context of a loving marriage.”¹

-Covetousness: not to be satisfied what you have, always seeking more. Your neighbor has a better car; your eyes are always seeking more and more and more... The bottom line is **Greed**. Sex is a gift given by God; yet using that gift in the wrong context becomes an obstacle not worthy of our calling.

-Words are important: what do we say and not to say to each other. Jokes are great, and we need humor to laugh. Watch out what kind of jokes one is passing around!

-Be Thankful

“but instead let there be thanksgiving.”

A grateful heart is like medicine. Later Paul will bring this topic as well. Greed will not allow us to be thankful.

Many of you told me that the statement from last week's sermon was so true. We are thankful one day, and next day we are greedy and not thankful anymore. (buying things we don't need)

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. 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 become partners with them; (5-7)

Paul repeats those same sins that make us imitators not of God, but of the world.

Next:

-Light and Darkness.

for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (8-14)

Why do criminals mostly commit their crimes in the dark?

People like to hide things. We think we can hide sin. To be imitators of God or Jesus means to walk in light.

The light will expose who we are. There is no way we can learn to walk as children of light when we hide things.

The day an alcoholic person says, "I need help", a big step in healing starts in that person's life.

Walk as children of light; walk as Christ would walk.

Watch out where you expose them. Make sure in a place you trust. First open yourself to God, then find a trustworthy person to share, and ask for help.

Walk in a way that pleases God.

My teacher Ken Boa says: We cannot impress God; but we can please God. We cannot take credits, we are not light, God is. So let us be light, reflecting Jesus, imitating God, spreading His Love and Care.

-Filled with the Spirit

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, (17,18)

- Wise people know how to use their time carefully. Every minute is a gift from God. Let us use them carefully. Live a life as if it is the last day of your life.

- Wise people seek God's will in everything. He knows better.

- Wise people know where to walk, not drunk... no control over their walk...

(How many people die in Fresno because of drunk drivers?)

Let me open a parenthesis here: Paul is criticizing especially the Gentile society who used excessive amounts of alcohol to be in ecstasy with a god, or goddess; that led them to all kind of immoral behaviors.

-Alcoholic beverages are also called Spirits in Arabic are called "spiritual drinks." Or in Armenian Ոգեւից ըմպելի

Do you see how many times Paul uses the metaphor "**to walk**": walk in love, walk as children of light, be careful how you walk...

We are called to have different lifestyle. A different walk.

The triune God is at work.

We should be imitating God the Father,

Walking in love like Jesus,

and now we should **be filled with the Spirit.**

Paul gives a better way to walk. If you want to be in spiritual ecstasy, allow the Holy Spirit to fill you.

-When we have faith in Jesus, we also receive the Spirit of God. His presence is in us always. Yet what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

When we are filled with Spirit it means we are aware that the Spirit of God is in us.

"Come, Holy Spirit, and fill me," which means "Help me to see you, help me to experience your presence in me."

How?

We need to be open to receive. "Blessed are the poor in Spirit." It is not our own power that we can bring changes in our character; just allow the Spirit of the Lord to lead you ... means be open. You cannot pour water in a closed jar.

Then Paul gives four practical areas where we can experience the Spirit: (19-20)

1. Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

There are many ways we can open ourselves so the Spirit of the Lord comes in. Paul addresses here the corporate worship with psalms, hymns and praise songs. Did you see it is not private worship. (You can have that as well, but not in this context).

Paul commands to sing to one another, to sing together. This is corporate worship. How much we missed singing together in the months of isolation (Covid days). The Spirit of the Lord comes over us, as a group of worshipers. We are not worshiping each other; we are worshiping God together. While I am singing, I am also hearing next to me the person singing with me. We listen to one another and pour our souls to the Lord.

2. Singing and making melody to the LORD with your HEART.

Singing with our heart, NOT in our heart. The emphasis is on the LORD. Some of us are musically talented, some of us are not. That is fine as long as you are opening your heart, your soul, your mind, yourself to the Lord and worshiping. This is another way of allowing the Spirit to come to you and fill you with His presence.

3. Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

A heart of gratitude is a great attitude to be filled with the Spirit.

- Sevan and I visited Chris Krikorian last Sunday. She has many medical issues. Yet, her heart was full of gratitude. left that place filled with God's Spirit.

We need to be careful how to interpret being thankful for everything. We are not thankful for evil and its vicious work in the world. Yet, when difficult circumstances come to our lives, we learn to surrender to God's will and wisdom and learn to be grateful for who God is in those moments.

I hate war. I have been so many days in war in the Middle East. I learned to thank God and be in peace during the war. I am not thankful that we have a war.

4. Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The key here is to be submissive to Christ. Without being under Christ we cannot be submissive to each other.

The tough thing to do is to submit to someone.

"Hello, my sister and brother, I care for you. I am willing to serve you."

- When you submit to someone, you are willingly saying their needs come first.

- How important is this in the marriage relationship. We will discuss coming weeks.

- Not only in marriage, in our church family, in our relationships, when we consider your need more important.

- Dallas Willard, a theologian and professor and writer. One day one of his students challenged him in a bad and offensive way. At that moment, Dallas paused and said, "I think that is a good place to end our class today." Later, someone asked him why he didn't correct this student, as he easily could have. Dallas said, "I am practicing the discipline of not having the last word."²

Oh I wish I can have that discipline to swallow my pride and learn to submit in love. I am not saying if someone is abusing you, you need to submit. No, by all means. We need to learn to stop the evil. But most of our disagreements are not necessarily abusive. Do you want to have a relationship in the family, you ask God to have Christ's mindset who did not retaliate. He was meek and gentle.

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, then you allow to be filled with the Spirit.

Application

Walk in love, be imitators of Jesus, walk in light, spread His light, walk as wise people filled with his Spirit.

Prayer:

May the Father grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19)

1. John R.W. Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today, The Message of Ephesians*, P 146

2. Dallas Willard, *Living in Christ's Presence: Final Words on Heaven and the Kingdom of God* p41-42.

"Grace is God acting in our lives to enable us to do what we can't do on our own of course; it's unmerited favor but what form does it take? the form it takes is presence and the sign of that has always the outcome of his presence leads us far beyond anything we could accomplish on our own, that isn't just in the domain of miracles, but also in the domain of character." Dallas Willard (Interview with him about Divine Conspiracy)