

In Christ - Ephesians Series

Walk in Love (Part 1)

What it REALLY means to walk in love!

Text: Ephesians 5:1-3

Introduction:

1. This is the 3rd time we encounter the word 'walk' in this practical section of Ephesians. We are exhorted to:
 - Walk worthy of the Lord (Eph. 4:1)
 - Not walk as the unsaved (Eph. 4:17)
 - Walk in love (Eph. 5:2)
2. The word walk implies progress and forward movement. "The word depicts progress in the Christian life because the Christian life never stands still. It is a life of movement." (John Phillips)
3. In this section the Apostle now issues a call for us to walk in love. As we will see, this is connected with a life of strict separation from the sensual sins of the flesh. We will consider this section under three headings:
 - The Example of Love to Follow (Vs. 1-2)
 - The Evils of Lust to Flee (Vs. 3-4)
 - The End of the Lost to Fear (Vs. 5-6)

I. THE EXAMPLE OF LOVE TO FOLLOW (VS. 1-2)

As believers we are to walk according to:

A. The Standard of the Father's Love (Vs. 1)

1. It is a love that is forgiving (Vs. 1a)
 - a. "therefore" = shows the connection of this exhortation to the previous verse. In the previous verse (Eph. 4:32) the forgiveness of the Father has been described.
 - b. Note: This forgiveness was based upon the sacrifice of Christ – "even as God for **Christ's sake**" (Vs. 32).
2. It is a love that is to be Followed (Vs. 1b)
 - a. "followers of God" = the word 'follower' comes from the Greek word 'mimetes' (μιμητης) which forms the basis of our word 'mimic' in English. We are to imitate our Heavenly Father in all things and in particular within the context of this passage, His attribute of forgiveness. Forgiveness is love expressed in action.
Who are you imitating in your life?
 - b. "as dear children" = the word 'dear' means 'beloved'. "In classical times it particularly referred to an only child to whom the parents had devoted all their love... Believers must realize God's ability to extend his love to each of his children as if he or she were the only child." (Hoehner) As children in God's family, we are to imitate our Heavenly Father.
 - c. Illustration of forgiveness: Sabina Wurmbrand

B. The Standard of the Son's Love (Vs. 2)

The love of Christ is the model for our walk. Notice three features of Christ's love described in the verse. Christ's love was:

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1. Self-giving – “as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us
 - a. Christ loved us so much He **gave Himself** for us. The word ‘gave’ means “to hand or give over”. Do you see the picture? Christ handed Himself over to all the agonies of the cross to purchase our redemption. He was not forced onto that Christ; he laid His life down willingly for us. Can you see how much Christ loves us? John 10:17-18 “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but **I lay it down of myself**. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”
 - b. The word ‘for’ is ‘huper’ meaning “instead of, in behalf of”. It brings out the great truth of substitution that Christ died in our place, instead of us.
 - c. Application: The kind of love God wants from us as Christians is a selfless, giving love (Rom. 5:5).
2. Self-sacrificing – “an offering and a sacrifice to God” (Vs. 2b)
 - a. The use of the words ‘offering’ and ‘sacrifice’ take our minds back to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament of which Christ is the perfect fulfillment.
 - b. “...Behold **the Lamb of God**, which taketh away the sin of the world.”
 - c. Application: The love God requires from us as Christians is a sacrificial love.
3. Sweet-smelling – “for a sweetsmelling savour” (Vs. 2c)
 - a. This phrase points us back to the “sweet savour” offerings described in Leviticus. They were the first 3 of the 5 offerings described in the first part of Leviticus. They are:
 - i. The Burnt offering (Lev. 1:1-17) which depicted Christ’s total devotion to God in giving His very life to obey and please His Father.
 - ii. The meat (meal, grain) offering (Lev. 2:1-16) which depicted Christ’s perfection.
 - iii. The peace offering (Lev. 3:1-17; 4:27-31) which depicted His making peace between God and man.
 - b. The central thought is that of an offering that is well pleasing to the Father.
 - c. Application: When we exercise Christ-like love, it is fragrant and pleasing to God. Do you have the fragrance of Christ’s love in your life or the foul stench of self-centeredness?

II. THE EVILS OF LUST TO FLEE (Vs. 3-4)

Paul now demonstrates that “to walk as unregenerate sinners runs counter to walking in love and lists lifestyles that are diametrically opposed to the Christian love.” (Hoehner) God’s Word clearly shows that walking in God’s love is inseparably connected to a life of purity and holiness. The sins Paul warns against fall into two categories:

A. Sensual Sins (Vs. 3)

1. The sins described (Vs. 3a)

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- a. **Fornication** (Vs. 3a) – refers to illicit sexual intercourse in its many and various forms. It comes from the Greek word ‘porneia’. The related word πορνη is translated ‘harlot(s)’ 8 times in the N.T. and 4 times as ‘whore’. Our English word ‘pornography’ comes from two Greek words πορνεία and γραφή meaning, “to write about a whore or harlot.” It is a broad term encompassing any form of illicit sex.
- i. The Graeco-Roman view in Paul’s day: Demosthenes (Greek Orator) said, “We have courtesans (prostitutes) for the sake of pleasure; we have concubines for the sake of daily cohabitation; we have wives for the purpose of having children legitimately and of having a faithful guardian for all our household affairs.” Seneca, a Roman Philosopher, said that the women of that day would date the years by the names of their husbands. John Phillips notes, “In Paul’s day, as in ours, sexual promiscuity was taken for granted. Everybody indulged in it; it was an acceptable lifestyle. Many of the Ephesian converts had been brought up in **a permissive atmosphere** where it was common for a man to keep a mistress, frequent houses of ill repute, gratify his lusts in casual liaisons, or accept a partner without bothering with the formality of marriage.”
 - ii. Sounds like the day we live in! Now we have our government passing laws legitimizing sins that a generation ago would have landed you in prison!
 - iii. I. Cor. 6:13, 15-20 “...Now the body is not for **fornication**, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body...Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. **Flee fornication**. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but **he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body**. What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”
 - iv. 1Thess. 4:3-4 “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from **fornication**:

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That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;”

- v. Practical Challenge: Guard your virginity as a **single person**. Resolve to stay pure until God provides you a spouse. Resolve to stay single if it's God's will and serve Him rather than marrying out of God's will!
- vi. Practical Challenge: Guard your marriage as a **spouse**. Remember your vow was “till death us do part” not “until lust us do part”! Remember you didn't just make that promise to your spouse, you made it to Almighty God!
- b. **Uncleanness** (Vs. 3b) – means moral uncleanness, perversion, impurity. The word ‘all’ means “every kind of, all sorts of”. It is a more general term than the previous, encompassing not only sinful actions but **thoughts** and **intentions** as well. A closely related form of the same word is used to describe demons as ‘unclean’ at least 22 times. In fact, the word ‘uncleanness’ with the exception of one instance is used in connection with sexual sin in the New Testament. The following are other examples where uncleanness is linked to sexual perversion:
 - i. Rom. 1:24, 26 “Wherefore God also gave them up to **uncleanness** through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves...for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman...”
 - ii. II. Cor. 12:21 “...and have not repented of the **uncleanness** and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.”
 - iii. Gal. 5:19 “Adultery, fornication, **uncleanness**”
 - iv. Rev. 17:4 “...**filthiness** of her fornication.”
 - v. Illustration: In the O.T. physical and spiritual uncleanness was to be zealously put away from God's people. The word ‘unclean’ occurs 110 times in Leviticus and the word ‘uncleanness’ 19 times. In like manner, all uncleanness of the flesh and spirit is to be put away from us if we are to walk in fellowship with Christ. 2 Cor. 7:1 “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from **all filthiness of the flesh and spirit**, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”
- c. **Covetousness** – means a greedy desire to have more, an uncontrolled appetite. It is “selfishness to an extreme degree. The internal attitude is tied to the sexual immorality and impurity. Can also be greed for material possessions.” (Hoehner)

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- i. Remember the context here is sexual sins. Covetousness is the root from which these perverse sins spring. Covetousness is linked to sexual lust elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Eph. 4:19, 1 Thess. 4:6, Col. 3:5).
 - ii. Exodus 20:17 “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, **thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife**, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.”
 - iii. There are a number of things fuelling this covetousness in the area of sensual pleasure in our day. There is Hollywood and the pop culture which promotes promiscuity through its movies and music. There is the multibillion-dollar pornography industry with its vile tentacles reaching its way through most of the internet world. Then there is the culture of immodesty and nakedness that sadly has also affected the church. (See 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:5). There is social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc...) that promotes an unreal/fake universe where everyone appears to be attractive.
2. The standard demanded (Vs. 3b)
 - a. “not be once named among you” = ‘named’ is used in the same sense here as in 1 Cor. 5:1. This is a very high standard for God’s people. These sins are to have **no** place in our lives. Such sins are unthinkable for the child of God. “Paul is not saying that one cannot identify the sin when it occurs. Rather, he is asserting that these sins should be so universally absent from the body of believers that there should be no occasion to associate them with the church.” (Hoehner)
 - b. “as becometh saints” = the word ‘becometh’ means appropriate, fitting and proper. In other words, abstaining from these sins entirely is what is proper for the saints. Indulging in these sins is inappropriate and unbecoming for the saints. Remember, the word ‘saint’ means a holy, set apart, consecrated one. You’re a saint not a playboy! Walk in love not lust! In this passage, the Holy Spirit brings us back to the gold standard of Christlikeness.

To be continued in Part 2...

Conclusion:

1. Are you saved? Verse 5-6 make it clear that unless one repents from such a lifestyle and receives Christ, they will spend eternity in hell.
2. Are you defeated in the area of moral purity in your life as a Christian? Will you seek cleansing and restoration from God and get godly council?