

Sermon Title: Walk Like This
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:1-6 (Ephesians #33)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-3-22

There is a descriptive and useful word that wasn't in a lot of people's vocabulary until about the last decade: the word "worldview"; and we specifically talk about a "Christian Worldview." In his seminars, Mike Riddle talks about a "Christian Worldview." We've done it here at Heritage from time to time. It's that whole perspective through which you see everything to do with the world (cf. Prov. 9:10).

And I was thinking how the Word of God helps us have this broad spectrum, right down to specifics (Prov. 28:5b). Wednesday night, Scott was teaching us through the Book of Daniel, and we are seeing the sequence of the beasts that represent these eras, these kingdoms; and there's this *big* view of world history. And you don't grasp that if you don't grasp what God has revealed to us in His Word. But He *also* gets down to *exactly* what He wants *you* to do *today* when you walk out the doors from this place—and it all fits together. Today, we are going to be in the first six verses of Ephesians Chapter 5, and we're going to get very, very personal and practical.

The influence of examples is a very powerful influence. One of Marsha's and my favorite stories is about a newlywed couple that at last carved out enough budget money to have their first homemade roast beef dinner. They planned all week, pointed toward Saturday evening. Heather picked out a nice roast. Her husband watched as she was working around the kitchen, and he pitched in and helped wherever he could.

But he watched her cut about half an inch off of each end of the roast, and put it in the pan, and she popped it in the oven. He couldn't control his curiosity, so at the risk of possible offense of his lovely bride, knowing she was probably a little bit insecure about this—the finest dinner that she had attempted in their marriage—he said, "Honey, why did you cut the ends off the roast?" "Well, that's just how you do it," she answered. "But, why? Isn't it a waste of good meat?" He truly just wanted to be a good steward. She said, "Well, my mom is the best cook I know, and that's the way she cooks roast, so it must be the best way."

Well, the roast turned out great; dinner was wonderful. But the mystery remained; and not too long after that, Thanksgiving rolled around, and the subject popped up at the Thanksgiving dinner. Mike addressed his mother-in-law as politely and gently as he could; he said, "You know, one of the things I have to be thankful about is what a wonderful cook my wife turned out to be. And I owe a lot of gratitude to *you* for being such a good example to her. But a question has been bothering me for a few weeks. When Heather cooked a roast, she cut a little bit off the ends before she cooked it, and she said the reason was because that's how you showed her to do it. Why do you cut the ends off the roast?" "Well," said the mother-in-law, "that's the way *my* mother always did it, and *her* roasts were wonderful!"

Well, fortunately, Grandma was also at the Thanksgiving dinner, so all eyes turned to Grandma for the big question: "Mom, why *do* you trim the ends off the roast before you cook it?" Well, Grandma had to compose herself when she finally stopped laughing; and she shared the wisdom that had been passed on for two generations. She said, "Well, when you kids were young, we were living on a shoestring, and I only had one pan I could

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cook a roast in, but it wasn't big enough for the size of roast that we needed to feed the family, so I had to trim off the ends to make it fit the pan!" How powerful is the example of someone you love!

Well, this principle of powerful examples is a common one in the New Testament. Speaking of his role as a spiritual father to the Corinthians, Paul wrote this to them: In First Corinthians 4:16, he said, "Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me." Boy, *that's strong!* And again in Chapter 11, Verse 1—"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted). Can *you* say to someone, "If you want to learn to be more spiritually mature, follow *me* around"? Wow!

Paul commended one of his favorite churches, the church at Thessalonica, with these words in Chapter 1, Verse 6, of First Thessalonians: "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit." And then later, he commended that entire church for imitating the example of other strong churches: First Thessalonians 2:14—"For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews."

The writer of Hebrews beseeched the uncommitted ones in the group to which he wrote in these words: Hebrews 6:12—"...so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Then that same author exhorts all of us to follow the example set by the ones who are our spiritual leaders: Hebrews 13:7—"Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7)

And there is a very general command in Third John 11—"Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God."

In our passage for today, we have a very strong command about imitating good examples. How good of an example is this? Well, pretty good. Ephesians 5:1—"Therefore be imitators *of God*, as beloved children." We need to learn what that means! How can I actually *imitate* God?

Well, there's a big clue in the theme-word that we've been seeing through Chapter 4, and now into Chapter 5; a major theme-word of Ephesians 4, 5, and 6 is the word "walk." Your "walk"—or, your lifestyle, the way you live your life—that needs to match your *position* in Christ. In *position*, you are "blessed...with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3)—you are "in Christ." Your *practice*—that's how you walk. Remember how Chapter 4 began, introducing the second half of this book? Chapter 4, Verse 1—"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to *walk* in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

And now, here at the beginning of Chapter 5, Paul is going to call us to think further about what it means to "walk" in the world as His child.

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It's a great word picture, because walking, as a physical analogy, doesn't happen all at once; the coordination and the balance and the muscle development take time, and a lot of practice. I've never known of an infant who, one day, just crawled over to the edge of the crib, vaulted over the edge, leapt out, and started running!

Walking begins with quavering balance, and *many* falls. It's followed by faltering steps, and *many* falls. You know, "Come on, honey, you can make it! You can make it! Two more—*oh*, almost made it!" Then comes walking with help. How many times have you walked the little one along, given him two fingers to hold onto. Eventually we all walk, and we learn to run.

But there are *many* falls! Gradually we get pretty proficient at it, but *only* after *many* falls and a lot of practice. I've been walking for several decades now—I *still stumble*! At this end of the journey, I'm kind of learning how to go back to the *first* part again.

But, wouldn't we think it absurd for a thirteen-month-old to fall down while they're trying to make it to your loving arms, and then say, "This is for the birds! I'm going back to crawling forever!" That would be foolish! That would be to deny God's plan, and normal development. But learning to walk and run requires *hundreds* of repeated attempts, along with painful lessons that come from the failures.

So, it's a *great* analogy for spiritual growth! This chapter and the chapter before, and the chapter after it, talk about "The Walk of the New Man." This is not telling you *how* to become a child of God; this is saying, "Because you *are* a child of God, here's how to live. Here's how you, as a 'new creature' in Christ"—which he calls the "new man" in Ephesians Chapter 4—"this is how the 'new man' lives."

There's no guarantee of instant success. God does promise us the ability to do it; we have that ability by the power of His Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16). But we need to be as tenacious about it as when we were little people, trying to imitate our parents and our older siblings walking around. This is the theme of this portion of God's Word.

There are five commands—basic to all the others in this section—built around this metaphor of "walking." Now that you belong to Christ, how's your walk? Well, it started back in Chapter 4, Verse 1—"Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." Then there was Verse 17 in Chapter 4—"Walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind." In our passage today: "Walk in love" (vs. 2). Then next paragraph, Verse 8 of Chapter 5—"Now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light." We'll get down to Verse 15—"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise."

So as we keep talking about "The Walk of the New Man," a very obvious sermon title came to my head this week: "Walk Like This"—and I'm not an Egyptian. "Walk Like This"—simple outline, five verses: 1 and 2—What To Imitate. 3 through 6—What Not To Imitate.

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Start out with What To Imitate: Verse 1—"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children." "Therefore" connects this immediately with Chapter 4. When you see a "therefore" at the beginning of a chapter, it's too bad they put the chapter division there, because this is a direct connection. There's no change of subject, no change of logic, no change of flow here; he's building upon what he has been saying, and taking it further.

"Therefore," he says, "be" something. That little tiny word "be" has the same nuance of meaning that it had last week when we looked at Chapter 4, Verse 32; and it can be kind of hard to translate into English and get the full meaning of it. It's actually a form of the verb *ginomai* that means "to become". It should be translated something like "be becoming this." In other words: this is something that should be constantly being produced in our lives—this imitation of God. Again: not how to *become* a child of God, but—and we used this word last week, and pointed out how it's used that way in John 15:8—this is how to "prove" that you are a child of God.

The word "imitators"—that's one of those great Greek words. You almost know it, because it has been transliterated into English. The word "imitator" is *mimētēs*; we get "mimic" from it. Remember *way back* to the *olden* days—a thing called a "mimeograph machine"? That means "imitating what's written"; that is exactly what the word means. It implies likeness and similarity to a pattern, but not duplication; so it's "following an example". It literally means "to do what is seen to be done by someone else"—even to the extent of cutting the ends off the roast. We are called to "imitate" God.

Now, I just want to make sure you understand: That has some limitations, alright? *You* can't create a universe from nothing! You can't even "hold together" the universe, as it exists (Col. 1:17). You can't save anyone from eternal damnation (Ps. 49:7), nor can you *bring* the just eternal damnation on Satan for his rebellion (cf. Jd. 9). You can't "raise the dead" (Jn. 5:21; cf. Rom. 6:4). You can't create "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1). You can't make "the blind" see; you can't make "the lame walk" (Lk. 7:22; cf. Jn. 9:32). But you can imitate God.

So, how does that work? Well, I think the context gives you a *very* good idea how it works. Remember the word "therefore"? It's connected with what he said in Verse 32, which follows Verse 31, which follows Verse 30, which is based upon Verses 20 through 24, which is all about "putting off" the deeds of "the old man" and "putting on" the deeds of "the new man" (NKJV).

In Chapter 4, Verse 32, we can imitate God by "forgiving" others the way "God" has "forgiven" us. The sacrificial way that Jesus expressed *His* love for us isn't only the means of salvation, it's also the example of how we live so that we put others "more important than" ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

There are, in all, eleven commands in the New Testament for us to imitate God the Father, or imitate Jesus Christ. They *all* have to do with love, or with some aspect of our interpersonal relationships. We imitate God in *moral* things and in *relational* things. That's how we "imitate God."

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Stick around, keep coming back; it won't be too much longer, we're going to get further into Ephesians Chapter 5, and we're going to see this command: "Husbands, love your wives, *just as* Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (vs. 25). Therein, every husband has the perfect biblical description of his authority as the leader of his home: he has the authority to put himself at the *bottom* of the pile and *give himself* for the good of his wife. *That's* the authority that you have! You have the authority to be the leader in loving, because that's imitating what Christ did for *His* bride—which is the Church (cf. vs. 29).

So, how do you imitate God? Well, how about you skim back through the context a little bit? Speak truth in love; resolve conflicts; be honest; clean up your speech; put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice; and forgive each other.

And notice, he says: "Be imitators of God *as beloved children*." Children are *great* imitators! A child naturally imitates his or her parents, and a well-loved child is all the more eager to imitate the ones who love him and the ones that re respected the most. "Beloved children" keep imitating, *even* to the point of cutting the ends off the roast—unless some other teaching intervenes.

So look at Verse 2—"...and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." As recipients of God's love, start mimicking Him! Copy the One who has loved us perfectly; hence—"walk in love." Do you see the pattern? If you've been "forgiven," the expected outcome is: you will be "forgiving." If you are "beloved," the expected outcome is that you "love."

So that requires understanding what the verse means by "love." Well, the word translated "love" is the familiar word that you have heard a lot of times if you've been around Christian teaching; it's spelled just like the word "agape," as in: your jaw drops and you're staring at something; but you have to be cool and pronounce it "Greekish": *agapē* [uh-GAH-pay]—that's the word.

There are actually four words in the ancient Greek language that describe various shades of the meaning of love. There's one for familial love (*storgē*), like "blood is thicker than water." There's one for physical love—*eros*, the "erotic" kind of love. But there are two other words that are used in the New Testament, and they both describe shades of the meaning of our English word "love."

The first one is *philos*, or the verb *phileō*. That's the kind of love that involves strong feelings of mutual care and connection between people. For example, it's used that way in the name for the city in America that has the best Greek name: "Philadelphia"—from *phileō*—"love"; and *adelphos*—"brother"; it's "the city of brotherly love." It's where you're *connected* with each other. This is a *wonderful* kind of love! This is a *human* kind of love. This is part of what makes the fellowship of the saints such a special thing (Eph. 1:15b), where we are caring for each other, with which we are personally involved; we have mutual feelings and we have positive responses and we interact in ways that build each other up (Eph. 4:16). That's *phileō*, and it's a *good* thing.

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But the word *agapē* is the kind of love that goes to a different level. This is best described by self-sacrifice for someone else's benefit (e.g., Jn. 3:16). In all the uses of this word in the New Testament, it's *always* a matter of sacrifice for someone else's benefit. That's why, in the archaic Elizabethan English, in First Corinthians 13 especially, they translated this word not as "love" like they did most of the time; they translated it as "charity"—because what is "charity"? "Charity" is you giving what you have for someone who doesn't have it. It's actually a good *sense* of the word, but it has a lot more implication than just that.

The basis of this kind of love is that you *value* the object of the love. This kind of love doesn't care what's in it for the lover; it does what it does because it values other people. This love can be with *or without* positive feelings for another person. *This* can even be done *in spite of* negative feelings for the other person, as in: "Love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44; cf. Ex. 23:4-5; Prov. 25:21). "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19; Gal. 5:14).

For a long time, we had a neighbor on one side that was *really* easy to love, and a neighbor on the other side that was really *not* easy to love. And it didn't say, "Love your northern neighbor as yourself, and your southern neighbor..." No. "Love your *enemies* and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

That's *this* kind of love. It doesn't depend on feelings; it's a matter of actions. Since I love God, and God has declared the value of every single human being (Titus 3:4)—*all* "created" in His "image" (Gen. 1:27; cf. 5:1; Jas. 3:9)—that's *all* the motivation I need to love people with *agapē* love (cf. Matt. 5:45).

That famous description of this in the so-called "Love Chapter"—First Corinthians Chapter 13—I might quibble whether that's the best chapter to call the "Love Chapter," but it *does* contain the most thorough description of this love; it's First Corinthians 13:4-7; you may have it memorized: "Love is patient, love is kind..."—and it goes on and on and on. The interesting thing is that *that* passage—which describes *agapē* love in about seven different ways—it's significant that every description of love in that passage, whether or not you can tell it in English, every description of love is a verb. That's because this kind of love can *only* be described by "action words"—serving the best interest of someone else (cf. Matt. 20:28).

Agapē is doing what is best for someone else, regardless of the cost to yourself, regardless of your feelings, and without concern over whether what you do will be noticed or appreciated or reciprocated. The kind of love that we are called to practice involves things like: speaking truth, meeting needs, forgiving, watching your tongue, building up the other person.

Ant notice that right here in Verse 2, when he says, "Walk in love," the description of "love" that he gives is voluntary sacrifice: "just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us"; and it was "an offering," it was "a sacrifice to God."

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And would you notice also that Paul convoluted First and Second Person here: "As He loved *you*"—Second Person—"and gave Himself up for *us*"—First Person plural. He wanted to make sure that he included himself in there. I don't think Paul ever got over the fact, and how he just *marveled* that Jesus died for a murdering, blasphemous Christian-killer like him (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15). "He loved you, and gave Himself up for all of us."

And would you notice that *that* offering, that sacrifice, is described as "a fragrant aroma." That's a metaphor; it's a phrase that is used in the Bible to describe God's pleasure, His acceptance of a sacrifice (e.g., Gen. 8:21; Ex. 29:18; Ezek. 20:41; Phil. 4:18). If you want to be a "fragrant aroma" to God, "walk in love" (cf. 1 Jn. 4:7). In so doing, you will be imitating God. You go out and you "walk in love," and God can look down at you and smile, and [inhaling deeply, with pleasure] "Oh, *I like that!*" Have you ever thought about that? *You* can be "a fragrant aroma" in the nostrils of God? Now, does God have nostrils? How big are they? Those are all word-pictures.

What To Imitate: the sacrificial love of Christ. Love is a verb in that sense; it has to be described in action words. And now: What *Not* To Imitate. And here comes a quick synopsis; and when I typed the word "synopsis," I thought, "You know what? We could misspell that and make it an *s-i-n-o-p-s-i-s*, because that's a description of what's in the next four verses: a synopsis of sinful things.

Ephesians Chapter 5, Verse 3—"But..." Okay, stop right there. "I told you what to imitate. Here comes the other side: what *not* to imitate." "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints."

"Immorality" is the translation of that word *porneia*; it's the word that is used for illicit sexual activity of *any* kind—in other words: any kind of sexual activity or desire or intent other than between a husband and a wife within the covenant of marriage (cf. 1 Cor. 7:2)—that's this word. Ephesus, to whom Paul wrote this letter, in the First Century was very similar to our culture today, in this sense: all sorts of extramarital sex was rampant, it was widely accepted, it was not considered shocking. Satan pulled off one of his *great* coups in the temple to "Artemis" (Acts 19:24)—or, "Diana" (NKJV)—he'd even figured out how to make sex with a prostitute into *worship*...or, so they said. Well, the "new man" lives by a completely different standard for the use of our bodies (cf. 1 Cor. 6:15-20).

Don't let "immorality" be "named among you," or "impurity." "Immorality is specifically talking about sexual things; "impurity" has a broader meaning: it means the deeds, the words, the thoughts, the intentions of the heart, the desires, the passions. And when you put it in juxtaposition with "immorality," it makes a strong point. If you're saying, "Well, you shouldn't have sex with anybody you're not married to," then he says, "Also, don't do the things that lead up to that (cf. Rom. 13:14). Don't rationalize behavior that is short of the physical act." So Paul adds: Avoid *any* impurity." Like Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, that to "look" upon someone with the *intent* of "adultery" (Matt. 5:28)—that's essentially the same as committing the act; the only difference is in the matter of degree (cf. Jb. 31:1, 9, 11; Prov. 6:24-25).

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God is concerned that we "purify" our "hearts" (Jas. 4:8) just as much as He is concerned with us purifying our actions (cf. Matt. 23:26). For your walk to look like the "new man," you need to concentrate on having a "pure heart" (Ps. 24:4; 73:1; Matt. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22). The actions will tend to take care of themselves when you deal with the issues of "the heart" (Eph. 6:6; cf. Ezek. 36:26-27; Titus 2:14).

And he throws in the word "greed." Have you ever thought of "greed" being the cousin of "impurity" and "immorality"? Well, you could take the word in its most general sense of materialism and self-comfort rather than sacrificial love; but it could also be taken in terms of the connection to those physical and sexual things, in that it is the desire for something that doesn't belong to you. Either way, "greed" is the enemy of sacrificial love.

And he says these things "must not even be named among you." Not only should we not *participate* in these things, we should hold one another accountable to be sure that we don't even let them creep in around the edges of the fellowship of the Body of Christ, that we're careful that we avoid even *discussing* these things. We don't *talk* about these things! Why? Well, it's right there at the end of that verse: "as is proper among saints." Some things just aren't "proper" for lunch discussion among believers. I was just listening to a podcast with Marsha this week, and something was brought up with some ugly memories of the one who made himself famous for being the "cussing pastor," using filthy words from the pulpit, titillating people that way. I mean, *that's wrong!* I don't care what you say you believe, it's *not* "proper among the saints"! There's a higher standard, there's a purity to the fellowship (cf. Ps. 52:9; 89:5; 149:1).

There have to be things that you refuse to talk about, things you won't listen to, things you won't joke about. Most of this generation in America has forgotten how to take a stand on things and let it be known without apology, and say, "That's not proper!" If that makes you think that you're sounding like your Grandma, well, go back and think about what it was about Grandma's world, *where there was a standard* for properness, for propriety, for dignity, for respect!

The next verse, I leaped forward to, back when we were in Chapter 4, Verse 29, where he says, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth," and I said it's like Chapter 5, Verse 4. Well, here's Chapter 5, Verse 4—"and there must be"—now, he's talked about wrong *acts* in the verse before this; now, he's getting to words—"and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting"—or, you might say: not "proper among saints"—"but rather giving of thanks." We need to be known for being thankful people who give thanks for everything we can *think of* (1 Thess. 5:18), rather than speaking "filthiness"; that's that shameful or disgusting talk.

And remember the phrase "silly talk"—it's literally the talk of a fool. The Greek would make it "moron talk"—boasting; tall tales; speaking beyond your knowledge, like the whole world has done for two years, where *everybody* became an expert in epidemiology. "I *know* that! I read it on the Internet! It's a person I like, so it must be true, and you're wrong! And I'm going to leave your church about it!" We've had a whole bunch of "moron talk" going on.

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"Coarse jesting" is irreverent, offensive, vulgar. Being a "cursing pastor"? *How in the world* could you have this book [Ephesians] in your Bible, and want to be *known* for being profane from a pulpit? Okay, I'm picking on somebody; he deserves it. "Not fitting"—that's the opposite of "worthy." That's what we have to pursue.

Instead, be known for the "giving of thanks"—thanking God; thanking people; thanking God *for* people; thanking people for what they do, instead of doing the things that tear someone down (cf. Prov. 12:18).

The last two verses of our pericope for this morning make a *strong* conclusion for this message. There's a potent reminder that when a person is saved, it *shows*; it shows in how they walk (cf. Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:13). Look at Verses 5 and 6—"For this you know with certainty..." Now, I'm going to stop there, before I read the rest of these two sentences. "Know with certainty" is a really interesting phrase. It's an idiomatic way to translate the compilation of two Greek words for "know" that are put side-by-side here. It's an idiom for the *strongest* possible awareness and understanding of something. The most literal translation might be something like: "This you know, recognizing" something. It means you know it in your mind, *and* it's verified by your experience. The Greek uses those two different words: if it's emphasizing the mental knowledge, it's one word; if it's emphasizing knowledge by experience, it's another. Here, they're shoved together.

So, look what he says: "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral"—that's the same word as "immorality" in Verse 3—"no immoral or impure person or covetous man"—that's "immorality," "impurity," and "greed" (vs. 3)—"who is an idolater"—that's the essence of any sin: you're making something more important than pleasing God, so you're an "idolater"—"has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." (cf. Matt. 7:21; 1 Jn. 2:4) ["deceive you with empty words," cf. Jer. 7:8-10]

Now, think about it: We could go over to First Corinthians Chapter 6; there is, if possible, an even uglier list of sins there, and sinful kinds of people. And then Paul has that great statement in Verse 11—"Such *were* some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified..." In other words: to come to Christ *changes you!* It *removes you* from that kind of "walk," that kind of lifestyle, that kind of thinking, that kind of speech, that kind of behavior! (cf. Rev. 14:12; 17:14)

So, think about it: Will it show up in a person's pattern of life, if that person is unsaved—"still in" their "sins" (1 Cor. 15:17; cf. Acts 8:34); unregenerate—still spiritually "dead" (Eph. 2:1; 1 Tim. 5:6; Rev. 3:1); totally depraved—that is, following in the footsteps of Adam, who led us into sin (Rom. 5:12); and "living" for "the flesh" (Rom. 8:13)? If you're unsaved, unregenerate, depraved, and living for the flesh—is that going to affect the way you live? Of course it is! It will *dominate* it! (cf. 2 Pet. 2:14) So, is it possible for a person like *that*, who now becomes saved, regenerated, made righteous in Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit—can you be *that*, without it showing up in your life? *No!* It's different! Why, you might say: "in Christ" you are "a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17)!

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That's why it's legitimate to say, when you see these things bubbling up in your life—and you *will*, because you still battle "the flesh" (Matt. 26:41; Gal. 5:17) until you're "set free" from "the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24)—when you see those things bubble up, it's perfectly legitimate to say, "Stop! Wait a minute! 'Put off the old man' (Eph. 4:22, NKJV)"—like a filthy, stinky garment that you *can't wait* to get off and get in the shower. *Strip* that thing away! Let your "mind" be "renewed" by the Word of God (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23; cf. Ps. 19:7), and "put on the new man" (Eph. 4:24, NKJV). Replace that *old* outward appearance with the "newness of life" that you have in Christ (Rom. 6:4).

It's interesting to me that nearly 2,000 years ago, Paul could tell these Christians in Ephesus that this was something that they *knew* with "certainty"...And *now*, we've developed a version of Christianity that often says, "Ah, it's not our place to put any demands upon a person who professes to know Christ!" Well, actually—*yeah*, it is! (cf. Matt. 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Thess. 3:14) And we are to love each other enough to "provoke one another to love and good works," says Hebrews Chapter 10, Verse 24 (NKJV); to come alongside and "reprove" and "rebuke" and "exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim. 4:2); to "pray for one another" (Jas. 5:16); to "care for one other" (1 Cor. 12:25); to want to "build one another up" in Christ (Rom. 14:19).

And would you notice, at the end of Verse 6—"for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." God *will* judge people "according to their deeds" (Is. 59:18; Jer. 25:14; 2 Cor. 11:15; Rev. 20:12-13). *All* the "books" will be "opened" (Rev. 20:12); everything you have ever done, said, thought about—*all* exposed in the light of day (Lk. 8:17; cf. Ecc. 12:14; Matt. 12:36; Heb. 4:13).

And if *any* of it in *any* way falls short of glorifying God (Rom. 3:23), you will be *justly, fairly, and appropriately* rewarded with *eternity* in "the lake of fire...tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev. 20:10; cf. Is. 3:11)—*unless*...unless you stand in Christ; and God, instead of seeing all of *your* deeds, looks down and sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ (Matt. 3:17), which has been "credited" to your account (Rom. 4:3; cf. Is. 61:10; 2 Cor. 5:21).

My friends, "the wrath of God" is *coming*! It hasn't been poured out yet. Do you want to see how ugly it will be? Go study Revelation Chapters 6 through 19, where, during the seven years before Jesus returns, the wrath of God is poured out—"the day" of "the wrath of the Lamb" has come (Rev. 6:16-17). Don't you love that term at the end of Revelation Chapter 6—"the wrath of the Lamb"? I've seen angry lions, I've seen angry bears, I've seen angry vipers...A "lamb"? Really? But He's the "Lamb" who took the punishment for our sins (1 Pet. 1:19; cf. Is. 53:7-8; Jn. 1:29; Col. 2:14).

And so, you could think of the wrath of God this way, best illustration I've ever heard of: Think of a gigantic vat, suspended over the Earth, a *huge* cauldron; and it's suspended just a little bit off-center. Every time someone sins—and that's pretty much *every nanosecond*—a *drop* of the wrath of God falls into that cauldron...and it's filling up. And when it's full—remember, it's suspended a little bit off-center—it will reach the tipping point, and the whole thing will turn over and "be poured out" (Jer. 7:20; cf. Ps. 75:8).

Sermon Title: Walk Like This
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:1-6 (Ephesians #33)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-3-22

That's what Jesus was talking about in John 3:36—"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who *does not obey* the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (cf. Heb. 5:9) For anyone who doesn't know Christ, the cauldron is going to tip (cf. Ps. 9:8; 96:13; Acts 17:31); the "wrath" is going to be poured out (Rom. 2:5)—it's going to be "*terrible*" (Mal. 4:5; cf. Am. 5:20)! And it's going to be *perfect* and *righteous* and *holy* and *just* and "*good*" because that's what God is (Ps. 119:68), and He cannot *not* punish sin, and be a good God (Nah. 1:3; cf. 2 Tim. 2:13).

But if you are "in" Christ (Jn. 14:20; cf. 1 Pet. 2:25)—He, on that cross, took that wrath for you (Rom. 5:8-9; cf. Matt. 20:28); He absorbed it (Is. 53:5-8); and *all* your sin is placed "on Him" (Is. 53:6, 10). He paid the penalty so that now, you can stand—as Ephesians says 27 times—"in Christ"; and that's how God sees you (Phil. 3:9), and *that wrath won't touch you* (cf. Jn. 5:24; Rom. 8:1; Rev. 2:11).

Oh, how could that be true, and you *not* want to "walk" like it, *act* like it, *live* like it? (cf. Gal. 2:20) It's an absolutely transforming, glorious manifestation of the grace of God!

And let's pray:

Our Father, please remind us every day that this passage is addressed to all of us who belong to You "in Christ," and obeying these things is how we choose to give You glory, how we choose to thank You for Your goodness, how we choose to show people around us what You do when You make someone "a new creature." Father, I pray that every soul who hears these words and does not know You through faith in Your Son—is not yet "in Christ"—would You, at this moment, please move them to call upon You for Your mercy? Would You call them into Your kingdom? By the work of Your Holy Spirit, would You change them? Would You make them fit that description of, "Such were some of you"? And now, as we prepare to leave this place of sweet fellowship and to go about our business in the world, please renew our minds each day, keep us from careless speech; remind us that this applies not only to what we say with our mouths but also to what we think, what we post in cyberspace. Lord, we want to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called." Teach us to do that, and to do it with grace. Teach us to avoid wallowing in the wrong places when we stumble. Let no one "deceive us with empty words." We would never want to speak or participate in those things for which Your "wrath comes upon the sons of disobedience." So, as Your "beloved children," help us be "imitators." Convict us as necessary. Reprove us as often as we need it. Correct us by reminding us of Your truth and of good examples; and train us, that we can say, "Be imitators of us, and of the Lord." May the way that we walk, even this week, be to You a "fragrant aroma." And we come to You in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.