

“Living a new life of love”: Ephesians 5:1-2

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost – July 11, 2021

Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

Scripture reading – Eph 4:31-5:2

Introduction

- We’ve been slowly working our way through this letter written by Paul to the church at Ephesus. The letter is packed with important spiritual truth and practical wisdom regarding the Christian life.
- As we’ve seen, Paul follows a pattern in his teaching: he presents a truth about us (in grammar: indicative mood), then he gives a command based on the truth he has taught (imperative mood). Throughout the first four chapters, he presents a compelling case that we used to be a mess, but because of God’s enormous love for us, he changed our situation: cancelled our sin, put his Spirit in us, recreated us in Christ (cf. Eph 4:24).
- **“Therefore” (5:1)** – because of what God has done for you, this is how you should live.

Two commands

1. **“be imitators of God”** – “imitator” is *mimetes*: follower, someone who mimics or copies another.
 - God’s incommunicable attributes (omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, transcendence, et al.) can’t be imitated to any meaningful extent.
 - God’s communicable attributes (holiness, love, patience, kindness, joy, et al.) can be imitated so long as there is a basic correspondence or affinity between who God is and who we are (cf. Gen 1:26; Eph 4:24).
 - The indicative (“created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness”) makes the imperative (“be imitators of God”) possible. This is why we are able to imitate him. It’s the basis for the NT commands: I Ptr 1:16: “Be holy, for I am holy”; Lk 6:36: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful”; Mt 5:48: “Be perfect in love as your heavenly Father is perfect”.

- Jesus, our older brother, showed us how to imitate God in the Gospels. We can become like Jesus by incorporating the same practices into our lives.
2. **“walk in love”** – walk is *peripateo* and is a commonplace in this letter (Eph 2:1, 10; 4:2, 17; 5:2 here, 8, 15). Semitic way of referring to the conduct of one’s life. To “walk in love” is for love to be the dominant defining feature of our lives.
 - What is love? “To will the good of another as the other.” It is to truly want and work for another person’s welfare without any expectation of reward. It’s the opposite of a preoccupation with ourselves. (Cf. 1 Jn 4:8,16; Gal 5:22; Jn 14:34-35; Jn 15:13).

Three assurances

1. **“children”** – *teknon*. A child/son in this letter reflects similitude: “children of disobedience/wrath” (Eph 2:2-3). Here we are children of God: we reflect his character. In telling us to imitate God, Paul is not telling us to do something “unnatural”.
2. **“beloved”** – *agapetos*, “dearly loved, favorite, worthy of love”; cognate used of Jesus in Eph 1:6 and other places. Loved by whom? The Father and the Son. The Father loves us as he loves Jesus (cf. John 17:23). The Son loves us with the same love the Father has for him (cf. John 15:9).
3. **Fully accepted.** The Father received Jesus’ sacrifice as a “fragrant offering”. Whenever this expression is used (e.g., Gen 8:21), it implies pleasing, favorable, acceptable. Cf. Hebrews 7:27; 9:14; 10:10,12. We can imitate God because we are already fully accepted.
 - Look at these three attributions: children, beloved, accepted. Look familiar? Cf. Mk 1:11.
 - The Son of God became a son of man that the sons of men might become sons of God.
 - Because of this, we can imitate God knowing that God loves us, even when we fail. Quote by A.W. Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship?* p. 29.

Take away

- Is there anything in you that is resistant to the truth that you are God’s beloved child, fully accepted by him in Christ? This week, ask the Father to point out to you any hesitations on your part. Read some or all of the following seven texts this week and pray them back to God: Psalm 23; Psalm 103; Psalm 139; Luke 15:11-32; Rom 8:31-39; Eph 1:3-14; Eph 2:1-10. Repeat to yourself throughout each day: “I am God’s child; I am deeply loved; I bring God great pleasure.”