



Imitate that which is Good

Message for May 2019 – 18

International Missionary Society
Seventh-Day Adventist Church
Reform Movement
YOUTH DEPARTMENT OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

My dear youth,

I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and ask that His blessings, love, and guidance be upon you in abundance.

The tendency to imitate

Today I invite you to reflect on the text of 3 John 1:11, **“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”**

Human beings by nature like evil, whether we want to admit it or not, history proves it. That is why it is not surprising that we tend to imitate the bad. Evil spreads like a virus and it is very difficult to contain it. This is the consequence of sin. In the natural world there are examples that confirm it. If in a drawer there are several pounds of apples in good condition and among them all one is in decomposition phase, the rest of apples, however many pounds there are, will never be able to stop the rotting of that single apple. The opposite will happen; the apple in bad conditions will rot the others. So it is with people. A person who is infected by a virus will infect thousands, but thousands of healthy people will not be able to make that patient healthy.

In the spiritual realm the same thing happens, that is why God always warned his children: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to evil." Exodus 23:2. The reason is because pagan nations lived far from God and had degrading customs, and since it is easier to imitate evil than good, they should refrain from relating to those nations.

The people of Israel had to expel the tribes that lived in the land of Canaan in order to take possession of it; this was the divine order: "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto her are, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son." Deuteronomy 7:3. The basis for this divine edict is seen in the following verse: "For they will turn away from me, they will serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly." Deuteronomy 7:4.

But we see that they did not fulfill God's desire and made many of these nation's tributaries. They were allowed to dwell with them and the Israelites became contaminated; the process of degradation or spiritual decay affected them quickly, as the rotten apple affects the healthy ones.

The degradation of the human

When the kings of Israel made an alliance with the heathen nations through marriages, they quickly stopped seeing the disastrous results for the Israelite nation. Solomon was a clear case. His marriages with unbelieving women, of habits contrary to the faith of the people of God, turned their hearts away from the truth and ended up building temples to pagan deities, thus giving their people the opportunity to worship them, something contrary to the law of God. What a terrible influence the wisest king on earth exercised in imitating evil! Many Israelites deviated from the faith because of Solomon, that young king who at the beginning of his reign was honored in a special way: "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore." 1 Kings 4:29.

What spiritual greatness the king could have developed. God had given him the potential to reach a great height, however he decided to imitate evil. The Spirit of Prophecy says: "From the joy of divine communion, Solomon turned to find satisfaction in the pleasures of sense... By his own bitter experience, Solomon learned the emptiness of a life that seeks in earthly things its highest good. He erected altars to heathen gods, only to learn how vain is their promise of rest to the spirit... For him there was no longer any joy of life or peace of mind, and the future was dark with despair." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pg. 76. We know that after some time, this king repented of his sins and changed course to undo the bad he had done, but there always remained traces of his sins.

A decision that must be made

Today, the panorama in our modern societies has not changed much. Sin abounds as well as the people who practice it. By that natural law that governs the heart it is very difficult for Christians to stand firm in the faith and faithful to eternal principles. Only by the grace of God can we be preserved from evil.

But every servant of Christ must make a decision in his mind not to imitate evil and to refrain from all kinds of evil. Inspired pen tells us: "Many of the amusements popular in the world today, even with those who claim to be Christians, tend to the same end as did those of the heathen. There are indeed few among them that Satan does not turn to account in destroying souls. Through the drama he has worked for ages to excite passion and glorify vice. The opera, with its fascinating display and bewildering music, the masquerade, the dance, the card table, Satan employs to break down the barriers of principle and open the door to sensual indulgence. In every gathering for pleasure where pride is fostered or appetite indulged, where one is led to forget God and lose sight of eternal interests, there Satan is binding his chains about the soul." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pg. 459.

We must learn to imitate the good and the best way is by taking an irreproachable and perfect example, our Lord Jesus. People disappoint us and we also disappoint others. But the Lord Jesus is pure, holy, perfect, full of life and love, wonderful, kind, merciful, eternal. There was nothing in Him that tainted His character; the devil could not find anything to accuse Him, because He was perfect. Every human needs the example of Jesus: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:29.

Conclusion

Imitating Jesus gives us the guarantee that we have accepted the best model of the universe. "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." John 13:15.

The problem is that without divine help we cannot do it, because our nature is corrupted by sin. Best of all, dear youth, Jesus not only wants us to imitate Him, but he gives us the strength, the ability, the power of his Holy Spirit so that we can bring to fruition this exercise of faith. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Zechariah 4:6. May the Lord bless you and keep you, dear youth. Amen.

José Vicente Giner
Pastor and Director of the Youth Department
General Conference

For reflection:

1. Who did you always like to imitate?
2. Has he been a good model for you?
3. Has anyone you have decided to imitate disappointed you?
4. Since when did you decide to imitate Christ?

5. What kind of obstacles do you find in this spiritual enterprise?
6. What do you think that can help you to be like Jesus?

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