

Ephesians Week 9

5:1-20

Summary

Summary of the Text

It is in light of God's forgiveness of us in Christ that leads to Paul commanding us to be imitators of God himself. This imitation is set in the context of childhood. We have been adopted and now we must display the family characteristics - the very ones Christ himself displayed in offering himself as a sacrifice. This is a mixed metaphor of sorts, we are to be like God as his children and by so doing we give ourselves as a offering.

This, of course, is why it would be completely inappropriate to have any immorality, impurity, greed, filthiness, silly talk, or coarse jesting, because we are to be a living sacrifice - which requires we be unblemished, that is holy. There are those who would seek to deceive God's people attempting to pervert the purity of God's people but we are to rebuff them and even exposed their darkness to the light of God's gospel. In so doing, we invite the dead (those of the world, the sons of darkness, the children of disobedience) to rise.

Our time is short so we must walk right while we have the time to, being focused on God's will being filled with the Spirit, building each other up, giving thanks to God in Christ.

Application

Our seeking of self pleasure is a modern day, western type of idolatry. Power, money, spirituality and sex are all versions of this idolatry. Our need as the people of God is to continue to reject idolatry by seeking to live as imitators of God. Though this command seems monumental it is actually required of us. There are a few strategies to accomplishing this. First, remember that this is an on going process, it does not happen over night - we are to become imitators of God. Second, this propels us to study Scripture seriously. If we are to imitate God by giving ourselves up, then we need to be looking at Jesus through the pages of Scripture. Third, we are given the gift of one another. Just as Paul can say to the church, 'follow me as I follow Christ.' So we have been gifted with saints who have gone ahead of us, showing us what it means to live like Christ. Find these saints and follow them.

Discussion

Once again we talked about why the contemporary church struggles with issue of attendance and retention. We agree that there are many reasons why some come but do not stay, and why some leave after a long time. Sometimes it is because there is such a selection to choose from, so any sense of boredom or not fitting me - they leave. Some are looking for particular programs, some just looking.

A large problem is the modern day mind set which believes we are free autonomous people, even Christians. That we get to choose for ourselves and even get to seek after our own self fulfillment. There is no submission to the community itself. In the early church entry to the church was difficult and strict. The Christian seeking to be part of the church was submitting themselves to be formed as a Christian by the community and the authority of God invested in it. To leave is to reject faith, God.

So, we live in a tension. We have convinced ourselves that numbers is the mark of success and because of that we have altered the seriousness of the gospel and the call of discipleship

so people will come. But, in altering that seriousness we no longer form people who understand the role and need to submit to the authority of the community for the purpose of formation. It was asked, what is the solution. We concluded that the solution is multifaceted. We need to commit to discipling people to be serious Christians who take their development seriously. This is in the place of filling our churches. Once we stop worrying about filling our church and start worrying about making disciples who make disciples then we will begin to reshape the contemporary church.