

Walking in Love

Ephesians 5:1-2

As we have been studying Ephesians you may have noticed that one Paul's favorite metaphors for the life we live is *walking the walk*. Walk in chapter 5 verse 2 is the Greek word *peripateo* which means literally to walk about here and there or to step all around.

Paul uses this word picture throughout the book of Ephesians to describe our behavior both before and after we are saved.

- In 2:2 Paul describes the life we lived before we were saved saying that we, "**walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.**"
- In 2:10 he says, "**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**"
- In 4:1, he said, "**walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.**"
- In 4:17 he said we should "**should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind.**"
- In v.2 of today's text we are commanded to "**walk in love.**"
- In 5:8 we are told to "**walk as children of light.**"
- In 5:15 we are to "**walk**" in wisdom, "**not as fools.**"

Walking the walk means doing what Jesus would do. Walking the walk means Jesus makes a difference in the way we live. Walking the walk means living differently than the rest of the world. Walking the walk means not living as a sub-culture but a counter-culture.

Part of walking the walk with Christ is walking in love. Notice that in our passage today we are told that we are to always "**walk in love.**" Today we are going to ask the question "What does it mean to walk in love?"

Ephesians 5 contrasts walking in love with walking in lust. It's starts out by giving us three positive principles about walking in love and then four negative principles of walking in lust. Today we will examine the principles of walking in love.

I. Walking in Love (vv.1-2).

A. We Walk in Love by Imitating God.

Paul says we are to "**be imitators of God.**" The word "**imitators**" comes from *mimetes* from which we get the English terms "mimic" and "mime," someone who copies the characteristics of another.

As "**children**" of God, we are to imitate God's characteristics, namely His love.

What Paul is saying is, "Don't just talk about His love, walk in His love, live it, express it. Don't tell everybody you have it, show them that you have it. Do as God does. Mimic Him. In other words, live it out before the world."

I like Eugene Peterson's translation from *The Message*, "**Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents.**"

The late Dr. Albert Schweitzer, famous missionary, medical doctor, and musician, was asked, "What is the best way to raise children?" He replied, "There are three ways: 1) By example, 2) By example, and 3) By example" (cited by Doug Spangler, *American Baby* [August, 1979], p. 35). He was certainly right. By your actions, your words, and your attitudes in the home, your children learn to follow in your footsteps.

Note the word "**therefore**" at the beginning of v.1. It refers us back to 4:32, which tell us to be "**kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.**" That's the essence of imitating God, being kind, tenderhearted and forgiving.

God's purpose has always been to make us like Himself. Rom.8:29 tells us that the reason for our salvation is that we might be "**conformed to the image of His Son.**" Mt.5:48 says we are to be "**perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.**" The Lord says in 1 Pet.1:16 and Lev.11:44, "**Be holy, for I am holy.**" Our great hope as believers is in 1 Jn.3:2, "**We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.**" In fact, the only reason we can walk in love is found in Rom.5:5, "**because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**"

We are to imitate God "**as dear children.**" It is natural for children to imitate their parents.

Because our heavenly Father is holy, we are to be holy. Because He is kind, we are to be kind. Because He forgives, we are to forgive. Because Jesus humbled himself, we humble ourselves. Because Jesus was a servant, we are to be servants. Because God is love, we are to "**walk in love.**"

Now I am sure somebody is saying, "Now wait a minute. Hold on. How in the world am I going to imitate God?"

The word "**love**" that we are looking at in verses 1-2 is a love that is far beyond what any man could ever attain. It is the kind of love that John 3:16 talks about, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**" It is the kind of love that Romans 5:8 talks about, "**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**" It is the kind of love

that 1 John 4:10 speaks about, **"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."** It is the kind of love that the great love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 speaks about. No man, regardless of how sincere he is, can work up this kind of love. This is God's love.

To be an imitator of God is not something you do for Him. It is something God has to do through you. Let me show you this. There are two things that are very critical that we need to understand in this text.

1. In order to imitate God's love, we have to be His child.

The verse is very clear. He says in verse 1 again, **"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children."**

Let's look at the word **"children."** There is a word for child in the Greek that means an infant that has just been born. That is not the word mentioned here. There is another word for child that means one that is grown up and matured, *huios*. That is not the word that is used here. The word that is used here is the word *teknon*. It is the word that means an offspring of someone. It is a child, but it has to do with the fact that you bear the characteristics and the nature of your father.

"Oh, you mean to tell me to love as God loves, I am going to have to have His nature within me?"

That is exactly right. That is exactly what happens when you receive Christ into your life. His very nature comes into your life. God writes His DNA onto your life. His spirit unites with your spirit and my spirit, and therefore, we have the potential now out of that nature to love as He loves.

Many people have told me that my voice sounds a lot like my dad's voice. I don't have to try really hard to imitate my father's voice, it comes naturally to me because I am related to him. Imitating God should be the most natural thing in the world for those of us who have been born again by the Spirit of God as children of God. We should naturally act like our heavenly Father.

2. I must choose to obey His command.

I want to share something with you, loving on this level is not a feeling. It is not something that is going to happen to you because you had your quiet time. It is not something that is going to happen to you because you sincerely want it to happen to you. It is something that is going to happen when you choose to love others around you. The very fact that this is an unconditional love means there are going to be people out there who aren't going to deserve it and you are not going to want to love them. It is a command. We have to say,

"God, I in my flesh don't want to do this, but in my spirit I know that I am commanded and I choose to do it. I don't feel like it."

It is a choice you have got to make. Husband, wife, are you living with somebody that you think is unlovable? If you possess the nature of God, you are commanded to love. You have to make your own personal choice to do it.

Paul gives us a standard for that love that is incredible. The standard is the way He loved us.

B. We Walk in Love by **Loving** as Jesus Did.

V.2 says we are to "**walk in love as Christ has loved us.**" The word "**walk**" implies a step-by-step, slow but steady process. It refers to our entire manner of life.

The point is, the longer you are a Christian, the more your life should be characterized by love. As Paul puts it (1 Thess. 4:9-10), "**But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.**" Or Philippians 1:9), "**And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment.**" It's a lifelong process, but we must strive to grow in it

Paul is in effect saying, "**Look at Jesus.**" We can't love like He loved on our own. This is not a natural ability, but a supernatural ability because Jesus lives in us.

Many children learn to draw freehand by first tracing pictures. The more closely they follow the pattern of the original picture, the truer the likeness. We are always to trace the pattern of Jesus in our lives. We are never to live "freehand." We are to live and "**love as Christ has loved us.**"

Study how Jesus loved people. In a nutshell, He was kind and gentle with the broken, the outcast, and the downtrodden. He welcomed humble sinners. But He was also forceful and direct with proud hypocrites. Sometimes He was forceful and blunt with His own disciples, as when He hit Peter hard: "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" (Mark 8:33). But, His loyal love brought Peter and the others through all of their failures to become the godly apostles of the early church. Look to Jesus Christ as your supreme example of love.

The greatest test for Christ-like love is forgiveness (i.e. **4:32**). Nothing so exhibits love like undeserved forgiveness. Nothing so reveals a hard loveless heart than a determination not to forgive.

No matter what anyone may have done to us, Jesus has already paid the price for that sin. Peter thought forgiving seven times was enough, but Jesus said in Mt.18:22 we are to forgive "**seventy times seven.**" His point was we are to *keep on forgiving and keep on loving.*

C. We Walk in Love by **Giving** of Ourselves.

Not only has Jesus **"loved us"** and forgiven us, but v.2 says He has **"given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God..."**

Jesus' love is not just a pleasant feeling or emotional attachment. That kind of love comes and goes. Jesus' love is a real love, the love that gives.

We didn't deserve Jesus' precious gift, but He gave Himself anyway. Rom.5:8 says, **"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."**

Jesus gave himself as **"an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."** All of the OT offerings and sacrifices were pictures of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Jesus' willingness to give Himself was well-pleasing to the Father **"a sweet-smelling aroma."** That wonderful fragrance spreads to everyone who receives His sacrifice on their behalf.

You don't lose anything in love, you give it up! In W.W.I there was a young French soldier who was seriously wounded. His arm was so badly smashed that it had to be amputated. He was a magnificent specimen of young manhood, and the surgeon was grieved that he must go through life maimed. So he waited beside his bedside to tell him the bad news when he recovered consciousness. When the lad's eyes opened, the surgeon said to him: **"I am sorry to tell you that you have lost your arm."** **"Sir,"** said the lad, **"I did not lose it; I gave it -- for France."**

Walking in love means giving ourselves in sacrifice to others. When Paul gets to teaching on husbands and wives he says in 5:25, **"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."** So the whole idea here is I die to myself so that Jesus can be Jesus in me. When Jesus is being Jesus in me, my wife, my son, my daughter, my son-in-law, all know they are loved. They are being effected daily by a conscious choice I am making.

Walking in love is a father and mother who love their young children enough to turn off the tube and spend their time teaching them, talking with them, playing with them and loving them with their lives. That's walking in love.

Walking in love is a teenage believer who refuses to join in teasing and making fun of another student, but rather befriends and encourages that young person at a difficult time. That's walking in love.

Walking in love is a senior saint whose husband has long since gone to heaven. Though she's lonely, her focus is not on her solitude but on encouraging other lonely people with cards, letters and phone calls. That's walking in love.

WALK IN LOVE. We are to imitate God's love in Christ. The love that gives, that counts no cost too great, and, in sacrificing itself for others, offers all to God, and does all for His sake.