

075 - Imitators of God - Part 1 - Ephesians 4:31-5:2 - 2016-01-10

Call to Worship: Nehemiah 9:5b

Scripture Reading: Nehemiah 9:6-17

Sermon: "Imitators of God - Part 1" Ephesians 4:31-5:2; Luke 6:27-38

Benediction: Ephesians 5:8

## INTRODUCTION

The part of this ethical, practical section of Ephesians is more than one verse. The connected thought runs from 4:31 to 5:2. The doctrine in this section is very closely connected to a doctrine spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It seems to me that by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul took what our Lord had taught and expounded it to us specifically as applies to our conduct among each other in Christ's church.

So our method today will be to consider the way the Lord personally taught us this truth, then see how He applied it, through his apostle, to walking worthy of the calling in the church. In both, we will see that

**The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that as we walk with one another in His church, we are to be imitators of God, as beloved children, and to walk in love as our Lord Jesus Christ walked.**

## TEXT

Luke 6:27-38 "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, (28) bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. (29) To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. (30) Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. (31) And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. (32) "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. (33) And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. (34) And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. (35) But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. (36) Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. (37) "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (38) Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

## BODY

**The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that as we walk with one another in His church, we are to be imitators of God.**

- I. You Have A Double Temptation in Your Thoughts Regarding Love
  - A. To credit yourself with being loving because you love those who love you
    1. you love those who love you
      - a) your husband
      - b) your wife
      - c) your father or father-in-law
      - d) your mother or mother-in-law
      - e) your brother
      - f) your sister
      - g) the person you work for
      - h) the person who works for you
      - i) the other worshipers in the church
    2. you do good to people who do good to you
      - a) your husband
      - b) your wife
      - c) your father or father-in-law
      - d) your mother or mother-in-law
      - e) your brother
      - f) your sister
      - g) the person you work for
      - h) the person who works for you
      - i) the other worshipers in the church
    3. you give to those who have something to give back to you
    4. then you give yourself credit for being a good Christian because of how you love people
    5. we all are tempted to think like that
  - B. To excuse yourself for being unloving toward those who do not love you
    1. that person hates me; those people hate us; so I am justified in having no regard for them
    2. that person spoke disrespectfully to me; that person told lies about me; that person made fun of me; that person yelled at me; so I am justified in doing something like that to her
    3. that person was downright mean to me, spiteful to me; so I am justified in doing something to get back at him
    4. that person let me down; she promised me something and did not keep her promise; she betrayed me; she did not do what I was counting on her to do; so I am justified in making her miserable for it

5. that person hurt me; he hurt my feelings; he hurt someone I care about; so I am justified in hurting him
6. that person broke something of mine; she took something from me; so I am justified in holding a grudge against her

## II. The Lord Jesus Spoke to Us About This

A. He corrected us in the first place with this rhetorical question: If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? (Luke 6:32)

1. the question stated another way: If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?
2. the question stated yet another way: If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you?
3. the unstated answer to the question: none; it is no credit
4. the reason: even sinners love those who love them, and do good to those who do good to them, and lend to those who can repay them
5. illus. someone brags on his dog: When I give him a treat and scratch behind his ears, look how he wags his tail---isn't he a wonderful dog!?! Well, no, all dogs do that.
6. illus. Your wife looks beautiful to you; she is faithful to you; she is careful with the family's money; she takes good care of the children; she makes wonderful meals; and so you tell her that you love her; you buy her flowers; you rub her shoulders; and you tell yourself that you are a very loving husband. I'm sorry, brother, but that just makes you equal with the unrepentant, unregenerate sinners. You scratched my back and I liked it, so I scratched yours. Oh, aren't I loving!
7. Not that acting loving toward those who love you is wrong! No, you must do so. But it is the absolute most basic kind of love. It is kindergarten or pre-school love.

B. He corrected us in the second place with this command: Love your enemies (Luke 6:35)

1. stated another way: do good (to those who do not do good to you)
2. stated yet another way: lend, hoping for nothing in return
3. with a reason: your reward will be great
4. with a greater reason: you will be sons of the Most High
  - a) you will be like Him
  - b) because He is kind to the unthankful and evil
5. stated yet another way: Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful
6. applied: judge not and condemn not
7. applied: give

## III. The Holy Spirit Inspired the Apostle Paul to Write to Us About This

Paul did not take up the issue as fully as the Lord Jesus did in his sermons. He did not address the false notion that loving those who love us is not credit to us. Instead, he

takes up the issue in the second place, the Lord's command that we love our enemies. But, of course, the people in your family are not your enemies. And the people you work with are not usually your enemies. And the people in Christ's church, with whom you assemble for worship, and with whom your fellowship, are not your enemies. But what we learn from the Lord's doctrine of loving our enemies the apostle applies to walking in love toward your friends, when they sometimes act unloving toward you, almost as if they were your enemies.

Ephesians 4:31-5:2 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (32) And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (5:1) Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. (2) And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

- A. (Eph 4 31) First, he commands us that all unloving thoughts toward one another, and all unloving speech toward one another and about one another, be put away.
  - 1. You understand he means, when you, a Christian in Christ's church, experience unloving treatment from someone, that does not justify you responding in any unloving ways, such as with bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking
  - 2. The Lord's command is not, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." or "Love those who love you and hate those who hate you." or "Walk in love toward those who walk in love toward you, but never mind walking in love toward those who do not walk in love toward you."
  - 3. No, the Lord's command is, "Love your enemies." There is no justification for acting unloving toward anyone, least of all the other worshipers in Christ's church.
- B. (Eph 4:32a) Second, he commands us that we be kind and tenderhearted toward one another, and that we forgive one another.
- C. (Eph 4:32b) Having commanded that we forgive one another, the apostle brings in the gospel of Jesus Christ as the model: we are to forgive one another even as God in Christ forgave us
  - 1. When we sinned, He did not become bitter toward us
  - 2. When we sinned, He did not pour out his wrath on us
  - 3. When we sinned, He did not deal with us in all His anger
  - 4. When we sinned, He did not fill up with malice
  - 5. Instead, despite our sin against Him, He is kind to us
  - 6. Despite our hard-heartedness toward Him, He is tenderhearted to us
  - 7. Despite all our sin, He has remained ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy
  - 8. He forgave our sins in Jesus Christ
- D. (Eph 5:1) The apostle then takes that conduct of God the Father and tells us to be imitators of God in this

1. As God has dealt mercifully with sinners, with those who wronged Him, with those who did not love Him; as God has loved even His enemies
  2. So we should do, imitating God as beloved children
    - a) as little children who are loved by their parents will imitate them
    - b) so we, who are loved by God our Father, are to imitate Him
- E. (Eph 5:2) The apostle then takes the love of God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ as tells us to walk in love as He walked
1. Toward us who had sinned against Him, He did not act in bitterness, wrath, anger, or malice
  2. Instead, He loved us, and walked toward us in kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness
  3. He even gave Himself for us, giving Himself over to death by crucifixion, offering Himself as an offering and sacrifice to God for us
  4. He took the reek of our sins and covered it over with the sweet aroma of His righteous sacrifice
  5. So we are to walk in love toward those who wrong us
    - a) someone wronged me; let me pray the Lord forgive Him
    - b) someone wronged me; let me devote myself to his welfare

Ephesians 4:31-5:2 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (32) And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (5:1) Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. (2) And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

## CONCLUSION

Do you suppose that the unity Christ has built into His church could be maintained on a practical level if we were to imitate God's tenderness and mercy in all our dealings with each other?

Husbands and fathers, do you suppose you could do well in loving your wife and children if you were to deal with their sinfulness with kindness and forgiveness?

Wives, do you suppose you could be a true help to your husband if you were to be as merciful to him as God has been to you?

Do you believe that a church, and that an individual Christian should be evangelistic?

Do you suppose anyone would believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ which we preach and believe, if he experienced love from us, a love in which we imitate God the Father and walk as Christ walked?

Your unbelieving wife, your unbelieving husband, your unbelieving family members, co-workers, or friends, do you think it reasonable for them to believe your gospel if you only act loving toward them when they act loving toward you? How would that convince them? But if you love them when they are unloving; if you are kind when they are mean; if you are tender when they are hard; don't you know that the Lord says such people may be converted when they see your Godly conduct?

**The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that as we walk with one another in His church, we are to be imitators of God, as dear little children, walking in love as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

-Do this as sons of God your Father, because He does this

Eph 4:31-5:2

-You are tempted excuse yourself for not being loving toward someone in the church on the grounds that he is not being loving toward you.

-you would think, feel, speak, and act in bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking, telling yourself you are justified in doing so because someone in the church has provoked you to it

-But God's law of love is that you love at all times in the church, even when others are not acting loving toward you

-in love, you put away from you all of that bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking, and all malice

-and in place of those things, you are kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving toward one another

-You do this as beloved children imitating God your Father, because He does this

-You were not acting in love toward God; He would have been justified in pouring out His wrath upon you

-But God loves you; when you did not love Him, He loved you; He forgave you your sins in Jesus Christ

JRY:

The Lord Jesus delivered this doctrine to Israelites tempted to act as they were instructed by the Pharisees, who were corrupt bible teachers.

Paul delivered this doctrine to us Christians tempted to act as we used to act, when we walked according to the ways of the world.

So the essential doctrine is the same, but as the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle to write, he applied the Lord's teaching to our situation.

**5:1**

**Therefore be imitators of God as dear children**

JRY:

God's law commanded, with God's character and conduct as the example

Barnes:

"therefore" connects this with the previous chapter to imitate Him in the particular thing under consideration.

God, who was always kind and ready to forgive compare Matthew 5:44-47

As he forgives us Eph\_4:32, we should be ready to forgive others; as he has borne with our faults, we should bear with theirs; as he is ever ready to hear our cry when we ask for mercy, we should be ready to hear others when they desire to be forgiven; and as he is never weary with doing us good, we should never be weary in benefiting them.

The meaning is, "as those children which are beloved follow the example of a father, so we, who are beloved of God, should follow his example." What a simple rule this is! And how much contention and strife would be avoided if it were followed! If every Christian who is angry, unforgiving, and unkind, would just ask himself the question, "How does God treat me?" it would save all the trouble and heart-burning which ever exists in the church.

Clarke:

The beginning of this chapter is properly a continuation of the preceding, which should have ended with the second verse of this.

Poole:

particularly in being kind, and forgiving injuries (Matthew 5:45, 48), so that this relates to the last verse of the former chapter.

Ellicott:

"therefore" implies that this imitation of God must be chiefly in His essential attribute of love

lit. "as children beloved"

Hawker:

The Apostle is still prosecuting the same Subject, as in the former

JRY:

Parents, act in such a way that if your children imitate you, it will be godliness in them.

#### **4:31**

#### **bitterness**

Ellicott:

sharpness; an acerbity of temper, ready to take offense and break out in anger.

#### **wrath**



Ellicott:  
passionate outburst

### **anger**

Ellicott:  
deeper anger, of which wrath is at once effect and cause

### **clamor**

Ellicott:  
the loud fury of the first burst of wrath

### **evil speaking**

Ellicott:  
deliberate, as the temper cools down without losing its settled anger

### **with all malice**

Ellicott:  
All are various exhibitions of "malice"—that is, evil mindedness or malignity—the general disposition which is the opposite of goodness, graciousness, and sympathy. (Comp. Rom\_1:29; 1Co\_5:8; 1Co\_14:20; Jas\_1:21; 1Pe\_2:1.) By the law of human nature they rise out of this temper, and react upon it so as to intensify its bitterness. Both it generally, and they in particular, must be resisted and cast out.

Matthew 5:43-48 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' (44) But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, (45) that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (46) For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (47) And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? (48) Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.