

Ephesians 5:1-5

Christian Virtues versus Worldly Values

As we continue our look at Ephesians this morning, Paul takes us further into a look at the worldly values that we are to put off, put aside and move on from.

Before we go there, how many of you know that you children and your grandchildren imitate you and kids and adults around them? They are mimics aren't they? That is how they learn things. The behaviors they see, good or bad, are the behaviors they pick up.

I wanted to start this morning by showing you a short video. Let me warn you though, it is a bit graphic but it makes this point very well. Watch.

VIDEO

Children learn by what they see and hear. Likewise, as children of God we are to learn by what we see, hear and learn from the Lord. The first part of our passage in Ephesians 5 speaks of this. Look with me.

Ephesians 5:1-2, "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God as a fragrant offering."

As God's beloved children, we are to be imitators of Him. Be imitators of His love, His righteousness and His holiness.

This is our challenge isn't it? Being imitators of God, of Jesus. Denying ourselves, taking up our cross and offering our lives as a sacrifice that becomes a fragrant offering to the Lord.

How do we know how to I imitate Jesus and God? We read and study His word don't we? We learn from the teachings of Jesus and His followers. Those men who were filled and inspired to write the Bible, the Words of God.

How many of you believe this is the infallible word of God? We believe this don't we? Even though the writers of the Bible were human their writings were by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. And God and His Spirit is the same yesterday, today and forever as it says in **Psalms 56:19, "God...with whom there is no change..."**

God never changes therefore His word spoken and written never changes. Please keep this in mind as we move forward today.

Let's continue on in our study in by looking at **Ephesians 5:3-5, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Not should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a person is an idolater – has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God."**

Now last week I spoke about the words we use. How we are not to let unwholesome words come out of our mouth so I think we have that part this verse is covered.

What is not so clear is what is meant by immoral and impure and the fact that these individuals will not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Before I go into this teaching though I wanted to bring in two more passages which have similar lists and end up with the same statement that such individuals will have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Look with me. **Galatians 5:19-21**, “**19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**”

1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “**9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.**”

Now I think we agree on most of these behaviors but I want us to try and understand what Paul said back in Ephesians about these behaviors.

“...any immoral, impure or greedy person – such a person is an idolater.”

By saying such a person is an idolater I believe what Paul is saying is that these behaviors can control a person life so much so that they dominate their lives and put them in a place where God and His teachings can become secondary in their lives. We know this is idolatry right?

It is easy for a number of things to become idolatry in our lives isn't it? Idolatry is not just limited to the things in these lists. Money, possessions, being a health nut, television you name it. This list could be long and different for each of us.

But here is the thing. I believe when it says that those who are involved in these practices will not inherit the kingdom of God I do not believe it is speaking purely about salvation.

While it is certainly true that individuals who are involved in these behaviors can easily become blinded by their behavior, their sin, so much so that they cannot see the salvation and eternal life that Jesus is offering them.

Now whether these individuals are saved or not I am not the judge. You are not the judge right? That is only for God to decided.

But I will tell you this. I believe that individuals who are saved may fall into a life of these behaviors and because of this they are not inheriting or receiving a life full of God's blessings. In this life and in the next. This is what I believe it means to inherit the kingdom of Jesus and God.

Now, I firmly believe that if you are a disciple of Christ you will agree that most of these behaviors are not compatible with the Christian life. I don't think I need to cover most of the behaviors listed here but I do want to pull the one out that has been pressed upon us, the church, to respond to and that is the issue of homosexuality in all of its different forms.

I know you, like me, have probably heard different teachings on the issue of homosexuality but I think it is important in the climate of our times, for us to visit it from time to time to reaffirm what scripture says.

I want to make a biblical case that will help us all respond correctly, biblically, when we are approached with the question that believers, Christians, hate homosexuals. How do we, as Christians who believe that God's word is true, how do we deal with the homosexual lifestyle and all that has come about in our time?

The first thing I think we need to identify is what kind of culture do we live in? Scholars and professors would say there are three cultures that a society can be governed by.

The o nomous

- 1. Theonomous Culture – a culture where the law of God is so embedded in everyone’s hearts that everyone thinks in the same categories.**

Deuteronomy 5:7-8a, “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol...”

This is where we were as a nation but are no longer. Our government was set up on biblical values as evidenced by the wording in our government documents, money and it is stamped all over our government buildings. In God we trust...right?

Our laws were based upon our corporate belief in the laws of God and the laws of good and evil that He placed in us. We shared these laws from generation to generation. They were self-evident within us weren’t they. We as a society were governed by them.

The second kind of culture in the world is what is known as a heteronomous culture.

- 2. Heteronomous Culture – The main stream of the culture is dictated by the leadership at the top.**

Meaning that a few individuals at the top of the system tell everyone within that culture what is right and what is wrong. A few examples would be Lenin, Stalin, Mohammad, an Imam, Cleric or Ayatollah.

These individuals tell people under them when they must fast, eat, what to wear, how to pray. Basically how to live or not live. The few at the top dictate to the masses what they are to do and how they are to live.

Now, are we living in a heteronomous culture or a Theonomous culture?

Neither. We are not dictated by a few at the top and neither are we, as a culture ruled by God. So that leaves that last possibility and that is an autonomous culture. Autonomous meaning...

3. Autonomous Culture – auto (self) nomous (law). Each person dictates their own moral beliefs. Each person comes up with law based upon their own internal feelings of right and wrong.

Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel. (No spiritual leader who was following God therefore there was no absolute truth); everyone did what was right in their own eyes.”

A question. As a whole, as we living in an autonomous culture?

Unfortunately yes and the problem and challenge with this is if everyone has their own autonomy and you don't agree with them then there is conflict and we are seeing a lot of conflict in our nation today aren't we?

A question was asked of Ravi Zacharias, a preacher and defender of the bible, a question was asked why are Christians against racism, discrimination, but they discriminate against the homosexual?

I think Ravi's answer hit the mark.

Discrimination is wrong because the race and ethnicity a person is born into is sacred. It is a gift from God. You do not violate a person's race because it is a sacred gift.

And the reason we believe in an absolute when it comes to a person's sexuality is because we believe that one's sexuality is sacred as well. It is a God given gift. So we make a choice.

We make a choice that marriage as God has given it to us is the most sacred relationship into which any person can enter. Love is given one word in English but in the Greek there are three words to describe love.

4. Three **types** of love: Agape, Philo, Eros
 - a. Agape is a God given love
 - b. Philo is brotherly love
 - c. Eros is romantic love

A marriage as defined by God's word is the only thing that brings these three together. Agape, philo and eros. And if you take Agape love, God's love out of the mix then brotherly love and romantic love gets redefined and can become whatever you want it to be.

For us, who believe that God's word is true and never changing, we read and believe that the beauty of the relationship of a man and woman as shown in the marital relationship and consummation is sacredness, as sacred as Christ is to the church, as He is the bride and the church is the bridegroom.

Any departure from that beauty and sacredness and the fullness of agape, philo and eros love, the biblical notion of what it means to be married, any departures from that are not acceptable in the sight of God.

The theological, biblical, God centered position is the consummate, full relationship in the procreative act of a man and a woman in the sacredness of paying each other the ultimate compliment of being in that committed relationship called marriage.

Theologically this is what we believe.

The question now is

5. Sociologically how do we relationally **respond**?

How do we respond to a society that is probably more autonomous than theonomous? The o nomous

Ephesians 5:2a, "...walk in love, just as Christ also love you and gave Himself up for us..."

Responding in love is what I believe is biblically true. We are to accept people with a love and genuineness regardless of what their view on anything is if it's different than ours.

I am getting better at this as I am getting older. I can say to someone, God gives you the freedom of choice but God does not give you the freedom of consequences. God gives you free will but He does not give you the privilege of determining a different outcome of what that choice will entail. The consequences are bound to the choice.

If you go through all the Bible it says you will reap what you sow. You choose a life of following God's law then there are blessings. You go outside of His law, there are consequences. And in light of our passages, a person following an alternative lifestyle will not inherit the Kingdom of Jesus and God meaning they will not be found under the flow of God's blessings in their life.

At the same time the Bible commands us to love even those we disagree with. Our responsibility is to never hate the individual. Our privilege is to love and through that love the heart of a person can be changed.

God is the ultimate judge and in a society that is partially functioning by theonomous and autonomous, governed by God and by humanity, let us as Christians love one another and let God be the judge over all of us. He is the one who is pure in His judgments.

Amen?

One more statement in closing that will tie this back to where we started. Our children and our grandchildren are watching us and the society around us and they are making decisions based upon what they are seeing.

Are we creating a theonomous, God centered society around our lives and our church for them to be raised in? I think we are. I think we are developing a kingdom culture but it is a culture that is counter to that around us.

Developing and maintaining a God-centered culture demands that we keep diligent in our walk with the Lord.

Let us do our part. Let's take up our cross and be imitators of God and Jesus.

Amen?