

“Walking in Love”

By: H. E. Phillips

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Ephesians 5: 1, 2).

It is quite obvious from both language and attitude of the masses today that they have no true understanding about the scriptural teaching of the word of God concerning the love of God and the love of one’s fellowman. The Bible contains much teaching on the subject of love and the object of man’s love. The denominational world and many unlearned brethren are trying to disguise sin under a perverted definition of love.

The American Standard Version makes the thought in this passage even plainer: “Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell.”

I should like to briefly call attention to three points in these verses. First, we are instructed to be followers or imitators of God as dear or beloved children. In the verses going before this passage, we are instructed in the proper relationship that should exist between brethren. All forms of evil and immoral conduct are forbidden. Instead, we are to imitate God as His children and deal with each other as God deals with us. The last verse of chapter 4 states that God also in Christ forgave you, hence, to imitate or follow God we must have that ready mind to forgive each other. While we are certainly to follow God in everything required of us, I understand this verse to particularly relate to our dealings with each other, because of the context. Both before and after these two verses in Ephesians 5, the subject matter deals with human relationship.

God does not tolerate such sins in the lives of His children as are mentioned here. He does not ignore such conduct and allow it to continue without a just condemnation of it. If I follow God as a beloved child, I will have the same attitude toward such sins. If this is not what is meant, what does the language mean?

Second, we are to walk in love. “Walk” signifies the manner of life one lives. His manner of life is governed by love. This brings two questions to mind: (1) What is one to love? and (2) what does love do?

The New Testament clearly teaches that we are to love God (Matthew 22: 37), Christ (John 14: 21), the truth (2 Thessalonians 2: 10), enemies (Matthew 5: 44), neighbors (James 2: 8), and the brotherhood (1 Peter 2: 17; 3: 8). We are also taught not to love the world (1 John 2: 15), iniquity (1 Corinthians 13: 6) and evil (Romans 12: 9).

Since we are to walk in love, following God as beloved children; and since God loves even sinners (Rom. 5: 8), but hates every evil way, it follows that we must love the truth and the souls of men, but we must hate every evil way.

WALKING IN
Love

Walking in love would mean that we follow or imitate God in all that we do. We must learn to separate the person from the sin of which he may be guilty. This does not mean that we must deal with him as if he had not sinned. When one is guilty of sin he must bear the consequences of his sin. However, love for the guilty person will lead us to try to persuade him to forsake his sin and obey the truth that he may be made free. We cannot condone the person in sin and follow God because He does not do so.

But what does love do? Most people today have the mistaken idea that love forbids any attempt to expose one’s sins or to take any action to correct him. If God’s love is our pattern the very opposite is true. The Old Testament

is full of God's dealing with men in sin and it established beyond doubt that "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward" (Hebrews 2: 2). God punished those who sinned. He does so now; and He does so without partiality or respect of persons. Is this love?

If a young girl fell into a deep hole filled with water and you could only reach the hair on her head, would you hesitate for a second to think not to grab her hair because it might not be an act of love, inasmuch as it would hurt and you would be abusive? If an old man stepped in front of an automobile and your only chance to save him would be to grab him by the collar and pull him backward to the ground, would you hesitate to question this as an act of love?

You know it would not be love to allow a little girl to drown because you might hurt her by pulling her hair, or allow an old man to be killed because you did not want to jerk him backward to the ground to save his life. This is not love in any Bible sense of the word.

When one is lost in sin and we do not expose his error and try to get him to repent, we do not love that person as God loves him.



Third, our love is to be the kind that Christ had. We must be willing to die if necessary to uphold the truth that frees men from sin. We cannot expect to be appreciated by all when we stand firmly against sin in any form. But if you love as Christ loved, you will be willing to suffer for the truth.

True scriptural love is described by the Holy Spirit as: "...taketh not account of evil: rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth" (1 Corinthians 13: 5, 6).

- *Searching the Scriptures*, Aug. 1986