

Eph Ch 5 Vs 1-2

(Kingdom Qualities)

And that really seems to be the on going theme that we've been studying since vs 17 of ch 4, Kingdom qualities. The nature of the new man that's been given to us in Christ, what it is that properly reflects the new man, how it is in light of all that Christ has done for us and all that we have to draw upon in Him in order to walk in the newness of life that we're to live, the things that are becoming of a Christian and those things that are no longer acceptable if you're a child of God. Because if you are a Christian, or I am truly a believer in Jesus Christ then we're no longer to lead our lives like the rest of the world, who doesn't know the Lord leads theirs. and You guys may be thinking that I'm beginning to sound like a broken record when it comes to repeating this fact, but I'm telling you, it's not for the sake of hearing my head rattle that I say these things over and over.

There are way to many people that call themselves Christians and yet there's absolutely nothing at all that distinguishes their lives from the non-believing society around them. They still party on Friday and Saturday night, they still lie, and cheat and steal from the company, but because they go to church on Sunday they think their Christians but I have news for you and that's that going to church on Sunday doesn't make anybody a Christian. and In reality what they do is take the Lord's name in vain. Many people are under the misconception that the taking of the Lord's name in vain is to use it in a cuss word, or in a non-respectful, belittling manner.

While it's true that in the verbal sense of the word that is to take the Lord's name in vain, but believe me, it is not limited to verbal usage. It's much more profound than that, when you call yourself "Christian" you're taking the name of the Lord upon you, it means, follower of Christ. and So if you've taken the name of the Lord upon you, and yet there's absolutely nothing about your life that is Christ like, there's nothing that distinguishes you as a follower of Christ, then you've taken the name of the Lord in vain and it would be best for you if you just didn't refer to yourself as a Christian. Because the bible says, "*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.*"

You see, if you have come to know Jesus Christ in a personal way then there should be certain attributes "Christ like" attributes that have come into your life that you are growing more and more in each day. You shouldn't be the same person you once were, that person is dead, you should no longer be characterized by lying, but rather you should cast that aside and deal honestly and openly with people. You should be truthful with your brothers and your sisters in Christ, why, because we're members of one another. and Even as you wouldn't function properly and effectively if the members of your body were all sending mixed signals to one another and you'd wind up doing more damage then good both to yourself and to others around you, the same is true for the body of Christ.

If we're lying to each other then not only are we not going to function properly and effectively, but we're going to wind up doing more damage than good, both to ourselves and other people around us. We're not to be angry and vengeful toward others, why because that's sin to us, that reflects the world, not the Lord, and it gives opportunity to the enemy to immobilize us spiritually. Vs 28 we're not to be keeping things from others or our employers but rather we're to earn an honest day's wage, and the more we get the more we should be willing to give to those in need. The point being that stealing hurts, but sharing helps.

The old man was deceitful, the new man is truthful, honest, and lives a life of integrity. 1 Tim 6:17-19 says, "*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*" and So we've been seeing the various contrasts that are to take place in the life of the individual who has come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ Not through our own efforts, but as a result of our surrender to the Holy Spirit in our lives, and we're not to grieve Him through bitterness in our hearts, gossip and evil speaking, cruel workings and intentions in our lives, those things are the fruits of unforgiveness, but you have not so learned Christ, forgiveness is one of the most basic and fundamental elements of the character of Christ, therefore (notice vs 32).

Vs1-2

Now this has both broad and specific application to our lives, "be imitators of God," think about that, that's a tall order to fill. In fact an impossible order to fill, in the efforts of the flesh, but without getting into it again, that's why Paul spent the 1st 1/2 of this letter informing you of the resources from which you have to draw upon in Christ. and So we're to imitate God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and if we're going to imitate God it's important that we know what He's like, and how is it that I get to know Him and His attributes? By the study of His word, because it's in His word that He reveals Himself to us. and Yet the more I study His word and get a better and better understanding of Him, the more I learn how far above me He is, and how impossible it is for me to fulfill the command to be like Him, absolutely perfect as He is perfect, Holy, for He is holy.

Yet the bible says be ye therefore imitators of God, thus the importance for me to walk in the reality of these 1st 3 chapters being rooted in the resources that are mine in Christ, not seeking to do this through my own self effort, but rather by Eph 3:16 being, "*strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.*" and Vs 19, *that I may be filled with all the fullness of God.* and To be filled with the fullness of God is to be emptied of self, thereby emulating His person and repudiating or crucifying mine. Be imitators of God, emulate the attributes of God.

What are the attributes of God? Well, one day God in speaking to Moses defined His very person and scripture records it for us in Ex 34:6-7, and there we read, “ And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, *“The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilt.”*”

So He doesn't clear guilt, He doesn't just overlook it, He deals with it in righteousness and holiness, but what are the chief characteristics that He states concerning Himself in His personal evaluation of His Character? Mercy, grace, longsuffering or patience, abounding in goodness and truth, and forgiveness, be imitators of God, be merciful, Jesus said blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Be gracious to others, patient with others, with your husband or your wife, don't be overcome by evil but instead as the bible says overcome evil with good, be honest with people and as it pertains specifically with where we're at in Eph, forgive. So be imitators of God, reflect the character of God to the people around you, by the power of the Spirit, that's the broad application, the particular application of this vs deals specifically with forgiveness, because as you know this “therefore” (here in vs 1) goes back to this previous section of which we began by reviewing and in specifics vs 32 (read vs 32-1).

You see there are those attributes much like we read in Ex, kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. But did you catch the flow there, just because there's a ch break doesn't mean that there's Holy Spirit break, “*forgiving one another even as **God** in Christ forgave you, therefore be imitators of God.*” Paul continuing this theme on forgiveness, why, because it's so absolutely critical for the believer to be one who forgives, forgiveness needs to be such a real working and attribute of our lives.

Because really the only one that unforgiveness hurts is ourselves, we do more damage to ourselves in every arena of life through unforgiveness, then we'll ever do to anyone else. Emotionally, psychologically, which begins to work it's way into the physical through ulcers and things of that nature, but most importantly spiritually, we hurt and hinder and immobilize ourselves through unforgiveness, meanwhile the individual we're holding out on, may not even know that they've offended you. Or if they do they're not the one's struggling with unforgiveness and so we gnaw away at our own souls, because we're unwilling to forgive. We're bitter and angry and in our hearts we're storing up malicious intent, and it's just eating at us and eating at us.

The bible is constantly emphasizing the importance of forgiving and being forgiving, having a forgiving spirit and heart. You remember when Jesus was teaching the disciples to pray, and He gave them sort of a model or an outline by which to praise and petition the Father, included in that model was, *“And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.”* Now we know that our forgiveness is always by God's grace and based on Christ's atonement. But, the bare minimum that we should glean out of this is that a believer confessing his sin and asking God's forgiveness while withholding forgiveness from someone else is not only inconsistent and contradictory, but it's hypocritical.

You see what right do we have to expect God's forgiveness towards us when we ourselves are unwilling to forgive? We want a double standard, and that's not right, and it's interesting that there was only *one* petition that Jesus re-emphasized or underscored out of that whole prayer and it was concerning the issue of forgiveness. After concluding the model prayer He added, *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* and Again forgiveness is a release from a debt or a full pardon of an offense, to many people use the layaway forgiveness program. They say that they forgive, but what they really mean is I'm going to let you work this off and pay for it little by little but you just remember I still own it and I can take it and use against you anytime I feel like it, and that's not right, that's not forgiveness.

You say but Jeff it's just so hard when it's the same offense over and over, did they ask your forgiveness, did they say they repent, then you're to forgive. Now no doubt they are to bear fruits worthy of repentance, but if they stumble and fall over and over again in the same area and are continually in need of your forgiveness then you're to give it to them. “Well is there a limit to how many times I forgive, I mean how many times am I supposed to forgive someone for the same offense?”

Well Peter let me tell ya, because Jesus taught so much on forgiveness that Peter one day had that same question, and he probably thought that he'd score a couple of extra points with the Lord when he said, *“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, (speaking of the same sin) and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”* Now Peter probably thought that he'd really been growing in grace and was getting a glimpse of the heart of God on forgiveness, because the rabbi's taught the 3 strikes and you're out principal.

So Peter doubled that and then added an extra one just for good measure. and So he was probably expecting a, “Hey, boys did you hear what Peter just said, Peter tell them what you said, you guys listen to this because he's really got a grip.” Because man he could conceive forgiving another man 7 times for the same offense, more than double the religious leaders.

But imagine Peter's embarrassment and lesson in humility when the Lord turned to him and said no Peter, 70x7, it's kind of like that comment that the Lord made to Philip when Philip said to Jesus, "*Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.*" Jesus said to him, "*Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip?*" If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father; the bible says that Jesus, concerning God the Father is the, "*express image of His person.*" Heb 1:3, Col 2:9 says, "*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*"

So the Lord was like Peter, have you been with Me all this time and that's as close as an understanding of My heart concerning forgiveness that you've come, not 7 times Peter, 70 x 7, 490 times. What was Jesus trying to say? Well, one thing I'm certain He wasn't saying and that's that forgiveness is a matter of mathematics, because before you get to 490 odds are you'd lose track and just go on forgiving, and if you keep that meticulous of a record you've got bigger problems than the one who's offending you and you need to repent of such a hardened heart. Because the point wasn't that forgiveness is a matter of mathematics, it's a matter of the heart and we're to have forgiving hearts even as God Himself has a forgiving and merciful heart.

But Jeff I've been wronged, I have a right to be angry, and they don't deserve my forgiveness, and I'm justified in this position, Ok fine, eat yourself up and suffer the ramifications. Sow to that wind and see what type of whirlwind you reap, but just remember those words when you stand before God because guess what? You've wronged Him, He has a right to be angry at you, you've violated Him over and over and over again in the same area and you know that area of your own life, and you've hurt Him, and you don't deserve His forgiveness and He's absolutely justified in that position. But you don't want justice, you want mercy, you want forgiveness, then forgive others even as God in Christ has forgiven you. Imitate that characteristic, He's set the standard, He's been the example in forgiveness, He initiated it, now you respond by doing likewise, as dear children. If you're His child then these are the things that should be permeating out through your life, because even as your children have certain characteristics of yours, certain similitude's to you, even so if you're a child of God, you will have certain likenesses to Him and Paul is saying that forgiveness needs to be one of them. and Here's another, walk in love.

Vs2

So notice that in the 1st 2 vs we have 2 commands, and the standards set before us in each of them as seen in the divine example as to how or to what degree we're to live out those commands. God's forgiveness in the 1st vs and the love of Christ in the 2nd, Paul says *walk* in love, have you noticed that the "walk" of the believer is of key interest to Paul? In vs 1 of ch 4 he tells us that we're to have a worthy walk, in vs 17 of ch 4 that we're no longer to walk as the rest of the world walks, it should be distinguishably different. In Vs 8 of ch 5 we'll see that we're to in light and as children of light, in vs 15 that we're to walk circumspectly, or carefully in wisdom, and here in the vs before us that we're to walk in love. Now again what's meant by that word "walk"?

To keep it simple it speaks of the way that we live our lives, the way that we progress through life. and Here we see that the believer's daily lives are to be lived in such a way that they are characterized in love. and Remember we're speaking of agape' love, sacrificial, giving love, a love not stirred by the object, because then the object would have to be loveable, thank God that His love wasn't looking for loveable objects. Or none of us would have received it, "*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.*" You see it's a love that gives, it's not selfish, it's not meted out by merit, and we'll talk a little more about that in a minute. But we're to walk in this love, which takes us back to that impossible standard we was talking about, because this type of love isn't natural, it's supernatural. It requires that new nature and the continuous power of the Holy Spirit flowing through us by obedience to the word of God. and It's this love that makes vs 1 a reality; you might say that love is the wellspring of forgiveness.

One of the greatest evidences of this type of love in our lives issuing undeserved forgiveness, it was God's love and grace that brought forgiveness to mankind, to the sinful, to the undeserving, to the wretched, rebellious and vile, by sending His only begotten Son to take that sin upon Himself and atone for it through the shedding of His blood upon the altar of the cross. Rom 5:8 "*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

John MacArthur writes, "Because forgiveness is the supreme evidence of God's love, it will also be the most convincing proof of our love. Love will always lead us to forgive others just as love led God in Christ to forgive us. Nothing more clearly discloses a hard, loveless heart than lack of forgiveness. The presence of forgiveness always proves the presence of love, because only love has the motive and power to forgive. The extent of our love is the extent of our ability to forgive."

That's pretty heavy reasoning; think about that, the measure of your love towards an individual is displayed in your ability to forgive that person. and In reality since Christ paid the penalty for every sin, we really have no right to hold someone's sin against them anyway. Do you remember when Paul was writing to Philemon concerning his run away slave that had met Christ through Paul and Paul said to Philemon, "*But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay--not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.*"

The next time someone offends you, or violates me, may God quicken our hearts with this scripture, if they have wronged you, or owe you anything, (Jesus says) put that on My account, because I've already paid for it in full, not to mention you owe Me even your own self besides. Because the depth of our love is displayed in a two-fold manner, #1 by how much we forgive, and #2 in understanding how much we ourselves have been forgiven. Leave the book of Eph and turn with me quickly to the gospel of Luke and allow me to draw your attention to vs 36.

Vs36-47

Now this isn't saying that Simon had less to be forgiven of, it's saying that he had no sense of the enormity of the sin in his own life. He was a religious fellow, went to church every Sunday, figured he lived a pretty good life and so he didn't really sense any need for forgiveness, and therefore as you may have noticed he was unforgiving and unloving himself, concerning others. Especially towards those to whom he considered social and moral outcasts, he had a self-righteous attitude, which by the way is measured by unforgiveness, just as forgiveness is measure in love. and So our ability to love and therefore to forgive others, correlates with the sense that we have of how much God has forgiven us. and Unforgiveness is also to an extent a measure of unbelief, because the person, who feels no need for forgiveness, feels no need for God. He is self-righteous, but the person who sees the magnitude of their own forgiveness by God's love will themselves be forgiving others in that same love. (You see vs 2 as Christ...)

Vs2

Christ is the pattern for Christian living, and it's the type of love that He displayed that we're to have flowing through us, and we see here in this vs as we were speaking a minute ago that His love is both giving and sacrificial. Notice, He has *given* Himself for us, and it was a sacrifice that was pleasing to God. It was sacrificial, that's the type of love that's to be in us; that's agape. You see biblical love is not a pleasant emotional experience or that which makes you feel good about someone, but the giving of oneself for the others welfare, or well-being.

1 John 3:16 says, "*By this we know love, (or this is the demonstration by which we come to understand what true love is) because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" Human love, or the type of love that man produces is conditional, it depends on the merit, or the attractiveness, or the response of the one loved. But divine love is unconditional, it's a love that depends solely and completely on the one who loves and has nothing to do with the one being loved.

That's how God can love Charlie Manson, or all these serial rapists just as equally as He loves you or Billy Graham, because it's not about them, it's about Him. and God is love, and God's love whether it be coming directly from Him or if it's funneled through you loves for the sake of giving and not getting, it's not reciprocal, you know, give and take, it's just give. Jesus didn't just have this warm-fuzzy for mankind, or sacrifice Himself for us because we somehow deserved it, remember it was while we were still in sin that Christ died for us, and it was His sovereign and gracious love that caused Him to take our sin upon Himself and shed His blood for the remission of it.

Now the emotional love or romantic type love between a husband and a wife can swell at times or it can fade at times or there may be a time when you feel as though it's disappeared all together. But loss of emotional or romantic type of love is never justification of the dissolving of a marriage, because as we'll see in a few weeks the type of love that husbands are commanded to love their wives with is agape. Love that's based on a willful choice in and towards your spouse regardless of emotions, attraction, or what's deserved. Love that continues to give even when and if it stops getting, God's love; now where there is this sacrificial love of a willful choice in a marriage relationship, that will usually bring with it the love of intimacy, emotion and friendship as well. But we're to love regardless, you have to begin to invest your treasure into the heart of your spouse and believe me when I tell you that your heart will follow with that. But we'll maybe hit on that more when we get to the 2nd 1/2 of this chapter.

So we're to walk in love, and as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, so we are to give ourselves or lay down our lives for one another. 1 John 4:11 "*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*" If the Lord laid down His life for us, we need to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren, Rom 12:10 says, "*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.*" Gal 5:13-14 says that we're to, "*through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* and

We don't have time to get into this whole "you've got to learn to love yourself" mentality of the world as compared to what the bible says, maybe another time. But you don't need to learn to love yourself, you already do, we need to learn to love others equally, and Jesus raised the standard on that when He said love one another even as I have loved you. By the laying down of His life for us, literally and in the practical manner of laying aside personal wants and ambitions and esteeming others and serving others, not coming to be served but to serve. and He said I have given you an example that you should do to others as I have done to you, Heb 13:16 says, "*do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*" John 13:35 "*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*" Sometimes we get a better understanding of what something is, by gaining an understanding of what it's not and next week we'll see what true love is not and what qualities aren't fitting for the Kingdom.