

July 5, 2020
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Ephesians
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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WALK LIKE CHRIST Ephesians 5:1-10

I have always loved to hear the “old timers” tell stories about what life was like before everyone had electricity, indoor plumbing, or even cars and televisions. Yes, I go back that far, and most of the people who lived way back then are gone. Those old timers marveled at all the inventions that have brought incredible changes to life.

I marvel. I remember when not everyone had a television. I remember when people who had black and white televisions were covetousness of those who had colored televisions. I remember when a young person’s respect for elders was demanded by parents. I remember a time when, if a child was reprimanded at school, he got the same thing when he arrived home and his big sister ratted on him. I actually can remember a guy and girl who were expelled from highschool for being immoral.

Then when I was in highschool everything changed. The Beatles changed the music scene, movies that came to be rated “R” and “X” were shown in public theaters, the sexual revolution swept over us, rebellion against any and all authority by teens and college kids was the popular trend. Life suddenly changed. What once was right was now wrong, and what once was wrong was now accepted. I can remember when many states still had laws that deemed sexual sins to be illegal.

Now we live in chaos and most of the voices of the “experts” are trying to tell us it is a wonderful freedom. When will the politicians and news media get around to admitting that the chaos in Seattle over the past few weeks was actually chaos and not a “summer of love” as Mayor Jenny Durkan called it in a CNN interview on June 11? It seems like everywhere we turn, everyone

who is talking, claims that in is out, up is down, left is right, dark is light but light is dark, and truth is error and error truth.

We could become unhinged, or very destabilized, in such an environment. But we who love and follow our Lord Jesus should continue to plow ahead unmoved in times like these. How can we do that? We have the unchanging, non-negotiable, eternal Word of God. The better we know the Bible, the better we understand this astonishing work by which Satan is wreaking havoc in our world. I, and many other old timers, say we have never known Satan to be so aggressive, so zealous in all our lives.

Satan was alive and busy in the first century also. That is why Paul warned the Christians in Ephesus to never forget that we wrestle against spiritual powers of darkness all the time. The difference in the American culture now is that for many years people have rejected God’s Word more and more. The Bible is no longer a guide book for the majority of people. It is not even known nor is it acceptable to most people. But it is our hope, our anchor, our stabilizer in the sea of chaos. Here we learn how to negotiate chaos by walking in Christ’s love and ordering our lives according to the truth He gave us in the Bible.

Walk in Christ’s Love (vv.1-2).

Those who are being built up, growing up into the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, are commanded in this text to imitate God. That only seems logical. It is a logical expectation because God created us in His image. *Therefore be imitators of God (v.1a)*. The Greek word for imitators gives us the English word mimic (*mimeteis*). As we might expect, the word means to copy, to use as a pattern, to follow the directions. It comes from a word that speaks of the artist who draws a likeness of something or someone on canvas.

Here we discover that God Himself is our pattern that we are supposed to copy. What is He like? That question is answered all through the Bible. What does God think, how does He respond? Again, find the answer in the Bible. What does God desire? Read the Bible. What are the traits of God’s character? Look in the Bible. Be like what you find in that search. How could we ever hope to imitate God?

In the beginning God made us in His image. We are copies of Him. To what extent and all that such a concept entails escapes us. We see through a glass darkly because sin marred us more than we can imagine. But through faith in Christ, we are being restored to the image of our Creator. In fact, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament uses the word *homoiaio* (to make like or becoming like) when the Bible spoke of God making Adam. We read, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness* (Genesis 1:26). The word *likeness* means becoming like.

Other more mature believers also help us along in this becoming better image bearers of our Creator. Paul challenged Christians, *Urge you, then, be imitators of me* (1 Corinthians 4:16). *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ* (1 Corinthians 11:1). He reminded believers in Thessalonica, *And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit* (1 Thessalonians 1:6). We are to imitate God because that was the pattern for us in the beginning.

Second, we should imitate God because we are His children. The command is to imitate God *as beloved children* (v.2). We are by nature children of God's enemy. We are born children who live in darkness, alienated from the light of God's Word, the life of God (4:18). We walk in, live in the realm of Satan and think and act according to his influence (2:2). We are by nature children deserving wrath (2:3).

But because of God's grace, we are now His beloved children. The indwelling Holy Spirit affirms that we are God's children and heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16-17). That also makes us children of God's promise (Romans 9:8). We are children of light not children of darkness like we once were (Ephesians 5:8). We are blameless, innocent children of God who live in a wicked world (Philippians 2:15). As children of Christ, we abide in Him (1 John 2:28). And the really exciting part is, *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (1 John 3:2).

Therefore, because we are imitating God, because we are children of God, we are supposed to walk in love. The command is plain and simple: *And walk in love* (v.2a). The verb is a present tense, active voice command that speaks about our everyday life. Therefore,

it can be translated, *Be walking around*. Or even more completely, *Be walking around in love*.

We get that because everyone knows that showing love is God's will for Christians. How many times did Jesus tell us to be loving people? Jesus commanded the disciples to love each other like He loved them. He said, *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you"* (John 15:12). The same command applies to us in the Church. But more than that, Jesus even told us to love our enemies. *"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust"* (Matthew 5:44-45). In fact, God's rule is that we should love everyone who is our neighbor. *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* (Galatians 5:14). Walking in love like that virtually identifies us as followers of Christ. *"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:35). Even the unsaved world of sinners knows that Christians are supposed to be loving, and they tell us so.

But in a world of sin, we have such a hard time walking in love because we keep running into conflicts. For example, how do you love your child but also love the guy who kidnaped him? How do you love your granddaughter but also love the perverse man who sexually abused her? How do you love your neighbor but also love the guy who stole his car? How does our Christian brother in India love the Hindu who lied about him that resulted in the Christian going to prison?

Obviously, we need for someone to show us how this walking in love thing works. But everyone we look to is as infected by sin as we are. That is why God gave us the perfect example of how to walk in love. We are to walk in love, *as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*.

Immediately upon commanding us to walk in love, God pointed to Christ as the example. Who walked in love better or more than Jesus? Of course He got it right because He is the perfect expression of God's love. Jesus pointed that out to the teacher of religion when He said, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"*

(John 3:16). Jesus loved His enemies so much that He offered forgiveness through prayer for those who were crucifying Him. There could not possibly be a better example.

But wait! Did Jesus demonstrate love when He said to the Pharisees, “*You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*” (Matthew 12:34)? Was it loving for Him to say, “*But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in*” (Matthew 23:13)? And six more “woes” followed that woe! It is doubtful that the merchants felt the love of Jesus as He drove them from the temple on two occasions.

But maybe most of all, we pause to wonder about Jesus walking around in love when we read that He told people, “*On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness’*” (Matthew 7:22-23). And we know that by “depart from me” Jesus meant, “*And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire*” (Revelation 20:15). Human wisdom has a hard time making the connection between the love of Jesus and the justice of sending a sinner to hell.

Jesus’ walk in love was in perfect accord with God’s perfect justice. God’s justice and God’s love will never contradict – though it appears to be a contradiction to us. We long for justice, strive for justice, hint at justice, talk about justice. But we achieve justice very slightly because we all are infected with sin and, therefore, lack the perfect wisdom of God. God alone is able to express perfect love with perfect justice.

How? What is the key to actually walking in love and at the same time not embracing sin? Notice that the perfect example of walking in love is followed immediately by an appeal to Christ’s sacrifice. Christ’s love is the standard, the explanation, the definition of true love. It is *agape* which is demonstrated by and requires sacrifice. Jesus Christ proved love by laying down His life for us. It is not that He was willing to die for us but that He DID die for us. He made the sacrifice. And that while we were still His enemies. Real

love, Christ-kind of love, desires the very best for the recipient even if it requires sacrifice. The very best in all situations is that the recipient would become more like Christ not more like an acceptable human standard or ideology.

Furthermore, we learn in this text that Christ’s sacrifice was a fragrant offering, a perfect sacrifice. The first five chapters of Leviticus list five offerings or sacrifices. These were pleasing to God. And the first three are burnt offerings all of which are said to create an aroma or fragrance that pleases God. So notice very importantly that Christ’s sacrifice of love was not a fragrant offering and sacrifice **to** the sinner. Sinners could not care any less about Jesus’ sacrifice. Rather, Jesus Christ offered the perfect, ultimate sacrifice **to God for** the sinner.

This principle will help us when we are trying to show love to someone who does not deserve it. No sinner (which is all of us) deserves love. Therefore, we demonstrate love **FOR** the sinner as a sacrifice of praise **TO** God. God has given us great thoughts about walking in love in these verses. But how do we make them work in real life?

What Does the Christ’s-Love Walk Look Like?

It is a pure life (vv.3-4), one that is free from immorality and covetousness. *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints (v.3)*. Here is a list of three sins that are all connected. The connection between immorality and impurity makes sense. The first word is the Greek word *pornia*, which gives us the English word pornography but is far broader than just looking at porn. *Pornia* is any kind of sexual sin. The second word is *akatharsia* which speaks of spiritual uncleanness, which in this case is also connected with sensual sins.

The third word in that triad is covetousness which is the desire to have more or have what someone else has. At first blush, it would appear that this third trait to avoid is not connected with the others. But, covetousness is the underlying sin to immorality and impurity. Failure to control sexual impulses is driven by the desire to have.

None of these traits should be found, that is practiced, among believers on any level. And yet the modern church is characterized by

a soft view of the sins. How many believers who are gathered in churches on Sunday are guilty of these sins? How many churches harbor the very root sin. I have a friend who attends a church that is more contemporary than ours. One day we were discussing the importance for men to keep sexual temptation out of their lives. He said, “How am I supposed to do that when even in our church I am bombarded by women calling attention to their physical assets?”

Everything about our culture, being influenced by media, desensitizes the Church in this area. The lost and darkened world calls sexualization love. That, like all of Satan’s lies, is the exact opposite of God’s desire for us, which is to walk in love.

Second, the life that imitates God will be characterized by fitting conversation. Negatively stated Paul warned, *Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving (v.4).*

The word translated filthiness speaks of disgraceful talking. It is perverse language. The age has changed so rapidly that words and topics once considered disgraceful and not only heard unceasingly on television have now come into the church. The words *foolish talk* refer to silliness like the kind of foolish chatter you hear on sitcoms and maybe talk shows, always accompanied by “laugh tracks” because no one is really laughing. What an insult to our intelligence.

Crude joking is turning an innocent phrase or statement into something sinful, sensual, unacceptable. None of this kind of language should be found in the Church. Sensuality and coarse language is worldliness.

In contrast to that kind of life, the imitating God, walking in love like Christ life is an informed life (vv.5-6). Mark this well, idolaters are not Christians. *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 (v.5).*

The warning here is that we who imitate God will not be characterized by traits of people who are on their way to hell. Can we point out this horrible reality and still be walking in love? Paul wrote a similar warning to the believers in Corinth saying, *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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Since idolatry is the character of people who will be condemned, it is very important for us to know what constitutes idolatry. We think of an idol as the little object before which pagans bow. The object is not the idol, but only a representation of the idol. Paul pointed out that idolatry focuses on the “spirit” or concept behind the object. He warned the Corinthian church, *Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14).* A couple of verses later Paul explained what they should flee. *What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons (1 Corinthians 10:19-20).*

Idolatry is very common in the Church today. What ideology (trend) is important to you? How much time do you spend thinking about, reading about, participating in that ideology? How much time do you spend thinking about, reading about, pursuing God? Do you talk about your ideology more than you talk about the gospel? The irony is that the gospel is the antidote, the solution, the correction to all the chaos that conflicting ideologies create.

Idolatry is a really bad thing because God’s wrath abides on idolaters. *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience (v.6).* Walking in love does not mean we should be gullible. You are actually walking in love when you expose deceiving, empty words. We know what these deceptions are because we have been delivered from them.

Earlier in our study we learned that Christ’s plan for His church is that His saints should be taught, *until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ (Ephesians 4:13-15).*

Do you warn about the difference between light and dark? How can we do that and still embrace, accept, tolerate, endure the sin? We don't. Walking in love IS to warn about the eternal consequences of sin. Consider God's warning to Ezekiel, His chosen messenger. *But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand. So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me (Ezekiel 33:6-7).*

Third, the God-imitating, Christ's-love walking life is a separated life (vv.7-8). God warns us here to have no association with idolaters. *Therefore do not associate with them (v.7).* Don't associate with those who are recipients of God's wrath. Wait! Is it loving to cut off association with sinners who need to hear truth? Here Paul's explanation about that. *I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler – not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? (1 Corinthians 5:9-12).*

We are going to be in contact, have conversations with sinners. It is impossible to live in the world and not have contact with such people. But contact is not the same as association or fellowship. Fellowship requires agreement. Agreement with them is impossible because *at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (v.8).* As we walk as children of light, people in darkness will not be comfortable with us. When we demonstrate how we have abandoned, forsaken the sin that characterizes the sinner's life, he or she will become very uncomfortable around us and not seek our fellowship.

Finally the God-imitating, Christ's-love walking life is a discerning life (vv.9-10). Our lives are to be rooted in truth. We are to walk around as children of light *for the fruit of light is found in all*

that is good and right and true (v.9). Separation will happen because of truth. That is most obvious in a sexualized, secularized culture. Speaking of the sexual revolution, especially as it is manifested in the extreme pressure on churches from the LGBTQ community, Al Mohler wrote, "The battle that rages is between *revolution* and *revelation*. This is why the church cannot recede or diminish its commitments on gender and sexuality. Either we engage in active revolution against God, or we hold fast to the verbal revelation God granted us in his Word and in Jesus Christ. The sexual revolution—now undermining the very structure of humanity as male and female—represents a direct challenge to what Christians believe and teach and preach." (Albert Mohler, *The Gathering Storm*, Nashville: Nelson Books, 2020, 116-117.)

All that is good and right and true is literally hated by a secular (and therefore sinful) culture. We don't fit in that culture because we are trying to discern God's desires. We walk around as children of light *and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord (v.10).* Our desire must be to please the Lord. We discern how to do that by refusing to be conformed to the world and insisting on being transformed by God's Word. That is God's plan for us. *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).*