

To Be Like Jesus

We love to sing,

To be like Jesus, to be like Jesus, all I ask, to be like Him.

All through life's journey from earth to Glory

All I ask, to be like Him.

But how much do we really mean it? Personally, I believe most Christians really do mean it, but many don't realize what that entails. It certainly must include forgiving one another. In what we call the "Lord's Prayer," Jesus explains just one of the items, "But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses." (Matthew 6:15, NASB). Most Christians remember that one.

But another concept of being "like Him" is far less often recognized. In Ezekiel 18 God is quite clear that He, Himself, does not hold a son responsible for the sins of this father, nor the father responsible for the sins of his son. (Read Ezekiel chapter 18.) Therefore, if we are seeking to be more godly in our daily walk with Him, we must strive diligently to judge others as individuals rather than by their ancestry. That is usually far more difficult than we realize.

The reality of judging each person as an individual, can be excruciatingly hard! Racism, around the world, is a result of judging others by who their ancestors were: black / white; Muslim / Jew; Japanese / Chinese (yes, they have centuries-long violent conflicts), Comanche / Ute; etc., for virtually every people group on earth. Consider Naomi who was an Israelite and Ruth who was a Moabite - (Israel and Moab were traditional enemies). But as *individuals*, they became like mother and daughter, precious friends (see Ruth 1:16). How could that happen? They judged one another as individuals, not by the bloodline of their ancestors. In fact, Ruth was converted to Judaism, "Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God."

Likewise, King David had a faithful soldier in his army named Uriah. He was a Hittite, another nation which was a traditional enemy of Israel. How could that happen? David and Uriah must have judged one another by individual, personal merit and not the bloodline of their ancestors. (Yes, there's a lot more to that story, but that doesn't negate this ancestral reality.)

Today is no different. The current war between Israel and Hamas is based on millennia long bloodline hatred. (Notice that I say "Hamas" not "Palestinian.") The savage attack by Hamas that even killed babies is evil to the core. If anyone of any bloodline seeks to be pleasing to God, we must strive to be like Him, *not* holding the sins of the fathers against their offspring. Through thousands of years of wars on every continent in every century, bloodline hatred has fomented war and violence on totally innocent people - people who had nothing to do with former sins of violence. Again, in Ezekiel 18, God says, "**The person who sins will die. A son will not suffer *the punishment* for the father's guilt, nor will a father suffer *the punishment* for the son's guilt; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.**" The person who sins will die. A son will not suffer *the punishment* for the father's guilt, nor will a father suffer *the punishment* for the son's guilt; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself." If and when anyone tries to exact inter-generational punishment or revenge, he becomes very much *not* like God!

We rather easily understand and practice the concept *legally* - we don't put a son in prison for a crime his father committed. We don't execute the grand-children or great-grand-children of men who committed war crimes (on either side). So why do we often find it so hard to stop judging the progeny of evil men?

Let's keep singing "*To be like Jesus,*" and keep striving to do exactly that.

Ray Wallace