

Walk in Love – Part 3

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. truthful, self-controlled emotionally, productive, edifying, kind in our relationships
 2. second, he laid out a specific **conviction** that sits at the heart of this conversion (**5:1-2**)
 - a. that we are beloved children, adopted by the Father, and now bear the beautiful fragrance of the Son in his sacrifice, thus we desire to imitate God and walk in love like Christ himself
 3. (**now**) Paul will put forth a form of **confidence** that should characterize our behavior as those who have gone from the old self to the new self as adopted sons and daughters of God
 - a. I am using the term “confidence” here because I think it is a better way to see Paul’s intent – not as a litany of “do not’s”, but a way of thinking *positively* about who we are
 - b. **IOW:** a very different approach than “moralistic therapeutic deism” – contemplating our behavior *forward* from a starting point rather than *towards* an ending point
 - c. Paul will use three descriptive words to describe believers: saints, children of light, and wise

III. The Confidence of the New Self (Ephesians 5:3-21)

Content

a. confident as “saints” (vv. 3-5)

1. “saints” (x9; e.g. 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19) = an adjective (“those who are”); the holy, the dedicated; the sacred; lit. those who are set apart (i.e. as church = “the called-out ones”)
 - a. (**again**) not in the “Roman” sense of super-believers with great merit, but those who have been set apart from the world as special unto God himself
 - b. i.e. the starting point for what it means to belong to God – set apart from the world and its ways
 - c. Paul assumes that the starting point for believers is that they have been set apart by God
2. Paul outlines **three (3) categories** of sin that believers are to avoid
 - a. “sexual immorality” (*porneia*) = a general term for all manner of sexual sinfulness (without detail)
 1. any deviation from the biblical concept of sexuality within the monogamous, heterosexual, life-long, covenantal relationship of marriage (including adultery; **KJV: fornication**)
 2. “impurity” is probably just another term for the same sort of sexual deviation from the norm
 - b. “covetousness” = a general term for all manner of material greediness and jealousy
 - c. “filthiness” = a general term for all manner of obscenity and language that is guttural and base
 1. “foolish talk” and “crude joking” are probably just other terms for the same sort of raw speech

3. Paul contrasts these behaviors
 - a. **for the unregenerate: these are the “only” sources of happiness and fulfillment**
 1. sexual pleasure, material gain, and the use of language associated with both
 2. **e.g.** three of the most dominant internet forces are social media, e-commerce, and pornography
 3. **e.g.** the return of “Will & Grace” and “Murphy Brown” – shows *originally* dedicated to “advancing” the cause of open sexuality – considered *quaint* by today’s “standards”
 4. when you dismiss a Creator and live by an entirely secular outlook, the only sources of “hope” or “happiness” are what you can get in this world (**thus the hypocrisy of #metoo**)
 - b. **for the regenerate: these are greatly overshadowed by a new and better state of being**
 1. “let there be thanksgiving” = the **characteristic** of those who are born again
 - a. thankful for a perfect relationship with a Creator who actually loves us
 - b. thankful for a life of contentment with what the Creator has ordained for us to possess
 - c. thankful for a revelation of truth that is substantive and worth talking about
 4. **clarification:** what does **v. 5** mean regarding those who *struggle* with sexual or material temptation?
 - a. or, is Paul suggesting that *anyone* who may struggle with (or fall to) these sins is *automatically* excluded from everlasting life? **answer: NO**
 - b. because that would exclude *everyone* from the possibility of eternal life
 - c. because that would be inconsistent with Paul’s view of justification *by faith alone*
 - d. because the nouns are all *nominative* – **i.e.** if that is what you *are*, then you are excluded
 1. meaning, those who *continue* in these practices, and never *struggle* to find freedom from them, who are *characterized* by them, are *likely* (then) still unregenerate and lost
 2. **principle: one of the strongest evidences of conversion is a hatred of continuing sin**
 5. **application: our confidence (as the adopted children of God) is in knowing that there is much more to life than physical pleasure – our confidence is in knowing that since our heavenly Father has so much more in store for us, we no longer need to “dabble” in these things**
- b. confident as “children of light” (vv. 6-14)**
1. “children of light” (**v. 8c**) = those born of God (truth); those who are the result of revelation; lit. the people of God, who have received revelation of truth and have been “remade” by virtue of it
 - a. the N.T. uses “light” in a number of symbolic or metaphorical ways:
 1. as the very nature of God himself, being holy and pure (**1 John 5:7**, “God is light”)
 2. as the revelation of God in Jesus Christ (**John 9:5**, “I am the light of the world”)
 3. as the revelation of the gospel to the world (**Acts 13:47**, “a light for the Gentiles”)
 4. as the place of knowledge that comes from faith (**Acts 26:18**, “turn from darkness to light”)
 - b. the N.T. uses “darkness” as the antonym of light:
 1. ignorance of God and his ways; a lack of understanding about who he is
 2. rebellion against God; a desire to be “hidden” from his view to do what is sinful
 3. the outer place away from the “presence” of God (in judgment and punishment)
 - c. Paul uses these terms **ontologically** to describe a change of state for the believer
 1. “you were darkness” (**v. 8a**) = you were ignorant of God, you loved your rebellious state, you hid yourself in order to not be seen by him, and you were destined to go to a place of death
 2. “now you are light” (**v. 8b**) = you are now aware of the things of God, you (should) hate your continued rebellion in sin, you come to God in intimate fellowship, and are destined for glory
 - d. thus, “children of light” is similar to “saint” in that it connotes the idea of being *separate* – separate from what is false and wicked by virtue of an action on the part of God
 2. Paul outlines **another category** of sin that believers are to avoid
 - a. the deception of “empty words” (**v. 6a**) = lit. instruction that leads to a place of improper result
 1. **i.e.** the use of words to deceive; specifically (in this context), to use words to steer believers away from the *natural* results of their conversion
 2. **e.g.** words that imply a sense that *nothing else is required of believers but “simple faith”*
 - a. the teaching that “salvation” is simply about praying a prayer and God automatically saves you, irrespective of whatever obedience (fruit) appears in your life thereafter
 3. **note:** “sons of disobedience” (**v. 6b**) = a Hebrew-inspired phrase (see also **2:2**) often applied to the Israelites who, although joined to God by choice (as sons), were not shown to be the true children of God by virtue of their continuing rebellion against him (as disobedient)
 4. **note:** “unfruitful works of darkness” (**v. 11**) = a sense in which certain acts are unproductive in the face of what it means to be a follower of Christ
 3. Paul contrasts this behavior (**to be continued ...**)
 - a. what does it mean to love *genuinely*? – to put on the new self as the children of God ...