**February 11, 2018 “Be Imitators of God” Ephesians 5:1-7**

One of the things that fascinates me about the writings of the Apostle Paul is his ability to contrast ideas. Now I realize that this ability is not from him alone but is the outworking of the Holy Spirit through Paul.

Have you noticed how often in the book of Ephesians Paul offers contrasting ideas? As we have learned, the book is divided into two sections. The first tells us over and over again, who we are in Christ Jesus.

We have a new Father, we have an inheritance that outshines the sun, we have been forgiven, we have redemption in Christ, we have hope, we been endowed with His wisdom and insight, we have a new calling, a new walk and a new joy in our hearts.

Paul, in the second half of this letter, exhorts us to live in a manner worthy of all that God has given us in Christ Jesus. Note

* Ephesians 4:1… walk in a manner worthy of the calling
* Ephesians 4:17… walk no longer like the Gentiles
* Ephesians 4:22-23… lay aside the old self
* Ephesians 4:23… be renewed in the spirit of your mind
* Ephesians 4:24… put on the new self
* Ephesians 5:1…. walk in love
* Ephesians 5:8… walk as children of light
* Ephesians 5:15… walk in wisdom
* Ephesians 5:18… walk in the Spirit
* Ephesians 6:10… walk as a soldier in warfare

Why has Paul done these comparisons and given us these exhortations on how we should live as disciples of Christ? The answer is quite simple. If your life and my life does not match our calling as Christians, there is a very real possibility that you and I are not saved at all! In other words, if our values and character does not match the calling of Christ, we are not His sheep.

For example, this week, I read some statistics of the condition of the so-called Church in various countries.

* In England… 60% of the people claim to be Christian
  + Less than 2% attend worship services regularly
* In Europe the numbers are nearly the same
* In the United States about 80% claim to be Christian
  + About 15% attend services regularly

Paul, here in Ephesians 5:1-2 contrasts the “walk in love” as a Christian with the life of those who may claim to be Christian but live in a manner foreign to a walk worthy of the calling of Christ. (Ephesians 5:3-7)

1. Walk in love
   1. How?
      1. Be imitators of God
         1. Note it is not a suggestion
         2. It is a command to believers
            1. Commands don’t care about your feelings
   2. “Therefore”
      1. This word always points us backward
      2. Find out what it is “there for”
      3. In this case it refers back to Ephesians 4:31 and 32
   3. What should not be in your life or mine
      1. Bitterness… that smoldering anger… that just makes you want to avoid that person, not speak to them, have nothing to do with them and carry a general disdain for them
      2. Wrath… just an outright hatred for what they do and who they are
      3. Clamor… making it known in public… yelling at them
      4. Slander… whispering behind their backs
   4. What should be in our lives
      1. Kindness
      2. Tenderhearted
      3. Forgiveness
         1. The reason we don’t do these things is
         2. Because we do not love them
            1. Why don’t we love them?
            2. It is because we are not “imitators of God”

Ephesians 4:32

“Just as God in Christ also has forgiven you”

How forgiven are you and I?

What is the greatest measuring rod of your Christian life or mine?

It is forgiveness

* + 1. All of the things mentioned in Ephesians 4:31 are of the “old self”
    2. All the things mentioned in Ephesians 4:32 are of the “new self”

1. How is it possible to be an imitator of God?
   1. Luke 7:36-50
      1. Two people contrasted
         1. Simon the Pharisee
         2. Woman… probably a prostitute
      2. Pharisee
         1. All he wanted was some theological discussion to see if Jesus was the “real deal”
         2. He already made up his mind at the meal
            1. If this man were a prophet…
      3. Woman
         1. She just wanted to be loved
            1. And her sins which were many were all forgiven
   2. I hear people, mostly men, say
      1. I feel God on the golf course
      2. I feel God when I am fishing
      3. I feel God when I am in the woods
   3. Do you know when I feel God?
      1. When I am in church
         1. People who were former meth heads
         2. People who were former coke heads
         3. People who were former prisoners
         4. People who have been married and divorced – sometimes multiple times
         5. People who have violated their marriage vows
         6. People who were addicted to pornography
         7. People who abused prescription drugs
         8. People who were in psych wards
   4. I Corinthians 6:11… “such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God”

You see this Pharisee probably knew more about theology than most of us will ever know. He probably tithed and never missed going to synagogue. He traveled in the best circuits and knew all the important people… but he never knew love because he never knew he needed to be forgiven.

Does the Bible say, “For God so loved the world that He gave us fabulous golf courses, beautiful rivers and lakes, beautiful skies and woods?”

Or does the Bible say that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for dirty, rotten sinners like me?”