

1. Be imitators of God

- a. Therefore - related to God's graciousness towards us in Christ (chaps 1-3)
 - i. Because of God's glorious grace shown toward us in Christ...
 1. 4:1-16 – "Therefore...walk" in unity
 2. 4:17-32 – "Therefore...walk" in holiness/righteousness
 3. 5:1-6 – "Therefore...walk" in love
- b. Imperative
- c. "imitate" has the connotation of being as close to the original as possible, used of actors and fraud/counterfeits
 - i. we are to imitate God, who is our "original" which we emulate
 - ii. We are commanded to act like Him
 1. Unity
 2. Holiness/Righteousness
 3. Love
 4. NOT in His self-exaltation or self-rule of *ourselves*
 - a. God worships that which is worthy of worship, i.e. Himself
 - b. We worship that which is most worthy of worship, i.e. God (not ourselves)
 5. NOT in His authority or Savior-ship
 - a. Isa 45:22 – "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."
 - b. Isa 46:9 – "...I am God and there is no one like Me."
 - c. ILLUSTRATION: The girls and the "daddy-hat"
 - iii. This imperative lies within some "just as" phrases that relate God and His work to the commands for us to walk
 1. Walk in Unity –
 - a. "just as you were called to one hope of your calling" (4:4)
 2. Walk in Righteousness –
 - a. Walk in Truth - "just as the Truth is in Jesus" (4:21)
 - b. "forgive just as God, in Christ, forgave you" (4:32)
 3. Walk in Love –
 - a. "just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us" (5:2)
 - b. You are light in the Lord, walk as children of light (5:8)
- d. Gospel-centered: in Christ
 - i. Imitate God in Christ, the God-Man
 - ii. Not *merely* an imitation of ethic or of morality, but a deeper transformation based upon the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ (gave Himself up for us a fragrant aromatic sacrifice to God).
 - iii. We are called to walk according to the revealed desires and actions of God

2. As children who are loved

- a. How does our sonship affect our living faithfully (in righteousness and holiness, 4:24)?
- b. What does it mean to imitate God as a loving Father?
 - i. How is this different than a moralist?
 1. A moralist will produce outwardly good behaviors in order to try and gain the love of the father (orphan living).
 2. This understanding produces deep fear when the orphan fails, because the father's love is seen to depend upon the perfect performance of the child.

3. This understanding produces deep arrogance when the orphan succeeds, because the orphan feels, for the moment, that the father loves them *better than* the other children who are not succeeding.
 - a. John 21:21-22 – Peter asking about what will happen to John
 - b. Gal 5:26 – boasting and envying one another
- ii. How is this different than cheap grace, or presumption?
 1. Cheap grace says that God *has to love* us and it doesn't matter how we live or what we do.
 2. This understanding produces a lifestyle of selfish presumption and entitlement, because the Father is not loved by the child, but is seen to serve the child.
 3. This understanding produces no inner transformation of unity, righteousness, or love because it only imitates the aspects of the Father that it judges to be *worthy* of imitation. Ultimately, we make ourselves out to the father and turn God into the child through apathy or outright rebellion.
- c. "children"
 - i. is *τεκνα* (tekna), indicating relationship of dependency
 1. Luke 9:46ff – Jesus' instruction to become like a child in dependence
 2. Matt 9:2 – "take heart, child, your sins are forgiven" dependent faith
 - ii. different than "sons" which indicates *position or right to inheritance*
 - iii. This abolishes both the fear of the orphan and the presumptive independence of the cheap grace
 1. The prodigal was really about both sons: the prodigal who became an orphan and the elder son who became presumptuous.
 2. They both needed to be saved by the Father
- d. "loved" is particularly used of a child's contentedness because of the love of their parents, used often in antiquity of an only child who received a great outpouring of love
 - i. God's love of His children is so great that He sacrificed Himself so that His own righteous character would be satisfied! The cross removed God's anger and made you sons!
 - ii. "If God is for us..." Your FATHER, in Christ, is completely for you! Trust Him and imitate Him.
 - iii. Your Father takes your best efforts to please Him, ugly and tainted as they are, and receives them with joy, because Christ's blood has purified them and the Spirit intercedes in them!
 1. Jack Miller illustration about the white shirt and the wheelbarrow

3. Walk in Love

- a. "Walk" is the way in which we live our lives, our external behaviors that are based upon the internalized truth of the Gospel
- b. Love as Jesus loved us
 - i. Gave Himself up for us
 - ii. Gave Himself up as a sacrifice
 - iii. Gave Himself up as one pleasing to God
 1. Jesus' death on the cross satisfied God's wrath
 2. It was a sacrifice that was a pleasant aroma to God
 3. This offering of Himself was "for us" – substitutionary

"The righteous, loving Father humbled himself to become in and through his only Son's flesh, sin and a curse for us, in order to redeem us without compromising his own character. The biblical gospel of atonement is of God satisfying himself by

substituting himself for us... The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.”— John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*

- c. To walk in love is to give ourselves up for others, self-sacrificially, to the honor and pleasure of God
 - i. We can do this *because* of all that Christ has done for us! Chapters 1-3
 - ii. We don't have to fear being seen as weak: Your Father Loves You!
 - iii. We don't have to fear losing our reputation: Your Father Loves You!
 - iv. We don't have to fear God's wrath: Christ Died For You!! Look at the Cross!!

4. Our Lives Are to be Gospel-Centered

- a. Any moving away from the Gospel is empty
 - i. Severity of sin – Jesus became sin
 - 1. Challenges a low view of sin (sin isn't that bad; God wasn't *wrathful*)
 - a. Sin brings eternal death and condemnation
 - b. Jesus died to bear up our eternal death and condemnation by an Almighty God
 - 2. My sin is so egregious to God that Jesus had to DIE
 - ii. Substitution of Jesus – *for us*
 - 1. Challenges the view that we have to perform to attain forgiveness and righteousness (Phariseeism)
 - a. We cannot be righteous enough to gain acceptance w/God, if we could then Jesus wouldn't have had to die *for us*
 - b. He *died* in our place
 - 2. He loves me so much that HE DID die for me
 - a. Christ loves you!! He has become the curse for you, so that you are reckoned as perfectly righteous before the Father!
 - b.
 - iii. All in Jesus – in Him we have LIFE
 - 1. There is no other
 - 2. He has completed all that we need for salvation
 - a. Do we love Him? Do we submit to Him? Are we dying to ourselves so that we might live to God? Do I trust Him so that I will risk it all on Him and for Him?
 - b. Do I trust His work enough to repent? Or, am I still trying to earn it so that repentance tears down my own righteousness?
 - c. Do I trust His sacrifice and His loving promises enough to repent of my faithlessness daily and trust His Word?
 - 3. We do not move away from His complete SACRIFICE – FOR US – TO WALK WORTHILY in grateful and hopeful inner transformation
 - a. Has the grace of God shown to you led you to live for the one who became sin in your place, died, and has risen again to live as your Master?!!
 - b. Imitate God as your loving Father, trusting His grace as evidenced in His incredible plan of your salvation through His satisfaction through His substitution in your place. It is finished!

- b. In the gospel of Jesus the Holy Spirit *convicts us of our sin, and then takes us to Jesus*, where we see the whole truth of the gospel of Jesus:
- i. we are more deeply sinful that we even know and that sin is terribly egregious and an affront to God Himself. It brings wrath and judgment and Hellfire! **It is so serious and real that Jesus had to come and die to satisfy God's justice!**
 - ii. we are more deeply loved than we can even dare to hope, for the Father did not leave us under His wrath but sent His Son to die in our place and bear up our sins, even in their ferocity. **By His grace He has done it all and He loves us so much that He DID die for us to satisfy God's justice! You belong to God as beloved sons!**
 1. So, in the gospel we see that:
 - a. we cannot stay in the realm of accusation, for when we do we have forgotten the grace of Jesus and His complete work on the cross. We don't believe that Jesus satisfied God's justice.
 - b. Nor can we live without the truth that our sin rightly brings God's wrath and live only in the realm of excusing our sins; of false-peace, where we excuse our sin as nothing and pass it off as inconsequential. We don't repent. We have forgotten that we are saved by sheer grace and it took the death of the Son of God to free us from sin's deadly grasp.
 - a. If we forget either of these truths, we will be buffeted by fear, anxiety, and pride, living our lives being tossed back and forth without peace. Maybe you live there today and you feel tossed about, listless, and terror has overcome you more and more often as of late.
 2. In the gospel repentance is joyful and free, not merely somber and sad, for God is our Father. We repent to a Father, not merely a judge.
 - a. Christ is our righteousness, so our failures to live perfectly do not mean that you are cast out by the Father. We risk and rest in Christ.
 - b. Some examples of how this works in the gospel:
 - i. Worship:
 1. God is transcendent - holy
 2. God is immanent – near
 3. His imminence makes His transcendence comforting, while His transcendence makes His immanence amazing! The gospel leads us to both awe and intimacy in worship because the Holy One of heaven is our Father !
 - ii. Righteous Living:
 1. Self-salvation leads us to walk *so that* God will accept us or so that we feel better about ourselves
 2. Both these motives are self-salvation, with no room for Christ as a complete Savior from sin
 3. The gospel leads us to “do the right thing” as a joy and a delight for the sake of our Father, out of great love for Him and gratitude to Christ, not as a burden or a means to an end.
 - iii. Relationships:
 1. The orphan makes relationships into a “blame-game” because criticism traumatizes him. So, believing that his position and self-image is based upon his “goodness” he will blame others

2. The presumptuous child only relates as long as there is no risk, no cost. As soon as a relationship costs him something, he gets out. There is no deep trust in the Father.
3. Both are ways of getting rid of Jesus as the means to the Father and are forms of self-salvation and self-dependence.
4. The gospel shows us that our love and position is based upon the passive righteousness of Jesus Christ, as our sacrifice offered up to God and pleasing to Him.
 - a. So, we can accept criticism with openness and humility and not defend our own “goodness” (or perceived goodness) because Jesus is our goodness and our Father loves us deeply
 - b. We can accept great cost in our relationships and sacrifice without the need to prove that we are acceptable and good. We can love enough to confront someone even when it does not seem to benefit us, but comes at a great cost.

Conclusion:

Oh fellow Christians, Christ is our surety! He is our Rock of salvation! Let us stop trusting in our own works of goodness, even our self-actuated works of repentance, and trust in His perfect sacrifice as our standing before God! His blood secures our sonship and we belong to the Father! Think about that! You belong to God and are beloved by Him! When you fall down in your efforts to please Him, do not fear, Christ stands for you. When your best efforts seem so little in the face of your flesh, do not fear, draw near to Christ, He stands for you. Take great risks for the Lord, for God is Your Father! You are more deeply loved than you can even imagine, so repent with joy and lay all of your righteousness down and come by faith in Jesus as your righteousness, for by His blood He has made you sons of the Most High God, never to struggle alone, but given His very Spirit within you which cries out, “My Father!”