

We all know it to be true that children imitate their parents. The apple never falls very far from the tree. They're a chip off the old block, as we always like to say. And we can see that in our own children. The way that they act, the way that they talk, the way that they do things, it's often just like us. So much so that sometimes it's like looking into a mirror, seeing the way that they do things. And we can see it in other people's children too, the way that they imitate their own parents. And I think part of growing up, honestly, is coming to terms with that fact. Because there's many a young adult who realizes with horror how much they are like their parents. A son finding out he's just like dad, or a daughter finding out she's just like mom. We come to peace with that, and that's part of growing up. Children really do imitate their parents.

But children also imitate their parents in bad things too. They pick up their bad habits. They pick up their bad way of doing things. And even if parents try very, very hard to set a good example for their children, it doesn't always work. Because bad habits are always far easier to fall into than good ones. And so yes, children often are the spitting image of their parents, both in the good and in the bad.

And Christians, this is also true of spiritual things. You are just like your father. But the question that Paul asks us today is: who is your father? Because you will act like your father. You will think like your father. You will do what your father does in all spiritual things. But who is your father? Are you sons of God, or are you sons of disobedience?

And you can tell the difference between those two things in the way that you think and act. Because if you have God as your Father, you'll be able to see it. The world will be able to see it. You will think like him. You will act like him. You will do what he does. You will walk in light, seeking what is good and right and true. Because in that way, we imitate God as our Father. And in the same way, we will be joined with one another as fellow Christians, because we are siblings, having the same Father in God. And just like children can't hide the fact that they are like their parents, so we also do the same. If God is our Father, our lives will be filled with thanksgiving. Our lives will be filled with all that is good.

But the sons of disobedience have a different father. And you can see that also in the way that they act and think. They live lives which are filled with sexual immorality. They live lives which are filled with impurity. They live lives which are filled with covetousness. Their talk will be filled, Paul says, with filthiness, foolishness, and crude joking, because they are just like their father. Only, their father isn't God. And because of that they have no part, Paul says, in the kingdom of God. God is going to pour out his wrath upon them and pour out his judgment upon them, because they belong to the world. And they think like the world. And they will perish along with the world.

So you can tell who your father is, then, by the way that you think and the way that you act. As Jesus tells us, you know a tree by what kind of fruit it produces. A good tree produces good fruit. A bad tree produces bad fruit. Good trees can't make bad fruit. Bad trees can't make good fruit. You will know them by their fruits. And so when we act like the world and act like the sons of disobedience, we run the risk of becoming like the world, of becoming joined to them. Seeking after darkness means that we will leave behind the light. So how we live then as Christians makes a difference.

This is why Paul says in verse 7: "Therefore do not become partners with them." Or as it was in our bulletin: "Don't associate with them." And that word which is translated as "partners" or "associate" is a word which means to be joined together, to become as one. In fact, Paul uses this word earlier in Ephesians. In Ephesians chapter 3, he says: "This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." That word "partakers" is the same word. So "partners," "associate," "partakers," it's all the same thing. Back in Ephesians 3, Paul is saying that Jews and Gentiles have been joined together into one body. They have been made one in Jesus Christ, so that they are now brothers. In fact, more than brothers because they have the same Father. They have God as the Father of them all.

And so for us to become partners with the world, or partakers, or to associate with them means that we are joined together with the world. We start to think like them. We start to act like them. We start to do what they do, so that there is no difference at all between us and the unbelieving world. You could even say that we have become brothers, having the same father. But that father is not God. And this brotherhood will lead us into destruction.

So Paul urges us then: don't become like them! You have a different Father. The things that the sons of disobedience do should not even be named among us, as is proper among saints. Now, Paul doesn't mean that we can't talk about them or that we shouldn't rebuke them. If he meant we shouldn't ever talk about them, he would be guilty of the very thing he's talking about, because he talks about it right here! So not naming them means not going after them. It means not doing them. It means not seeking after them or approving of them. We should seek after what is good and not what is evil. We should seek after what is light and not what is dark. In other words, Paul says, we should walk as children of light.

And this walking as children of light shows itself in ways that can be seen. It's not just something that we talk about and we agree with in general. It's something that changes the very way that we live. Because if we say one thing and do another, Christians, what does that say about who our father really is? Or if we find ourselves neglecting the things of God--neglecting things like the Word or prayer or coming to church or whatever it may be--neglecting the things of God for the things of the world, what does that say about who our father is? If our talk is shaped by the world, so that no one can tell the difference between us and the one who doesn't believe in God by the way that we talk to one another, what does that say about who our father is? Or if we think like the world, especially through the influence of the media, or if we desire the same things as the world, so that we want the same things that they do, what does that say about who our father is? We should turn away from these things, Paul says, because we don't have the same father as the world. We have a different Father in God.

As he says in verse 8: "At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." Christians, we were all once in darkness. We were all once still part of the world, having the same father as the world. But no longer! Because God has given to you his Son, Jesus Christ, to take you out of the world, to make you his own. You have become light in the Lord because of what Jesus has done for you. Jesus sacrificed himself to the Father so that you would become

adopted as children, so that you would be joined together into one body. And your inheritance is in heaven.

So walk as children of light, Christians. Seek after what is good and right and true. Imitate your Father in everything! The way that you think, the way that you act, the way that you talk. Because God has made you his own child through his Son, Jesus Christ. Turn away from the world and its darkness. Have nothing to do with it. No longer associate with them. But turn towards God, because he loves you. And walk with one another in love, because you are all siblings in the Lord. Above all, give thanks for all that God has done for you in Jesus Christ. Be like your Father, Christians! Because God has made you his own in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, you have knit us together into one body in Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us always to walk in love with one another and to act and think like you, because you have made us your own. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.