

Become Imitators: Why Grace Never Cancels the Commands

Ephesians 5:1-7 (NKJV)

Key Thoughts

1. **"Be" means "become."** Paul is not describing a finished state but a process. We are in the ongoing work of becoming imitators of God, which means the Christian life is a journey to be enjoyed rather than a standard to panic over.
2. **Imitation here is family resemblance, not a cheap substitute.** We think of imitation leather and imitation crab, but Paul means a child growing up to carry a parent's character. Jesus is the crown jewel of what imitating the Father looks like.
3. **Grace never cancels the commands.** The commands were never given for salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). They show us what it is to love God and love people, and God supplies the power of the Holy Spirit to obey what He commands.
4. **Holiness reaches all the way to the mouth.** Filthiness, foolish talking (godless talk, as if God were not there), and coarse jesting are all declared "not fitting" for saints. The believer's mouth should be known instead for the giving of thanks.
5. **Two groups, two destinies, one warning.** The wrath of God in verse 6 falls on the sons of disobedience, not on sealed children of God (Ephesians 1:13-14). Yet believers who partner with deceivers still suffer real loss: usefulness, household peace, credible witness, eternal reward, and the Father's discipline.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Ephesians 5:1. Why does it matter that "be imitators" is better understood as "become imitators"? How does that change the way you evaluate your own progress?
2. Paul points to Christ in verse 2 as the pattern for walking in love. Compare John 15:13 and Galatians 5:22-23. What does walking in love actually cost, and where is it currently costing you something?
3. Verse 3 says fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness should not even be named among the saints. Ephesian culture treated sexual sin as unremarkable. Where does our culture do the same, and where have you absorbed that thinking without noticing?
4. Verse 4 addresses what we say and what we laugh at. Which is harder for you to surrender: filthiness, foolish talking, or coarse jesting? What makes it hard?
5. Read Ephesians 1:13-14 alongside Ephesians 5:5-6. How do these passages together answer the fear that sin can cost a believer their salvation, and what does a believer genuinely stand to lose instead?
6. Verse 7 says do not be partakers with them. Who or what is currently shaping your appetites, humor, and thinking more than Scripture is? What would stepping back look like this week?

Applications

1. **Name one thing and confess it.** Return to verses 3 and 4, identify the single item God pressed on during the message, and bring it to Him in specific confession before this day ends.
2. **Audit your partners.** List the voices, feeds, group chats, and friendships shaping what you want and what you laugh at. Choose one to step back from this week, and tell someone you did it.
3. **Replace it with thanks.** Paul's remedy for a coarse mouth is gratitude. Each day this week, when you catch the joke or the complaint forming, speak a specific thanks out loud instead.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that our standing before You was settled by grace through faith and not by anything we could perform. Thank You for sealing us with Your Spirit and guaranteeing our inheritance. Forgive us for the ways we have carried the world's appetites, the world's humor, and the world's speech into Your family. Give us no patience for empty words that promise sin costs nothing. Make us glad in the process of becoming, and let the resemblance grow. Teach our mouths gratitude. Show us where we have partnered with what opposes You, and give us courage to step back today. We are Your children. Help us live like it, for the glory of Your Son. In Jesus' name, amen.