

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 5:1-6, *WALKING IN LOVE*

- A. Christians are to walk in the same love in which Christ loves them (1-2)
1. We are to imitate God since we are His beloved children (1), *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.*
 - a. *Therefore*
 - 1) Here, Paul is basing his command to imitate God on the previous verse, 4:32, where God is said to be tender-hearted and forgiving.
 - 2) The word *imitate* means *to act like*.
 - 3) It is normal for children to imitate their parents, especially for those who are beloved children of God.
 - b. God is a Christian's heavenly Father.
 - 1) Matthew 12:50, *For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*
 - 2) Mark 11:25, *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*
 - c. Christians are God's *beloved children*.
 - 1) We are identified by God in the same way He identifies His Son, Jesus, Matthew 3:17, and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."
 - 2) John 17:23, *I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*
 - d. Christians are to imitate God the Father.
 - 1) Luke 6:36, *Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*
 - 2) Matthew 5:48, *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* Note 2 Peter 1:3-4, *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*
 2. Our lives should be characterized by Christlike love (2), *And walk in love, as Christ loved us*
 - a. The foremost way a Christian is to imitate God is by walking in love.
 - 1) Love is a primary attribute of God.
 - a) 1 John 4:8, *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*
 - b) 1 John 4:10, *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
 - 2) Christians are commanded to love.
 - a) John 13:34, *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*
 - b) 1 John 3:11, *For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*
 - c) 1 John 4:21, *And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *The old nature is basically selfish, and for this reason builds walls and declares war. But the new nature is loving, and therefore builds bridges and proclaims peace.*
 - b. Specifically, Christians are to walk in Christlike love which is sacrificial (2b), *and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*
 - 1) *Gave himself up*
 - a) Jesus handed Himself over. His was a choice of love for us.
 - b) John 10:17-18, *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.*
 - c) 1 John 3:16, *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.*
 - d) In Ephesians 4:19, heathen have given themselves up to sensuality but here, we like Jesus, are to give ourselves up to sacrificial love.

- 2) *a fragrant offering and sacrifice*
 - a) Jesus' sacrifice was pleasing, acceptable to God.
 - b) 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, *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.*
 - c) John Stott, *It is thus a striking truth that sacrificial love for others becomes a sacrifice acceptable to God.*

B. Christians are to abstain from evil which are the opposite of love (3-6)

1. Keep from vices in conduct and speech (3-4)

- a. Such conduct includes sexual immorality and covetousness (3-4a), ***But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.***

1) Introduction

- a) Note from Thomas Constable, *The self-centered practices introduced here are the opposite of love. There should be no hint of them in the believer's life.*
- b) William Barclay, *In his speech Pro Caelio, Cicero pleads: 'If there is anyone who thinks that young men should be absolutely forbidden the love of courtesans, he is indeed extremely severe...When indeed was this not done? When did anyone ever find fault with it? When was such permission denied? When was it that that which is now lawful was not lawful?'*
- c) William Barclay, *When Paul put this emphasis on moral purity, he was setting a standard which the ordinary non-Christian had never dreamt of. That is why he pleads with them so earnestly and lays down his laws of purity with such stringency. We must remember the kind of society from which these Christian converts had come and the kind of society with which they were surrounded. There is nothing in all history like the moral miracle which Christianity brought about.*

2) *sexual immorality*

- a) It is to engage in unlawful sex and prostitution.
- b) 1 Corinthians 6:18, *Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.*
- c) 1 Thessalonians 4:3, *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;*

3) *all impurity*

- a) It is the state of moral impurity, especially in relationship to sexual sin.
- b) Romans 1:24, *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,*
- c) Colossians 3:5, *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*
- d) *Sexual immorality and all impurity* would cover all kinds of sexual intercourse outside the God-ordained context of a loving marriage.

4) *covetousness*

- a) It is the desire to have what others have regardless of need.
- b) Luke 12:15, *And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."*
- c) John Stott, *...Paul adds covetousness, surely because they are an especially degrading form of it, namely the coveting of somebody else's body for selfish gratification.*
- d) Warren Wiersbe, *The fornicator and the covetous person each desire to satisfy the appetite by taking what does not belong to them.*

5) Such behavior is inappropriate for Christians to do or even talk about.

- a) Christians are saints, those who are set apart to God.
- b) Ephesians 5:12, *For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.*
- c) Not only should Christians not be immoral but we should not think immorally, or talk about immorality.
- d) John Stott, *This was a high and holy standard to demand, for immorality was rife in Asia. And since the Greek goddess Artemis, 'Diana of the Ephesians', was regarded as a fertility goddess, sexual orgies were regularly associated with her worship.*
- e) William Barclay, *To joke about something or to make it a frequent subject of conversation is to introduce it into the mind and to bring nearer the actual doing of it. Paul warns that some things are not safe even to talk or to joke about. It is a grim commentary on human nature that many books, plays and films have had success simply because they dealt with forbidden and unpleasant things.*

- b. Inappropriate speech includes filthiness, foolish talk and crude joking (4b), ***Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place,***
- 1) Inappropriate speech is out of place for believers because such talk is harmful and opposite one's nature as a saint.
 - a) Ephesians 4:29, *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*
 - b) Ecclesiastes 10:13, *The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness.*
 - 2) Words that describe inappropriate speech include the following.
 - a) *Filthiness*
 - 1] It means *shameful, indecent, obscene, in defiance of moral standards.*
 - 2] It is all that is contrary to purity.
 - b) *Foolish talk*
 - 1] It means *silly, stupid, that which accomplishes no good purpose.*
 - 2] Warren Wiersbe, "*Foolish talking*" *does not mean innocent humor but rather senseless conversation that cheapens the man and does not edify or minister grace to the hearers.*
 - c) *Crude joking*
 - 1] It means *coarse jesting with indecent content.*
 - 2] It is *vulgar, frivolous wit.*
 - 3] Warren Wiersbe, *The gift of wit is a blessing, but when it is attached to a filthy mind or a base motive, it becomes a curse. There are quick-witted people who can pollute any conversation with jests that are always inconvenient (out of place).*
 - 3) Comments
 - a) Each of these words is used only here in the New Testament.
 - b) Stephen Fowl, *Rather than dissect each of these terms to find out which types of speech are implied here, it is probably better to see these three terms as working together to present a composite sketch of the types of speech Christians are to avoid.*
 - c) John Stott, *All three refer to a dirty mind expressing itself in dirty conversation.*
- c. Instead, a believer's life should be characterized by thanksgiving (4c), ***but instead let there be thanksgiving.***
- 1) Ephesians 5:20, *giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
 - 2) Colossians 4:6, *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*
 - 3) John Stott, *All God's gifts, including sex, are subjects for thanksgiving, rather than for joking. To joke about them is bound to degrade them; to thank God for them is the way to preserve their worth as the blessings of a loving Creator.*
 - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *How much better it is for us to be quick to give thanks! This is certainly the best way to give glory to God and keep the conversation pure.*
2. God's judgment is on those who pursue what is evil (5-6)
- a. A person who pursues evil deeds has no part in God's kingdom (5), ***For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.***
 - 1) Scriptural warnings
 - a) 1 Corinthians 6:9, *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,*
 - b) Galatians 5:21, *envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

- 2) This is a contrast between believers and unbelievers.
 - a) Christians have an inheritance and are to live in newness of life.
 - 1] Ephesians 1:13-14, *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*
 - 2] John Stott, *Let no-one say that doctrine does not matter! Good conduct arises out of good doctrine. It is only when we have grasped clearly who we are in Christ, that the desire will grow within us to live a life that is worthy of our calling and fitting to our character as God's new society.*
 - 3] Max Anders, *We are not like them anymore; therefore, we ought not to live like them.*
 - b) Unbelievers have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God evidenced by the way they live.
 - 1] Sexually immoral, impure, see Ephesians 5:3.
 - 2] Covetous, namely an idolater.
 - a] Colossians 3:5, *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*
 - b] A person who is greedy is putting things before God.
 - c) Carnal Christians do not lose their inheritance but are disciplined.
 - 1] Romans 8:1, *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
 - 2] Hebrews 12:5, *And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.*
 - 3] Revelation 3:19, *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*
 - 4] Warren Wiersbe, *A Christian is not sinless, but he does sin less—and less—and less!*
- b. Don't be deceived because God's wrath is on the unregenerate (6), ***Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.***
 - 1) Some in the church attacked Paul's teaching on holy living, William Barclay, *'Do you say that God's grace is the greatest thing in all the world?' 'Yes.'* *'Do you say that God's grace is wide enough to cover every sin?' 'Yes.'* *'Then let us go on sinning, for God's grace can wipe out every sin. In fact, the more we sin, the more chances God's grace will have to operate.'* Note Romans 6.
 - 2) God is holy and deals with sin, Ephesians 2:1-2, *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—*
 - 3) God condemns the unbeliever and disciplines the disobedient believer.
 - 4) It is a good time for a self-test. Which am I? 2 Corinthians 13:5, *Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!*

CONCLUSION

- A. We are to love others sacrificially as Christ loves us.
- B. We are to abstain from immorality in deed and word.
- C. Our behavior should reflect Whose we are.