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Imitators of God

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is

an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.” Ephesians 5:1-7

In this section of Ephesians Paul continues to talk about the differences between the Old Man and the New Man. He uses the metaphor of walking and encourages us to walk in love, to walk in light, and to walk in wisdom. When we walk in these paths, we will prove to be imitators of God.

Walk in Love

We are encouraged to be imitators of God as dear children. Since Christ is the manifestation of God in the flesh, it follows that to imitate God we must imitate his Son, Jesus Christ. The idea of imitating God as dear children is interesting to consider.

We often have witnessed little children imitating their parents. A little boy pushes his toy lawn mower around behind his dad as dad mows the lawn. A little girl takes her bake set and watches her mom cooking in the kitchen, duplicating her every move. Little children are fond of imitating their parents.

As children of God, we should love to imitate him and follow in his paths. We are to walk in love, as Christ has loved us. In particular, Paul mentions here the offering and sacrifice of Christ for us. Paul affirms in Rom. 5:6-8, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

When we walk in love as Christ loved us, we will be led to love even our enemies. Jesus teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:43-48): “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you,



and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father 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. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

When the love of Christ is perfected in us, it will lead us to seek the ultimate good even of those we may consider our enemies. We are not being commanded to have certain feelings. Agape love is more a matter of the will than of the emotions. *Strong's number 26 – Agape* – is defined as love or goodwill. In usage it is translated love, benevolence, good will, esteem; and in the plural: love-feasts.

As children of God, we should love to imitate him and follow in his paths.

Paul then lists some sins that are the opposite of walking in love toward our neighbor. He warns us against fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness.

Strong's number 4202 - porneia is defined as fornication, and in usage is translated fornication, whoredom; metaphorically it is translated as idolatry. A word study of *porneia* reveals it to be the root of the English terms “pornography and pornographic.” Another form of the word, *pornos*, is derived from *pernao*, which means “to sell off.” Properly it indicates a *selling off* (surrendering) of sexual purity; *promiscuity* of any (every) type.

The pornography industry generates \$12 billion dollars in annual revenue - larger than the combined annual revenues of ABC, NBC, and CBS. Of that, the Internet pornography industry generates \$2.5 billion dollars in annual reve-

nue. (Pornography Statistics. Family Safe Media.)

Strong's 167 - akatharsia is defined uncleanness, and in usage is translated uncleanness, impurity. A word study of *akatharsia* states that it is from *A* "not" and 2513 “*katharós*”, “clean because unmixed, pure.” It refers to ritual *impurity*, caused by leprosy, open infection, child birth, touching a corpse, etc. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* states that in a moral sense it refers to the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living (See Romans 1:24; Romans 6:19; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:7). It is used of impure motives in 1 Thessalonians 2:3.

Strong's 4124 – pleoneksia is define as advantage, covetousness. In usage it is translated covetousness, avarice, aggression, desire for advantage. A word study shows that *pleoneksia* is a feminine noun derived from 4119 */pleiōn*, “numerically more” and 2192 */éxō*, “have”. Properly it means the desire for *more (things)*, i.e. lusting for a greater *number of temporal* things that go beyond what God determines is eternally best and thus beyond His preferred-will.

Strong's 151 - aischrotés means baseness, and in usage is defined as obscenity, indecency, baseness.

Strong's 3473 - mōrología is defined as foolish talking and is so translated. A word study indicates it comes from 3474 */mōrós*, “dull, without an edge,” and 3004 */légō*, “speaking to a conclusion.” Literally it means “foolish (moronic) words,” i.e. speech flowing out of a *dull, sluggish* heart (mind) that *lost its edge (grip)* on reality. This is the “talk of fools, involving foolishness and sinning together” (R. Trench, 121).

Strong's 2160 – eutrapelia means a ready wit, coarse jesting, low jesting, ribaldry.

Strong's 2169 - eucharistia means thankfulness, giving of thanks and is translated thankfulness, gratitude; giving of thanks, thanksgiving.

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Again, we don't have to guess the kinds of behavior and talk that Paul is warning against in these verses. In contrast to all of this he encourages us to exhibit and express thankfulness.

Those who practice these immoral habits have no inheritance in the Kingdom. Don't be deceived by the alluring arguments of our culture. The empty words here refer to the arguments of those opposing the truth by defending the immorality of the pagan culture surrounding the church of those days. The same kinds of arguments are made today. Don't be a "goody two shoes." Don't be such a "spoil sport." Why are you always so "holier than thou?" This kind of behavior is worthy of the wrath of God. We are not to be partakers of this lifestyle.

Walk in Light

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.'" (Eph. 5:8-14)

We see the contrast again of walking in love and walking in unrighteousness. It is here under the figures of darkness and light. We are to walk in the light. Although this verse is surely true of all wicked men, MacKnight, and others, have detected a close connection here with the various mystery cults of paganism. His paraphrase of Ephesians 5:11-12 brings this out thus: "And have no fellowship with those who celebrate the heathen mysteries, which being transacted in the darkness of night are really the unfruitful works of darkness, as they bring no fruit to the initiated, except eternal death: But rather reprove them. For the impure and wicked actions which are secretly done in the mysteries by the initiated, are so abominable, that it is base even to mention them." (Coffman)

Everything that is made manifest (by the light) is light ... This means "Everything that the light reveals becomes itself light!" Of course, this is literally true. Nothing can be seen, except through its reflection of light; and that which reflects light (as the moon) is in itself light. As Dummelow noted, this very thing had happened to the Christians who received this letter. "Light turns darkness into light; this is what had happened to Paul's readers." (Coffman)

Redeeming here means to buy up, ransom, to rescue from loss.

John wrote in 1 John 1:5-10, "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive

us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

Walk in Wisdom

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.” (Eph. 5:15-21)

Redeeming here means to buy up, ransom, to rescue from loss. And in order to “redeem” the time we must walk circumspectly.

Strong’s 199 - akribōs means with exactness and is translated carefully, exactly, strictly, distinctly. When we look at a word study of *akribōs*, we find it is from *akribes*, “the high point, extreme,” (see also 195 /*akribeia*, “highly accurate”) Properly it means extremely accurate, very exact; “more (very) accurate” because researched down to the finest detail (“factually precise”). This root (*akrib-*) refers to gaining *exact information* with the *highest level* of accuracy (“exactness”) and is acquired by *probing investigation* to provide a *comprehensive circumspect* (precise) view in *strict adherence* to the facts.

We say that someone who is drunk is “under the influence.” When we are under the influence of alcohol it causes us to act in certain ways. We may slur our speech and find it difficult to walk or stand. Paul is saying that we should be under the influence of God’s Spirit. This will cause us to act in certain ways. It will cause us to sing songs of the faith to encourage and build each other up. It will lead us to thankful living and also to the abil-

ity to submit to one another in love.

Paul continues to contrast the behavior of the Old Man as opposed to the New Man. We know that putting on the New Man is a process that we must pursue with diligence. It involves us being led by the Spirit of God rather than the spirit of the world. When we are led by God’s Spirit, we walk in wisdom.

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Sources:
Burton Coffman Commentary
Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon

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Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.
Daniel 5:1-2

Walk in Love

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”
Ephesians 5:1-2

To start, what does the apostle Paul mean by the word “walk”?

In the fall of 1956, I carried home what would be the first of many report cards. Along side the expected marks for reading, writing and arithmetic, there were marks for something called “deportment”. As the school year progressed, I learned that the marks for the three R’s were not as important as the marks for “deportment”, which reflected my *conduct or behavior* in class, and was usually indicated with either the letters “S” for satisfactory or the dreaded “U” for un-satisfactory.

There were marks for something called “deportment”.

Here the word “walk” is used figuratively by the Apostle Paul to mean exactly this; ***to deport one’s self***. (Strong’s) or ***to conduct one’s self***. Therefore we might read Paul’s words this way: “And ***conduct yourselves*** in love, as Christ also has loved us.”

At first glance, this command seems simple enough. However, when we consider the broader context, our *conduct* includes being “*kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*” (Eph. 4:32)

Being kind is not a feeling but a *behavior* and being tenderhearted is not a feeling but *actions* of tenderheartedness, just as forgiveness is not merely a change in our feelings toward others but is a conscious *effort* to convey our forgiveness. It is much like the father Jesus spoke of in the story of the prodigal son. When he saw his son returning home, while still a great way off, he ran to embrace him and in so doing, *demonstrated* his forgiveness even before his son could ask for it. (Lk. 15:11-24)

Just as important, when we finally understand that our ***pattern of conduct*** is Christ Jesus himself and

that His love for us was a sacrificial love, i.e. a supreme, *agape*’ love, may we forever dismiss the notion that He only requires of us a sentimental love, like a child’s fleeting attachment to his toys. Instead, He requires our love for Him and for each other to be active and engaged, like a mother’s unwavering devotion for her child, which is far more than a mere feeling or an emotional connection.

Clearly Jesus had feelings for His own people the Israelites but what mattered most were his actions. “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,*” He said, “*How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left desolate.*” (Lk.13: 34) Later, just outside the city, He described in greater detail the coming destruction of Jerusalem and as He viewed it, **He wept**. (Lk. 19:41-44)

Thus, for his entire ministry, for three and half years while walking hills and valleys, from city to city, Jesus blessed, healed, taught, warned, rebuked.... like a mother hen attempting to gather her brood to the safety beneath its wings....but because His message was hated, like that of Zechariah’s (II Chron. 24:20-21), they both were murdered. Yet the Lord’s tears were not for himself, but for those who would perish in Jerusalem’s impending destruction. And, before that would happen, He would ultimately sacrifice himself completely and unselfishly to provide an eternal safe haven to all who would come and obey Him. (Mk.16:16) Christ didn’t just feel compassion, He implemented it, which is what He calls on us to do today.

In addition, He calls on us to love in a very specific way: “*as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us....*”

In addition, He calls on us to love in a very specific way: “*as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us....*” That is the standard, the unchangeable rule that we, His people, are to follow.

So what exactly does that phrase mean, “*as Christ also loved us....*”?

For starters it means Christ didn't wait till we were loveable, or good or clever or talented or for any other impressive label to be slapped on us. He simply loved us at our worst, when we were "wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked" or as Paul put it: *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us."* (Ro.5:8)

Therefore, in order to successfully follow that unchangeable rule, some of us will have to move out of our comfort zone, showing kindness to the unkind neighbor perhaps or being tender hearted with the hard-hearted co-worker. Not surprisingly, God set forth this principal some thirty five hundred years ago, early on, in the Law of Moses: *"If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it."* (Ex.23:5) While early on in His ministry, Christ set forth the very same standard: *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."* (Matt. 5:44)

Learning to love as Christ loved us is challenging to say the least, even as it must have been for the Apostles. For example, before Christ came, every good Jew knew what the Law said about love, most particularly, loving your neighbor. God had said in Leviticus 19:18, *"...You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* When Jesus finally did come, He surprised His Apostles with a brand new commandment: *"A New Commandment I give to you"* He said, *"that you love one another; **as I have loved you**...."* (Jn.13:34)

What made it "New" was replacing the old standard of love with a new one. The old standard was "self" and "self" is imperfect. Jesus, on the other hand **is** perfect and therefore it made perfect sense to "raise the bar", as it were, to replace the old imperfect standard with a new, perfect standard – His Love.

Walking is good therapy, whether it be a literal stroll through the park to control our blood pressure or a spiritual "walk" to control our behavior. Paul provides for us a challenge in our spiritual walk that proves to be good spiritual therapy. In first Corinthians 13, the well-known love chapter, read, if you will, verses 4-6. Now read it again but replace the word "love" with your own name. For example, starting with verse 4: *"your name suffers long and is kind"* and so forth.

Pretty quickly we begin to see how imperfect our love is and where we can improve. Therefore, with Christ at our side let us walk in love each day.

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*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father 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. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect .
Matthew 5:43-48*

What Is Love?

A group of professional people posed this question to a group of 4 to 8 year-olds, "What does love mean?" The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think:

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."
Rebecca- age 8

"When someone loves you , the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth."
Billy - age 4

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other."
Karl - age 5

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs."
Chrissy - age 6

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired."
Terri - age 4

"Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK."
Danny - age 7

"Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together, and you talk more. My Mommy and Daddy are like that. They look gross when they kiss"
Emily - age 8

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen."
Bobby - age 7

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate."
Nikka - age 6



Volume 42 - Number 2 - Mar/Apr 2023

BC is published every other month. Send all inquiries, address changes and subscriptions to the editor: L Scott Gage, PO Box 3425, Fayetteville, AR 72702-3425 Voice 479-521-6809

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