

Series: The Wealth of Christ the Walk of the Christian

FOLLOWERS OF GOD

EPHESIANS 5:1-2

Text: Ephesians 5:1

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¹ *Be ye therefore **followers of God**, as dear children;*

Introduction:

In 1878, William Gladstone presented himself before Parliament to announce the death of Queen Victoria's daughter Princess Alice of Britain, the Grand Duchess of Hesse. In making the announcement, Gladstone told a touching story.

The Duchess had seven children, six of them came down with diphtheria during an epidemic in England. Her youngest child, Marie had a painful death in spite of her mother's tender care. The Duchess concealed the sad news from the other children to protect them from shock and more pain. Later, she had to reveal it to her son Ernest who was very devoted to his little sister. Ernest was overcome with grief and broke down in tears. In an attempt to console and comfort her grieving son, she clasped him in her arms and kissed him, ignoring the doctor's warning.

Alice was very weak from heavy work and severe strain and she easily caught the infection. Within a week after the kiss of love, the Duchess fell severely ill and she breathed her last breath the morning of December 14, 1878.

That mother's love is an illustration of the love of God for us. It is also a picture of the kind of love we are to have for others.

Notice the challenges that are presented to us in these two verses.

1. THERE IS A PERSON TO IMITATE (VS. 1)

Ephesians 5:1

¹ *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;*

The word "therefore" again calls our attention backward to the last verses of chapter 4. We are reminded that the saints of God have been saved by the grace of God, and because they have been saved they are to be different in the way they walk, the way they talk, and the way they think. They are to be different in every area of life.

Note:

A. A Command – Be ye followers of God

The word “followers” means to “mimic” to be an “imitator.” The command here is for the people of God to imitate God. We are to learn all we can about God, and we are to mimic His characteristics.

I hear at times people make statements that are troubling to me.

I hear people say that certain individuals are looked at as a hero and they try to mimic that person.

Bible colleges at times are guilty of teaching students; not so much in word but more in action that following graduation that they should go out and mimic what they have learned.

Let me say we are not to mimic men but we are to mimic God.

I look at this command, and I see real problems. We can never imitate God in all ways.

- God is perfect – we are flawed
- God is all powerful – we are weak
- God is all knowing – we lack wisdom

- God is wholly good – we are wholly evil
- God is eternal – we are temporal
- God is heavenly – we are earthly

We are to learn all we can about the Lord from His Word and we are to put into practice everything we know about Him. We are to do the things we see Him doing, and we are to avoid the things He avoids. We are to be like God in every respect. In essence, God is here commanding us to do something that is impossible within ourselves. Left to ourselves we could never be imitators of God.

Note there is the command but also:

There Is a Condition – as dear children

We are told to imitate God, but we are told to do so as “dear children.” It is natural for children to imitate their parents.

While that is true in our earthly families, it is even more true in our heavenly families. Like beloved children, who are ever near the parent, learning, observing, and growing, we are brought near to our Heavenly Father so that we might learn His ways and become more like Him.

Romans 8:29

²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Matthew 5:48

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

1 Peter 1:14-16

¹⁴ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 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.

1 John 3:2

² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, **we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is.

We are unable to imitate God through our own power. While we can't be holy on our own, as redeemed children of God, we have been empowered to live like, act like, and talk like our Heavenly Father. He has empowered us and enabled us to live holy lives for His glory.

We are not mere slaves following in the footsteps of a demanding master. We are the sons and daughters of God. Redeemed by His grace. Adopted into His family. Partakers of His very nature.

2 Peter 1:4

⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

- He is holy – we are to be holy
- He is loving – we are to be loving
- He is truthful – we are to be truthful
- He is compassionate – we are to be compassionate
- Everything God is – we are to be

Where do we learn these things? We learn them from His Word.

Micah 6:8

⁸ He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

We learn them from observing Him.

We learn them by watching Him work in the lives of others.

We learn these things from simply walking with Him.

Not only is “A Person to Imitate” but also:

2. THERE IS A PRECEPT TO INITIATE (VS. 2A)

Ephesians 5:2

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 savour.***

The word “walk” means “to regulate one’s life.” Our very lives are to be controlled, to be driven, to be defined by love.

The word “love” speaks of God’s love for mankind.

It speaks of a love that is “unconditional, undeserved, unending, and self-sacrificing.” It is not just mere fondness. It is not just the kind of love that one would find in a family setting. It is certainly not the love the world knows, the love that is tied to the passions.

This kind of love arises out of God grace.

- It's a love that sets itself toward the undeserving
- It's a love that cannot be bought or turned away
- It's a love that is powerful, eternal, redemptive, and undeserved
- It's a love that has no counterpart
- It's a love that we are commanded to imitate

God's expectation is laid out for us in Matthew.

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

- We are to love God supremely
- We are to love others as much as we do ourselves

What is the proof that we love God?

John 14:15

¹⁵ *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

John 14:21

²¹ *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

When we love Him, we will be like Him; and when we are like Him, I will love like He loves.

Note not only that there is “A Person To Imitate” and “A Precept To Initiate” but also:

3. THERE IS A PROVISION THAT ILLUSTRATES (VS. 2B)

Ephesians 5:2

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 savour.*

To illustrate what genuine love looks like, Paul calls upon the sacrifice of the Lord for His people on the cross. The greatest expression of love the world has ever witnessed was the love that sent Christ to the cross to die for us.

The Lord's love for us was not just a deep affection. It was not an emotional attachment. He did not give Himself for us because we deserved anything from Him. He did what He did simply because He set His unconditional, gracious love on us.

- His love for us cause Him to leave Heaven
- His love for us cause Him to bear our sins on the cross
- His love for the Father cause Hi to give Himself as a sacrifice to God.

God's love for Christ, and for us, caused the Father to accept the offering and sacrifice of the Son on the cross, as a "sweet smelling savor." God was pleased when the love of Christ sacrificed itself to redeem lost sinners.

Romans 5:8

⁸ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Verse 2 says Christ, "...hath given Himself for us..." He did that because He loved us. We are to manifest that same kind of selfless, self-sacrificing love toward others. Literally, we are to "give ourselves" out of love for God and others.

We need to remember this: Genuine love is always measured by what it gives, not by what it gains.

Close:

In all honesty, can others see the Father in you? We are challenged to be so surrendered to the Father that we become like Him.

When we imitate the Father, we will love like He loves, and that kind of love has the power to change your life, your home, your church, your city, your nation and your world.