

ROCK GROUP BIBLE STUDY

June 27, 2003

Walk in Love

Ephesians 5:1-6

1) Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 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. 3) But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4) and {there must be no} filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5) For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Here Paul moves on to a new section in the letter to the Ephesians. This section can be easily divided into three parts based off two words that form the structure of this chapter. In verses 1, 7, and 15, the word *therefore* [OUN] occurs, and it is followed shortly thereafter by the imperative form of the word *Walk*.

· ***What is the word therefore there for? What does each section point back to and why?***

In verse 1, *therefore* seems to point back to the previous section. It suggests that since the old self has been laid aside and the new self has been put on (vs. 22-24), then we should strive to be imitators of God by walking in love, which is characteristic of the new way.

In verse 7, *therefore* points backward emphasizing that since the old self has been laid aside and the new self put on, then we should not walk as those who are in darkness (the old way), but we should walk in light (the new way).

In verse 15, *therefore* once again points backward emphasizing that since the old self has been laid aside and the new self put on then we should not walk as unwise (the old way), but as wise (the new way).

The term walk is often used in Scripture to describe how the Christian should live out his daily life. Clearly throughout the book of Ephesians the idea of the Christian walk is highlighted. In 4:1 we are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. In 4:17 we are not to walk as the Gentiles walk, but rather in righteousness and holiness in truth (4:24). This week we will focus on verses 1-6 and the injunction to be imitators of God and walk in love.

A FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE: WALK IN LOVE! (EPHESIANS 5:1-2)

· ***What is Paul's two-fold plea in verses 1 and 2?***

1-Paul pleads with the Ephesians to be imitators of God as beloved children.

2-Paul pleads with the Ephesians to walk in love just as Christ also loved.

· ***What does it mean to be an imitator of God?***

Webster's Dictionary says to imitate is to follow a pattern, model or example of an original. The Greek term for *imitator* [MIMETES] is the term from which we get the English word, *mimic*, someone who copies specific characteristics of another person. So Christians are to imitate or mimic God's characteristics in their daily lives.

· ***What do the following verses have to say about the idea of imitating God?***

Romans 8:29 *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined {to become} conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren* It was part of God's choosing us that we might be conformed to the image of Christ.

Matthew 5:48 *Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* Christ commanded that believers strive to be like God. We are to strive to be perfect as God is perfect.

1 Peter 1:14-15 *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts {which were yours} in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all {your} behavior.* Peter is exhorting believers not to live according to the former lusts (the old self), but to be holy like God is holy. To imitate God's character of being set apart.

1 John 3:2 *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.* As children of God, we should strive to be like our Father. Some day we will be glorified as Christ was glorified.

· ***What examples of imitation can you think of?***

There is probably no better illustration of the idea of imitation than that of children who strive to imitate their parents. (i.e. Jacob strives to imitate me)

· ***What do you think the phrase "as beloved children" means?***

It leads back to the idea introduced in Ephesians 1:5, which says, " *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself...*" John 1:12 says, " *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, {even} to those who believe in His name.*" Galatians 3:26 says, " *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*" The idea is that God has chosen and adopted believers in Christ as his own beloved children. Since children typically imitate their parents, the idea is that as beloved children of God, we should strive to imitate God our Father.

· ***How can we imitate God as his beloved children?***

Working off of Ephesians chapter 4, we can see that God's character plays a huge role in how we are to walk ourselves. Because God in Christ humbled Himself, we are to humble ourselves (4:2). Because God is patient, we are to be patient (4:2). Because God is holy, we are to be holy (4:24). Because God is truthful, we should be truthful (4:25). Because God is kind, we are to be kind (4:32). Because God is forgiving, we are to be forgiving (4:32). Likewise, because God is love, we are to walk in love! (5:1)

· ***What does it mean to walk in love? How does one walk in love?***

Walk is a term that emphasizes daily living. Our daily living should be characterized by love. Love should permeate everything we do. The term used here is AGAPE. It speaks of a thoughtful, volitional, purposeful and sacrificial love that wills to love even the unlovely. It speaks of the very

love of God Himself. It speaks of loving a person as God loves him. Paul describes this kind of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8:

"Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

· ***What do the following passages teach regarding the idea of walking in love?***

John 13:34-35, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* Clearly this verse reveals that one way we imitate God is that we love one another just as Christ has loved us.

1 John 3:14, *"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death."* This verse teaches us that loving one another is a characteristic of believers. It is a characteristic of those who possess eternal life. Failure to walk in love is characteristic of those who are not believers.

1 John 3:17-18, *"But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."* Failure to meet the needs of others when one has the capability to demonstrate a lack of God's love. We should be about the business of demonstrating our love to others through our actions, not just our words.

1 John 4:20-21, *"If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."* The picture painted by these verses is that those who are walking in Love are loving others because loving others demonstrates a love for God. Clearly the idea is that we need to be about the business of loving others.

· ***Why are we to walk in love?***

Because of Christ's love for us demonstrated by His giving Himself up for us. Christ died on the cross in order to save us from sin. What a demonstration of love! This great sacrifice of Christ is described as an offering and a sacrifice to God. This sacrifice on the cross, demonstrated in the fullest and most ultimate way God's Kind of Love and it was indeed pleasing to God as a fragrant aroma. So Christ is the pattern that we are to follow. We are to love because of Christ's love.

· ***What do the following verses have to say in support of this?***

John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."* Clearly by giving His one and only Son, God demonstrated His love to us. It was because God loved us that He gave His one and only Son.

1 John 4:7, *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."* Clearly the mandate is that we are to love because love is from God. Because of His great love with which He loved us, we are able to love one another.

1 John 4:11, *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."* Once again the idea

is that since God so loved us so we should love others.

A FOCUS ON THE NEGATIVE: ABSTAIN FROM EVIL! (EPHESIANS 5:3-6)

Paul switches his focus from the positive admonition of walking in love to a prohibition regarding the conduct of believers.

· What is the responsibility of those who are walking in love when it comes to their conduct as highlighted in verse 3?

Certain behaviors should not be exhibited by those who are walking in love.

1) Immorality--This is the Greek word [PORNEIA] from which we get the English word pornography. Its usage in the New Testament emphasizes the idea of sexual immorality including the ideas of fornication, adultery, prostitution, incest or any other kind of sexual deviancy. It is a broad term that covers any kind of sexual immorality.

2) Impurity--[AKATHARSIA] This term refers to anything that is unclean and filthy. Jesus uses it in describing the rottenness of decaying bodies in a tomb. It is used to refer to immoral thoughts, passions, ideas, or fantasies.

3) Greed--[PLEONEXIA] This term refers to the idea of longing to fill one's desire with objects of sense outside of God. It emphasizes a desire of advantage, a grasping, aggression, cupidity or covetousness.

Paul is clearly delineating between sacrificial agape love (God's kind of love) and the sinful idea of lustful passion, which results in immorality and impurity.

· What is the responsibility of those who are walking in love when it comes to their conversation as highlighted in verse 4?

They are to avoid various forms of speech that are not fitting for those who are walking in love and substitute it with giving thanks.

1) Filthy Speech--This has to do with general obscenity. It is any kind of speech that is degrading or disgraceful. (Cf. Colossians 3:8, abusive speech.)

2) Silly Talk--[MOROLOGIA] This term is derived from [MOROS] from which we get the word, moron. It is stupid talk, which is only befitting of someone who is intellectually deficient. It is sometimes referred to as low obscenity such as foolish talk that comes from those who are drunk. It gives the picture of someone who has a gutter mouth.

3) Course Jest--This term gives the idea of being pointed or determined. It carries the idea of quickly turning something that is said or done--no matter how innocent--into that which is obscene or suggestive.

These terms do not mean that we cannot have a sense of humor. They are really addressing the idea of speech, which is perverted or obscene. All three kinds of perverted speech come from the same heart, that which is given over to moral filthiness.

· According to verses 5 and 6, why are those who walk in love to abstain from immoral conduct and impure conversation?

Because such behavior demonstrates that one is not walking in love, one is not truly a believer and one is destined to eternal punishment.

Those evil doers who demonstrate such immoral conduct as verse 3 depicts will not inherit the kingdom of Christ and God. Such sexual immorality, impurity and greed/covetousness only demonstrate that one is not a believer and destined for hell.

Those who practice the speech patterns of verse 4 demonstrate that they are not truly believers and are destined to receive the wrath of God. They are demonstrating that they are still dead in their trespasses and sins and are indeed children of wrath. (cf. Ephesians 2:1-3)

Paul pleads with the Ephesian believers to imitate God by walking in love. The pattern that they are to follow is that demonstrated by Christ, as He loved us first by giving Himself up for us. In so doing they are to avoid the perversions of sexually immoral conduct and impure speech, because these activities demonstrate that one is headed for eternal punishment rather than one who is walking in love.

SMALL GROUPS: QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- *How do your actions demonstrate that you are or are not imitating God by walking in love?*
- *What can you do to change your behavior patterns so that you are walking in love?*