

Walk in Love – Part 2

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. **love 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 reminder of where we are in *this section*
 - a. Paul is showing 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 gave some very specific *contrasts* between the old and new self (**4:25-32**)
 - a. 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
 - b. **these are characteristics of true believers – evidences of conversion**
 2. (**now**) he will lay out a specific **conviction** that sits at the heart of this conversion (**5:1-2**)
3. an overview of the **logical structure** of the pericope
 - a. “*therefore*” = Paul will summarize these five characteristics together into a single statement of intention – this is his “high level” overview of what all of these pursuits really are
 1. **IOW:** they are not “individual” acts to be pursued independently, nor are they the *only* things we are to focus on – rather, they are *examples* used by Paul to lead to his point here
 - a. he will continue the list into **vv. 3-21**, listing the kinds of behavior that is/not are part of what it means to hold the conviction of **vv. 1-2**
 - b. he “pauses” here to give the **conviction** that governs each of these behaviors
 - b. “*imitators*” and “*walk in*” = Paul uses a form of *parallelism* to hammer home his point – the two verses are similar in structure and content, using different words to say (basically) the same thing
 1. a common approach in Hebrew poetry (**e.g. Psalm 19:1-2**)

“The [1] heavens declare [2] the glory of God, and the [1] sky above proclaims [2] his handiwork. [3] Day to day [4] pours out speech, and [3] night to night [4] reveals knowledge.”
 2. here, there are three (3) parts which parallel each other:
 - a. **as an action:** either “*be imitators*” or “*walk in love*” – something to do
 - b. **with a focus:** either “*of God*” or “*as Christ*” – someone to be like or similar to
 - c. **in a state:** either “*as [his] beloved children*” or “*as [he] loved us and ...*” – somehow in nature
4. the **point** of the pericope:
 - a. **conviction: those who truly love others, as followers of Christ, do so because they understand themselves to be in an entirely different state of being than what they were before their conversion – they put on the new self and love others rightly because they see themselves in a whole new light before God**
 1. they understand themselves to be children of God, so they seek to imitate their Father
 2. they understand themselves to be loved by Christ, so they seek to imitate his love

II. The Conviction of the New Self (Ephesians 5:1-2)

Content

a. be imitators of God (v. 1)

1. **note:** Paul does not use the Trinitarian term “Father” here, but (rather) the more generic idea of the Godhead (**i.e.** as encompassing the entirety of the *nature* of God)
 - a. by making reference to us as “*children*,” it could be argued that Paul has the Person of the Father in his mind here, or he is *purposely* speaking of the relationship the believer has “as a child” to the entirety of the nature of God in all three Persons
2. **the state:** as “*beloved children*” = as those who are adopted by God as his own children

“All those that are *justified*. God vouchsafed [graciously granted], in and *for the sake of* his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are [1] taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, [2] have his name put upon them, [3] receive the spirit of adoption, [4] have access to the throne of grace with boldness, [5] are enabled to cry ‘Abba, Father,’ [6] are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and [7] inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.” (LBCF, 12:1)

 - a. a **significant** N.T. concept, appearing as a *fundamental* aspect of Paul’s understanding of salvation
 - b. that, in coming to faith, we are included in the very family of God as *his own children*, to be treated by him in *precisely* the same manner as he treats his only Begotten Son (**read Romans 8:14-17**)
 - c. **question #1:** how does adoption fit into the entirety of the doctrine of redemption?
 1. based on the LBCF, it would *appear* as though adoption is a “resultant” doctrine (and “less”)
 2. however, based on **Ephesians 1:5**, the entire *intention* (predestination) of redemption was for God to make the elect his sons and daughters – his *first* purpose was to create a family
 - a. note Joel Beeke’s sympathy for the Puritans who saw adoption as the *apex* doctrine
 3. and (here), Paul argues that our entire love life is built around our relationship to him as Father
 - d. **question #2:** what does adoption look like in our relationship to God the Father?
 1. **e.g.** the illustration by Beeke illustrating a view of “Abba”: the **Jewish child** at the Wailing Wall
 2. that in the midst of our afflictions, trials, temptations, pains, doubts, fears, loneliness, etc. we can cry out “Abba, Abba” and our heavenly Father will “pick us up” and carry us through
 3. **i.e.** a relationship with God so **intimate** flowing from his intent *from before Creation* to make us his perfect and holy family, loving us as he loved his own Son from eternity past
3. **the action:** to imitate God (our Father)
 - a. **e.g.** the illustration of children imitating their parents: **Matthew** and his plastic lawn mower
 - b. the goal is to imitate God, even though we can never *fully* emulate him:
 1. we cannot know everything (as omniscient), but we can pursue knowing all we can
 2. we cannot be perfect (as holy), but we can pursue the mortification of our sin
 3. we cannot love absolutely (as perfect), but we can pursue putting on the new self in love
4. **the conviction: that we are the beloved children of our heavenly Father, thus we imitate his love for us by pursuing his nature in holiness and loving others as he loves us**

b. walk in love, as Christ loved us (v. 2)

1. **the state:** as loved by Christ = as those atoned and now in a state of “fragrance” before God
 - a. “*offering*” and “*sacrifice*” are being used *interchangeably* by Paul here – a *singular* work of Christ to atone for sin (as a sacrifice) which produces in us a pleasing fragrance before God
 - b. **note:** it is said that the sense of smell is the one that produces the most powerful memories
 1. **e.g.** I distinctly remember the smell of the incense burned at Catholic Mass as a child
 - c. **question #1:** what “odor” does the human race give off before God, in its fallen state?
 1. the smell of death, the “*stinketh*” of the grave (**e.g.** Lazarus, **John 11:39 KJV**)
 2. **i.e.** what God “perceives” from the human race is the smell of rot, that comes from sin
 - d. **question #2:** what symbolism is Paul capturing here, particularly from the O.T.?
 1. the picture of the altar of incense outside of the Holy of Holies, where the priests burned incense twice a day
 2. although perceived in **Rev. 5:8** as the prayers of the saints, in the O.T. case, a way to “mask” the odor of sin and death present in the sacrifices before the “nostrils” of God
 3. in the case of Christ (as a sacrifice), a pleasing odor emanating from him (as the Son) that now “permeates” the believer – no longer does God smell death in us, he smells his Son
 4. **i.e.** a relationship with God so **pleasing** flowing from his own Son covering us with a fragrance of perfect righteousness, sensing us as he senses his own Son from eternity past (**2 Cor. 2:15f**)

“For we are the *aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.*”

2. **the action:** to walk in love
 - a. the goal is to imitate Christ, to be utterly *self-sacrificial* in all our dealings
 1. we cannot save others (as redeemers), but we can do everything possible for their salvation
 2. we cannot be sinless (as he was), but we can pursue putting off the old nature in obedience
3. **the conviction: that we bear a lovely fragrance of the righteousness of our elder brother, thus we imitate his love for us by pursuing utter allegiance and self-sacrifice in our love for others**