

Walk in Love
Ephesians 5:1-6
Reading: Luke 7:36-47 (*Brent - #2*)

Bethany Baptist Church
September 3, 2017 (Labor Day Weekend)

...pray...

This past spring we adopted a church *mission statement* (bulletin)!

Our mission is to walk in love and make disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ as God's Word equips us to worship, to witness, and to work together. → (John 4:23-24; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16)

These are our guiding goals as a congregation.

The leading idea is *to walk in love*. It is a broad NT term that suggests the entire Christian life characterized by *godly love*.

- The Bible teaches that *God is love & that we love because He first loved us*.

What follows in our mission statement is that *love for God & faithfulness to His commands* compel us to *obey the Great Commission, to worship in spirit & truth, to share the gospel & to serve together as the family of God*.

This morning's text is going to reinforce that our mission statement is right on target!

Let's read Ephesians 5:1-6 together.

This begins another section of Ephesians & the clue is Paul's command *therefore...walk in love*.

The apostle is continuing to develop the idea that if you *believe in Jesus* you are *born again – a new you*.

And the *new you* needs to *imitate* your Heavenly Father and *love* like He *loves*.

Four commands to grow you & guard you as a child of God.

- 1. Imitate God. (1)**
- 2. Walk in love. (2)**
- 3. Disdain evil. (3-5)**
- 4. Avoid deception. (6)**

The new you is called to imitate God. Read v.5

1. This is a new section but Paul's transition, his "*therefore,*" tightly ties our text back to 4:17-32 w/ its summons to ***put off*** the *old you* & to ***put on*** the *new you*...
 - a. In particular, Paul has not moved very far from **v.32** – *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you...just as God in Christ also has forgiven you!*
 - b. *Therefore...*
2. And then that *stunning command*: ***be imitators of God!*** To *imitate* is from the Grk word for *mimic (copy)*. Paul's grammar is a *command to imitate God daily* – the *new life* is to be a *lifestyle of imitating* your Heavenly Father.
 - a. At first glance, it would seem that someone might as well tell you to *step off* the top of the *Sears Tower & fly!*
 - b. For certain, there are **some things** *true* about God that will *never be true* about you.
 - i. Theologians call these God's ***incommunicable attributes*** – characteristics He hasn't *communicated* to us in creation, e.g.: *eternal, immutable* (unchanging), *omniscient* (all-knowing), *omnipotent* (all-powerful), *omnipresent* (present everywhere)...etc.
 - c. But the Bible teaches that there *are* characteristics of God that He *has communicated* to us in creation, because you are made *in His image*: *creativity, communication, wisdom, compassion, justice, love* (etc).
 - i. Theologians label these God's *communicable attributes*.
 - ii. You *don't* possess them *perfectly*, but you do *have* them in some measure because you are created in God's image, and as a *born-again, Spirit-filled* Christian you can *grow in them*.

3. Which is Paul's *insight* into his seemingly impossible assignment: *imitating God* is in your *new nature* – your “*spiritual DNA*”! You are God's *beloved child*...
- a. I read an article this week about an emerging championship runner at **MU**. Last year (Junior) *Karissa Schweizer* was the **NCAA Div.I** champion in CC (fall), in the **5000m** in indoor track in March, & in the outdoor **5000m** in June.
 - i. Now, her Senior year looks to be more of the same, & after college she clearly has the potential to be become an *Olympian*.
 - ii. I'm guessing *Karissa trains hard* but there is more to her story than just *running a lot of miles* every week!
 - iii. Her *grandfather* was an **NCAA AllAmerican** distance runner, her *father* was an **NCAA AllAmerican** distance runner, her *mother* was university track star, her *brother* runs for Notre Dame & her *little sister* is a high school track star!
 - iv. Sometimes...it's in the **DNA!** ☺
 - b. If you are *born again* through *faith in Jesus Christ*, Paul says that *godliness* is now in you *spiritual DNA*. And so we can *imitate God* as His *beloved children*.
 - i. Paul has already written a lot about *election & adoption* & our *spiritual inheritance* (Eph 1). ... About becoming a part of God's *household* (Eph 2). About becoming *new* (Eph 4).
 - ii. When you *trusted in Christ*, you became a *new you...new nature...new spiritual DNA*. And you became God's *beloved sons & daughters*.
 - iii. Elsewhere, the Apostle John writes: *See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God, and such we are!*
 - iv. So beloved, *imitate God!* It's just in your *spiritual DNA*...

Paul's point, with this simple but essential command, is that you were “born again” to become more & more like your heavenly Father.

And in particular, the *new you* is called to *walk in love* (read v.2).

1. This is Paul's *second command* in our text and it is an *insight* into *imitating God*.
2. And this is the apostle's *third* use (Eph) of the word picture of **walking**, which implies your *lifestyle* (4:1 & 4:17 & *now* 5:2; next 5:8 & 5:15). Every time Paul uses this idea of *walking* it signals that he is issuing a *new instruction* for *Christian living*.
 - a. So here, you *imitate God* as you *walk in love*.
 - b. After all, the Bible is clear: **God is love!**
3. The *love* Paul writes about translates the familiar **Grk** term **αγαπη**.
 - a. *Agape love* is concerned for the *good* of its beloved, **not** whether its beloved is *lovely* or *worthy*.
 - b. The **NT** teaches that *agape* is **unconditional** & **unselfish** & **sacrificial**.
 - c. (On the other hand, *worldly love* only *gives* when it can *get*.)
4. Our immediate context in Ephesians helps you understand how *agape love* operates as you *imitate God*.
 - a. Let's strip our text down to the *bare bones* (4:32b): *God in Christ has forgiven you, therefore be imitators of God... and walk in love*

- b. *First*, agape love is *forgiving*.
 - i. As Christians, we understand that the *Gospel* always binds *love & forgiveness* together. So the Apostle John writes, *God loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin – therefore, we are forgiven.*
 - ii. John MacArthur notes that our willingness to *forgive* is a measure of the genuineness of our *love*.
 - 1. If you won't *forgive* then you don't appreciate the *forgiveness* you've received.
 - 2. If you won't *forgive* then you don't *love*.
 - 3.
 - c. *Second*, agape love is *sacrificial*.
 - i. The ultimate example of *love & sacrifice* is Jesus. Jesus' death on the cross was *His* sacrifice to God, in our place.
 - ii. In v.2, Paul writes that Jesus loving sacrifice was *a fragrant aroma* to God. **OT/NT** uses this language of *offering & sacrifice & fragrant aroma* often!
 - iii. When an **OT** worshiper brought an acceptable sacrifice to the altar, God "smelled" its *aroma* and He was *satisfied & pleased!*
5. Let's pause and consider the *best human relationship* for *imitating* God and *walking* in agape love → *marriage*.
- a. We've just said *godly love* is: *consistent* when your spouse doesn't deserve love, *sacrificial* when your spouse is needy, *unselfish* when your spouse is helpless, *unconditional* when your spouse has nothing to offer in return.
 - b. These are the expressions of love that result in an enduring marriage, a marriage that *paints a picture* of Christ and His bride, the Church.

The greater lesson in vv.1 & 2 is that love that *forgives* and love that *sacrifices* is love that *imitates* God & *pleases* God. (PAUSE)

Then Paul switches from the *positive* features of *godly love* to the *negative* features of *counterfeit (fleshly) love*. His *third* instruction is to *disdain evil*.

1. Have you ever eaten a *diet brownie...?* *Activa* in the place of sugar. *Egg Beaters* in place of *hen's eggs*. *Prune puree* in the place of cooking oil. *Cocoa powder* in the place of industrial strength chocolate.
 - a. *Maybe* it *looks* the same...
 - b. But wait til you *taste* it!

2. The *flesh*, the *world*, & the *devil* have their own, counterfeit versions of *love*. Sometimes it *looks* attractive, but people *choke on it*, every day!

3. Paul warns us against *sinful, counterfeit love* and all of its *bitter ingredients* in **vv.3-5**.
 - a. In **v.3** he summarizes the *conduct* of counterfeit love.

 - b. In **v.4** he examines the *conversation* of counterfeit love.

 - c. And in **v.5** he sums up its *consequences*.

 - d. (**OBTW**, watch for a fav Pauline writing device: little lists of **3** in each of these verses!) **Read vv.3-5**.

4. Disdain the *conduct* of counterfeit love... (3)
 - a. *Immorality*. The Grk word is *pornea* → *pornography*. This broad term encompasses *all* sexual sin – which is any sexual expression *outside* the biblical parameters of *marriage between man & woman*.
 - i. Thus Scripture clearly condemns *pornography, sex before marriage, sex outside of marriage, sex between same genders, (etc.)*.

 - b. *Impurity*. The term can describe *any* moral uncleanness, but is almost always used to describe *sexual sin*.

- c. *Greed*. *Greed* means *wanting more*. *Wanting more* than you should have. *Wanting* what you **don't** have. *Greed* grows out of *discontent* & *ingratitude*.
- i. **4:19** indicates that *impurity* is fueled by *sensual greed*...
 - ii. And **5:5** will tell you that *greed* is *idolatry* – the worship of *created things* rather than their *Creator*.
- d. *Immorality*. *Impurity*. *Greed*. *Disdain* them! Don't even *name* them or *consider* them or *excuse* them. They aren't to be a part of our *daily lives*. They aren't *proper*. After all, you are a *saint* = "**holy one**"!
5. Disdain the *conversation* of counterfeit love ... (4). **Three** more sad words:
- a. *Filthiness*. → *Ugliness*, *wickedness*, *obscenity*. This could be *actions* or *words*.
 - b. *Silly talk*. Lit. *moron-speak*! It suggests *foolish banter* & *crude conversation*.
 - c. *Coarse jesting*. *Witty but vulgar turns of speech*. *Ridicule*. Have you ever noticed that most *humor* requires a *victim*...? But we *laugh*!
 - d. Does it ever sadden you that *public conversation* has become so crude? So much that we hear isn't *fitting* – *appropriate*, *suitable*.
 - e. Here (4b) is the *biblical* alternative to *sinful* discourse: *gratitude*. *Gratitude* recognizes that there *is* a God. *Gratitude* is a *fitting response* to God's work in your life. *Gratitude* is an evidence of *genuine faith* & *love* for Him.

6. Third, remember the *consequences* of counterfeit love ... **(re-read 5)**.
- a. All **three** of these *bad players* map straight back to the list in **v.3**; Paul repeats the same basic words: *immoral, impure, covetous* men.
 - b. The apostle says you *know* these guys and you know their *citizenship w/o even opening their passports!*
 - c. God's beloved children are citizens of the *Kingdom of Christ and God*.
 - i. **Col 1:13** – *For God rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.*
 - ii. As children of the King, we have an *eternal inheritance*.
 - iii. The *lost* (i.e. those in **vv. 3&4**) do *not* have that inheritance & they are *not* citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom.

And you can eventually spot a lost person by their *conduct & conversation*. No matter *what* they claim...

The new you must be on the lookout for *deception* (read v.6).

1. This is *not* the first mention of *deception* in Ephesians.
 - a. In **4:14** the apostle indicated that spiritually immature Christians are often tossed around by *the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming*.
 - b. In **4:22** Paul called his readers to *lay aside the old self, which is begin corrupted in accordance w/ the lusts of deceit*.
 - c. In **4:25** the indication is that *the old you* – before Christ – was simply **wrapped** in *falsehood*.
2. What *deceptive messages & empty words* is Paul warning you against here in **v.6** ...?
 - a. Glance back at **v.5 (read)**; the **truth** is, if you live like *that (immorality, impurity, greed)* you simply aren't saved.
 - b. But the **deception** is...that it doesn't really matter *how* you live! The **deception** is...that there is *no* connection between your *salvation & your conversation & conduct*...
 - i. After all, *evildoers all around you* seem to be doing *just fine*!
 - ii. The Bible's teachings on *morality & propriety* seem to be hopelessly *out of touch w/ modernity*.
 - iii. Besides, the *God of love* wouldn't **dream** of *sending you to hell for having a little fun*!

3. But there in the middle of **v.6** is that *pesky* little word ...**for**... It signals a *reason* or a **consequence**. ...**for** because of **these things** the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
- a. **What things** are “**these things**”...? The *immoralities* of **vv.3&4** – the *evils of conduct & conversation*.
 - b. And look *carefully*: the God of *forgiveness & love* in **v.1** is still the God of *justice & wrath* in **v.6**.
 - c. You are either His *beloved child & a God imitator & a thankful saint & a citizen of the Kingdom of Christ & God*...
 - d. ...**or** you are a *son/daughter of disobedience*.

The evidence is in the way you live.

There is a *damning deception* that you hear from *time to time* in Baptist churches. Like most *deceptions*, it's the perversion of a *perfectly good teaching*!

2. The perfectly good teaching is *The Doctrine of Eternal Security* (aka *The Perseverance of the Saints*). It teaches that a real Christian never *loses* his salvation.
3. The ***perversion*** of *Eternal Security* is the lie that once you *pray a prayer to receive Jesus* then it doesn't really matter *how* you live. After all, *once saved, always saved*!
4. But Paul has just made it *clear*, how you live **does matter**. Your efforts won't *save* you, but they *prove* that you've been saved.
5. Have you been living a *worldly life* while clinging to the lie that it *doesn't really matter how* you live?
6. Do you have a *son or daughter, or brother or sister*, who claims to be a *child of God* but lives like a *son/daughter of disobedience*?
 - a. *Openly immoral or spiritually indifferent...?*
7. Don't be *deceived*! Don't wait for *God's wrath to fall* on you! ...on your *loved one*!
8. *Turn to Christ & trust in Christ & follow Christ*. Urge your *children to examine* themselves & do the same. *Christ loved you & gave Himself up for you*. And God is *satisfied w/ that...*

...pray...