

The Privilege of our Position in Christ

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, as an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."

Introduction

A) The Privilege of Being an Imitator (Ephesians 5:1)

1) Who do we imitate? "Therefore, be imitators of God" (Ephesians 5:1a).

- a) Man was created in God's Image (Genesis 1:26-27).
- b) Christ's work on the cross has "transferred us" (Colossians 1:13-14).
- c) We are inadequate to accomplish anything in our own strength (2 Corinthians 3:5).

"Imitation of God is the sincerest form of admiring Him" (Charles Spurgeon, *Imitators of God*).

Practical Principle:

2) What do we imitate about God? We imitate His attributes (Hebrews 12:10).

- a) Attributes are not personal opinions or individual thoughts about God, but rather, what God has revealed about Himself in Scripture and are modeled in the life of Christ.
Examples: Exodus 33:5-7; John 1:9; Colossians 1:15, 19
- b) Two categories of attributes: Communicable and Non-communicable attributes.
 - *Incommunicable* attributes are characteristics that *only* God possesses. Examples: omniscient (all knowing), omnipresent (everywhere present), omnipotent (all powerful), sinless/perfect, immutable (never changes), and sovereign.
 - *Communicable* attributes are those that people can obtain to a degree. Examples: faithful, just, merciful, good, gracious, love, and holiness.

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us" (A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*).

Practical Principle:

3) How do I imitate? "As beloved children" (Ephesians 5:1b).

- a) Through Christ we have become children of God (John 1:12, Galatians 3:26).
- b) "The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God" (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*).
- c) The foundation for being an imitator is the relationship of being a child of God. As God's child we receive a new nature and become objects of God's love. Because of this relationship, we can display "family likeness."
- d) God loved us so deeply with lavish love, He desired a family relationship with us. Adoption provides all the rights and privileges of the birth relationship (Ephesians 1:5).

"Adoption is a family idea, conceived in terms of love, and viewing God as father. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs. Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is greater." (J. I. Packer).

Practical Principle:

B) The Privilege of Being a Follower (Ephesians 5:2)

1) How do we follow? "Walk in love" (Ephesians 5:2a).

- a) Walk - a life-long process of learning to imitate God (Colossians 3:1-14). Sanctification is the "work of God's free grace by which our whole person is made new in the image of God, and we are made more and more able to become dead to sin and alive to righteousness" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 35).
- b) To imitate God is to walk in love. Two distinctive characteristics of God's love:
 - God's love is undeserved (1 John 1:9; 4:19).
 - God's love provided forgiveness (Psalm 130:3-5; Ephesians 4:32; 1 Peter 4:8).

"Because forgiveness is the supreme evidence of God's love, it will also be the most convincing proof of our love" (John MacArthur, *Ephesians*).

Practical Principle:

2) Who do we follow? "... just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us" (Ephesians 5:2b).

- a) What did Christ give? He gave Himself (John 3:16-17: "for us," for our benefit).
- b) How do we follow Christ in how He loved and gave?

- He pursued (Initiated relationship) - We did not deserve relationship (children of wrath, Ephesians 2:3). Imitators of God initiate relationship.
- He planned (Resolute plan) - God initiated the plan that would allow us to once again be "image bearers." We could never change our status or standing before God without God's redemptive plan. Imitators of God are purposeful in their pursuit of people - Discipleship (1 Corinthians 11:1; Hebrews 10:24) or Evangelism (Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:11-12).
- He paid (Costly sacrifice) - Christ gave up everything for us. Imitators of God are characterized by sacrificial love.

"There are many who preach Christ, but not many who live Christ. My great aim will be to live Christ" (Robert C. Chapman, *Agape Leadership*).

Practical Principle:

Conclusions: "As an offering and a sacrifice to God as a *fragrant aroma*" (Ephesians 5:2c). *The Privilege of our position in Christ* is we are being restored into the image of God intended in creation. Sanctification is the process of being transformed into His likeness, and thus we fulfill God's purpose for our lives to glorify Him. We are a fragrant aroma "fully pleasing to Him" (Colossians 1:9-16; 2:6-7).

Resources:

A.W. Tozer. *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life*. HarperOne, 2009

C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity*. Harper San Francisco. Reprint, 2009

Charles Spurgeon. *Imitators of God, No. 1725*. Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, England. 1883

J.I. Packer. *Knowing God*. IVP Books, 1993

Robert Peterson & Alexander Strauch. *Agape Leadership: Lessons in Spiritual Leadership from the Life of Robert C. Chapman*. Lewis & Roth, 1995