

# Walking • Ephesians 5:1-7

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Chad

1. Little Chad was a shy, quiet young fella.
2. One day he came home from school and told his mother he wanted to make Valentines for everyone in his class.
3. Her heart sank because she knew Chad was an outcast from the other kids
  - a. she had watched the children when they walked home from school and saw how no one talked with her little boy
  - c. they all laughed and hung on to each other
  - d. but Chad was always last, and never included with the other kids' fun
4. Nevertheless, she decided she would go along with his plan to make cards for the other children.
5. So she purchased the paper and glue and crayons.
6. For three whole weeks, night after night, Chad painstakingly made thirty-five, colorful, elaborate Valentines.
7. Valentine's Day came, and Chad was beside himself with excitement!
  - a. he carefully stacked them up, put them in a bag, and bolted out the door.
  - b. his mother decided to bake him his favorite cookies and serve them up warm with a cool glass of milk when he came home from school.
  - c. she just knew he would be disappointed when once again he wasn't included in the other kids fun
  - d. maybe the cookies would ease the pain a little.
  - e. it hurt her to think that he wouldn't get many valentines – maybe none at all.
8. That afternoon she had the cookies and milk on the table when she heard the children outside walking home from school.
9. Sure enough here they came, laughing and having the best time.
10. And as always, there was Chad in the rear all alone
11. His arms were empty, she noticed, and when the door opened she choked back the tears.
  - a. she said, "Mommy has some warm cookies and milk for you."
  - b. but he hardly heard her words.
  - c. he just marched on by, saying: "Not a one -- not a single one."
  - d. her heart sank, but as she looked at his little face, it was beaming in a mile wide smile
  - e. he added, "I didn't forget anyone, not a single one!"

### B. Love Gives

1. Little Chad is a wonderful lesson to all of us
2. We can either go through life with a mindset to *get*, or a mindset to *give*
3. Our lives will consist in the *abundance of our possessions* or in the *possession of an abundance of love* that seeks only to give

## II. TEXT

### A. Vs. 1-2

#### {1} Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

1. Some translations say, "Be followers of God as dear children"
2. But *imitators* is a better translation - in fact, we get our word *mimic* from this Greek word
3. "Imitation" is an oft-repeated call in the NT
4. We know from the writings of the early church that they put a great value on following good examples
  - a. it makes sense that they would
  - b. you see, Christianity broke into a world that was dominated by a rank paganism
  - c. morality was incredibly low - sin was commonplace
  - d. there simply were no examples of holiness for people to follow
  - e. so the apostles and elders of the churches encouraged new believers to look to the lives of those who had a solid walk with God and who were demonstrating what it meant to follow Jesus
5. We need good examples of the Christian life - we need to be able to see what godliness looks and sounds like
6. But you know, it seems we have become leery of looking for examples today
  - a. whereas in Paul's day there simply were few examples to look to
  - b. we are wary of even looking for them
  - c. the reason why is that we keep getting *disappointed*
  - d. our attention is drawn to someone who seems like a good example
  - e. they become well-known, either nationally or just within a local congregation as a man or woman of God
  - f. a couple of years pass, and then we hear some word of scandal
    - 1) it might be a pastor or elder
    - 2) or a Radio preacher
    - 3) or it might even be a president
  - g. We've become a nation of *cynics*; so that when someone notable does rise, we start *looking* for dirt; we prepare for the inevitable let-down
  - h. we may despise magazines like the *Midnight Globe* and the *National Enquirer*, but in our own minds, we've already played out the headlines of scandal
7. What Paul calls the Ephesians to here is an example that will never disappoint
8. He says that we must be imitators of God!
9. And our imitation is the kind of imitation that is done by dear, or beloved children
10. Kids go through a phase of development in which they imitate the behavior of their parents
  - a. little girls copy their mothers and little boys ape their fathers
  - b. little girls will put on a fancy dress many times too big for them, crawl into mom's dress shoes, don a white lace hat, smear lipstick all over their mouths and try to put rouge and eyeliner somewhere near their eye lashes

- c. little boys stand at dad's side while he squirts shaving cream into his hand, applies it to his face, and then shaves; they then try to do the same thing with a toy razor or one dad has taken the blade out of
- 11. Children at that age want to be just like mommy and daddy
- 12. That is what Paul is describing here
  - a. we are the precious children of a Great Father
  - b. we ought to never grow distant from the desire to want to be *just like Him*
- 13. But what example are we to look to that we might follow?
- 14. How can we imitate Him who we cannot see?
- 15. The answer is in v. 2 . . .

**{2} 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.**

- 16. This is how we imitate God - we walk in love
- 17. And the kind of love we walk in is the love Jesus *demonstrated* by offering Himself for us
- 18. In a word - love, → gives!
- 19. While we see the love of Christ supremely manifested at the cross, we must not limit the demonstration of God's love to just the cross
- 20. Jesus' whole life was an offering of love
  - a. He didn't save up all His love for one great finale
  - b. and then expend it all in one courageous and heroic act
  - c. every day, from the moment He rose till the time He went to bed was a sacrifice of love, offered as an act of worship to the Father and service to men, women, and even children
- 21. The life of love of a living sacrifice - one that is well pleasing to God
  - a. and we ought not think of walking in love as going through life looking for some courageous and heroic act we can perform that will prove the depth and nobility of our love
  - b. a countless number of opportunities are before us each and every day to love others
- 22. I can go into an arcade with a bag of quarters and give them all to one kid - or - I can walk around the arcade for several hours, giving quarters out one, two, three at a time to as many kids as I can find
- 23. That is the way we live our lives - doling out love in a quarter's measure, but consistently, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment.
- 24. In the ancient world - when someone wanted to worship their god, they would bring an animal and offer it to be burned on the altar
  - a. they had the satisfaction of watching as their offering was placed on the fire
  - b. and then seeing the smoke rise into the sky
- 25. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross has done away with the need for animal sacrifices today
- 26. So *our* worship takes a different form - we make a sacrifice of *ourselves* in the form of loving service of others
- 27. This service is nothing less than *worship* that comes before God as a sweet fragrance
- 28. Now - We are facedw with a huge contrasted . . .

## **B. Vs. 3-4**

**{3} But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;**

**{4} neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.**

1. These verses continue what we looked at last Sunday
  - a. that we must put off the old man
  - b. and put on the new person who has been created in Christ
2. The end of chapter 4 tells us about some of the stuff we need to take off and put on
  - a. in those verses, it is mostly anger and bitterness that is reflected in improper speech that we are to put off -
  - b. while we are to put on tenderness and an attitude that is ready to forgive
3. Here in chapter 5, he tells us about some *more* stuff we are to put off - and here the idea that ties it all together is *sexual immorality*
4. Contrasted with the kind of *genuine love* we are to walk in; love that seeks to *give*, is a *carnal lust* that only wants to *take*
5. We will not labor in word-study over the list of sexual sins Paul details here
6. Just suffice it to say that Paul is condemning all sex outside the boundaries proscribed by God
7. He had to write this to the Ephesians because they lived in a culture and a city that was completely given over to sexual immorality
  - a. the center of city-life was the temple to Diana, where ritual prostitutes plied their trade
  - b. part of being a good citizen was a regular visit to her temple
  - c. besides that, the Greco-Roman culture took it for granted that men and women would commit fornication
  - d. in fact, men who didn't were considered *abnormal*
8. Among other things, one of the effects of the gospel in the ancient world was a radical revaluing of the role of sex in life
9. It was taken out of the gutter into which it had been shoved, and was made the sacred and precious gift of God to marriage
10. By doing this, women were given a new value -up to that point, they were considered by men as little more than objects to be used
11. But the gospel made women, human beings of equal worth with men
12. A believing wife was also a *sister* for whom Christ died
13. And sex was a gift God gave to help a husband and wife find a level of intimacy that was deeply rewarding to BOTH of them - not just the man
14. What Paul wrote to the Ephesians needs to be repeated today
  - a. for once again, sex has been shoved into the gutter
  - b. our culture is not unlike theirs - in fact, in some ways, it is worse
  - c. sex has been taken out of the specialness that marriage lends it
  - d. and it's been turned into a lustful, selfish urge that is pursued with no thought of consequence
  - e. the incessant message of movies, TV, magazines, and videos is that sex is something to be indulged in without concern for any kind of propriety

- f. instead of *marriage* being the boundary - *attraction* is the only boundary
  - g. night spots are nothing more than markets of flesh
  - h. and sporting events have become the scene of the inevitable bikini contest
15. According to recent surveys, it was discovered that half of all internet traffic is pornographic in nature
  16. And like ancient Ephesus, it's gotten to the point where adultery and fornication are considered a normal part of modern life
    - a. polls tell us that 50% of married people have had an affair in the first 5 years of marriage
    - b. many couples getting married today live in what are called open-marriages; in which they are free to have sexual relations with some one other than their mate
    - c. there is a growing trend among high school students toward homosexuality and bi-sexuality
  17. Into the midst of precisely this kind of social acceptance of immorality Paul writes . . .

**{3} But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;**

18. It matters not which way the winds of society blow; it doesn't matter if fornication and adultery and pornography are accepted
19. They are sin - and they are such sins as are incompatible with following Christ
20. Paul doesn't say here that we should avoid these things so we can BE saints - he says that we avoid them because we ARE saints -
21. Christian - Be what you are in Christ!
22. V. 3 prohibits the *acts* of sexual sin; v. 4 even prohibits the demeaning of sex by making light of it in speech

**{4} neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.**

23. We must put off dirty jokes and double entendre and instead maintain a pattern of speech that is always aware and responsive to God's many blessings
24. Before we go on, let me take a minute to say that just as the NT was very bold in its revaluing and direction on the role of sex in marriage to the time it was originally penned, the Church needs to be just as bold today
  - a. while the world distorts and devalues and degrades sex,
  - b. the Church ought to be bold and unapologetic in the wisdom of its counsel that sex belongs in marriage and that a Christian husband and wife have a great love life because it is enjoyed in the right context, free from the guilt and consequences that mark immorality
  - c. taken outside the boundaries God has set for sex, it is dehumanizing, it reduces men and women to the level of animals who have no higher good than their own selfish pleasure
  - d. but *within* marriage - it is a shared treasure that *empowers* a man and *secures* a woman, and so makes them even *more* human!

### **C. Vs. 5-7**

**{5} 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.**

**{6} Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.**

**{7} Therefore do not be partakers with them.**

1. Paul spells it out here - heaven is not some sensual paradise all will enter
2. It's for the redeemed - for people who have been saved and delivered not only from the guilt of sin, but from the sins themselves
3. If a person continues to fornicate, use pornography, or offer his life in service to anything other than God - he or she is lost and ultimately going to experience God's wrath
4. Now, here's the problem; people who are caught up in a lifestyle of sin, rarely look at themselves as sinners
  - a. they know their fornication and immorality is *technically* wrong
  - b. but other than that, they aren't really bad people
  - c. after all, how is their sin hurting anyone?
5. Paul knew that sinners are unconcerned that the consequences for their sin will be all that serious - so he turns his attention to it and warns, "Let no one deceive you with empty words"
  - a. whether it is society at large,
  - b. others in the workplace
  - c. fellow students
  - d. Cosmopolitan or Men's Health
  - e. or maybe even our own minds, rationalizing our sin
  - f. or that subtle voice of Satan
6. Sin is sin - even when the voices of persuasion try to redefine it
7. Their words are hollow, empty, because they are not based in truth

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. Needs To Be Said**

1. We live in an age when the entire Church is being pressured to capitulate to the world
2. And many churches have given in
3. Marriage has been devalued so that in some denominations, it isn't necessary to be married; as long as a couple are committed to each other!
4. And the word "couple" has now been redefined to include any two people who care about each other, regardless of their sex
5. Some churches are ordaining practicing homosexuals and lesbians
6. Others look the other way while their priests and pastors have affairs
7. Being faithful to the Lord in our time means holding fast to the word of God and saying it like it is . . .

**{5} 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.**

**{6} Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.**

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**B. You**

1. If you are committing fornication - stop
2. If sexual uncleanness marks your life - end it
3. If there is some passion you have given yourself over to that has become an idol in your life, destroy it

**C. The Cookie Jar**

1. A little boy's mother had just baked a batch of cookies and placed them in the cookie jar
2. She told him he was not to eat any of them until after dinner
3. But it wasn't long when from the other room she heard the top of the cookie jar open
4. She called out, "Billy, what are you doing?"
5. Billy answered, "My hand is in the cookie jar resisting temptation!"
6. Now, the fact of the matter is - no one can resist the temptation when their hand is in the cookie jar!
7. There are open cookie jars all around us today
8. How do we avoid them - how do we keep from stumbling and sticking our hands in the jar of sexual sin in a world where it is expected we won't resist?
9. Simple -
  - 1) Don't go near the cookie jars!
  - 2) Follow the instruction of vs. 1-2
    - a) imitate God and walk in love
    - b) walk this earth with an eye to *give*, not *take*
    - c) see every thought and action as a *sacrifice* we offer to the Lord