

Being a Follower / Imitating Jesus Christ

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Ephesians 5:1-7

- 1 Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children:*
- 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 savor.*
- 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.*
- 5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*
- 6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*
- 7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.*

I know that there are all kinds of tragedy in our land, in our country, and very near us and even in our own area. There are a lot of people hurting. There are a lot of people going through difficult times. However, even though that is the case, it is great to be on our way to heaven. It is great to be saved. It is wonderful what the Lord is doing.

That is what we want to talk about tonight, the Lord being our helper, just for a few moments.

Paul is writing to the church of Ephesus. The church here at Ephesus, if we read the book of Acts we know that Paul established the church there. He did some great work there. There is a lot of conflict that went on there at Ephesus. As he is writing to the church at Ephesus, in chapter five, he is continuing on his words, his encouragement, and his exhortation and his instruction about being followers of Christ.

1 Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children:

The word “follower” may not mean necessarily what we think that it means. The word “follower” means “to imitate.” The word “imitate” means “to act like or be like someone else.” The word “be;” he says “be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.”

Paul is saying something here that I think sometimes we don’t give a lot of consideration to. The word “be” means “to become.” It means to become an imitator of Almighty God. You might say “He’s God. He’s a spirit. He’s in heaven and we are just people here.” That is all very true but it is great to know that we can be imitators. In other words, we can be like the God of heaven. We can be.

The Bible says here “as dear children.” I was thinking as I was studying today, back years ago when the kids were home, I can remember when I would do something, and then they would do what I did whether it was good or bad. Whatever I did the kids would want to be like their parents. You can look at the kids that we have and do you know what they want to do? The little girl wants to be like mom and the little boys want to be like dad. They want to do the things that their parents do.

We today, as Christians, we should want to be like Jesus Christ. We should want to be like Him. There is a way that we can do that. As we look at what he says here, the word “follower” and “become a follower;” we have been studying a lot about commitment. Well, it means that. When we become a Christian, we become committed unto the God of heaven. Not only that but it brings out the idea of attachment. It brings out the idea of devotion, and giving attention to. What he is saying here is that we need to be like our Father. We need to be like the God of heaven. We need to be follower of Him as dear children.

Do you know what children can do? They want to be like mom and dad. They want to be like grandparents. However, do you know what they do? Children are very forgiving. They may be fighting one minute and throwing all kinds of things but just in the next minute they are forgiving and hugging one another. They go off playing.

As you and I imitate Christ, as we become more like Him then we need to be like that.

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 savor.

Do you know what we need to be doing? Our manner of life, we need to walk in love. That is what Jesus Christ did. If we are going to be a follower of Jesus Christ, then we are going to have to love and we are going to have walk in love. You cannot tell me, if you say that you love the Lord Jesus Christ and you are not walking in love then you are lying. It is impossible for someone to imitate Christ and not walk in love. In everything that He did and everywhere that He went; He was love. He is love. Love originates from Him. If we are going to be followers of Him, if we are going to be imitators of Almighty God, then we are going to have to love everybody.

It is very important that we love. The love that Jesus Christ had is the agape or the word for it is agape. It means an all-giving and all-sacrificing love. That is what He had and we know that He did that.

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 savor.

Do you know what we need to be doing? Not only do we need to have love for Almighty God, but we need to have love for one another. Sometimes, we want to love those that love us. We want to love those who are good to us. We want to love those who brag on

us. However, if we are going to be followers of Almighty God then we are going to love everybody. We are going to love people that don't like us. We are going to love people that talks about us. We are going to love people who try to destroy us. You might say "I don't about that." Jesus Christ did that very thing. The people that hated Him; He still yet loved them. The people that tried to kill Him and did finally take His life; He still yet loved them. Aren't you glad that you and me, if we have Him, if we have become followers of Jesus Christ, if we have become attached unto Him; aren't you glad that when people hates you that you can still yet love them? If you can't do that then there is something wrong in your life. I would never forgive them. Then you are not ready to go to heaven to make statements like that.

People who are imitating Christ and being followers of Jesus Christ then we can look beyond our little petty feelings and look beyond when someone has maybe done us wrong. I am glad that the love of God is greater than all the hurt and all the harm that men may inflict onto us. I am glad that when people misuse us, talk about us, and lie about us; do you know what we can do? We can get on our faces before Almighty God and honestly and sincerely ask God to bless them, and ask God to save them. You can do that and do you know why? It is because you have been attached unto Jesus Christ.

I am glad that when He moves in, hatred moves out. When Jesus Christ moves in then love moves in. People may do all kinds of things against you; let's love them and go on. If you will do that, you won't get yourself in a mess. Do you know what happens many times? When we don't love people we get in a trap. Do you know what it does? It brings us down to their level. We don't need to do that. If we are imitators of Jesus Christ then we don't need to do that.

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 savor.

If we are imitating Jesus Christ, our manner of life is going to be love. It is going to be love. We are going to be followers of Jesus Christ.

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 savor.

Look what happens here. The Bible says, "...hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for..." us. Many times we think that when Jesus died on the cross, we think that the only reason He went there was just to save us. I want you to think about something. When Jesus Christ went to the cross, do you know what He was going to do? We know the end result was that we were going to be able to be saved because of what He did. Let's just think for a moment. When you go back in the book do you know what you will find out; we can read about Adam and when Adam sinned it brought disgrace unto Almighty God because Adam was a creature that God had created. When Adam sinned there is not doubt that it brought disgrace unto God because Adam did not do what God had asked him to do. The Bible uses the word "an offering." Do you know what Jesus Christ did? When Jesus Christ went to Calvary, when He went there, the end result

is that we had the opportunity to be saved by that. Do you know what Jesus was doing? The Bible says that He was doing the will of His Father. When He went there He offered Himself—we read the word “offering” here. In your Bible reading yesterday, in Leviticus chapter one, you read about a burnt offering. Do you know what the people were commanded to do? In the Old Testament they were commanded to bring a burnt offering unto Almighty God. They did that willingly. They did that because they wanted to honor Almighty God. They did that because they wanted to worship Almighty God. They wanted to do what God’s will was. When Jesus Christ went to Calvary; He went there to do His Father’s will. His Father’s will was for Jesus to die on a cross. That was His Father’s will. Jesus made an offering there on that day. He wanted to please His Father. He wanted to honor His Father. He wanted to do His Father’s will. By Him doing that, thank God, we are saved tonight.

That should excite us! God loved us enough that He said and He told His Son “This is my will for you. You go to Calvary and die on a cross. That is my commandment for you.” Jesus loved us enough and loved His Father enough that He wanted to honor His Father and to glorify His Father and to worship His Father; that He was obedient unto that command. Isn’t that awesome?

The great thing is that when you and I become imitators of God, then our lives will change. We become changed people. We are changed people. You might say “He’s God and He don’t sin. He is up there in heaven. He can do all these things that we cannot do.”

Let’s look at what the Bible says here about some things. The Bible says in Matthew chapter five in verse 48:

Matthew 5:48

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

That is telling you and me if Jesus Christ said that we need to be perfect and be like our Heavenly Father is that He is perfect. Do you know what that is telling me? That is telling me that we can be like Him.

That is imitating our Heavenly Father. That is what we need to be doing today. No. We are not sinless. We still yet mess up. Thank God we are complete in Him. We have all that we need and all that we need is in Jesus Christ. Isn’t that awesome to think about? He also made this statement:

I Peter 1

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

If Jesus said that we needed to be perfect or complete, if Peter said that we needed to be holy because he was holy then we need to be holy.

We look at the word “holy” and sometimes we don’t really understand what it is talking about. The word “holy”—it doesn’t mean that we have wings and floating around up above everybody else. It means that we are different from the world. Jesus, when He was here, He was different. He was holy. He was set apart for the work of Almighty God. That is what we need to be today. When we are following Jesus Christ then our life will be different. We will be holy. We will be holy because He is holy. We can do that, if we want to.

He tells many different things that we need to look at and think about. Leviticus chapter 19 you will read in a few days says this:

Leviticus 19

2 Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.

Do you think that God would tell us to be holy if we could not be holy? Do you think that God would set a standard out there somewhere for us to meet that we could not meet? God would not do that. Do you think that Jesus would make a statement that we need to be perfect because our Heavenly Father which is in heaven, He is perfect; if we could not do that? He would not do that. We can do that by imitating Jesus Christ or by being a follower of Jesus Christ. Are we holy? Are we perfect? Do we have all that we need? That is a good thought isn’t it? The thing is that it is more than just talk. It is more than just conversation. It is more than saying “I’m saved.” It is more than that. It is about everyday living; day in and day out, week in and week out, month in and month out. It is about living a holy life. It is about living a life that is a perfect or complete life. Are we doing that? If we are doing that then that is one way that we are imitating Christ.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

That is pretty strong talk, isn’t it? If we are going to be followers of Jesus Christ, if we are going to live for Him and live as we should live, there are some things that we need to look at. There are some things here that we don’t need to be doing. There are some things here where our life has to be different than it was before. He is talking about being clean, being morally clean, having our bodies clean. If we are imitating Jesus Christ then we have to be morally clean. We have to be morally pure. He uses the word “fornication.” We know that fornication means all kinds of sexual activity. It means pre-marital sex. It means all kinds of different stuff. If we are imitating Jesus Christ then we are not doing those things. If we are imitating Jesus Christ, if we are a follower Jesus Christ then we cannot be a fornicator, say, believe, and practice being an imitator of Jesus

Christ. It is more than just talk. My life has to prove that. Also, your life has to prove that.

Not only does He use the word fornication but He uses the word uncleanness. All kinds of filthy junk any kind of an unclean filthy or any kind of junk that we can think of like that; we have to stay away from that. If we are imitators of Jesus Christ we will stay away from it.

Many church members want to participate in all kinds of junk but if we are an imitator of Jesus Christ, then we will stay away from uncleanness. We will be morally clean. There should be a lot of Amen's on that. In the day and time we are living in today we don't like to hear about being morally clean. We want talk about going to heaven and we want people to tell us how good we are but if we are not morally clean, we are not going to heaven.

He uses the word covetousness. Covetousness means somebody that is eaten up with a passion wanting to have things and stuff. If our lives are like that, then we are not imitating Jesus Christ. We are not a follower of Jesus Christ if we are a covetousness person. If all that we think about and all of our energy goes to having things and wanting more things then we are not following Jesus Christ. If our lives are filled with all kinds of junk and garbage and impurities then we are not following Jesus Christ. If we are committing all kinds of sexual sins and doing all kinds of perverted things then we are not following Jesus Christ. Amen—

Why can't we get that? That is very plain don't you think? Let's wake up and understand that if we are going to go to heaven then we are going to have to follow Jesus Christ. We have to be an imitator of Jesus Christ. I can't go to heaven and you can't go to heaven by being morally impure.

We don't like to hear it. I get phone calls all the time of people whining about that. If you would straighten up you wouldn't have to call me. If you would just straighten up and live right you would not have to whine all the time.

He says "let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." The word "saints" is a good word. If we are saved tonight living in the will of God then we are "saints." Isn't that awesome to think about? God calls us saints. No, we are not going to have wings and halos and things like that. That is not what he is talking about. However, we are special in the eyes of Almighty God.

Since we are special, since we are imitating Him, since we are following Him and since we are staying away from fornication, un-cleanliness, and all kinds of filth and garbage; since we are staying away from all those things, we are saints. We are absolute saints. Since we are saints the sins that we just talked about the un-cleanliness and covetousness; those things don't even need to be talked about among saints. We don't need to sit around and discuss junk like that. He says that it doesn't even need to be mentioned, not even named among you. It does say that, doesn't it? If that is all that we have to sit

around and talk about...we are in bad shape. Those things don't even need to be hinted that we are doing things like that. We are saints. We are following Jesus Christ. We are imitators. If we are imitating Him then we are morally pure and therefore, we are not doing these things.

Many church members do all kinds of junk. Some of the most wicked, vile, crooked people I know go to church. However, they are not imitating Jesus Christ; they just sit in the pew. Anybody can do that. Anybody can sit in the pew.

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

The word "filthiness" means "obscene." It means "shameful," "polluted," "immoral conduct," and "immoral conversation." Those things we must stay away from.

If we are following Jesus Christ, not only are we morally clean, not only is our bodies clean, but also our mouth is too. That is what that says. Filthiness here is talking about speech, and conduct. When you go and read this and study a little bit about this, it takes you back to Sodom and Gomorrah. We talk about the sins of homosexuality and sodomy and all that went on back during that time; all that perversion and all that filthy talk goes together. You find someone who is participating in all the sins of the flesh, doing all kinds of things to this body then their mouth is not going to be clean either. All filthiness; if we are following Jesus Christ then our mouth will be clean. Do you think that Jesus Christ used profanity? Do you think Jesus Christ used some of the garbage that we hear church people use sometimes? Do you think He had a fowl mouth? Do you think His speech was polluted? Do you think that He was obscene or shameful in His speech? If we are doing that, then we cannot be a follower of Jesus Christ. If we are doing that we cannot be imitating Jesus Christ. Whether you agree with that or don't agree with that; it is truth. That is the Bible.

Not only does he use the word filthiness but he uses the word "foolish talking." The word "foolish talk" means "empty," "un-thoughtful," "senseless," "wasted," "aimless," and "sinful." That is what "foolish talk" means. If we are doing and using our mouth and tongue for all kinds of foolish, silly and all kinds of idle stuff; then we are not imitating Jesus Christ.

We get on the phone and rattle our mouth and it flaps at both ends. We are not imitating Jesus Christ. If we have an issue with somebody then we need to talk with that individual. We don't need to tell your neighbors about it. We don't need to run down to the grocery store and tell the cashier down at the grocery store how big a dead beat your pastor is. If you have an issue with your pastor then you talk with him. You don't need to talk to the neighbors.

If I have a problem with you, I will talk to you. I promise you that. That is just the way that it has to be.

When we are doing and participating in foolish talk then we are not imitating Jesus Christ. To go to heaven we have to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Why would we want to let our mouths keep us from going to heaven? We can't go if we are not imitating Him. If we are using our mouth for all kinds of foolish and corrupt things then we are not following Him and we can't go.

He uses the word "jesting." "Jesting" means to "joke." I like to joke around and most everyone here knows that. However, the word here for joking is not like the word for playing and having fun joking. It brings out the idea of someone joking around or doing things in a way that will hurt, harm or degrade someone else. That is what jesting he is talking about here. It means that. It means to talk foolishly. It means to poke fun. It means to suggest and be suggestive in our conversations. It means to make wise, smart remarks. Do you think that Jesus Christ made fun of people? Do you think that in His speech in dealing with people that He poked fun at people? He did not do that. ...we have no right to poke fun at anybody. I don't have that right. I don't have the right to insult you. I don't have the right to say something about you that I know is going to hurt your feelings. I don't have that right. If we are doing that and having that kind of communications then we are not following Jesus Christ. If we have to follow Him to go to heaven then that means if we are doing these things then we need to straighten up so that we can go.

He continues on in saying "...but rather giving of thanks." If we take and use our mouths to be thankful and spend more time being thankful than we did trying to insult people, or to talk bad about people or do things like that; if we would be more thankful then our lives would be much better off. Jesus was thankful. Thankfulness is something that we need to practice in our life. If we are going to imitate Jesus Christ then we need to be thankful. That is the way it is.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

He says something here that if we are going to be a follower of Jesus Christ, there is something here that we know. If I am going to imitate Jesus Christ, if I am living for Him, if I am following Him; then there is something that I absolutely know and that is no whoremonger is going to go to heaven. We know that. Do you know why we know that? It is not because we have had some big revelation, because the Bible tells us that. Since we know that, then we don't need to practice those things. All the things that it is talking about here the prostitution and all the horrible sexual sins that whoremongers do; we know that if people are practicing those things, we know that they are not imitating Jesus Christ. If they are not imitating Jesus Christ then they cannot do these things and go to heaven. It does not matter what the Baptists say, or the Nazarenes, or the Catholics or the Methodists', or the Pentecostals; that does not have anything to do with anything. We cannot practice immorality and all kinds of sin and be imitating/followers of Jesus Christ. It is impossible.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

We talked about that just a little bit. “Unclean person” we know that means “immoral,” we know that means “dirty thoughts” or “dirty behavior.” When people are practicing all kinds of junk, sinful things then we know that they are not following or imitating Jesus Christ. Do you think that Jesus sat around all the time thinking about garbage all the time? Do you think that He sat around everyday, every hour of every day and all kinds of junk, or garbage ran through His mind, day in and day out? Do you think that it did? Do you think that His behavior was horrible, filthy and dirty? Do you think His behavior was like that? No. Therefore if we are doing these things then we are not imitators of Jesus Christ. Since we are not imitating Him then we are not ready to go to heaven. I hope we understand that. Do you know what my main goal is? It should be our goal. It is for everybody to go to heaven. I want people to come to church here, but above all that; I want people to go to heaven. I know that people cannot go to heaven living in sin. It is all of our jobs; we say it is a preacher’s job and I’ll accept that, but it is all of our responsibility to warn people and tell people they cannot go to heaven and live in sin. It is impossible.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Not only is he saying that they cannot go to heaven, but they have no inheritance here on planet earth either. They do not have any claim on any promise that God has ever made in this book while they are on planet earth. I don’t care if they belong to a church, if they are committing these sins that we have talked about here; they have no claim on the promise of the inheritance of Almighty God. We want to be around Christian people and we want to be around Christian functions and that is great. I appreciate people being around. Let’s get hold of the fact that if we are going to go to heaven, we have to follow Jesus Christ. If we are following Jesus Christ, we have an inheritance while we are here on planet earth and we can enjoy living and the blessing of God while we are here. We need to get a hold of that.

I know that we have issues, problems, sickness, and sorrows and all kinds of that. If we go through life never ever experiencing the power and the blessing of God on our lives then we are not experiencing the inheritance that God wants us to have while we are here. Therefore we are not following Jesus Christ. We are not imitators of Him. It does not matter if you belong to church. It does not matter if you preach, or sing; if we are not imitating Jesus Christ then we can’t go to heaven.

Does that sound hard to you? I hope that it does not sound hard. However, I hope that we understand that we can’t live like the world and go to heaven. I know we are living in 2009. I know you turn on the TV and big name preachers tell you all kinds of stuff. “Awe, that’s okay. Just do the best you can. God loves you and He will over...” there is going to be a lot of people that are doing the best they can who are going to be in the lake of fire. Your best is not going to get it. It takes the blood of Jesus Christ. It takes us

following Him. Your best isn't good enough. If your best was good enough then Jesus would not have died on the cross. It takes more than our best. It takes us following Him. Having a morally clean life, having our mouth under control, and following Him is what it takes.

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

That is what I just talked about. Many folks are being deceived today by preachers and by pastors and by teachers. Do you know how they are being deceived? "That was that old stuff from thirty or forty years ago when they used to preach the blood. Preachers used to get up holler, scream and spit; we don't do that anymore. We don't need that anymore. Just come on down and pay your tithes." Many people are being deceived today because of preaching and teaching like that.

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

Do you know what vain means? "Vain" means "useless," "empty," "worthless." When someone tells you that you can go to heaven by doing your best that is worthless words. When someone tells you that you can go to heaven by doing good works that is worthless words. That is vain words. We cannot get there any other way except following Jesus Christ. That is the only way. Don't let anyone tell you any different than that. Don't let anyone tell you that you can go to heaven without following Jesus Christ. It cannot be done.

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

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

He tells us something here. He mentions those who are using vain words and those who are misleading people and he talks about the children of disobedience and the wrath of God coming upon them.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

Do you know what Paul says? Don't live like them. Don't live like that. Don't be someone who is not imitating Jesus Christ. Don't be like those that are being deceived and misled by people using vain words. Don't be partakers with them. We need to imitate Jesus Christ. He loves us. He cares about us. He wants us to be holy. He wants us to be perfect. He wants to be morally clean. He wants us to have our mouth under control. He doesn't want us to be disobedient. If we are disobedient, then we are going to experience the wrath of Almighty God.