

# IMITATORS OF GOD. Eph. 5:12-20 (text;vs 1)

Printed in Ger.  
1471 at Augsburg.  
By 1563-86 ed.

INTRODUCTION: the great devotional book,

Imitation of Christ, <sup>compiled</sup> by Thomas a Kempis

This word could be translated "copy God".

But this copying God does not mean "playing God", but conforming to his will of love.

It is a sharing of his nature and a consciousness of his love, which is the very essence of God.

God-likeness is the goal of Christian living.

Christians are to act "each in his own little sphere, as God does in His great universe,

and to prove in this way that God is indeed their Father."

This IMITATION OF GOD is the highest standard that could possibly be set before Christians.

It is helpful to notice the ways this word is used elsewhere in the NT:

I Cor. 4:16, Paul says "be imitators of me,"

(I am your father in Christ)

11:1, "Be imitators of me,

as I am of Christ."

I Thes. 1:6, "You became imitators of us

AND OF THE LORD."

"so that you became an example to all the believers."

2:14, "you became imitators of the CHURCHES of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea."

Heb. 6:12, "Imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

2nd Thes. 3:7,9, "For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, (we worked day and night that we might not burden any of you).

It was not because we had not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate."

Heb. 13:7, "Remember your leaders,

those who spoke to you the word of God,

and imitate their faith."

3rd John, vs 11, "Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. He who does good is of God."

The Catalog in the Museum shows it the most widely read book in the world except the Bible for 400 years.



In the first 20 verses of this chapter Paul discusses four ways in which Christians are to be IMITATORS OF GOD: IN LOVE, IN PURITY, IN LIGHT, IN WISDOM.

## I. WE ARE TO BE IMITATORS OF GOD AS WE WALK IN LOVE AS CHRIST LOVED US, vs 1-2

A. Indeed we behave most like God when we walk in the kind of love manifested in the cross of Christ.

1. He appeals to the love of the Father

2. He appeals to the sacrificial love of Christ

a. the first word, "offering," refers to the sweet incense going up to God.

b. The second word, "sacrifice," refers to the animals slain and offered to God.

c. So Christ is both a slain sacrifice and an offering to God for us.

3. "Christ gave himself up for us."

a. This is not the ordinary word for "give", but it is "to give up, surrender, deliver into custody, or surrender one for punishment."

b. Notice the preposition "for" in "for us." This indicates that something is for the "safety" or the "advantage" of another. It may mean "over" or "above", and here shows that "one who does a thing for another stands "over" the one whom he would shield or defend.

B. God's love is shown in his FORGIVENESS, and if we imitate God we too must show forgiveness, as mentioned in the last part of the previous chapter. If we are God's own beloved children, we should show the family likeness.

## II. WE ARE TO BE IMITATORS OF GOD AS WE WALK IN PURITY EVEN AS OUR FATHER IS PURE AND HOLY, vs. 3-6

A. Paul has been dealing with sins which break the fellowship of the church.

Now he turns to those sins which corrupt the individual.

These sins were the disgrace of the pagan world; they must not be brought over into the church.

B. These are sexual sins of immorality & impurity, and the filthy speech so often connected with them. Notice the words Paul uses:

1. Fornication - sexual immorality, the prostitution of one's body, or committing of unlawful sexual vice. The pagan world was indifferent to this.

2. Uncleanness - impurity, sexual indulgence which is perverted, promiscuous, extra-marital or pre-marital, or other than God's Holy Word allows within the bonds of Holy Christian Matrimony.

3. Covetousness - desire for that which belongs to another; here sexual greed directed toward the ruin of another's purity.

4. Filthiness - indecency, obscenity, not just in words or speech, but in anything as opposed to purity.

5. Foolish talking - "talking like a fool."

Silly talking in a realistic manner about filthy subjects or even in crude "frankness" about the intimate things of sexual character in married life.

6. Jesting - subtle levity in the bad sense that jokes about that which is serious and sacred or makes a laughing matter out of that which is sinful, immoral, and tragic in God's sight. Foul & unclean half-meanings which by a turn on words & phrases cause laughter but defile the conversation and taint the imagination.

C. In vs. 6 Paul says "let nobody lead you astray about these things with empty words."

1. In that day of Greek and Roman culture many said these things were "natural" & not wrong.

2. Dr. W. O. Carver said: "The modern age is cursed with numerous such theories which both excuse and encourage sex indulgence in many forms, as being natural, necessary, or in any case legitimate, and involving no ethical principles."

3. Paul attaches a severe penalty to these sexual sins. No one who practices these sins has any share in the kingdom of God; it is these very sins which brings down the wrath of God upon them.



III. WE ARE TO BE IMITATORS OF GOD AS WE WALK IN THE LIGHT AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT, vs. 7-14

- A. Christians are to be "children of light"
- B. Pagan life is one of darkness while the Christian life is one of light.
- C. The light helps to discriminate between that which is well pleasing and that which is not well pleasing to God.
- D. Light exposes that which is evil.
- E. Paul's appeal ends with a quotation, perhaps from an early Christian hymn. May be a baptismal hymn.
- F. This is the remedy for and antidote against the moral plague, the light of the gospel, and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

IV. WE ARE TO BE IMITATORS OF GOD AS WE WALK IN WISDOM AS A CHILD OF GOD. vs. 15-20

- A. True wisdom is a moral quality, not just an accumulation of facts, but knowledge of and obedience to the will of God.
- B. Look carefully then how you walk especially in your daily moral life.
  - 1. Careful and thoughtful living.
  - 2. A Christian must always be alert
- C. Redeeming the time - making the most of his time and opportunities, buying up his opportunities as Merchants of the Master in the market of the world's revolutionary conditions & ideologies, insisting on just & right national policies as well as the highest moral standards in individual and social life.
- D. Another mark of wisdom is to live a sober, joyous, and thankful life, vs. 18-20.
  - 1. Be filled with the spirit, not drunk with wine.
  - 2. Stimulation from alcoholic beverages leads to reckless living; stimulation from the Holy Spirit leads to sensible living.
  - 3. The Christian gets his "lift" from the Divine Spirit, not distilled spirits.
- E. A positive, beautiful fellowship of Christians is proposed in vs. 19-20.  
Much is made of the ministry of music.  
Singing instead of criticizing & complaining.  
How happy & useful we would all be if we only came close to this high ideal!