

Be Imitators of God

By Pastor Nick Bibile

Ephesians 5:1 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.

If we imitate the world we become worldly but if we imitate God we become godly. If we don't imitate God then we become ungodly. Yes, even all the good moral values count nothing if you don't truly imitate God.

Remember you're before Christ days, when you were in the world how you wanted to imitate the world? You adored and imitated the ungodly stars of this world. You were ruled by your flesh and desired after the passions of this world.

Sin promised freedom, and brought us bondage; grace now binds us, and ensures us liberty. When you became a Christian you were brought from that darkness to the light of Christ, now Christ becomes your model, he is your star as he is the captain of your salvation, now you imitate God as God is the source of salvation. It was Christ that died for your sins and not the stars of this world; it was God who gave you a new life and not this world.

Imitating is to follow the example of God. Walking in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God. This is how God showed his kindness to vile sinners like us. This is how God showed his mercy and forgiveness to rotten wicked sinners like us. In the same way we need to follow the example of God.

Luke 6: 27 But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.

Luke 6:36 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Col 3:13 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Apostle Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ."

We are made in the image of God and we should resemble that image to a dark world.

3 John 1:11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

The dying words of our Lord ought to ring in our ears. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Did he not set us an example of bearing and forbearing? Who, when he was reviled time and again. But for every curse he gave a blessing. Pride goes not before salvation, but before destruction; you ought also to walk in all the lowliness and in all the tenderness of Christ.

God is love if you wish to see true love, look at Christ. He loves the Father. He loves the little children, and suffers them to come to him. He loves the widow, the fatherless, the poor; he loves the sinners who draw to him. Do you love people or do you love those who love you? Do you live within yourself? Are you greedy, covetous and selfish, don't care for the others Then you will go to hell. In hell you will find company of all the unloving, greedy, covetous and selfish. Only he that loves can live in heaven, for heaven is love: and you cannot go to heaven unless you have learned to love.

First he needs to be in Christ. You imitate someone that is close to your heart. If you love your parents you would imitate them as you are close to them. We imitate God as we are his children.

1Jo 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:

Behold, what manner of love is this, that Christ was accused and charged and we *are set free*, that the curse should be laid on His head and the crown set on ours.

1 John 2: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

There has to be a separation from the things you love and adore in this world and the passions and the desires of this world have to be crucified.

Joh 12:46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

Remember in the wilderness, the Israelites were lusting after food of Egypt but their souls were getting lean. We must refuse the cravings of the world in order our souls will prosper. Our souls should rest in Christ instead of the vanity, the ambitions and the ungodliness of this world.

If you are not in Christ then you are out of Christ and abiding under the wrath of God, there is no way you can imitate God.

Humility.

There is no way we can imitate God in humility as God does not have humility, he is above all his creatures his throne is set in the highest heavens. But we learn humility in Christ as he came from the highest of heaven to the lowest, his position was radically changed from the highest being God and to the lowest of a servant. Christ set us an example to follow. If we follow his example we become godly.

Christian growth is upwards and downwards. Grow upwardly in heavenly mind ness and contempt of this world and grows downwardly in humility. (Thomas Boston)

In John chapter 13 we see Christ washing the feet of his disciples. This was a remarkable action as he took the job of a lowest servant. Also we see a symbolic meaning of spiritual washing and cleansing the souls of his disciples from their guilt and spiritual pollution. When Peter said to Christ, "You shall never wash my feet." But Christ answered him, "If I wash you not, you have no part with me."

No part with Christ is to be part with the world and the devil, it is a curse.

Separation/Sanctification

Once a person is born again there is a separation unto God, God becomes his priority, we realize we don't live for ourselves anymore we live to please God. Our body does not belong to us anymore as Christ purchased us with his own blood so it belongs to God. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. (Rom 14:8)

Separation from the world means holiness toward God.

We have learned the doctrines of grace our heads are full of it. We understand the election of God. But do you know the aim of election?

Ephesians 1:4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love.

1 Pet 1:15-16 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

This is the object of redemption; this is the fruit of your calling; this is what comes out of justification; this is the evidence of adoption that we should be holy, even as Christ is holy. He has given his own Son to die for us, that we may die to sin; he has given him to live that we may live like him. Father desires to see Christ in us, that so Christ may be glorified in every one of us.

1Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Our head cannot be separated from our body, our head and the body works together. In the same way we have a union with Christ as he is the Head of the Church and we are the Body of the church. The Head is holy, so should be the body.

If you wish to see holiness, look at Christ. In him you see a perfect character, an all-round character. He is the perfect one; be ye like him in all holiness.

What is our most important thing in Christian life or our chief end? Our chief end is to glorify God. When we imitate God we glorify him.

Once we are in Christ and holy and separated unto him then we can admire God, instead of world admirers we become God admirers. We set God highest in our thoughts.

We see the love of Christ and we can walk in love, we can love God from our souls as our heart is set upon God. If our hearts are set upon treasures of this world that's where his love is, but our hearts are to set upon God as there is affection towards God.

We imitate God in obedience.

Remember the wise men that came to see the birth of Christ did not only bow their knee to him but also presented him with gold and myrrh. In the same way we must not only bow our knee to God but also bring presents of golden obedience. Remember Faith is always followed by good works. Whoever united in Christ bring forth the fruit of the gospel, obedience and holiness. The fruits of holiness will be found in his outward conversation for he has clean hands as well as a pure heart.

Actions speak louder than words. Many can talk very good but actions do not produce results. You are called the light of this world and the salt of this earth, the imitators of God. You are a witness of Christ to a dark world and the best witnessing is your Christ like behavior to the world as you imitate God. Your conduct is the living gospel. The masses of people are fed up with hypocrites as they say one thing and do another; they will be convicted of your godly conduct. Hypocrisy is like a leak in the ship that will not sail but will sink.

If we talk, we must walk, or it will, be mere talk. If we make the profession of abiding in Christ, we must prove it by our practice of walking with Christ. If we say that we are in Christ and abide in him, we must take care that our life and character are conformed to Christ, or else we shall be making an empty boast.

Obedience is trusting in God. Remember Job? His children, his wealth were all destroyed yet he had a mustard seed of faith where he trusted in God. His flesh was in agony but his soul was comforted. The grace of Christ is an ever flowing fountain and we see power in it as the apostle Paul said, "I will rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

How we need to take the example of our Lord Jesus, he is God in flesh but yet he was obedient to the Father, he did not come to do his will but the will of the Father. What about you, do you want to do what you wish to do? What you like to do? What you feel like doing? The will of God is in the Bible; follow his commandments, his ways not our ways. Jesus said, if you love me you keep the commandments.

Look at the nature, the majestic sun, the stars in the sky the moon and they service God in obedience day by day but we are God's children made in the very image of God for good works and how much more we should obey God. A pilot cannot take of the plane when ever he feels like it but he has to wait for the command, disobedience will kill not only himself but many others.

Look at Jesus; he began his ministry when he was thirty years. What did he do for thirty years? There was 30 years of seclusion. Yes, he could have started his ministry earlier but he was obedient to the Father, he developed discipline and after 30 years he came into public and soon after his baptism till he died for 3 years there was action in obedience. He did not rush into the ministry to make a name but learned obedience of being quiet. There is never an idle hour with Christ as he did so much in such a short time.

Oh! Wake up you lazy ones! Time is short; this life is only a dream. It's time to turn off your TV and start reading the word of God and look to Christ. The devil would love you to spend time enjoying your flesh; the devil will tempt you in every way to take the broad road that leads to destruction. Obedience is picking up the cross and following him. Obedience is not having a Bible in your home but reading and following what it says. Obedience is not only coming to Church on Sunday but doing what you heard on the sermon.

Self denial is saying I love not myself, but my Lord. I seek not myself, but Christ. Self-denials will sometimes be hard to flesh and blood but you can glorify God by denying yourself. When next time the devil tempts you to watch those Hollywood movies, soap operas, those sitcoms, seeking pleasures of this world denying yourself, this will glorify God, and then you are Christ like and imitating God.

Prayer.

"If any of you should ask me for an epitome of the Christian religion, I should say that it is in one word- Prayer. Live and die without prayer, and you will pray long enough when you get to hell." (C.H. Spurgeon)

Spurgeon was one of the greatest preachers yet; it was not preaching that made Spurgeon great. Mr. Spurgeon repeatedly acknowledged his success as the direct result of his congregation's faithful prayers. "It has often been remarked that the whole church helped produce Spurgeon." When visitors would come to Spurgeon's church he would take them to the basement prayer-room where people were always on their knees interceding. Then Spurgeon would declare, "Here is the powerhouse of this church."

"I always give all the glory to God, but I do not forget that He gave me the privilege of ministering from the first to a praying people. We had prayer

meetings that moved our very souls, each one appeared determined to storm the Celestial City by the might of intercession." Spurgeon regarded the prayer-meeting as the spiritual thermometer of a church. His church's Monday night prayer meeting had a worldwide testimony for many years. Every Monday night a large portion of Spurgeon's sanctuary was filled with earnest and fervent intercessors.

Throughout his entire ministry many hearers remarked that they were moved by his preaching, but yet still more affected by his praying. D. L. Moody after his first visit to England, being asked upon his return to America, "Did you hear Spurgeon preach?" He replied, "Yes, but better still I heard him pray."

"Shall I give you yet another reason why you should pray? I have preached my very heart out. I could not say any more than I have said. Will not your prayers accomplish that which my preaching fails to do? Is it not likely that the Church has been putting forth its preaching hand but not its praying hand? Oh dear friends! Let us agonize in prayer . . . "

Christ was perfect yet he could not live without prayer. Then how imperfect people like us live without it? He had no sin in him yet he prayed. He was perfect and holy and yet he prayed to the Father. When the night came, and others went to their beds, he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed. If Christ is in your heart how you should follow his example.

Why is it that Christ could not live without prayer? Because he was so close to the Father. If you live near to God you will speak to him often. How is your prayer life? Are you having a sweet communion with God? Are you living near to God or far away from God? If God is so precious to you in your mind, how is that your hearts are far away from God? Is it because you live close to your fleshly appetites?

Have Christ in your heart and prayer will follow. Prayer is the holy exercise of your heart.

He was called a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief but yet there was a great happiness inside of him as he said, I delight to do thy will, O my God. There is communion with God and there is sweet communion with God. The sweet communion with God is when you are alone pouring out your soul to God and your soul rejoicing in spiritual climax. He delighted in God. Many a sweet night he spent in those prayer-times of his in fellowship with the Father. Let us find

our pleasure, our treasure, our heaven, our all, in the Lord our God, even as our Lord Jesus did.

Let me close with this scripture.

Mal 1:6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear?"

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