

Ephesians

Walk in Love

Ephesians 5:1-2

August 17th, 2025

I. Introduction – The Image of God

Anthropology is the study of man: the study of what humans are. As Christians, our definition of what mankind is is rooted in Scripture. Man is what God says he is. Man is what God made him to be. What is man according to God? Man is a creature, to start off – a creature created by God. And when we read about the account of God’s creation of us, we learn something very significant about mankind. We are creatures, but we are special creatures. This is Genesis 1:26, the sixth day of God’s creating work:

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Mankind, by God’s sheer grace, was *created* like everything else other than Him. But mankind, unlike everything else, was made in the *image and likeness of God*. Like everything else, we were made for God. And, as His image, we were made to reflect God: to be sons of God in the earth.

Sanctification is about becoming more human, as we put off our old self and put on Christ. Our text this morning takes this a step further. It brings us even deeper into the mystery of what it means to be man, to be human: it means looking more like God our Father. And what does our Father look like? He looks like _____. As John would say, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). He’s not an airy, abstract, feel-good, love-is-love kind of love. He is the love made manifest in _____. This means as we are sanctified we become more and more like our Father who is love, and our lives look more and more like the life of Jesus, who is love incarnate.

II. Text – Ephesians 5:1-2

1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 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.

First, notice we are to be _____ of God. In a culture that idolizes originality and novelty, we have come to despise imitation. But mankind was made to image God. We were not made to be our own gods, apart from Him. But little mirrors of Him. We were made to imitate our Father, and that is our glory. When we do this life is good. Our conscience is clean. Our spirits are joyful. Even our bodies are strengthened, for sin is poison not only for the soul, but the whole man. And right innovation applied to God’s creation, for His glory, in His Spirit, is blessed and enriching – instead of corrupting and destructive.

Second, notice that we are to be imitators of God as _____. We imitate God our Father, for He loves us. At baptism, He declares this to us plain as water, “This one belongs to Me.” We don’t imitate God in order to earn His favor. We imitate Him because we have His favor. We received His love when we were utterly unlovely. Like David, we taste and see that the Lord is good (Psa. 34:8), and we want to be like Him. We want to be good as He is good. We want to love like He loves.

Finally, notice that this love which we are called to walk in is as concrete, as historical, as fleshy and human as the actual historical person, Jesus Christ. We walk in love, “as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for sweet-smelling aroma.” Love is open to interpretation. God knows this. He knows what is in man, and He did not leave it up to us to figure this part out. When God calls us to walk in love, He interprets it Himself. He doesn’t just give the command. But He leads the way. We are to walk in love even as Christ Jesus did. We are given a concrete, flesh and blood, historical exemplar. “Here is Love,” God said. “Walk like Him.” All else is artificial. Everything else is false and empty and death.

III. Love & False Loves

In Christ, God has declared His love so that all other so-called loves must pale in comparison against this eternal original. This is a lesson to us. It allows us to test and discover in ourselves and in our own lives the many false loves we try to substitute for Christ’s love.

First. Love, not _____. Relationships are good, just like everything else created by God. But when our desire for another is apart from God’s blessing a good thing becomes an _____ thing. It is a thing grasped at apart from God. It is Adam and Eve in the garden grasping at a good without God’s blessing. It is deceitful lust that results in corruption – the corruption of ourselves, and bitter fruit for those around us.

Walking in love is the opposite of walking in our deceitful desires. It is walking according to the love that Christ embodies. Lust wants to devour and consume, to take and possess. Love, however, is itself consumed. Love is itself devoured for the sake of others, for the sake of God, for the sake of the world. Love gives itself up for the sake of others, as an offering and sacrifice to God.

Second. We are called to love, not _____ (1 John 3:16-19). Love is not lazy. Love is not empty-handed. Love is not merely kind words and warm thoughts. Instead, love acts. We would not know the love of God apart from the very real action of God in this world, in history. God loved us not merely in word or in tongue, He loved us by sending His Son who loved us by healing our diseases, feeding us, teaching us, weeping with us, atoning for our sin, suffering in our place, building us a Kingdom and a Home. Divine love has the fruit of action, of good works, of service, of hospitality, of generosity, of meals, of a helping hand, of training, of sacrifice.

Third. Love, not _____. There’s a certain kind of action that we are tempted to call love, simply because it is the “right thing to do.” There’s a kind of right action that keeps the letter of the law, while missing completely the Spirit of the law. But it’s just a shell. It’s empty. It’s the form of love, perhaps. It walks in the footprints of love. But there is no life in it because there is no actual love in it. None of it comes naturally. It’s all sheer duty: no heart, no affection, no joy, no delight. Just cold, sterile, robot-like duty. That’s not how Christ has loved us, nor is it the way we ought to love one another.

IV. Come & Welcome to Jesus Christ