

## IMPOSSIBLE BUT APPARENTLY NOT TOO DIFFICULT

WILLIS 9/18/11

Ep5:1-8

In dealing with today's passage we come across another one of those Scriptural imperatives that seem impossible in their command but apparently they are not too difficult in their expectation.

**The Word of God is an impossible expectation backed up by an extraordinary provision.**

- We see the truth of this statement in Paul's exhortation in v.1 "Be imitators of God..." Excuse me did you just command us to imitate God? Yes written as an imperative not a suggestion the command is to continually and repeatedly make a lifestyle of imitating God. Or as Peter states it "be partakers in the divine nature..."
- **Written as a command "Be imitators of God" is an impossible expectation but apparently not too difficult.**

The Greek word for "imitators" is the word "mimetas" from which we get the word "mimic or mime." Its meaning is "to copy closely" and if necessary use words. The picture used of a mime is one of over exaggerated expressions for the purpose of portraying a character.

- As those who imitate God we are to be an over exaggerated expression of His person. **In portraying the ways of God we are to live as a voice but in relationship to the person of God we are to live as an echo.**
- Where He goes we go. What He says we say. Mimics, mimes, close copies. It is an impossible expectation with an extraordinary provision.

2pt1:3-4 If the promise of 2pt1 is true then the command of Ep5 is not too difficult. Being that the promise is "everything we need to become partakers of the divine life..." we must never settle for anything short of imitation.

- **We partake of the divine so we might imitate the divine.** So it's not enough to simply meditate upon God if the meditation does not produce imitation. **We mediate on the person of God so we might imitate the character of God.**
- We sit at His feet so we get up and follow in His footsteps. They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. I am not sure of flattery but I would certainly say imitation is the sincerest form of worship.

- It is not enough to just follow Him, serve Him or even love Him if we don't imitate Him.
- **If we truly worship God in Spirit and Truth we will imitate Him in word and deed.** It was the great preacher Spurgeon who said "Worship unattended by imitation is fake."

So as we induct this year's SPA class. I trust you will all aspire to be masters in your craft. **Never be satisfied with being good when the Master who lives within you desires to make you the best.**

- The million dollar question is how do we become the best? **We become the best by learning how to imitate the Master.** (The Louvre) Jesus said in Jn5:19 "I only do what I see my Father doing."
- **Imitation is a 5 step process Watch; Process; Copy; Practice; Reproduce.**

To be imitators of God means our lives become direct testimonies of God. Our lives speak whether by intention or by default. **The only question is who are we imitating and what are we saying.**

- How do fathers and mothers imitate God; what are they to be saying on His behalf?
- How do singles in their singlehood imitate God; what are they to say?
- Business people, City Council members, students...how do we imitate God in the place of our calling? How do we imitate Him in our entertainment

So Paul goes on to break down some of the specific expectations God has for our imitation.

1. **Walk in Love: v.2** It's to walk in love "just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us as an offering..." (I was hoping I could imitate Him in His sovereignty not His sacrifice.)
  - **It easy to walk in love when benefit is the promise. Jesus walked in love when sacrificial loss was the promise. To imitate Jesus by way of love is to love even when loss is the evident return.**
  - The command is to walk in agape...to walk in the removal of all demands. It is the demands we place on other that destroys our imitation. There is nothing wrong with desires but when desires turn to demands love is destroyed and imitation lost.
  - **Agape love is desirous of much but demanding of little. Agape's only demand is the demand it places on itself to walk in love just as Christ loved.**

In our next expectation of imitation we see what seems like another impossibility that apparently is not too difficult.

**2. Do Not Let Immorality, Impurity or Greed Even be Named Among You. V: 3** It is important to note Paul was speaking into a culture where immorality was not considered as an evil.

- This was a culture that had “Temple Prostitutes.” Religious Temples were built and sustained through immorality. Into that depravity, Christianity is born and the expectation of imitation becomes “don’t even let impurity be named among you.”
- Ep1:4 “He chose in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love.”
- In William Barclay’s commentary Barclay said, “Chastity was the one new virtue Christianity introduced to the world...there is nothing in all of history like the moral miracle Christianity wrought.”
- One translation reads “As well loved children who imitate their father...let there not even be the mention of shameful conduct...” **If holiness is not rooted in love leading to imitation it will never be able to sustain obedience leading to fruitfulness.**
- Love is the root; obedience is the fruit. Deepen your love and you will purify your fruit.

**As well loved children who seek to imitate their father one of the gravest acts we could ever do is make light of sin.** So Paul continues in his expectations of imitation saying:

**3. There Must be No Filthiness, Silly Talk or Coarse Jesting: v.4** Remember imitation is the context and the standard we are being called up to. So understanding live and death are in the power of the tongue Paul says you can’t waste words and expect to imitate God

- **Silly Talk:** “words that reveal how foolish a person is.” Being that the goal is imitation, if you are one to act the fool, keep your mouth shut and no one will know. Better yet let the imitation of God eradicate foolishness and your words will testify of His glory.
- **Course Jesting:** “Words that easily deviate into clownishness.” Words are one of the primary ways in which we imitate. If we allow our words to deviate into silliness or clownishness they could represent (misrepresent) God in the same light...make God look like a clown.

- As well loved children who seek to imitate our father our words should be His words...words that bless, words that edify, instruct and correct.

The Apostle ends the discourse with the admonition “do not let anyone deceive you with empty words for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”

- It is quite evident Paul sees as inseparable link with the choice of our words and the mandate of our imitation. **Guarding our tongue is perhaps one of the first and foremost attributes of being those who imitate Christ.**
- Though acceptable in our day not to guard our words, Paul’s admonition is “do not be partakers with those who don’t.

Whether by intention or by default you are an imitation of God. Whether it is accurate or untrue your life does speak. Since we have been given everything we need to be partakers of the divine life, let our imitation be one of intention that accurately represents.