

SERIES: EPHESIANS: THE CALL AND CONDUCT OF THE CHURCH, WEEK 37

TITLE: WALK IN LOVE!

TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:1&2

INTRODUCTION: (1) THE FIFTH CHAPTER OF EPHESIANS BEGINS WITH ONE OF THE MOST STARTLING, SHOCKING, ALARMING AND UNEXPECTED COMMANDS IN THE N.T.

*** IT IS “BE IMITATORS OF GOD.”**

**** NOW THIS COMMAND IS STARTLING BECAUSE IT POINTS TO A STANDARD BEYOND WHICH THERE IS NO OTHER.**

***** I MEAN HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO IMITATE ONE WHO IS INFINITELY ABOVE US, THE SOVEREIGN GOD OF THE UNIVERSE?**

****** WELL, THAT’S WHAT WE’RE TOLD TO DO IN OUR TEXT TODAY SO THE BAR IS SET PRETTY HIGH; GOD IS THE ULTIMATE HIGHEST STANDARD.**

(2) IN FACT, WILLIAM BARCLAY CALLS THIS “THE

HIGHEST STANDARD IN THE WORLD” AND I WOULD ADD TO THAT IN THE UNIVERSE.

* ALEXANDER MACLAREN CALLS IT “THE SUM OF ALL DUTY”.

** AND TO MARTIN LLOYD JONES IT WAS “PAUL’S SUPREME ARGUMENT...THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF ALL IN DOCTRINE AND IN PRACTICE...THE ULTIMATE IDEAL.”

*** SO WE HAVE BEFORE US AN ULTIMATE IDEAL, OUR DUTY, THE HIGHEST STANDARD IN THE UNIVERSE.

**** AND I GO BACK TO THE QUESTION, HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO IMITATE ONE WHO IS INFINITELY ABOVE US?

(3) WELL, PART OF OUR PROBLEM COMES FROM THE NATURE OF GOD AND FROM WHAT THEOLOGIANs CALL GOD’S NON-COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES.

* LET ME EXPLAIN. IN THEOLOGY A DISTINCTION IS MADE BETWEEN GOD’S COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES, IN WHICH WE SHARE AND CAN BE MANIFEST OR A PART OF OUR LIVES –

** AND GOD’S NON-COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES, IN WHICH WE DO NOT SHARE AND CANNOT BE A PART OF OUR LIVES.

***** FOR EXAMPLE: WHEN WE TALK ABOUT GOD WE OFTEN BEGIN WITH THE FACT THAT HE IS SELF-EXISTENT, SELF-SUFFICIENT AND ETERNAL.**

****** THESE ARE 3 NON-COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD THAT WE CANNOT IMITATE.**

(4) FOR GOD IS SELF-EXISTENT WHICH MEANS THAT GOD HAS NO ORIGINS AND CONSEQUENTLY IS ANSWERABLE TO NO ONE.

*** NOW THIS ATTRIBUTE SETS GOD UTTERLY APART, FOR EVERYTHING ELSE DOES HAVE ORIGIN AND IS ACCOUNTABLE.**

**** WE AS HUMAN BEINGS ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO OTHER PEOPLE, LIKE TO PARENTS, OUR BOSS, OUR MATES, AND TO THINGS LIKE GOVT. AND THE CHURCH AND ULTIMATELY TO GOD.**

***** BUT GOD IS NOT ACCOUNTABLE TO ANYONE FOR HE IS THE PERFECT HOLY CREATOR.**

****** NOW ANOTHER NON-COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTE OF GOD IS THAT HE IS SELF-SUFFICIENT.**

(5) AND THAT MEANS THAT GOD HAS NO NEEDS AND THEREFORE DEPENDS ON NO ONE.

*** BUT IN CONTRAST WE NEED COUNTLESS THINGS, FOOD, WATER, CLOTHING, OXYGEN, ETC.**

**** AND TAKE AWAY SOME OF THESE THINGS AND WE DIE. BUT GOD HAS NO NEEDS.**

***** NOW TO THESE NON-COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES WE COULD ADD GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE, HE'S ALL POWERFUL, HIS OMNIPRESENCE, HE IS PRESENT EVERYWHERE AND HIS OMNISCIENCE, HE IS ALL-KNOWING.**

****** AND THESE ATTRIBUTES MAKE GOD, GOD. AND WE CANNOT BE LIKE GOD IN THESE CHARACTERISTICS.**

(6) THESE ATTRIBUTES SET GOD OFF FROM HIS CREATION. AND EACH OF THESE INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES SEES GOD APART FROM US AND REPRESENT OR PORTRAY AN AREA IN WHICH WE CANNOT AND NEVER WILL BE ABLE TO IMITATE HIM.

*** BUT THERE ARE COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES IN WHICH WE SHARE THAT WE CAN IMITATE GOD.**

**** ATTRIBUTES LIKE FAITHFULNESS, GOODNESS, MERCY, COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS AND LOVE.**

***** AND WE CAN EXERCISE THESE ATTRIBUTES AND INDEED WE OUGHT TO.**

****** BUT WHEN WE THINK OF THESE COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES IN REFERENCE TO GOD, WHO IS PERFECT IN EVERY ONE OF THEM, WE ARE SOMETIMES OVERAWED, DISCOURAGED AND WONDER IF THERE IS ANY POINT IN COMPARING OUR FAITHFULNESS WITH GOD'S, OUR GOODNESS TO GOD'S OR OUR LOVE TO GOD'S LOVE.**

(7) NOW IN REALITY THIS IS A HEALTHY COMPARISON, WHICH SHOULD HUMBLE US, AND DRIVE US TO HIM. FOR IN OUR TEXT TODAY WE ARE TOLD TO IMITATE GOD.

*** AND SPECIFICALLY THE COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTE THAT WE ARE TO IMITATE HIM IN, IN THIS CONTEXT IS WHAT? LOVE!**

**** SO I'VE TITLED OUR MESSAGE TODAY, WALK IN LOVE, EXCLAMATION POINT, FOR THIS IS A COMMAND.**

***** AND IF WE WANT TO IMITATE GOD, WE MUST WALK IN LOVE AND I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN WHAT THAT MEANS BY LOOKING AT 3 POINTS AS WE STUDY EPHESIANS 5:1&2.**

****** NO. 1 THE PRINCIPLE OF IMITATING GOD, V. 1; NO. 2 THE PRACTICE OF IMITATING GOD, V. 2A, WALK IN LOVE; AND NO. 3 THE PATTERN OF WALKING IN LOVE – OUR SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, V. 2B.**

(8) AND WITHOUT ANY MORE INTRODUCTION, LOOK AT EPHESIANS 5:1 PLEASE WHERE WE'LL SEE THE

PRINCIPLE OF IMITATING GOD.

I. THE PRINCIPLE, (READ V. 1)

A. NOW THE WORD THEREFORE IN V. 1 SETS THE CONTEXT OF OUR STUDY TODAY.

*** AND I REMIND YOU, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT, WHEN YOU STUDY OR TEACH THE BIBLE, TO SEE A PASSAGE IN IT'S CONTEXT.**

**** THIS ESPECIALLY BECOMES IMPORTANT WHEN YOU SEE A WORD LIKE THEREFORE.**

***** AND THE QUESTION YOU MUST ASK YOURSELF IS: WHAT IS THE "THEREFORE" THERE FOR?**

****** AND THE ANSWER IS IT'S THERE TO TAKE THE READER BACKWARDS.**

1. AND SPECIFICALLY IN OUR STUDY TODAY TO TAKE US BACK TO VV. 31&32 OF EPHESIANS 4 WHICH SAYS: (QUOTE THEM).

*** NOW IN SUMMARY, PAUL COMMUNICATES IN VV. 31&32 THAT SOME NEGATIVE THINGS LIKE BITTERNESS ARE TO BE PUT OUT OF OUR LIVES AND KINDNESS, TENDER-HEARTEDNESS AND FORGIVENESS ARE TO BE PUT IN ITS PLACE.**

**** SO THINK OF IT THIS WAY, EPHESIANS 5:1&2 ARE IN**

REALITY A CONCLUSION OF THE FINAL PARAGRAPH OF EPHESIANS 4 RATHER THAN THE BEGINNING OF A NEW SECTION.

***** REMEMBER THERE WERE NO CHAPTER DIVISIONS WITH THE ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPHS.**

****** MEANING: KINDNESS, TENDER-HEARTEDNESS AND FORGIVENESS ARE TO BE A PART OF OUR LIVES.**

2. AND GOD HIMSELF IS INFINITELY KIND, TENDER-HEARTED AND FORGIVING, AND WE MANIFEST THOSE VIRTUES BY IMITATING THEIR SOURCE – GOD.

*** LET ME PUT IT TOGETHER THIS WAY: THEREFORE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST, CHILDREN OF YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER, IMITATE YOUR FATHER AS HIS SPECIALLY LOVED CHILDREN.**

**** AND WALK IN LOVE. AND WHAT IS THE GREATEST EVIDENCE OF LOVE? THE ANSWER IS UNDESERVED FORGIVENESS, KINDNESS AND BEING TENDER-HEARTED.**

***** AND THAT THEME WILL UNFOLD IN OUR STUDY TODAY, SO MARK IT DOWN OR HIGHLIGHT IT IN YOUR MIND.**

****** NOW WITH THAT CONTEXT BEFORE US, GO BACK TO V. 1 AND LOOK AT THE VERB “BE”.**

3. AND NOTE THAT THIS VERB IS AN IMPERATIVE IN THE GREEK MEANING THAT THIS ADMONITION TO BE IMITATORS OF GOD IS A COMMAND.

*** THIS IS NOT OPTIONAL FOR BELIEVERS OR A SUGGESTION BUT A DIVINE IMPERATIVE. THIS MUST BE OUR GOAL, OUR PURSUIT, OUR PASSION, TO ACT LIKE OUR FATHER!**

**** WE ARE TO BE IMITATORS OF OUR GOD, OUR FATHER SPECIFICALLY, AS HIS BELOVED OR DEARLY LOVED CHILDREN.**

***** TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, CHRISTIAN, BELIEVER, BE IMITATORS OF YOUR FATHER BECAUSE YOU ARE HIS CHILDREN, BELOVED BY HIM.**

****** AND THE GREEK WORD BELOVED, OR DEARLY LOVED, OR DEAR CHILDREN, DEPENDING ON WHICH TRANSLATION YOU HAVE IS THE ADJECTIVE AG-AP-AY-YOS FROM AGAPAO THE WORD WE GET AGAPE FROM USED IN V. 2, TALKING ABOUT GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL SPECIAL LOVE FOR HIS OWN, HIS ELECT, HIS CHILDREN, THOSE HE HAS SAVED OR WILL SAVE FROM THEIR SINS.**

4. AND THEN THE WORD IMITATOR OR FOLLOWER IS THE TERM FROM WHICH WE GET OUR WORD MIMIC, SOMEONE WHO COPIES SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ANOTHER PERSON.

*** AND AS IMITATORS OF GOD, CHRISTIANS ARE TO IMITATE GOD'S COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES, AND SPECIFICALLY IN THIS CONTEXT HIS LOVE AS WE'LL SEE IN V. 2, MANIFESTED BY FORGIVENESS.**

**** SO IN ESSENCE THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN WALK CAN BE SUMMED UP WITH THE COMMAND AS HIS DEARLY LOVED CHILDREN TO IMITATE OUR FATHER.**

***** LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON. LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER. AND WHAT A CLEAR PRINCIPLE THIS IS, ACT LIKE YOUR FATHER.**

****** AND IT IS NATURAL FOR CHILDREN TO BE LIKE THEIR PARENTS, GOOD AND BAD.**

5. BUT WITH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, THERE IS NO BAD IN ACTING LIKE HIM AND MIMICKING HIM IN EVERYTHING.

*** NOW GET THIS, IF WE ARE GOING TO IMITATE OUR FATHER, TO REPRODUCE THE FAMILY LIKENESS, WE MUST KNOW WHAT HE IS LIKE.**

**** AND THIS IS ONLY ACHIEVED WHEN WE STUDY GOD'S CHARACTER AND ATTRIBUTES AS THEY'RE REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE.**

***** SO WE MUST KNOW WHAT OUR FATHER IS LIKE, AND AS WE SPEND TIME WITH HIM IN HIS WORD, WE CAN**

BE ENERGIZED THROUGH HIS SPIRIT WHO INDWELLS US TO BE LIKE HIM.

****** AND WE COME BACK TO THIS BASIC IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, WE MUST READ, STUDY, MEMORIZE, MEDITATE ON OUR OWN AND LISTEN TO THE SCRIPTURES AS THEY ARE TAUGHT.**

6. WHY? WE NEED TO KNOW OUR FATHER SO WE CAN IMITATE HIM. AND THAT IS THE PRINCIPLE TAUGHT IN V. 1 WHICH LEADS US TO OUR 2'D POINT TODAY, AS WE MOVE FROM PRINCIPLE TO PRACTICE, THE PRACTICE, LOOK AT V. 2A PLEASE.

II. THE PRACTICE, (READ V. 2A)

A. NOW HOW DO WE SPECIFICALLY IMITATE GOD IN THIS CONTEXT?

*** THE ANSWER IS TO WALK IN LOVE. AND THIS IS THE 3'D USE OF THE NOUN WALK SINCE CHAPTER 4, AND HERE IN CHAPTER 5 IT WILL BE USED 2 MORE TIMES, ONCE IN V. 8 AND ONCE MORE IN V. 15.**

**** AND THIS WORD FIGURATIVELY TALKS ABOUT OUR MANNER OF LIFE, THE WAY WE LIVE, HOW WE CONDUCT OURSELVES, HOW WE REGULATE OUR LIVES.**

***** AND NOTE THAT THE VERB WALK HERE IS A PRESENT IMPERATIVE THAT COMMUNICATES THAT THIS ADMONITION IS A COMMAND, AND WE ARE**

TO KEEP ON WALKING IN LOVE AS OUR MANNER OF LIFE.

****** AND LET ME PAUSE AND SAY THE ABILITY TO DO THIS IS NOT NATURAL, BUT SUPERNATURAL, REQUIRING A NEW NATURE AND THE CONTINUOUS PATTERN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FLOWING THROUGH US BY OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD.**

1. SO YOU MUST BE A CHRISTIAN FIRST TO BE ABLE TO OBEY THIS COMMAND, AND IF YOU'RE NOT, YOUR NEED IS THE RISEN SAVIOR TODAY, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

*** YOUR FIRST NEED IS TO BE FORGIVEN OF YOUR SINS, YOUR ACTS OF REBELLION AGAINST GOD'S WILL THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. AND WE WOULD CALL YOU TO HIM TODAY AND WILL HAVE A COUNSELOR TO TALK TO YOU MORE ABOUT THAT AT THE END OF THE SERVICE.**

**** BUT IF YOU HAVE REPENTED AND TURNED TO FOLLOW CHRIST, YOUR NEED TODAY IS OBEDIENCE TO THIS COMMAND.**

***** AND WHAT GOD COMMANDS US TO DO, HE WILL ENABLE US THROUGH THE SUPERNATURAL RESOURCES THROUGH HIS WORD, HIS SPIRIT AND HIS CHURCH.**

***** SO WE CAN WALK IN LOVE.**

AND

CONTEXTUALLY AND THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE, THE GREATEST EVIDENCE OF LOVE IS UNDESERVED FORGIVENESS.

****** AND BECAUSE FORGIVENESS IS THE SUPREME EVIDENCE OF GOD'S LOVE, IT WILL ALSO BE THE MOST CONVINCING PROOF OF OUR LOVE.**

2. LOVE WILL ALWAYS LEAD US TO FORGIVE OTHERS JUST AS LOVE LED GOD IN CHRIST TO FORGIVE US, EPH. 4:32 (QUOTE IT AGAIN).

*** NOW NOTHING MORE CLEARLY DISCLOSES A HARD, LOVELESS HEART THAN LACK OF FORGIVENESS.**

**** IN OTHER WORDS, BITTERNESS, WRATH, ANGER, ETC. GOING BACK TO 4:31 SHOW A LACK OF LOVE. LACK OF FORGIVENESS SHOWS A LACK OF LOVE.**

***** BELOVED, THE ACTION OF FORGIVENESS ALWAYS PROVES THE PRESENCE OF LOVE, BECAUSE ONLY LOVE HAS THE MOTIVE AND POWER TO FORGIVE.**

****** SO THE EXTENT OF OUR LOVE IS THE EXTENT OF OUR ABILITY AND OBEDIENCE TO FORGIVE.**

3. AND JUST AS THE DEPTH OF GOD'S LOVE IS SHOWN BY HOW MUCH HE HAS FORGIVEN US, THE DEPTH OF OUR LOVE IS SHOWN BY HOW MUCH WE FORGIVE, IT IS MEASURED BY OUR ABILITY TO FORGIVE.

*** AS PETER SAID IN I PETER 4:8 (QUOTE IT).**

**** NOW THE GREEK WORD BEHIND FERVENT IN I PETER 4:8 SPEAKS OF A MUSCLE STRETCHED TO ITS LIMITS.**

***** AND OUR LOVE IS TO STRETCH TO THE LIMIT IN ORDER TO COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS. SO THE GREATER OUR LOVE, THE GREATER THE MULTITUDE OF SINS IT WILL COVER IN FORGIVENESS, ALSO QUOTE PROVERBS 10:12.**

****** SO LOVE MOVES US TO FORGIVE, IT STRETCHES US THAT WAY.**

4. AND PAUL WILL SET A PERFECT PATTERN BEFORE US TO MOTIVATE US TO WALK IN LOVE, TO WALK IN FORGIVENESS IN THE REST OF V. 2.

*** AND THAT PATTERN IS NONE OTHER THAN OUR SAVIOR THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE PATTERN. LOOK BACK AT V. 2 AGAIN PLEASE WHERE WE'LL SEE OUR THIRD POINT TODAY, THE PATTERN.**

III. THE PATTERN, (READ V. 2)

A. NOW AGAIN THE PATTERN, THE EXAMPLE, THE OBJECT LESSON OF LOVE AS A VERB, AS AN ACTION IN CHRIST'S LOVE IN LOVING THOSE HE WOULD DIE FOR AND FORGIVE.

*** FOR CHRIST LOVED YOU IT SAYS HERE IN V. 2 AND TO WHOM IS THE YOU TALKING ABOUT? BELIEVERS, THE CHRISTIANS PAUL IS WRITING TO IN THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS AND OTHER BELIEVERS IF THIS WAS A CIRCULAR LETTER.**

**** AND HOW DID CHRIST LOVE YOU? HOW DID CHRIST LOVE US, FOR PAUL WILL INCLUDE HIMSELF IN THIS TRUTH?**

***** WELL, IT SAYS, “AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR US AS AN OFFERING AND SACRIFICE TO GOD.”**

****** NOW CHRIST’S LOVE WAS NOT AN EMOTION BUT AN ACTION, A SACRIFICE OF VOLUNTARILY DYING FOR SINNERS TO FORGIVE THEM.**

1. BIBLICAL LOVE IS NOT A PLEASANT EMOTION OR A GOOD FEELING ABOUT SOMEONE BUT THE GIVING OF ONESELF IN SACRIFICE FOR THEIR GOOD.

*** DIVINE LOVE, AGAPE LOVE HERE, FOR THE WORD LOVE IN V. 2 IS AGAPE LOVE, DIVINE LOVE IS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE THAT DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON THE ONE WHO LOVES AND NOT ON THE MERIT, ATTRACTIVENESS OR RESPONSE OF THE ONE LOVED.**

**** CHRIST DID NOT SIMPLY HAVE A DEEP FEELING AND CONCERN FOR THOSE HE WOULD GIVE HIS LIFE FOR**

AND PURCHASE THEIR SALVATION AND FORGIVE THEIR SINS, GIVING HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY, MATTHEW 20:28.

***** NOR DID CHRIST SACRIFICE HIMSELF FOR US BECAUSE WE WERE DESERVING, WE WERE SINNERS AND HIS ENEMIES, ROMANS 5:8&10 (QUOTE ROMANS 5:8).**

****** SO THE ACTIONS OF CHRIST'S LOVE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH WORTHINESS OF THOSE HE LOVED AND DIED FOR.**

2. AND CHRIST'S LOVE AND ALL LOVE THAT IS LIKE HIS, LOVES FOR THE SAKE OF GIVING, NOT GETTING.

*** IT IS AN ACTION, A DETERMINATION, A VERB OF SACRIFICE. SACRIFICIAL LOVE OF WILLING CHOICE.**

**** FOR NOTICE IF YOU WOULD WITH ME AS I QUOTE A FEW FAMILIAR VERSES TO YOU ABOUT THE ACTION AND SACRIFICE OF GOD'S LOVE, OF CHRIST'S LOVE.**

***** QUOTE JOHN 3:16, I JOHN 4:9&10, GALATIANS 2:20, JOHN 15:13, EPHESIANS 2:4&5 AND I CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 (WE SEE THE ACTIONS OF LOVE, WHAT LOVE DOES, IT'S A VERB NOT AN ADJECTIVE.)**

****** NOW CLEARLY LOVE IS AN ACT OF SACRIFICE AND IT LEADS TO FORGIVENESS. THE FRUIT OF LOVE IS FORGIVENESS.**

3. NOW TRANSFER, LINK AND CONNECT THIS TRUTH WITH THOSE YOU ARE HAVING DIFFICULTY WITH IN YOUR LIFE – FAMILY, YOUR MATE, YOUR CHILDREN, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, A PARENT, ETC.

*** THEN CONNECT IT TO PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH, YOU GO TO SCHOOL WITH, NEIGHBORS AND PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH.**

**** AND FOR THOSE INDIVIDUALS THAT YOU CAN'T GET ALONG WITH, YOU MAY NOT HAVE BUBBLY GOOD VIBES, GOOD WARM FEELINGS.**

***** BUT YOU ARE CALLED THROUGH AN ACT OF SACRIFICE TO CHOOSE TO FORGIVE THEM IF YOU NEED TO AND TO DO SOMETHING FOR THEM IF YOU CAN, AN ACTION OF LOVE. FOR WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE EVEN OUR ENEMIES (QUOTE MATTHEW 5:43-48).**

****** AND WHEN YOU DO THAT YOU ARE FREED UP, JOY FLOODS YOUR SOUL, WHEN YOU WALK IN LOVE LIKE CHRIST, YOU ARE IMITATING GOD!**

4. AND QUITE FRANKLY TODAY, LOVELESSNESS IS MORE THAN A FAILURE OR SHORTCOMING OR A WEAKNESS, IT IS SIN.

*** IT IS WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE OF GOD'S COMMAND AND DISREGARD OF HIS EXAMPLE. TO LOVE AS**

CHRIST LOVES IS TO LOVE BECAUSE CHRIST LOVES, BECAUSE WE ARE TO BE IMITATORS OF HIM AS HIS LOVED CHILDREN.

**** SO THIS KIND OF LOVE IS A FORGIVING, GIVING AND LIVING LOVE.**

***** AND AS YOU'LL LOOK AT THE END OF EPHESIANS 5:2, NOTICE THAT THIS KIND OF FORGIVING, DYING, SACRIFICIAL LOVE BY CHRIST WAS A FRAGRANT AROMA TO GOD, TO HIS FATHER.**

****** AND BELOVED, THE SWEETEST FRAGRANCE, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AROMA, THE BEST PERFUME THAT GOD HAS EVER DETECTED EMANATING FROM THIS PLANET, WAS NOT THE BURNT OFFERINGS, THE GRAIN OFFERING OR THE PEACE OFFERINGS TALKED ABOUT IN THE FIRST 4 CHAPTERS OF LEVITICUS AS SOOTHING AROMAS TO THE LORD.**

5. NO. THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AROMA THAT GOD HAS EVER DETECTED EMANATING FROM THIS PLANET WAS THE AROMA OF THE PERFECT SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST THAT WAS OFFERED ONCE FOR ALL ON THE CROSS.

*** AND AS I WRAP UP THIS WONDERFUL PASSAGE**

TODAY: (1) I REMIND YOU THAT AS CHRIST IMITATED THE FATHER, SO WE ARE CALLED TO IMITATE HIM. AND WE DO THAT AS WE WALK IN LOVE AND SACRIFICE OURSELVES FOR CHRIST AND OTHERS AND LIVE A LIFE OF FORGIVENESS.

*** AND BELOVED, MANY LIVES COULD BE REVOLUTIONIZED BY APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE OF FORGIVENESS.**

**** I MEAN THINK OF THE HEARTACHE OF FRACTURED RELATIONSHIPS IN FAMILIES TODAY AND IN CHRIST'S CHURCH THAT RESULT FROM SELFISHNESS, A LACK OF LOVE AND AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT.**

***** AND CHRISTIAN, IF WE ARE GOING TO IMITATE AND ACT LIKE OUR FATHER, WE MUST FORGIVE, THAT IS WALKING IN LOVE.**

****** WE HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN AN UNPAYABLE DEBT, HOW CAN WE NOT FORGIVE SOMEONE WHO IN COMPARISON HAS A DEBT TO US THAT IS WORTH 25 CENTS.**

(2) I CAME ACROSS THIS STORY IN ONE OF THE COMMENTARIES I STUDIED THIS WEEK.

*** IT TELLS THE STORY OF A MAN NAMED ROBERT**

FALCONER WITNESSING AMONG DESTITUTE PEOPLE IN A CERTAIN CITY AND OF READING THEM THE STORY OF THE WOMAN WHO WIPED JESUS' FEET WITH HER TEARS.

**** WHILE HE WAS READING HE HEARD A LOUD SOB AND LOOKED UP AT A YOUNG THIN GIRL WHOSE FACE WAS DISFIGURED BY SMALLPOX.**

***** AFTER HE SPOKE A FEW WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO HER SHE SAID, "WILL HE EVER COME AGAIN, THE ONE WHO FORGAVE THE WOMAN? I HAVE HEARD HE WILL COME AGAIN. WILL IT BE SOON?"**

****** FALCONER REPLIED, "HE COULD COME ANY TIME, BUT WHY DO YOU ASK?"**

(3) AFTER SOBBING AGAIN UNCONTROLLABLY, SHE SAID, "SIR, CAN'T HE WAIT A LITTLE WHILE? MY HAIR AIN'T LONG ENOUGH YET TO WIPE HIS FEET."

*** BELOVED, THE PERSON WHO SEES THE GREATNESS OF HIS OWN FORGIVENESS BY GOD'S LOVE WILL HIMSELF IN LOVE BE FORGIVING.**

**** FOR HE GIVES AND FORGIVES AND LIVES IN LOVE BECAUSE HIS HEAVENLY HOLY FATHER HAS FORGIVEN IN LOVE AND HE DESIRES TO BE AN IMITATOR OF HIS FATHER BY WALKING IN LOVE. (LET'S PRAY).**