

Walk in Love – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul outlines what it truly means to put off the old self and put on the new self
2. aim – to cause us to desire the pursuit of holiness as the core of the new self in Christ
3. passage – Ephesians 4:25-5:21

b. outline

1. The Contrast of the New Self (Ephesians 4:25-32)
2. The Conviction of the New Self (Ephesians 5:1-2)
3. The Confidence of the New Self (Ephesians 5:3-21)

c. opening

1. a **reminder** of where we are in Ephesians
 - a. **Ephesians 4-6** is the **imperative** section of the letter
 1. **#1**: the church (the body) is to be *unified* – in our calling and our doctrine in Christ as Lord
 2. in this unity *under Christ*, the body “*builds itself up in love*” (4:16)
 3. **question**: what does this “*love*” look like in the church?
 4. **Paul will use the rest of this letter to define the concept of Christian love**
 - b. **point #1**: we are not to adopt our definition of “*love*” through the lens of how pagans think
 1. Christian love is *utterly different* from how the world thinks – particularly as pagans consider love to be a selfish sentimental sense of “*what’s in it for me?*”
 - c. **point #2**: we are to adopt an utterly different view *of ourselves* in order to love others
 1. to put off the “*old self*” = to discard the old nature of thinking as the world does
 2. to be “*renewed in mind*” = to pivot one’s life around a new way of understanding
 3. to put on the “*new self*” = to pursue a life (a walk) of holiness and Christlikeness
 4. **IOW**: to truly love one another, we must be in a constant state of **reformation** – thinking differently about who we are in Christ, which results in a very different way of living
2. a **peek** into where we are going in Ephesians
 - a. Paul will (**now**) show us, **in very practical form**, what walking in love looks like – what it really means to shed the old self and to pursue a life of genuine love in holiness and Christlikeness
 - b. so, in **4:25-5:21 (or 6:9)** Paul will use his apostolic authority to speak directly to how the Ephesian Christians are to live as they purpose to shed the old self and put on the new one
 1. first, he will give some very specific *contrasts* between the old and new self (4:25-32)
 2. second, he will lay out a specific *conviction* that sits at the heart of the difference (5:1-2)
 3. third, he will (again, using examples) describe a specific *confidence* in the new self (5:3-21)
 - c. **intent: here is what it truly means to love one another as Christians: pursue a life of holiness and Christlikeness before God, and you will truly love your neighbor rightly**
3. a **high-level view** of **vv. 25-32**
 - a. here, Paul will address five (5) specific areas of life, contrasting how the old self would approach these matters with what is expected of those who are followers of Christ:
 1. being truthful with one another, being self-controlled emotionally, being productive in the community, being edifying in speech, and being kind in our interpersonal relationships
 2. **these are characteristics of true believers – evidences of conversion**

I. The Contrast of the New Self (Ephesians 4:25-32)

Content

a. in the matter of *truthfulness* (v. 25)

1. “*falsehoods*” = lying; exaggerating; withholding facts; any of the forms of communicating *untruth*
2. “*having put away*” (aorist) = having *purposely* stopped; no longer doing; a continuing effect
 - a. since coming to faith in Christ is to embrace *the truth* (i.e. about oneself, about reality, about Jesus, etc.), the assumption is that our conversion is one of a *continuing* embrace of truth
 - b. the old self wallows in lies, particularly *self-deception* – the new self seeks the truth because truth is consistent with what it means to be Christlike (John 14:6) – **ontological sense**

3. “speak the truth” = to communicate in ways that fully embrace the truth of whatever matter is under consideration, without evasion or reservation or exaggeration or deception
 - a. within the framework of “speaking the truth in love” (4:15) – not using the truth as a cudgel or as a bludgeon to hurt others, but to edify and draw others in the body into Christlikeness
 - b. within the framework of seeking to build up the body
 1. as “members one of another” = the body imagery; the cooperation of each part in the whole
 2. **i.e.** holding one another accountable to speaking only what is **helpful** in the body
 3. **e.g.** which precludes the concept of “gossip” = casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not **confirmed** as being true
 - a. Paul equates gossips with the state of rank reprobation (depravity) in **Romans 1:29**
 4. **just as Jesus was the very embodiment of truth, so believers are to hold up truth in all matters**
- b. in the matter of emotionalism (vv. 26-27)**
1. “be angry” = not a command to be angry (per se), but a “lead-in” to the phrase “do not sin”
 - a. **IOW:** be careful that your anger is not sinful and that it does not lead you to sin in another area
 - b. anger (as emotional creatures) is a part of the *Imago Dei*, thus, it must be subject to the Creator’s boundaries as to what makes it righteous vs. what makes it sinful
 1. **e.g.** Jesus (as sinless) often expressed anger (**John 2:** greed in the temple; **Mark 3:5:** hardness of heart in failing to recognize him; **Matthew 23:** religious hypocrisy [woes])
 2. **i.e.** Jesus focused his anger on that which made *God* angry, not just those things that might be perceived to be “injustices” in a fallen world
 2. “do not let the sun go down ... no opportunity to the devil” = do not let your anger **fester**
 - a. either a) quickly resolve what has made you angry or b) turn over your anger to the Lord and trust that the matter will be resolved by him (ultimately)
 - b. **i.e.** anger that is allowed to fester is like a wound to the body that will not heal
 3. **just as Jesus properly handled his emotions, so believers are to imitate his ways when angry**
- c. in the matter of productivity (v. 28)**
1. “thief ... steal” (*klepto*) = the one who steals; lit. the stealer
 2. **category #1:** those who purposely steal to make a living (or survive; **e.g.** the tax collector)
 - a. however, if Paul is writing to *regenerate* people, who by virtue of their conversion have a new relationship to the moral code but consistently violate the 8th commandment, are probably not believers – **IOW:** Paul *may not* be addressing “thieves” here in the literal sense
 3. **category #2:** those who live off of the welfare of others; they don’t work for a living
 - a. Paul is specifically pursuing “labor” as his point, that Christians should do “honest work”
 - b. which flows out of his *worldview* that work is a part of the *Imago Dei* (**Gen. 2:15; 3:17ff**)
 1. he considered work as something being redeemed within creation (**Romans 8:20ff**)
 2. he considered work essential to the ordinary life of a believer (**2 Thess. 3:6-12**)
 3. he considered work a part of what it means to love others (**1 Thess. 4:9-12**)
- “Now concerning **brotherly love** you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another ... But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to **work with your hands**, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.”
- c. **caveat:** this does not mean that the church cannot be benevolent in the face of *short term* financial problems within the body, but that it should hold a *long term* view towards outward **generosity**
 1. **note the phrase:** “so that he may have something to share with anyone in need”
 2. **IOW:** the issue here isn’t self-sufficiency so much as it is generosity with others
 4. **just as Jesus’ work produced something to share with us, so believers are to pursue financial productivity so that they can share with others**
- d. in the matter of communication (v. 29)**
1. “corrupting talk” = bad; diseased; harmful; rotting; worthless – speech that is **unnecessary**
 - a. **i.e.** words that have no intended purpose to *build up* understanding (to edify), but serve the opposite, to tear down, minimize, denigrate or poke fun at what is serious and important
 - b. **e.g.** cursing – socially offensive, impolite, or rude language, designed to emphasize a particular *emotional* component of dialogue through the avenue of denigration or surprise
 2. “fits the occasion” = using words that are positive and helpful; speech that is consistent with the regenerated nature of being a believer – speaking of things in a positive and **reverent** light
 - a. “give grace to those who hear” = **i.e.** others hear your words and see your reverence
 - b. **IOW:** is your use of language consistent from church to work (school) to your mother’s living room?
 3. **just as Jesus used language well, so believers are to speak in ways that are reverent to God**

e. in the matter of *relationship* (vv. 30-32)

1. “*grieve the Holy Spirit*” = to cause the One who has “sealed” our redemption to feel sorrow
 - a. because the Holy Spirit is the *agent* of our conversion (i.e. through regeneration, calling, indwelling, etc.), any behavior that is inconsistent with the new heart brings sorrow to him in his role of sanctification – **i.e.** the deliberate causing of “setbacks” within our growth towards holiness
2. “*bitterness ... clamor ... slander ... malice*” = descriptions of failures in our interpersonal relationships
 - a. holding a grudge, being unnecessarily angry with, heaping verbal abuse, holding hateful feelings
 - b. **i.e.** failing to find proper ways to relate to others, even those you “have nothing in common with”
 1. Paul insists that believers are to be “*kind*”, “*tenderhearted*”, “*forgiving*” = looking for ways to hold loving relationships with *everyone*
 2. Paul insists that such a reaction to others should be based on the fact that “*Christ forgave you*”
 - c. e.g. Jesus’ reaction to those who arrested him and crucified him
3. **just as Jesus loved his enemies, so believers are to love others “outside” our comfort zone**

f. in the matter of love

1. **being truthful with one another, being self-controlled emotionally, being productive in the community, being edifying in speech, and being kind in our interpersonal relationships is what it means to truly “love”**