

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: November 8, 2009

Title: Filled to the Overflow - Love

Text: Ephesians 5:1-6

Theme: The believer’s daily walk is to be marked by a Christ-like love.

Author: Patrick J. Griffiths ©2009

Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

Title: Filled to the Overflow - Love

Text: Ephesians 5:1-6

Theme: The believer's daily walk is to be marked by a Christ-like love.

Introduction: The big idea is to walk in love. It is illustrated positively by the life and death of Jesus Christ and negatively by the old patterns of the fallen heart. The issue is not "can a believer lose their salvation?" The issue is "walk in love" and this is what it looks like.

What is the initial statement that strikes the reader? "Therefore" The exhortations of the apostle dovetail into each other. Our preceding passage (4:17-32) told us to put off the old man and its sinful characteristics and then to put on the new man and its Christ-like characteristics. What Christ looks like is love. It is a love that identifies us as His body. It always appears as if we come back to this one thing, love. We cannot afford to forget that what the Holy Spirit is working in us and through us, the body of Christ, are the fruits produced by the cross and the indwelling God. Unity, purity, and charity are all fruits of the cross tree. This tree cannot produce anything other than these fruits.

"In applying the doctrines in the first three chapters, Paul now for the third time uses the term for 'walk' (4:1, 17: 5:2)."¹

Ephesians 5:1-6 is a continuation of the exhortation to put off and put on. Love speaks the truth, does not let the sun go down on unsettled issues, labors to meet one's needs and the needs of others, uses appropriate speech and is kind and forgiving. This is what love looks like. The opposite of love is sexual immorality and inappropriate speech.

The Storyline:

God's love becomes the content for biblical unity. There can be no unity apart from it. In its absence there is only self destructing and soul damning impurity of every kind. It is only as His people love that they can guard themselves against the idolatry of self.

The Problem:

The most significant problem facing the church is the idolatry of self. We want everything our way. We are willing to sell our souls for the empty shadows provided for our edification by turning them into the end and not the means.

Questions:

1. What is Paul's intent in giving us this paragraph?
2. What if I never heard this message?
3. What impact would it have on my life?
4. What does Paul wish the reader to do?
5. What does Christ look like?
6. Why does Paul wish the reader to do this?
7. What is verse one calling God's people to do?
8. What does a Christ-like walk show itself (v. 2)?
9. What is the opposite of a walk marked by love (v. 3)?

10. What impact does a “fleshly” / **in Adam** walk have on the body of Christ?
11. What is the outcome of a walk marked by being **in Adam** (v. 5)?
12. What are “empty words” based on this paragraph?
13. Is there a parallel of ideas between verses 5 and 6?
14. What are some practical steps we might take to guard ourselves against impurity?
15. Why is immorality idolatry?
16. How does love guard and maintain biblical unity?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know God as love.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose His love in us and through us to those around us.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in His love as a guard against the idolatry of self.

Outline:

I. The Exhortation – Walk in love (v. 1)

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Eph. 5:1).

What is the believer exhorted to do? He is exhorted to be a follower of God. We are exhorted to be imitators of God. We are to manifest the very character of God. In so doing, we become Christ like. To see Christ is to see God.

- “Be” = Imperative mood. “The present imperative suggests way of life.”²
- “Therefore” [**oun**] “Accordingly, consequently, these things being so.” 7xEph (2:19; 4:1,17; 5:1,7,15; 6:14)
- “Followers” [**mimetes**] “An imitator.” 7Xnt

We are to imitate Him because He is our Father. Remember, He adopted us as sons and daughters and He is the Father of us all. As a consequence of this adoption, we are now to imitate Him.

“A mountain peasant’s child following in his father’s footsteps through high snow is a proper illustration of the biblical concept of imitation.”³

- “Dear” [**agapetos**] = “Beloved, esteemed, favorite, worthy of love.”
- “Children” [**teknon**] = “Offspring.”

As children of love we are to be love. I have never heard of a cat giving birth to a dog or an apple tree producing human offspring. We always reproduce after our kind and the offspring of love is love.

- How does the “and” of v. 2 function? It connects the exhortation of v.1 with an example / illustration of v. 2. How does an imitation of the Father look? As one who is walking in love.

II. The Illustration (v. 2)

“and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Eph. 5:2).

- "Walk" [**peripateo**] = "Hebraism, to live; to regulate one's life, to conduct one's self; to pass one's life." 7xEph (2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). It is a present active imperative. "The present imperative calls for habitual action."⁴

It is impossible to separate this call to love out of its context. The love of God has been sufficiently described by persistent visuals. The love of God is neither bitter nor malicious. It is marked by sacrifice and selflessness. It is the love of God that enables us to taste the unity produced by the cross.

“These words and the rest of 5:2 appear to be cited from a hymn or confession. The tone of diction is raised to a poetic level.”⁵

- "Given" [**paradidomi**] = "To give into the hands (of another)." 3xEph (4:19*; 5:2, 25*)

To imitate God is to give yourself over into the hands of another, to allow them to have power over you. The example of our love is Christ love for us. “The verb expresses wherein his love was shown.”⁶ Paul employs the language of the Old Testament text to communicate the nature of the sacrifice offered by Christ of Himself.

- “Offering” [**prosphora**] = "The act of offering, a bringing to."
- "Sacrifice" [**thusia**] = "A sacrifice, victim."
- "Fragrant" [**euodia**] = "A fragrant or sweet smelling thing, incense, an odor or something sweet smelling."
- "aroma" [**osme**] = "a smell, odor."

“The author designates Jesus Christ’s death as an atoning sacrifice offered by the pouring out of blood. Sacrifice is not just a metaphor, but here – as much as in Romans 3 and Hebrew – its essence and fulfillment are declared as present on the cross.”⁷

“Taken together the two words convey that Christ handed himself over as the offering and sacrifice that would fulfill all the offerings and sacrifices in the OT.”⁸

The sweet smelling aroma of one is contrasted with the rotten stench of the other. Just as one is aromatic so also is the other vile. The one is depicted as voluntary and sacrificial and the other as abusive and victimizing.

What love looks like is revealed by the negative or opposite. It is the second command in this paragraph.

III. The Prohibition (vv. 3-6)

³“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.” (Eph. 5:3, 4)

How does v. 3 begin and why? It begins with “and” (**kai**) and it is used contrastively. It sets what has proceeded with what is to follow. What follows in verses 3 through 6 is the exact opposite of love.

- If vv.1, 2 mark a sacrificial, selfless life, what do vv.3, 4 mark? A selfish, self-centered life.
- “But” [**de**] = Functions contrastively.

A. The Contrast (vv. 3, 4)

1. They were marked by immorality, impurity and greed (v. 3)

- "Immorality" **Porneia** = Illicit sexual activity. Sex before marriage.
- "Any impurity" = Physical or moral impurity of lustful, luxurious living (4:19; 5:3).

“Paul moves from specifically sexual sins to more general sins, such as greed. These include sexual lust but refer to other kinds of excessive desire as well.”⁹

- "Greed" = Greedy desire to have more, covetous, avarice (4:19; 5:3). “‘Insatiability’ would be a literal translation of Greek **pleonexia**, which is here interpreted by ‘greed.’”¹⁰

To be greedy is to desire something that God has not designed for you. Why is this idolatry? Because we are putting something above God. Our focus or desire is something other than God and we will seek to fulfill it even at the expense of our immortal soul.

I find it sobering to realize how often sexual sin is marked or referenced in the Bible. As a much younger man I thought my struggle against sexual sin would disappear once I was married and/or much older. Unfortunately, such is not the case. Perhaps some of the most degrading and abnormal sexual expression ever listed can be noted in Leviticus 18 and 20. This same debase and deviant sexuality is equally marked in Romans 1:24-28. It is also marked in 1 Corinthians 5:1.

“It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife” (1 Cor. 5:1).

Our current contribution to the persistent march toward abnormality is found in the internet through which an individual can engage in any manner of soul destroying activity. The tragedy of this is three-fold:

First, it takes something that is good for those within the context of marriage and makes it something that is crooked and unusual.

“Casual sex is a parody of the real thing – like drinking from a muddy stream instead of fresh, clear water, or like listening to a symphony on a damaged record or tape player when a world class orchestra is playing in the theatre around the corner.”¹¹

Second, its violation creates strongholds and brings individuals into captivity and bondage through a gnawing addiction. It is an itch that cannot be scratched or when scratched will never satisfy the urge [i.e. poison ivy].

Illicit sexual activity promises life and delivers death. It is a lie that will sooner or later come out.

Finally, it focuses on a shadow and not the substance. God gave us sexuality within marriage in order to address the intimacy we have in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Because marriage is a picture of Christ and His Church, the intimacy within marriage parrots or shadows what does exist between Christ and His Church.

There is an emphatic negation, not even, “let it not even be mentioned by name.”¹² Remember 4:1 and the word “worthy”? It means suitable to or compatible with. Here Paul reminds us of conduct that is fitting or proper. Our conduct is to be compatible with our position. When the spotlight of God is placed on our old Adamic nature we stand guilty and condemned from God. Oh how I praise His name that my standing before the Father is not merited by works but given solely by grace. Even in our best we are only filthy rags.

2. They were marked by filthy, silly and coarse jesting (v. 4)

“Believers must refrain from acts and thoughts of immorality which could lead to impure talk and action.”¹³

- "Filthiness" = Obscenity, filthiness.
- "Foolish talking" = Foolish talking. Compound word coming from **Mwros** ("Foolish, impious, godless") and Logia ("Speech").
- "Jesting" = Pleasantry, humor, facetiousness; in a bad sense, scurrility, ribaldry, low jesting.

“The context and the word ‘obscenity’ indicate that it is not humor as such but dirty jokes and the like that are out of place.”¹⁴

Notice how Paul couples together one’s conduct with one’s communication. The two work in tandem. What does Paul say about these areas of sin? “That they should not be once named (Pres. Pass. Imperative) nor are they convenient (“as what is fitting”).” The NIV translates the phrase, ‘not even a hint’. Why does he say this; “Because they are improper for God’s holy people” [NIV]. A way of guarding ourselves against the relentless onslaught of immorality is to remove it from our vocabulary.

Whatever the content of this communication is, it is the opposite of gratitude. Is God against humor? No, but He is against humor that runs the risk of desecrating His character and dividing His body. All of our selfish sins amount to nothing more or less than idolatry. It is the idolatry of self. I believe if we see our sin as idolatry it will go a long way in stopping us from sinning against God.

What is inappropriate speech contrasted with? It is contrasted with the giving of thanks. "By being grateful for all that God has given us, we can displace evil thoughts and words."¹⁵

- "But" [**alla**] = Strong contrastive conjunction. This is a stark contrast to the previous statement.
- "Rather" [**mallon**] = "to a greater degree"

"Gratitude is here singled out as the basic structural feature of the Christian's ethic."¹⁶

B. The Consequences (vv. 5, 6)

⁵"For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an 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" (Eph. 5:5, 6).

Who are those barred from entrance into the kingdom of Christ and God? It is those who are still **in Adam**. Those who have been . . .

- Blessed (1:3)
- Chosen (1:4)
- Adopted (1:5, 6)
- Redeemed (1:7, 8)
- Sealed (1:13b)
- And given both an inheritance and a guarantee . . .

are not the ones referred to. Those who are **in Christ** can never be barred from the kingdom of Christ and God.

"This is not to say that a believer might not fall into one of these sins, but rather this concerns the person who is characterized by one or more of these sins. Conversely, a criminal may do a good deed, but this is not what characterizes him. The contrast in this passage is between those who inherit and those who receive the wrath of God, not between faithful and unfaithful disciples. It is a contrast between heaven and hell and not a comparison of degree."¹⁷

Verse 5 begins with an explanatory "**gar.**" How do vv. 5, and 6 function in this passage? As a warning or reminder. What is the warning? Those who engage in such activities are excluded from the kingdom of Christ and of God. "The greedy person wants things more than he wants God, and puts things in place of God, thereby committing idolatry."¹⁸ In what five ways are those who engage in such activities described?

1. They are defiled

- "Know" [**oida**] = imperative mood
- "For" [**gar**] = explanatory
- "Whoremonger" = A man who prostitutes his body to another's lust for hire, a male prostitute; a man who indulges in unlawful sexual intercourse.
- "Unclean Person" = Unclean in a ceremonial sense, unclean in thought and life. Same as 'uncleanness' in v3.
- "Covetous man" = "One eager to have more, esp. what belongs to others, greedy of gain.
- "Idolater" = A worshipper of false gods, an idolater; used of any one, even of a Christian, who participates in any way in the worship of the heathen.

2. They are disowned

The idea of a lost inheritance is that which could have been theirs has been forfeited. It does not mean it was theirs and they lost it. "The person who persists in sexual and other kinds of greed has excluded God, who therefore excludes him from the kingdom."¹⁹

The language Paul uses is consistent throughout. Remember, those who know Him have an inheritance. Those who do not show themselves for what they are and will never inherit what could have been theirs.

3. They are deceived

"Deceive" means to cheat, beguile, deceive. It is a present active imperative. The fact that some were deceived suggests a teaching that allowed promiscuous and immoral people to continue in their sin while at the same time profess to be saved. Jude confronted this same idea in Jude 4.

"For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

Paul would have none of this. Those who would argue that grace is a license for sin are **in Adam**.

"Here in Ephesians Paul, addressing believers, rightly assumes that they have inherited the kingdom of God. However, **Paul warns that those whose lives are characterized by immorality, impurity, and greed, even though they may claim to be Christians, are not included in the kingdom of God.**"²⁰

4. They are destroyed

The wrath described is judgment wrath. It is not the judgment that is chastening or corrective but rather punitive. "It isn't an arbitrary thing whereby God makes up some rules to stop people enjoying themselves and then threatens to get cross with them if they go ahead anyway. God's wrath is built in to creation itself. There are certain ways of behaving which are so out of line with the way God made the world, and humans in particular, that they bring their own nemesis. Sexual misbehavior certainly comes into this category."²¹

5. They are disobedient

“The sons of disobedience” is a Semitic expression indicating the chief characteristic of the person as disobedience.”²²

"Disobedience" means obstinacy, obstinate opposition to the divine will (2:2; 5:6). The disobedient are unbelievers. They are idolaters.

Markus Barth comments on how, “The immoral persons mentioned in Eph 5:3ff are members of the congregation, not people outside the Church. Ephesians 5:5 warns the saints, do not disinherit yourselves! [emphasis his]”²³ This text tells me that within any gathering there are those who still exist **in Adam**.

C. The Counsel (v. 7)

- Verse 7 is transitional in nature. It can go either way. I will use it with both sections. Verse 7 functions as a conclusion.

What is the first word that greets you and why? “Therefore” It forces you to look back. Thus, based upon what Paul has just said here is his conclusion. What is Paul’s conclusion? Do not fellowship with those who are not walking in love. Do not associate with those who are selfish and self-centered. They are destroying the unity achieved by the cross. We are to mark those who are in error and seek their salvation and/or restoration.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What’s the NEXT STEP?)

- Where are you in all of this?
- What is the Holy Spirit pointing out to you today?
- How well are you fighting against the onslaughts of our culture for the possession of your soul?
- God’s love in us and through us is the greatest deterrent to the idolatry of self.
- God’s love promotes, guards, and celebrates the unity we have in Christ. Let us pursue love, let us pursue Him.

¹ (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 643).

² (Rogers & Rogers, 443).

³ (Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible, Ephesians*, 555).

⁴ (Rogers & Rogers, 443).

⁵ (Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible, Ephesians*, 557).

⁶ (Rogers & Rogers, 443).

⁷ (Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible, Ephesians*, 558).

⁸ (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 649).

⁹ (NIV Study Bible).

¹⁰ (Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible, Ephesians*, 561).

¹¹ (N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 59).

¹² (Rogers & Rogers, 443).

¹³ (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 653).

¹⁴ (NIV Study Bible)

¹⁵ (*NIV Study Bible*)

¹⁶ (*Rogers & Rogers, 443*).

¹⁷ (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 660, 661).

¹⁸ (*NIV Study Bible*).

¹⁹ (*NIV Study Bible*).

²⁰ (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 662).

²¹ (N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 59).

²² (*Rogers & Rogers, 443*).

²³ (Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible, Ephesians*, 564).