

**13<sup>th</sup> November 2019.**

## **OUR IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST.**

### **I Corinthians 11:1.**

In continuance with our studies of Paul's letter to the Corinthians tonight, having answered the cases put to him, as we considered the principles of marriage and liberty in the church, The Apostle Paul, proceeds in this section to the redress of grievances, which took on a way of having order in the fellowship meetings they had, with regards to their dressing, etiquette as well as exercise of spiritual gifts. And in response to feedback gotten, I will henceforth teach expository rather than thematically, so let's be ready to expound scripture and be blessed thereof by the Holy Spirit.

The first verse of the chapter is put, by those who divided the epistle into chapters, as a preface to the rest of the epistle, but seems to have been a more proper close to the last, in which he had enforced the cautions he had given against the abuse of liberty, by his own example:

“PATTERN YOURSELVES after me [follow my example], as I imitate and follow Christ (the Messiah)[Amp], fitly closes his argument; and the way of speaking in the next verse looks like a transition to another. But, whether it more properly belongs to this or the last chapter, it is plain from it that Paul not only preached such doctrine as they ought to believe, but led such a life as they ought to imitate. “Be imitators of me; - live as you see me live.” Note, Ministers are likely to preach most to the purpose when they can press their hearers to follow their example. Yet would not Paul be followed blindly neither. He encourages neither implicit faith nor obedience - that is faith or obedience that is not cautious. He would be followed himself no further than he followed Christ. Christ's pattern is a copy without a blot; so is no man's else.

Paul told the Ephesians likewise in Eph. 5:1&2 “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

Note, we should follow no leader further than he follows Christ. So called ‘Apostles’(sent of God) should be left by us when they deviate from the example

of their Master if they proclaim Him to be Jesus Christ. Someone is quoted to have said “Your life speaks so loud I can’t hear what you say”. The single greatest tool of leadership is the power of an exemplary life. Thomas Fuller said “Teaching is like putting nails in the wood, example is like hammering them deep.”

Remember, or consider that in I Cor. 4:14-17, Paul had told these guys.....

In exhorting Timothy to effective ministry, Paul said in I Tim 4:11- 16, “These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

In that if he gives a bad example **in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity** to those that hear him, he will destroy both himself and them.

If however, he continually meditates on the instructions Paul was giving him, which we have as the scriptures, the Word of God, the same way Joshua was instructed by God in Joshua 1:8 “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

His progress shall be evident to all, and he shall be successful in ministry and prosperous as well.

It amazes me, literally shamefully, that as a Bible teaching church with a mission to love and disciple we are the way we are. Even with the Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ having His authority given to us in heaven and on earth. To go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that He has commanded us; with an assurance that He is with us always, even to the end of the age. [How many of us have joined the missions team on Friday even once? Or do reach out at least once a week? Let alone pray for the unsaved at all?]

Sure enough all of us are a work in progress that is why our progress should be real and therefore evident to all. That in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity, we are becoming more like Jesus Christ, with the patterns we are observing in the scriptures. [More like the sermon we had on Sunday in the Luganda service that we need to be intentional at being witnesses of Jesus Christ. Col. 4:5,6].

Same as Paul says in Phil. 3:17... “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.”

“Since all of us believers are imperfect, we need examples of less imperfect people who know how to deal with imperfection and who can model the process of pursuing the goal of Christlikeness, as the Apostle Paul was”[MacArthur].

That’s the context we have Phil. 3: 17 drawn from..... vs 12 – 16.....

That’s why we are ‘entrustingly’ blessed with the Word of God, to enable us like Jesus Christ be wholly obedient to God. Who said in John 4:34 “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work”.....

Imagine, that, that you will not eat until your siblings are all born again!

Or that the witches are all driven from your village.....

Jesus would.... coz he was perfect..... So in the chapter preceding, Paul kept laboring about not eating meat sacrificed to idols if it stumbles a bother, and to take it generally not doing that that would hinder the growth of our brethren’s faith but that [ch.10:31-33] Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Giving no offense, either to the ‘Catholics’ or to the ‘Moslems’ or to the church of God, just as he also sought to please all men in all things,(surely within the limits of God’s Word and his Christian conscience) not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

That’s why he exhorts, that we should imitate him as he imitated Christ.

Because God’s major business is the salvation of souls, that’s the means of His Kingdom coming on earth, and His will being done on earth as it is in Heaven.