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C0509 -- Mar. 02, 2005 – Ephesians 5:1-6 – Walk in Love

In Ephesians 5:1-6 Paul is giving us the third application of the doctrine in chapters 1-3. The first application was found in 4:1-16; Walk in Unity. The second application was found in 4:17-32; Walk in Holiness. Now Paul exhorts us with a third application in 5:1-6; Walk in Love. Each of these sections is distinguished by two words; **therefore** (*oun*) and **walk** (*peripateo*).

Paul is once again making an application here from the doctrine in chapters 1-3. What doctrine or doctrinal section is Paul referring back to? What doctrine must we first understand if our walk is going to imitate God in love and be full of thanksgiving? Can anyone guess which chapter 1, 2 or 3 that Paul is referring back to? I'll give you a hint. The section Paul is referring back to has all of the following words or concepts: holiness, love, blessing or giving thanks, adopted as children, sacrifice or forgiveness, redemption. Chapter 1, verses 3-8.

“³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He lavished on us.

Eph 1

blessed (1:3)

forgiveness (1:7)

Christ the Beloved (1:6)

adopted as sons (1:5)

Eph 5

thanksgiving (5:4)

forgiven (4:28)

Believer beloved (5:1)

children of God (5:2)

before Him in love (1:4)

His blood (1:7)

walk in love (5:2)

offering/sacrifice (5:2)

So, the basic doctrinal background for imitating God and walking in love is founded on the love Christ demonstrated on the cross. In eternity past God pre-planned for you to be adopted into His family. On the cross Jesus Christ, the Beloved of God, executed the Father's plan. He willingly went to the cross for you as an offering to God, providing forgiveness and applying that forgiveness to you at the moment you trusted Christ. Friends, that is the supreme example of love and the supreme demonstration of the cost of love. And because our salvation was so costly Paul is calling us to **walk in love** in Ephesians 5:1-6. If we understand Christ's love then we will be able to imitate God by walking in love regardless of the cost.

There are three parts to verses 1-6. *First*, verses 1-2 are the positive command to "Walk in Love". *Second*, verses 3-4 are the negative command to "Abstain from Evil". *Third*, verses 5-6 give the Motivation or Reason which is because "unbelievers have no inheritance in the kingdom and are under the wrath of God".

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;

Therefore, become imitators of God. This is why Paul begins in verse 1 with the word **therefore**. Because of Ephesians 1:3-8 we should **become imitators of God**. The positive command is here in vv 1-2 as I noted. The translation should not read **be imitators of God** but **become imitators of God**. This is a present imperative indicating that we are supposed to continually develop into **imitators of God**. Why? Because God was gracious to us in Christ (4:32)!

The word for **imitators** is *mimetes* and refers to "an impersonator"; one who impersonates another. Actors impersonate other characters and we are to impersonate the eternal God. We are to flee from imitating the world and run toward imitating God. God has been gracious to us providing us with life, breath, salvation, and all things. Therefore, we should impersonate God by being gracious to others. We first received from God, therefore we ought to impersonate God by loving others regardless of how they treat us. In what manner are we to imitate God?

as beloved children. The word **beloved** (*agapetos*) is a common word in the Bible. This word is used of the way an only child is loved by his parents. All their love is given to that one child. Jesus Christ is called the Beloved One because He is God's only Son. Because

God predestined us to adoption into His family through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5) we are now His **beloved children**. As a child of God you must realize that God's love can extend to you as if you were His only child. This should cause you to rest in the security of His love. Paul uses the word *tekna* (**children**) here rather than *huios* (son). The parent-child relationship is closer than the parent-son relationship. A son is a son for life but a child is only a child in his early years. Soon he will grow to be an independent adult. It is during these early years that the child is dependent on the parent. Therefore, as **beloved children** who are dependent on God we as Christians ought to imitate God by being dependent on one another. This will help the body of Christ grow and mature.

Ephesians 5:2 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.

Not only are we to **become imitators of God**, we are also to **walk in love**. But to **walk in love** is to be an **imitator of God**. These phrases are parallel. Whenever we **walk in love** we are **imitators of God**. This is the third time in Ephesians we've been called to **walk** a certain way. In 4:1 Paul said, **walk worthy of the calling with which you were called**. In 4:17 Paul said, **walk in holiness, not as the Gentiles**. Now, in 5:2, Paul says, **walk in love**. This is a present imperative meaning we are to make this our continual habit. **in love** refers to the sphere of our walk. We are to make a habit of **walking in** the sphere of **love**. The word for love here is *agape* and means to desire the highest good for the other person regardless of what they have done to you or others. What is the highest good for anyone? The highest good is always God's will for their life (both general and specific). We are to desire God's will for the lives of others. When we do and when we act on that we love others as God loved us.

It is interesting to observe that often people do not recognize that we are loving them. A clear case is in the parent-child relationship. A parent tries to guide the child and the child resists. The child doesn't realize that their parents are simply loving them, trying to direct them into God's will. The reason children miss this is because they often do not recognize God's will for their life while the parents do. A parent's job is to teach the child how to recognize God's will so he'll stay out of trouble. Children often think we are trying to bother them or injure them or cut them out of some social loop, especially if they are a teenager. But we should not be surprised by their resistance. We too often resist the love of God. God wants the very best for us but it is very common for people to miss or reject God's love for them. For example, in 2 Tim 2:4 God says that "He desires all men [without limitation] to be saved", but not all men recognize God's desire. Even if all men did recognize God's desire for them to be saved not all men would respond, many resist. So,

people often resist or do not recognize when God or others are loving them. But our job is to love them anyway. The way we do this is by desiring God's will for their lives (general and specific). Parents and children should learn to **walk in love**. It's a commandment of God. Who is the supreme model of **love**?

just as Christ also loved us. Jesus Christ is the supreme person of love. This is the first time Christ is said to love us in the Book of Ephesians. In 2:4 it says God the Father loves us. Here Christ loves us. We are the objects of His love. The word for **loved** is an aorist tense. Aorist tense means point action in the past. Here it refers to the cross. The cross of Christ is a past point action where Christ demonstrated his love for **us**. And not only that, Paul says He...

gave himself for us. This is the supreme example of love. The verb **gave** is also aorist tense. When did Christ give **himself for us**? on the cross. He both **loved us and gave Himself for us** on the cross. Notice that Jesus **gave himself**. He took the initiative. In John 10:18 Jesus says, *"No one has taken it [my life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again."* Paul said in **Galatians 2:20** *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."* He gave himself up for each individual. Paul says in **Romans 5:6-8** *"⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* Christ didn't die for good people or people that were on their way to God. Christ died for the ungodly while they were sinners and running away from Him. This demonstrated Christ's love for us. Jesus said, in **John 15:13** *"¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."* Jesus Christ's death on the cross on your behalf and to satisfy God's justice is the greatest example of love the world ever has or ever will see. The question is, if Christ loved us by giving His life for us, how should we love one another? "He was willing to leave heaven's glory and die on the cross to become sin that sinners might become the righteousness of God."ⁱ What should we do for others?

What was Christ given as? **as an offering and sacrifice to God.** These two words, **offering and sacrifice** come directly out of the OT sacrificial system. In Leviticus 23 God outlined to Moses a calendar system that the nation of Israel was to follow. **Leviticus 23:37-38** *"These are the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the LORD-- burnt offerings and grain*

offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each day's matter on its own day-- ³⁸ *besides those of the sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts and besides all your votive and freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.*” So, the words **offering and sacrifice** point to the fact that Christ was the fulfillment of the OT sacrificial system. He was the end of all sacrifices (Heb 7:25-26; 9:23, 26; 10:12, 26)! Turn to **Hebrews 7:26-27** ²⁶ *For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;* ²⁷ *who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*” Thus, the Israelite calendar was fulfilled by Christ. It is astounding that one supreme **offering and sacrifice** of Christ met all the requirements of Israel’s **offerings and sacrifices**, yet that is what would be required to take away the sin of the world. To whom was this **offering and sacrifice** offered?

to God. Christ was not a ransom to Satan or to men. God doesn’t owe Satan anything. Christ was offered **to God** the Father. God’s righteousness and justice (His holiness) had to be met and they were met at the cross by Jesus Christ where He alone was qualified to make such a payment. Next Paul describes the kind of offering Christ was.

For a fragrant aroma. These two words mean a “sweet smell” and are almost always used together. They two find their origin deep in the OT. Paul is capturing the OT sense of a sacrifice that was acceptable to God. God did not accept every sacrifice in the OT, even when they were properly prepared. This is because the offerer had the wrong heart attitude. But Christ willingly offered Himself as the sacrifice and this was a **fragrant aroma** to God. As Christians we should walk in sacrificial love toward one another so that we are a **fragrant aroma** to God and to fellow believers. “Christ’s love cost him his life. Should our love be without cost?”

Ephesians 5:3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;

But do not let sexual immorality and impurity of any kind or greed even be mentioned among you. Walk in love, impersonating God, that is the positive, but here we have the beginning of the negative. First of all, the conduct of the old man is described in v. 3 and secondly, the speech of the old man is described in v. 4. We are to avoid both! First, the conduct we supposed to avoid is revealed in verse 3.

We are to imitate God and walk in love **not let immorality or impurity or greed even be named among us.** First, the Greek word for **immorality** is *porneia* and refers to “sexual

immorality”. No aberrant sexual conduct must even be mentioned among Christians, much less involved in. Second, the Greek word for **impurity** is *akatharsia* and was discussed at 4:19. It chiefly has to do with sexual impurity but it also refers to all sorts of impurity. No **sexual immorality or impurity** should even be mentioned among Christians. Third, the Greek word for **greed** is *pleonexia* and was also mentioned in 4:19. This describes the manner of their **impurity**. The word means “I want more”. I want more of whatever I desire regardless of the needs of others. This could be 1) sex, 2) money, 3) drugs, 4) power, 5) influence, etc...I want more of these things regardless of others. This word conveys extreme selfishness. It is obviously contrary to the love Christ showed us and which we are to walk in. The opposite of **greediness** is moderation and sharing. Paul is saying that we should not be consumed with ourselves but share with one another and depend on the Lord to supply all our needs.

These three things are not **even to be mentioned among you**. The sense Paul has in mind is there should not even be an occasion for these vices to be mentioned. Your behavior should be “above reproach”. Your lifestyle should not even give someone the idea that sexual immorality, impurity or greed is present. It is interesting to note that Paul had heard of the sin of **sexual immorality** among the Corinthians (1 Cor 5:1). He clearly calls them on the carpet for such immoral behavior. It was destroying their Christian witness. Herodotus says “*one may not speak about what one may not do*”. Bruce says: “*such unholy things should not be acceptable subjects of conversation among people whom God has called to be holy.*” This is truly a lofty calling which few Christians consistently exhibit.

as is proper for the saints. This is the reason such sins should not be mentioned. They should not be mentioned because they are not **proper for saints**. If you put off the old man and put on the new man at conversion then why act like the old man? It is not proper to act like someone you are not. Be ye holy as I am holy. You are to impersonate God now, not the old man. Since you are a new man, imitate God and walk in love. Committing such sins is not **proper for saints**. **saints** here, as always in Ephesians, simply refers to all “believers”, not a special class of extra holy believers. All believers are saints.

Ephesians 5:4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting. These three vices describe inappropriate speech among Christians. The tongue is the sharpest weapon a person has. You can cut people to the quick with misuse of the tongue. The *first* word **filthiness** refers to shameful, disgraceful, base speech and conduct. Such conduct or speech

has no place in the Christian life. It is filth. The *second* word **silly talk** or **foolish talk** means talk that is empty, speculative and detracts from the issues of faith and edifying discussion. What Paul is talking about is our conversation. What are your conversations about? Let me give two examples under the heading of **silly** or **foolish talk**: *First*, are your conversations people-oriented or topic-oriented? Whenever our conversation becomes people-oriented we are showing just how shallow we are. Many people thrive on talking about people. But people who make topics their conversation show depth of character. Make topics not persons your conversation and you will do well. It is interesting that when you discuss a *topic* conviction naturally takes place but in an indirect manner. However, when we make *persons* our conversation we directly attack them destroying our reputation and hurting others. This is **foolish talk**. *Second*, do your conversations have substance or are they vanity? Today we have lost the art and discipline of discussing theological topics and have bought into all sorts of worldly empty chatter. The Israelites were taught how to have conversation with substance in **Deuteronomy 6:7** “⁷ *You shall teach them [commandments] diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.*” Their conversation was to constantly revolve around theology. Everything should be discussed in relation to God’s word and never apart from it. Paul said “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly *and* empty chatter *and* the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” -- ²¹ which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.” Worldly and empty chatter leads to a false sense of knowledge and leads people to ungodliness and unfaithfulness. Paul also said that this kind of empty chatter spreads like gangrene. It doesn’t build up; it leads to ungodliness and shipwrecks our faith. We have been sucked into the world where our conversation is full of such things as “well, the scientists say this” and “so and so says this” but how often do you hear “well, the word of God says this and that’s the buck stops here.” If we really want to appeal to some higher authority let us put off **silly** or **foolish talk** because it is speculative and let us appeal to Scripture. Problem is we don’t know it well enough to quote it or we don’t have the wisdom to know how to apply it to modern culture. I imagine if most Christians followed this command to put off **silly talk** the world would be a much quieter place. The *third* word here is **coarse jesting** or **sarcastic ridicule**. What we’re talking about here is crude joking. Aristotle described this as fondness of laughter characterized by youth. Youths often engage in crude joking but Christians should not. Some people will do anything to get a laugh. In this context the joking has gone too far because it is cutting people down and embarrassing others who are present. This is humor in bad taste. Believers are to build up other believers even in humor. Humor is not some neutral category where we can speak coarsely and act as if it’s just a joke. Jokes are not an outlet for our sin. This does not mean that Christians cannot use jokes and humor but it should never be used at someone else’s

expense because this would be counter to Paul's command to edify each other (4:29). "Like anger, humor is to be controlled."ⁱⁱ

which are not fitting. These three vices are **not fitting** for the Christian. You are a new man, why are you doing the deeds of the old man. That's not who you are anymore. I told you last week to forget about him. It's enough that he remembers you. These kinds of vulgar speech or conduct are totally inappropriate for a Christian. 95% of the world's speech and conduct is inappropriate for Christians. I can guarantee you that if you speak and conduct yourselves differently the world will notice and you will probably be maligned and made fun of. But know this, that deep in their hard of hearts they wish they lived like you. They are jealous of your pure lifestyle and that's why they malign you. You don't use filthy speech, you don't speak about vain subjects, you don't engage in coarse joking. They fail at every point and so they malign you.

but rather giving of thanks. Here's what your conversation should revolve around. Instead of running everyone down, debasing yourself or others, making fun of Suzie Q, and speaking about vain subjects **give thanks**. "Instead of flippant speech that dishonors God, one should voice thanksgiving to God for who he is and what he has done."ⁱⁱⁱ This is the filler. Remove X and add Y. Fill your discussions with thankfulness to God for who He is (His character – SRJLOOOIE) for His gifts (all the spiritual blessings – cf Eph 1:3) and for giving us each other. Do not use speech to destroy one another but use speech to build one another up and encouraging one another. Why? What's the reason we should not use vulgar speech and conduct?

Ephesians 5:5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or greedy man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Because **no immoral or impure person or greedy man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.** In other words, the reason they should not act like unbelievers is because unbelievers are not going to inherit the kingdom of Christ and God. The old man doesn't have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God and can only expect the coming wrath of God! Paul says **you know this**. How did the Ephesians know this? Because Paul had trained them repetitively in this teaching. These actions are the actions of unbelievers who will not inherit the kingdom of Christ and God. Therefore don't act like unbelievers. Paul's style of teaching was militaristic. Military training is repetitious, often to the point of boredom. But the point is to hammer the doctrine

in so deep that it becomes a natural response mechanism. The Ephesians certainly knew this because Paul hammered and hammered on this doctrine.

These three nouns here come from the same root of the three verbs listed in verse 3. Paul is deliberately linking the actions of verse 3 with the persons who commit these actions in verse 5. The Greek construction shows that even if the person is characterized by just one of these three nouns he has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. This does not mean that a believer may not fall prey to one of these sins. Believers may be immoral or impure or greedy at times. But these are descriptive of the person's character. By way of illustration, a criminal may do a good deed, but this is not what characterizes him. In the same way, a Christian may do an immoral thing, but this is not what characterizes him.

Further, this man **is an idolater**. This word refers back only to the **greedy man** because it is singular. To be **greedy** is to covet and to covet is the essence of **idolatry**. Whenever we covet something that becomes the center of our life and is worshipped in place of the Creator (Rom 1:23). By way of example, Esau was so covetous of Jacob's soup that he sold his birthright—a ten minute exchange for a life's inheritance! How often have we satisfied our needs of the moment in exchange for a long term benefits?

People who are characterized as **immoral or impure or greedy...have no inheritance**. Not one person who is characterized in any of these three ways **has an inheritance in the kingdom**. Eternal inheritance does not belong to unbelievers but to saints. This is not talking about rewards for faithfulness. "This inheritance is obtained as a result of redemption..." (Hoehner, 661). The present context is concerned with the old man versus the new man, the inheritance of God versus the wrath of God, heaven and hell. The context has nothing to do with comparing faithful to unfaithful believers.

What kingdom is this? Paul says it is **the kingdom of Christ and God**. This is totally unique to the NT. The **kingdom of God** is mentioned 65 times in Scripture and the **kingdom of Christ** is mentioned 10 times, but this is the only verse that mentions two members of the Godhead together in relation to the kingdom. This may be an affirmation that Christ is God but the grammar is not airtight. The idea in **1 Cor 15:24** is what Paul has in mind. Christ will rule over the Kingdom for 1,000 years and then He will hand the kingdom over to God the Father so that the Father will be all in all.

CHRIST HANDS OVER
TO FATHER

Christians can do the deeds mentioned in verse 3 but we can never be characterized by these deeds. People who are characterized as **immoral or impure or greedy** are by definition unbelievers (also cf. Gal 5:19-21; 1 Cor 6:9-10). It is impossible for them to **inherit the kingdom of Christ and God**. Their inheritance is the Lake of Fire which was created for the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41).

Christians are associated with the **kingdom** in four ways. *First*, our citizenship has been transferred from darkness to the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13). This means we presently have reserved a citizenship in the future kingdom. *Second*, we are prayer warriors for the kingdom (Matt 6:10). *Third*, there is the future dimension of Christ's 1,000 year kingdom where we will rule. *Fourth*, there is the eternal dimension when Christ hands the kingdom over to God the Father.

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

This is a solemn warning. **Let no one**, believer or unbeliever, **deceive you**. Some believers think that worldly living really doesn't make a difference. These people are called antinomians. They say we live under grace and there is no law we must follow. These people forget about the "law of Christ" discussed in 1 Cor 9:21 and Gal 6:2. Grace as a rule of life does not discount the presence of law. **Let no one deceive you with antinomianism**. It will lead to a licentious lifestyle like that described in verse 3. What should we not be deceived with? **empty words**. **Empty words** refers to words that are void of content and truth. Our conversations and our behavior should not reflect the world! We are to know that truth is in Christ and that we have put off the old man and put on the new man and that there is a new lifestyle and life-speech that goes with our new position. Why should we not be deceived by the world's empty words?

Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. These things refers to all the sins mentioned in verse 5 and the empty words in verse 6. The wrath of God does not come on the sons of God but on the **sons of disobedience**. The word **disobedience** refers to unbelievers. Who are the **sons of disobedience**? They are the same one's mentioned in Eph 2:2-3. We were all born **sons of disobedience** but because we were predestined to adoption as sons we have become children of God. We are no longer under the wrath of God but all unbelievers remain under the *orge* of God. The word *orge* refers to a longstanding settled anger, not a temporary one. Notice that the **wrath of God comes**

upon them presently and is longstanding. This is both a present and a future wrath. There are two dimensions to God's wrath; *present wrath* and *future wrath*. *Present wrath* is described in Romans 1:18 and is evidenced in cultures and societies in the form of evolutionary belief systems, heterosexual immorality, and finally homosexual immorality. *Future wrath* is described in Romans 2:5 as that which unrepentant men are storing up for themselves in the day of wrath which is the Great White Throne Judgment after the 1,000 year kingdom on earth.

ⁱ Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 648.

ⁱⁱ Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 656.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 658.

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