

Text: Eph 5:1-6

Title: “Walking in Love”

Intro: In Ephesians chapter 4—the Apostle Paul teaches that in conversion God has radically changed us in the inner man, and that inner life change must be reflected on the outside

- If God in Christ has completely changed you on the inside, you cannot remain the same on the outside
- There must be a spiritual fruitfulness in our lives that reflects the change on the inside.

Before the Lord saved us, we lived a completely different life.

- We lived for self—our will, our mind, our emotions—all centered around self and the exaltation of self
 - Self-worship
 - Self-fulfillment
 - Self-justification—we tried to justify self
- We excused our sin—we blamed others for the consequences of our choices
- We managed our guilt and learned ways that we cope under the heavy burden of our sin

When Christ saves us—all of our lives change—we experience conviction over sin—the love of Christ opens our eyes to the Truth—we suddenly realize that the root causes of our troubles are the sinful desires within, not the things around us—not our environment or troubled childhood or parents, etc.

- Suddenly, everything in the new life is in direct conflict with the old life
- New patterns of thinking arise—old patterns of behavior start to fall away
- The satisfaction that you once had in feeding the flesh and its appetites is no longer there.
- Selfishness starts to give way to selflessness.
- You become wise to the lies you once believed—the promises of the old life come up empty
- As your daily intake of Truth increases, your conscience becomes sensitive to the things of God and the ways of God.
- Christ becomes the focus of your life—life centers around Him and His righteousness and less around you and your weaknesses
- You begin to pray and trust God in ways you never imagined.

Notice:

4:25—truthfulness replaces lies

4:26-27—restraint replaces sinful anger

4:28—giving replaces consuming

4:29-30—edifying speech replaces speech that tears down

4:31-32—kindness replaces hatred

You no longer want to take advantage of others—Why? Because you begin to see others the way God does, and we treat them the way God has already treated us. Were to ‘forgive each other just as God in Christ has forgiven you’

In 5:2—we are to ‘walk in love, just as Christ also loved you’

This is the third time in the second half of the letter that Paul tells us how we are to live (walk) as Christians.

4:1-16—to walk in unity

4:17-32—to walk in holiness

5:1-6—to walk in love

The Apostle Paul ends chapter 4 with an exhortation to forgive others unconditionally because God in Christ has forgiven us—and then launches into chapter 5 by stating that we must imitate God and treat others with the same kind of love that Christ has loved us.

Prop: How we treat others is anchored in how we've been treated by God. The model for living a life of love is Christ's love and sacrificial offering of himself. In 5:1-2—we are told what to do, in 5:3-4—we are told what we must not do, and in 5:5-6—we are warned against failing to obey either

1. The positive command: 'imitate God by walking in love'.

5:1—"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;"—there are two statements in parallel: imitate + walk

'be imitators'—Lit the wd for 'mimic' (mimetes)—an 'actor' or 'impersonator'—could even refer to an 'imposter'—'one who followed another closely for the purpose of copying their speech and mannerisms'

Used of imitating others in the body:

- Phil 3:17—"Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."—(sum-mimetes)—Lit 'fellow or joint imitator'
- Following another person's character and life will result in practical changes in your behavior

Paul at times urged churches to emulate other congregations:

- 1 Thess 2:14—"For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews,"

Used of imitating the Apostle Paul's example as he imitated Christ:

- 2 Thess 3:7,9—"For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you...not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example."—whenever you begin to 'mimic' someone else, there's going to be some practical changes
 - When you pattern your life after someone, it will result in some practical changes in how you live your life.
- 1 Cor 4:16—"Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me."
- The idea is: 'following an example'—like making a dress—you have a pattern to follow and you cut the fabric to fit the pattern
- You cannot say you love Christ and not mimic Him.

What Paul says in 5:1—is that we’re to observe how God has loved us and treated us, and then mimic it by treating others in the same way.

- In other wds, ‘pattern your life after the pattern that God has shown to you and treat others in that same way.’
- “Therefore be imitators of God”—Lit ‘become’—(the same present imperative as in 4:32)—they are to ‘develop continuously into imitators of God’

We are God’s ‘beloved children’—and as such, we are to grow up following His pattern

Note: this is the only place in all of Scripture that we are called specifically to ‘imitate God himself’

God’s kindness, mercy, and love is to be the model of our conduct

‘as beloved children’—Lit ‘loved children’—‘tekna’= ‘child’—the term was often used in classical Greek of not just a child, but an only child—the purpose being to show the intensity of the parents love—an ‘only child’ was loved so much that he/she was secure and contented—Thus, it’s a term that shows a more intimate relationship than just the word for ‘son’

- A believer is a child that has experienced the love of God through Christ—we’ve been adopted into God’s family (1:5).
 - God chose us in Christ and marked us out—before time began, He fixed His electing love upon you when in reality, He should have judged and discarded you
 - God’s love has been ‘poured out into our hearts by the HS’ (Rom 5:5). That makes imitating God’s love possible.
- A ‘beloved child’ is one who has been loved intimately and intensely by God—therefore, ‘I should act like His child, I should think like a child of God, act like I belong to Him’
- If you’ve richly experienced God’s love, you should imitate that love toward others.
- Matt 5:44-45—“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”—imitate God’s love toward sinners
- Gal 2:20—“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”
- It is not enough to merely read redemptive language in the Bible—redemptive realities must translate into redemptive influence in our own lives

5:2—“and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”—we’re to ‘love as Christ loved’—every believer is to trace his life after Christ—and like tracing as a child, the closer and more careful we trace, the closer we are to the original.

- ‘How’ Christ loved us is what’s amplified here—Christ ‘gave up Himself’—in other wds, ‘He took the initiative...He handed himself over...He willingly stepped forward to be the victim for us...no one took His life, He laid it down of His own accord’
 - The ‘Good Shepherd’ lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11).
 - This is unrestrained love—there’s nothing Christ would not have done—there’s nothing selfish in Him—He withheld nothing—He went the distance
- Paul uses ‘giving up’ language again in 5:25—“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,”

- Giving up yourself for others is the epitome of Christ's love.
- Biblical love is not an emotion but an action. Jesus didn't merely have kind thoughts toward sinners, He acted. And, Jesus acted in spite of our foul and undeserving nature (Rom 5:8,10).
 - Christ acted when we were at our worst
- Jesus loved us before we believed, and He loves us as believers—even when we are weak, failing, when we fail to reciprocate love shown to us.
- As a Christian who possesses the same nature as Christ, we are to love as Christ loves. And, to fail to love is to go against your new nature in Christ.
- 1 Peter 1:22—"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,"

Divine love is a sacrificial love: "an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."—Christ's self-sacrifice was pleasing to the Lord because it demonstrated the highest love possible.

- The 'sacrifice' in view is the OT 'burnt offering'—which depicts the total surrender of Christ on the cross
- Isa 53:10—"But the Lord was pleased to crush him, putting him to grief; If he would render himself as a guilt offering..."
- On the cross, Christ handed Himself over as the offering and sacrifice that would fulfill all the offerings and sacrifices in the OT.
- Heb 10:10-12—"By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,"
- In the past, even when properly prepared, God did not accept every sacrifice as a pleasing aroma because it was offered with the wrong attitude and a heart 'far-removed' from Him.
- Christ willingly gave of Himself to be pleasing to the Father—and when we love others in a sacrificial way, we imitate both God and Christ

2. The negative exhortation: we must throw off sins of self-love/self-gratification. 5:3—"But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;"

- This is the exact opposite of imitating God and loving as Christ loved. Self-indulgent sensuality is the opposite of self-sacrificing love.
- If we are going to imitate God, there must be an increasing disappearance of things that pervert and destroy—like impurity and sensuality
- What the culture perverts, we seek to restore. We want people saved from this culture.

'immorality'—'pornea'—speak of 'sexual immorality...unlawful sexual acts'—a wd often used of prostitution and homosexuality—'abhorrent sexual conduct'

- Used in the NT of extramarital relationships (Matt 5:32)
- Used in 1 Cor 5:1—of an incestuous relationship
- A broad term best translated 'sexual immorality'—which has no part of a believer's life

'impurity'—(akatharsia)—'moral impurity'—plus 'any'—meaning: 'every kind of impurity' (not just sexual impurity). A similar term to the previous, indicating 'unrestrained sexual behavior'

- In 1 Thess 4:3,7—Paul puts them in the same context—"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality...For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification."
- This is a proclivity to natural lusts—this is what the 'old man' did pre-conversion
- Those lusts and sinful desires must be 'thrown off' by God's grace

'greed'—a term that means covetousness or greediness—the opposite of moderation—it is 'selfishness to an extreme degree'—'always wanting more'

- This is the internal attitude that's tied to sexual immorality and impurity—a desire for 'self-gratification' at the expense of others
- Greed is the opposite of genuine love and concern for the other person

'must not even be named among you'—(present tense) there should not even be an occasion for the vices listed

- Paul is not saying that these vices don't happen among believers, but that these sins should be so absent from the body of believers that there's no linking them to Christ and His Church
- They are 'not to be named'—meaning, we not only avoid these sins, but don't think about them nor do we talk about them
- Why? Because they are 'not proper' for a Christian

"as is proper among saints"—'just as'—meaning 'what is fitting or appropriate'

- The ESV and NIV have: 'which are out of place'

We must throw off not only sins of conduct, but sins of conversation:

5:4—"and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."

- 'filthiness'—has to do with any talk that is 'degrading and disgraceful'—'general obscenities'
 - A term that referred to 'something that causes shame, dishonoring'
 - Used in 5:12—to describe the 'disgraceful' acts done in darkness that ought not be repeated
 - Paul uses it in Titus 1:11 of false teachers who teach for 'sordid gain'
- A Christian's speech should avoid dishonoring things, base things, things that are foul
- 'silly talk'—(moros + logia)—'dull/stupid + talk'—talk that comes from a foul mouth
 - Could refer to talk that may be empty or speculative
 - Talk of 'futile things' that detracts from a healthy, growing faith
 - There's nothing edifying about this kind of speech
- 'coarse jesting'—turning what is said in innocence into something obscene
 - Originally referred to sarcastic speech—but here it refers to ridicule through humor—in other wds, 'humor in bad taste'—'humor that doesn't build up, but tears down'
 - One writer: 'It is sarcastic ridicule that goes too far—it cuts people down and embarrasses those present'
 - That's not to say that Christians cannot use humor—we can—just not the kind that is unloving and caustic
 - Like anger, humor is to be restrained to what is appropriate before God

- All three terms describe a filthy mind that expresses itself in vulgar talk

‘which are not fitting’—‘which are not proper’—(imperfect verb + negative particle tells us that it remains improper)

‘but rather giving of thanks.’—(strong contrast) we ought to speak from a heart of thankfulness to God

- Why is ‘thanksgiving’ mentioned here? Why is ‘giving thanks’ contrasted with ‘foul speech’? We would expect instead of vulgar speech, noble talk as an appropriate antithesis.
- Play on wds in the original—instead of ‘coarse jesting’ (eutrapelia) we should rather be ‘giving thanks’ (eucharistia)
- A greater reason: ‘giving of thanks’ stands in contrast to all six preceding vices—think about it: sexual immorality, impurity, and greed express acquisitiveness (a strong desire to acquire things). ‘giving thanks’ is the exact opposite—giving thanks is a synonym for the Christian life—we are thankful for God’s saving grace, thankful for his provision
- ‘giving thanks’ is recognition that God is the ultimate source of every blessing
- The selfish and unloving person doesn’t give thanks because he thinks he deserves whatever blessing he gets.
- The self-less person focuses their lives on the needs of others. Instead of using others for self-gratification, he serves others and loves others and does them good. He doesn’t want to turn the innocent into the immoral but turn the immoral into what is holy.
- A true Christian brings a redeeming influence because he’s thankful to God in everything.
- 1 Thess 5:18—“in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

3. The reason: the old man has no inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

5:5—“For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

First warning: there’s no inheritance

- Why would you want to participate in the sins you’ve been set free from???
- We are no longer ‘partners’ with the unbelieving world.
- If we’re not like them anymore, we ought not to live and speak like them.
- 1 Cor 6:9—“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,”
- No person, regardless of their claims to faith in Christ, if they persist in sins of immorality, impurity, and greed, has any part of God’s kingdom. Why? Because you do not belong to Christ.
- A radical change on the inside will result in a change on the outside.
- Gal 5:17-21—“For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who

practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”—there’s God’s verdict...and people will try to deny that—don’t listen to them

- 5:6—“Let no one deceive you with empty words...”—telling you that sin is tolerable—that God will excuse it and allow unrepentant sinners into his kingdom

Second warning: divine wrath is coming—5:6—“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”

- Let ‘no one deceive you into thinking that you can live worldly and not suffer any consequences for it’
- Why is this command necessary??? Because believers can be influenced by their culture so that what is acceptable in the world becomes acceptable in the church.
 - In other wds, ‘Don’t buy into the world’s system...the world’s way of thinking’
 - ‘empty words’—Paul calls it—words that do not reflect the Truth
 - 4:17-18—“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;”
- You are forewarned—if you are partners with ‘sons of disobedience’, you do not share in the Kingdom of God.
- Paul calls them ‘sons of disobedience because it is their nature to disobey
- We don’t want to participate in sexual immorality and foul speech because God is bringing judgment upon those things.
- See: Col 3:5-10
- Don’t imitate the world and its immorality and vulgar talk—imitate God—manifest the same love of Christ that’s been shown to you