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Main Idea: What does it mean to be a Christian? It is to be “Christ-like,” as to imitate Christ, Who is our Lord, so we can be like Him. This means we follow Christ’s example, because we are deeply loved. We can do this by Jesus’ example, by His sacrifice for us. We can walk as His Children in His love and be loving and kind to others, so they will know Who He is by our example. Therefore, we can be people of honor and character, so we do not fall to sexual immorality or become greedy. We can be people who do not use bad language or tell inappropriate jokes. We can be people who do not act foolish, nasty, or without sense. We do not have to connive or scheme. Rather, we are grateful with a clear knowledge that we owe God for all He has done. From this truth, we will be caring and pleasant to be around. The people who are in Christ’s Kingdom represent Him; we do not want to represent Christ through sin or foolhardy behaviors. People who are unrepentant and evil will have no part of Christ, and we should not follow in their behaviors. We should also be careful that we are not deceived by such wicked people so we do not partake of their foolishness and face the consequences of our bad choices.

Contexts and Background:

The themes here came from Plato's "shadow philosophy," and Philo's "imitation of God," to draw a moral 'imitation.' To have a desire for real truth needs a foundation. Paul's point was to draw on this known theme to get his people to think and consider what we have in Christ to experience our new lives, verses going back to our old lives. Real Truth is something we want to learn for effectual lives and churches. Many Christians were duped in new philosophies that stated as long as we are in Christ, our connection to purity is maintained; thus, we can sin and live as we please. Paul emphatically fights this heinous notion. We have no right to sin deliberately thinking, *I am already forgiven so it is OK to sin* (Col. 1:9; 3:1-11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:2)!

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Follow God's example/imitators of God.* This means to mimic like an actor, to imitate. This is a call to follow Christ as Lord and not our whims, ideas, or anything that is false or contrary to His Word. The name "Christian" presupposes we are like Jesus Christ, receiving Him as Savior and as Lord as well as imitating His precepts. It means asking, "What would Jesus have me do?" Jesus taught and walked alongside others to show them His Way. We are to be examples of His call and reflect His precepts in our lives and into the lives of others. Make sure you and your church are doing as Christ does; *make disciples* (Matt. 28:16-20; Rom. 14:13-23; 15:1-6; Rom. 15:1-6 Eph. 5:1-2)!
- *Dearly loved/loved children.* God loves you and accepts you more powerfully, passionately, purposefully, and deeply than you could ever fathom! You are secure. God "guarantees" you with a clear, powerful, loving, impacting, and eternal relationship with Him. When you are in Christ, God is pleased with you! You have no need to fear; you are a person of deep value and worth before our Lord! You are forgiven because of Christ and His righteousness that covers you--not because of your deeds or performance. You are unique and complete in Him; and because of this, you are a special person whom God loves and will use to further impact His kingdom (John 6:37, 44, 65; 13:1; 15:16; Rom. 5:1-8; Eph. 1:4-5; Phil. 1:6; Col. 1:21-22; 2:10; 3:12-14; 1 John 1:5; 4:8-11; 5:1)!
- *Walk in the way of love.* How do we imitate God? We love. Because we are loved, we can and should respond out of gratitude to live your lives in love—the same sort of love which Christ. Living our lives because we are as beloved children, we will walk in love. We will be kind to one another. Which would you rather be given to you by the people around you, anger and bitterness, or kindness and love (1 Cor. 13)?

- *Fragrant offering/sweet smelling Savor.* This means God accepted Christ's sacrifice for our sins. This refers to something brought to the altar for sacrifice to please God, given or slain for the remission of one's sins to please God's wrath for sin. This is described as a sweet smell to God, pleased with our obedience and faith. Christ did that for us as the one and for all sacrifice and what we are called to do being devoted to Christ: Aligning our desires, plans, worship, and hope with God and His principles in attitude and action (Gen. 8:21; Ex. 29:18; Lev. 4:7; Num. 4:16; 2 Chron. 2:4; 2 13:11; 22:19; Psalm 1:2; 34:8; Isa. 26:3; Ezek. 20:28, 41; Matt. 6:24; Rom. 6:13; 12:10; 14:7- 8; 1 Cor.10: 31; Phil. 4:18; Col. 3:1-3, 17, 23).
- *Not be even a hint of/named.* We are not to be self-centered, where we despise or hinder ourselves or others the faith. A Christian must walk with character and distinction, which is our call, witness and how we glorify God. If we profess Christ and do not adhere to His principles we are fakes at best, a devil at worst. We are not walking in the Holy Spirit and disgrace our church, family and our witness.
- *Sexual immorality/fornication.* Sin and pleasure were sccommon pagan practice, seeking to please one's self regardless of the consequences.
- *Impurity.* Do not accommodate the culture; adhere to God's principles not man's. God does not cater to sin, water down, or trivialize a Christian's duty to truth and right living. God's standards are for a reason and for our benefit and that of the community, too. When we take in worldly culture as our own, we become callous and unconcerned with truth or the true benefit of self and others (Prov. 5:18-19; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Thess. 4:4-7; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; Heb. 13:4; James 1:13-16).
- *Greed/covetousness.* This is a lustful desire. Gluttony, stinginess, selfishness, and miserliness are the rotten fruits, because we hoard what God has given us, what He meant for us to share, and we do not use it properly as Christ called us to do. This blocks the flow of God's blessings from flowing in us. We will become stagnant and useless to either the Kingdom or the people around us. The cause fear or pride and arrogance, these will be the driving force--the quintessential things that God hates the most (Prov. 6:16-18; 1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:10; Col. 3:5)!
- *Improper for God's holy people... obscenity, foolish talk, coarse joking.* This means that one is acting like a fool. Sin not only dishonors our Lord and Christianity, it will cause us to fail and fall or to suffer. One's passions and desires can easily become unhinged from thoughts and virtue and cause one to be temporally insane and do wicked things (Rom. 1:26; Gal. 5:19).
- *Thanksgiving.* This means being grateful for Who and what Christ has done. This is not just an expression; rather, it is an attitude of gratitude which is essential for our faith and practice, no matter what we have been through or have lost. Being thankful also helps us to see hope, and to forgive and live and have joy by which we display God's goodness. Without gratitude, we are ungrateful. This is an insult to God. Without gratitude, we will live a self-inflicted, miserable, hopeless life, no matter what we have or could have; thus, God's goodness that is to be shown through us is veiled by our contempt (Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:14; Eph. 1:6; Philp. 1:3-4; Col. 1:3,12; 2:7; 3:15-17; 4:2; 1 Thess. 1:2).
- *Idolater.* And idol is anything that keeps our focus off of Christ. This can even be a desire or impulse that goes unchecked or without accountability and causes one to sin. Without having our thoughts on Christ, we will lust and then sin because we are self-seeking and not Christ-seeking (1 Thess. 4:3-7; James 1:15; 4:2; 1 John 5:21).
- *Inheritance in the kingdom of Christ.* This means we are "assigned a portion," because we belong to God as His children. We have special status before our Lord! We are His! Our identity in Him must affect us personally and publicly, and we synergize into a community. We are God's people, adopted by Him. God fulfills His promise and plan; nothing can stop it. Why would we not want it? If we continue in sinful practices, this means we refuse God's best plan for our life (Gen. 12:1-3; Deut. 7:6; 32:9; Psalm 33:12;

Hag. 2:5; Matt. 5:5; 25:34; Rom. 8:17-23; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 1:11-14; 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:14; James 2:5; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

- *Deceive you.* This is referring to luring people to or back to sin after they have escaped it by turning to Jesus. When we are new to the faith or not grounded enough in the Word to know His principles, we can be easily deceived (2 Pet. 2:17-22).
- *Empty/vain words.* This means 'without content,' using arguments to persuade, but, under logic or careful factual examination, the words are empty and meaningless. In Christ, He empowers us with His Word to know the Truth. No one will be able to deceive us with false ideas or persuasive words. When we are uncertain, we should have people near and far to help us as well as the Holy Spirit's empowerment (Isaiah 36:5; Mark 12:3; 2 Peter 2:18; 3:3-4).
- *God's wrath.* God hates malicious intent on His Children. God hates it when we hurt others and others hurt us, which sin does. This is God's just reaction to sin, as He is The Creator and Sustainer of all things, is totally against sin and will make sure that it is punished. Sin brings out God's anger because it hurts and rejects the real truth. God shows His love by the Cross. It is the place of sacrifice He takes on our behalf that pours His life into us. We receive grace--salvation and eternal life because we are covered by His atonement that makes it possible for our redemption, only through Christ's blood and suffering, which was the sacrifice for our reconciliation, to bind us in good relationship back to our Creator and Lord (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 1:18; 53:6; Zech. 1:2; Matt. 5: 3-12; Luke 22:20; John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 3:23-25; 5:6-10; 7:4; 8:1-3; 5:9; 1 Cor. 1:18; 5:7; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Eph. 1:7; 2:2-16; Col.1: 20; 1 Thess. 1:10; Titus 2:12; Heb. 7:27; 9:14, 22; 10:10-25; 1 Pet. 1:19-21 John 1:7; 2:2; Rev. 1:5-6; 11:18;13:8; 22:14)!
- *Disobedient.* This means indulging our *sinful nature*. We cannot change ourselves. This is precisely why we need a Savior. But once saved, we can do our due diligence to holy living (Eph. 2:1-10!)
- *Do not associate/be partners/not become involved/partakers.* This means to share in or be influenced by. This does not mean we separate ourselves from culture; it does mean that do not partner with or succumb to its ways. Christians are not to be antisocial, rather engage the culture as examples, but maintain our loyalty to Christ as Lord (Job 34:8 Psalm 50:18.).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications: Instead of acting like fools, we should act as we have been redeemed. How? Bringing our minds, our wills, and our hearts to God so our whole life is about seeking Him and His will. Real Christianity is following after Christ in gratitude, as an offering, by what Christ has done. Pleasing ourselves is not what the Christian life is, as so many chase. We are to be imitators, so it transforms our being and character, then pursue His character, seeking what will Jesus have me do and be. We are to do this by and through love with kindness to others as Christ did with us, that we did not deserve.

Church Leadership Tip: The Christian leader is called to model and inspire kindness, love, empathy, compassion—and, out of these, will flow forgiveness. God wants us to get with it, to wake up, and seize the wonders and opportunities He gives us. A bad or unforgiving attitude will choke us off from His wonders (Prov. 3:7; James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6-7).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?

6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How were you (or are you) affected by peer pressure in school (clothes, job, car, friends, etc.)?
2. Are you an offering to God? Has the Christian faith impacted all of you, who you are as well as what you do?
3. What does it mean to strive to live as *imitators* in all we do? How can you make it so?
4. If God is love why is there wrath?
5. Do you appreciate that Christ lived and died in your place? Are you confident that Christ loves you, and gave Himself up for you as a fragrant offering, a sacrifice to God?
6. How is your church affected by new trends and ideas of doing church?
7. Have you realized that Christ lived and died in your place? We should be, but so hits home?
8. Do you fully realize the magnitude of the fact that God has forgiven all of your sins, all the sins you have ever committed, and will ever commit? What does that mean?
9. How can we honor our Lord when we do not honor what He has taught us (John 14:15)?
10. As we grow in our faith and maturity, how can we better desire Christ over the ways of the world?
11. What can you do better so the Christian faith impacts all of you, who you are as well as what you do?
12. What can you do to be more grateful? How would that affect your life?