

# **THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS**

## **(LESSON SEVENTY-EIGHT)**

### **“WALK IN LOVE” (PART 2)**

#### **EPHESIANS 5:1-2**

*1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;*

*2 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 sweetsmelling savour.*

In **Ephesians** chapter **5** and verse **2** Paul writes, “*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 sweetsmelling savour.*”

Last week, when we commenced our examination of this verse, we considered 3 other translations. of this verse. They are as follows:

#### **New English Translation**

*“and live in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.”*

#### **The Living Bible**

*“Be full of love for others, following the example of Christ who loved you and gave himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, for Christ’s love for you was like sweet perfume to him.”*

## **The Message**

*“Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn’t love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.”*

Paul says, “**Walk in love.**” The word “walk,” is a translation of the Greek word **peripateó**: (**per-ee-pat-eh’-o**), which, in this context, means, “to regulate one’s life, or to order one’s behaviour.” The word is in the **present imperative** indicating that Paul is issuing a command, calling on the believers in Ephesus to be constantly regulating their lives within the sphere of the unconditional, sacrificial love of God!

The command is to “**Walk in love.**” The Greek word translated “love” is **agape**, which was the word, chosen by the writers of the New Testament as the distinctive word to be used when speaking of God as love, when speaking of the love with which God loves, and when speaking of the love which the Holy Spirit produces in the heart of the yielded believer.

According to **Romans 5:5**, the “love (**agapé**) of God” has been poured into the heart of every believer through the Holy Spirit! The fact that the **love of God** is poured out within the hearts of believers implies that it is the source of believers’ love **for** God and **for** each other! When this love becomes the deciding factor in our choices, and the motivating power in our actions, we will be “walking in love,” and we will be exemplifying in our lives the self-sacrificial love demonstrated at Calvary and explained in **1 Corinthians** chapter **13**.

Brothers and sisters, what Paul is calling for here is not something that can be accomplished in our own power. This “walking, or living in love,” is not a “**natural**” walk, but a “**supernatural**” walk, enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit. If we are to consistently regulate our lives within the sphere of the unconditional, sacrificial love of God, we must rely on the indwelling Holy Spirit to give us both the **desire** and the **power** to do so (**Philippians 2:12-13**).

If we strive to obey this command in our own strength, we will have to resort to legalism, and legalism is an abomination to God, because it is an attempt to please God by means of the religious activity promoted by the flesh. Legalism is an attempt to accomplish, by human effort, what can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit, and it is therefore guaranteed to fail! In order to “*walk in love,*” it is a necessity in the nature of the case that we abandon “**self-reliance**” and embrace “**Spirit-dependence!**”

The Apostle says, “*Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*”

Brothers and sisters, as we consider the matter of “*walking in love,*” our example is to be the love that our Lord demonstrated on the Cross of Calvary. We must keep the Cross before us and make the “*Calvary love,*” our goal. The Greek word translated “*as*” is **kathós**, a term of comparison, calling for us to ponder what is being compared. Paul’s exhortation is for believers to compare their “*walking in love,*” with the love of Christ for His Church!

Later in this chapter, in verse **25**, Paul wrote, “*Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.*” Here, as in verse **2**, the words “*just as*” are a translation of the Greek word **kathós**.

How can we measure the degree of Christ’s love for us? The answer is found in the phrase, “*and gave himself for us*” (**New English Translation**). The word “*gave,*” is a translation of the Greek word **paradidómi**: (**par-ad-id’-o-mee**), which means, “to hand over, to give or deliver over, to betray.” The basic idea is to give over from one’s hand to someone or something with particular reference to a right or an authority.

This concept is illustrated in the devil’s attempt to tempt our Lord, recorded in **Luke 4:6**: “*And he said to him, ‘To you I will grant this*

whole realm—and the glory that goes along with it, **for it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish.**” (New English Translation). The word “*relinquished*” is a translation of **paradidómi**. The devil was erroneously implying here that God had given him such authority with the additional capability of sharing the honour.

Our Lord “*gave Himself.*” The Greek word translated “*Himself,*” is a reflexive pronoun, emphasizing Christ’s personal involvement. Our Lord was willing to offer Himself for us, and to carry out the action of offering Himself. This truth is sublimely expressed in Paul’s statement in **Galatians 2:20**: “*I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave [paradidómi] himself for me*” (New English Translation).

One commentator has remarked that “all of the essentials of the atonement are found” in the phrase, “*who loved me and gave himself for me*” He goes on to say that Christ’s, “redemptive work is grounded in the love that expressed itself in the cross, the word ‘loved’ being an aorist in tense and referring to the event of the cross as the issue of eternal, electing love...The verb, ‘gave,’ means to hand over, to deliver over... It in this context suggests these important things:

**1** First, His death was voluntary. He gave Himself.

**2** Second, His death was a penal sacrifice, for He had to deliver Himself over to the cross. The aorist of the participle again points to the cross as the event at which the delivering took place. And it was a delivering of Himself over to the divine penalty for sin. He, thus, was a sacrifice.

**3** Third, His death was substitutionary. It was ‘*for me,*’ Paul says, a personal reference that is expanded to all the elect in other places in his writings...The use of the first person here indicates the deep personal feeling with which the apostle writes.”

Our Lord gave Himself, “*for us.*” The Greek word translated “*for,*” is **huper**: (**hoop-er**). **Huper** is the great preposition of substitutionary atonement in the New Testament, and means, “for the sake of, instead of, on behalf of.” In short, this describes Christ’s substitutionary atonement. It does not merely mean that He died for us, i.e. **for** our benefit, but that He died **instead** of us, He died in **our** place. He substituted for us, receiving in Himself the full impact of the divine wrath against sin. Christ died the death that we should have died, so that we can live the abundant and eternal life that He lives!

Brothers and sisters, do we realize what Paul is exhorting those of us who claim to be Christians to do? He is calling on us to demonstrate to our fellow believers the love that Jesus Christ demonstrated on the Cross of Calvary, a love that requires us to give ourselves for our brothers and sisters, taking their place and substituting for them, if it becomes necessary! He is asking us to love each other with a love that may require us to place ourselves in harm’s way!

Is this not what John is saying in **1 John 3:16**? “*We have come to know love by this: that Jesus laid down his life for us; thus **we ought to lay down our lives for our fellow Christians***” (New English Translation).

The following quotation is an excerpt from a footnote in the **New English Translation** in respect of this verse: “From John’s perspective Jesus’ act in giving up his life sacrificially was a voluntary one; Jesus was always completely in control of the situation surrounding his arrest, trials, and crucifixion (see **John 10:18**). There is a parallel with **1 John 2:6**—there, as here, the life of Jesus (during his earthly ministry) becomes **the example** for believers to follow.”

Our Lord commanded His disciples to love each other with this radical love in **John 15:12-13**:

*12 My commandment is this—to love one another just as I have loved you.*

*13 No one has greater love than this—that one lays down his life for his friends.*

**(New English Translation)**

Paul says that Christ’s act of giving Himself for us was, “*a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God*” (**New English Translation**). The word “*offering*” is a translation of the Greek word **prospora**: (**pros-for-ah**’), which literally describes a “*carrying, or bringing to*” and thus pictures a presentation. The word is used by the author of **Hebrews** to refer to the blood offerings of the Levitical system (**Hebrews 10:8**). Our Lord fulfilled these by becoming an offering for sin on the Cross. In the context of **Ephesians 5:2**, **prospora** stands for the thing offered for us, which was the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The offering included Christ’s life as well as His death.

Our Lord’s offering of Himself was a “*sacrificial*” one. The word “*sacrificial*” is a translation of the Greek word **thusia**: (**thoo-see’-ah**), which refers to the killing of a sacrificial victim. Again Paul speaks of Jesus Christ in terms of Old Testament shadows. The animals in the Old Testament which were slain and offered on the Brazen Altar, typified Christ’s once for all perfect sacrifice. He offered Himself as a sacrifice to God in full payment of the debt of sin which we as sinners owed, and which the law demanded.

**F. B. Meyer** wrote, “**Wherever there is true love, there must be giving, and giving to the point of sacrifice. Love is not satisfied with giving trinkets; it must give at the cost of sacrifice.**”

Our Lord’s offering of Himself was not only a “*sacrificial*” one, it was also a “*fragrant*” one. The **King James Version** describes it as, “*a sweetsmelling savour.*” In Greek it is, **osmé euódia**: (**os-may’**) (**yoo-o-dee’-ah**), literally “*an aroma of a sweet smell.*” Yet again Paul speaks of Christ in terms of Old Testament shadows. The following Old Testament passages, all reflecting the rendering of the **New English Translation**, will help us to appreciate this truth:

### **Genesis 8:20-21**

*20 Noah built an altar to the LORD. He then took some of every kind of clean animal and clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

*21 And the LORD smelled the soothing aroma and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, even though the inclination of their minds is evil from childhood on. I will never again destroy everything that lives, as I have just done.*

### **Leviticus 1:5-9**

*5 Then the one presenting the offering must slaughter the bull before the LORD, and the sons of Aaron, the priests, must present the blood and splash the blood against the sides of the altar, which is at the entrance of the Meeting Tent.*

*6 Next, the one presenting the offering must skin the burnt offering and cut it into parts,*

*7 and the sons of Aaron, the priest, must put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire.*

*8 Then the sons of Aaron, the priests, must arrange the parts with the head and the suet on the wood that is in the fire on the altar.*

*9 Finally, the one presenting the offering must wash its entrails and its legs in water and the priest must offer all of it up in smoke on the altar—it is a burnt offering, a gift of a soothing aroma to the LORD.*

### **Leviticus 3:12-16**

*12 “If his offering is a goat he must present it before the LORD,*

*13 lay his hand on its head, and slaughter it before the Meeting Tent, and the sons of Aaron must splash its blood against the altar’s sides.*

*14 Then he must present from it his offering as a gift to the LORD: the fat which covers the entrails and all the fat on the entrails,*

*15 the two kidneys with the fat on their sinews, and the protruding lobe on the liver (which he is to remove along with the kidneys).*

*16 Then the priest must offer them up in smoke on the altar as a food gift for a soothing aroma—all the fat belongs to the LORD.*

The “soothing aroma” offerings spoken of in these passages, prefigure the voluntary character of the sacrifice of Christ, our Great High Priest, which was the ultimate and completely satisfying sacrifice. In the present context, it also points to the sobering reality that our lives should be to God, a “*sacrificial and fragrant offering*” or a *sweet-smelling savour.*”

Commenting on this phrase, the Scottish theologian **William Barclay** made the following observations: “When a sacrifice was offered on an altar, the odor of the burning meat went up to heaven and the god to whom the sacrifice was offered was supposed to feast upon that odor. A sacrifice which had the odor of a sweet savor was specially pleasing and specially acceptable to the god to whom it was offered. Paul takes the old phrase...in the Old Testament and uses it of the sacrifice that Jesus brought to God. The sacrifice of Jesus was well-pleasing to God. What was that sacrifice? It was a life of perfect obedience to God and of perfect love to men, an obedience so absolute and a love so infinite that they accepted the Cross. What Paul says is: ‘Imitate God. And you can do so only by loving men with the same sacrificial love with which Jesus loved them and forgiving them in love as God has done.’”

Brothers and sisters, as God’s dearly loved children we are called upon to a lives of perfect obedience to God perfect love to men!

In **Philippians 4:15-18**, we are given an example of how the life and ministry of believers may be a “*sacrificial and fragrant offering*” to God. The **New English Translation** render the verses as follows:



*15 And as you Philippians know, at the beginning of my gospel ministry, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in this matter of giving and receiving except you alone.*

*16 For even in Thessalonica on more than one occasion you sent something for my need.*

*17 I do not say this because I am seeking a gift. Rather, I seek the credit that abounds to your account.*

*18 For I have received everything, and I have plenty. I have all I need because I received from Epaphroditus what you sent—a **fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, very pleasing to God.***

The American theologian and author, **William MacDonald** noted, “Our love should ascend to the Lord, should flow out to our brethren, and should extend to the unsaved world. Contemplation of His love should also inspire deepest worship. As we fall at His feet, we must say repeatedly:

*How Thou canst love me as Thou dost  
And be the God Thou art  
Is darkness to my intellect  
But sunshine to my heart.”*

I cannot help but think that Paul had the Old Testament sacrifices in mind when he pleaded with the believers in **Romans 12:1-2:**

*1 Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God—which is your reasonable service.*

*2 Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God—what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.*

**(New English Translation)**

Brothers and sisters, we will only “*walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us,*” if we are able to test and approve what is the good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God. But we will only be able to test and approve what the good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God is, when we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. But our minds will only be renewed if we are not conformed to the world. But we will only escape being conformed to the world if we present our bodies as a sacrifice unto God—a living, holy and pleasing sacrifice. But we will only be able to present our bodies as a living holy and pleasing sacrifice unto God, by the mercies of God!

And so, my beloved brothers and sisters, let us be cognizant of the fact that we are what we are, by the grace of God, and it is only by His grace working in us, that we will be enabled to “*walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us*” (**1 Corinthians 15:10**).

We will conclude this Lesson with the words of a hymn written in 1877, by the English Anglican Clergyman, **Godfrey Thring**:

*O God of mercy, God of might,  
In love and pity infinite,  
Teach us, as ever in Thy sight,  
To live our life to Thee.*

*And Thou who cam’st on earth to die,  
That fallen man might live thereby,  
O hear us, for to Thee we cry  
In hope, O Lord, to Thee.*

*Teach us the lesson Thou hast taught,  
To feel for those Thy blood hath bought;  
That every word and deed and thought  
May work a work for Thee.*

*For all are brethren, far and wide,  
Since Thou, O Lord, for all hast died;*

*Then teach us, whatsoe'er betide,  
To love them all in Thee.*

*In sickness, sorrow, want or care,  
Whate'er it be, 'tis ours to share;  
May we, when help is needed, there  
Give help as unto Thee.*

*And may Thy Holy Spirit move  
All those who live, to live in love,  
Till Thou shalt greet in Heaven above  
All those who live to Thee.*