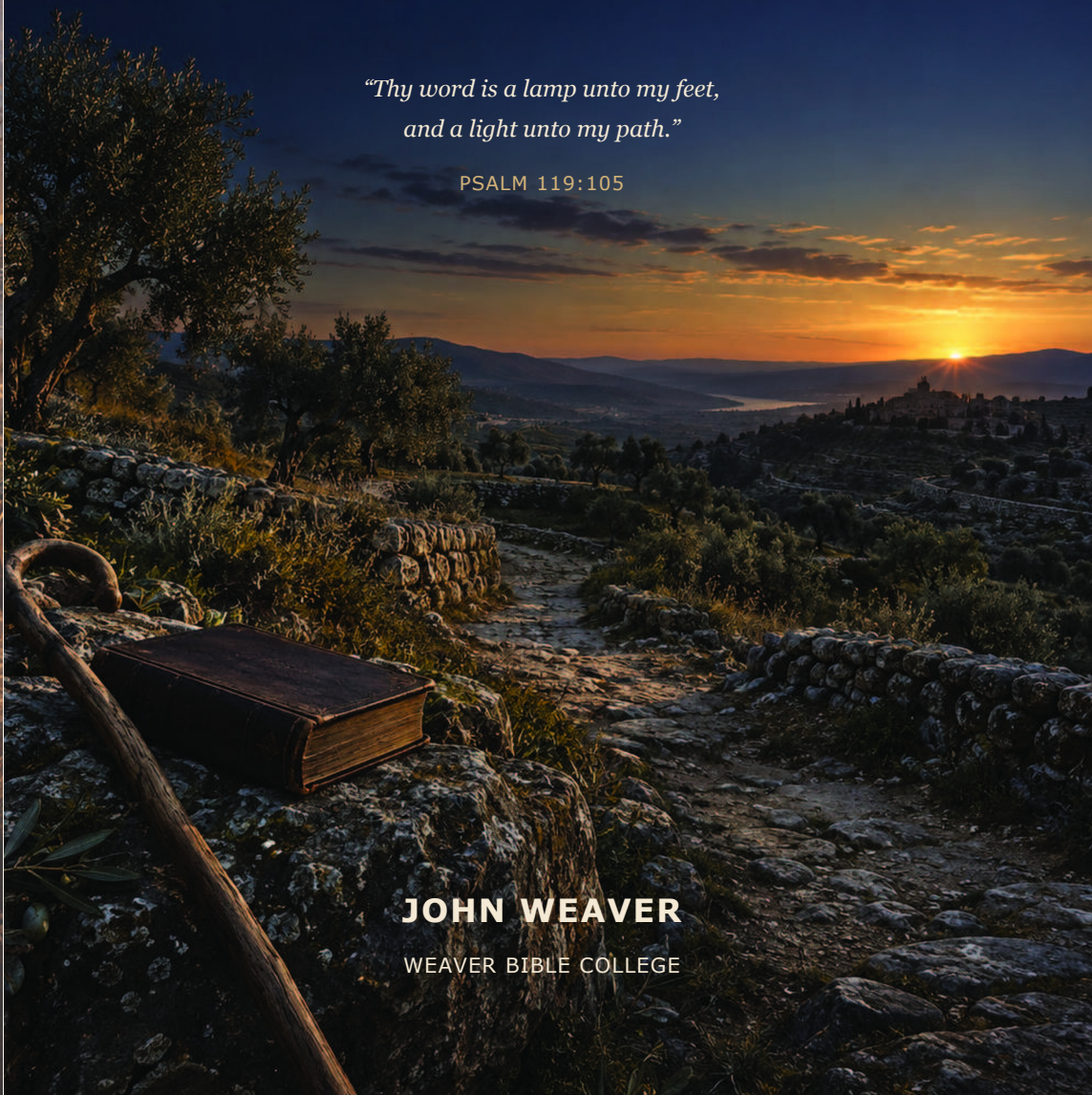
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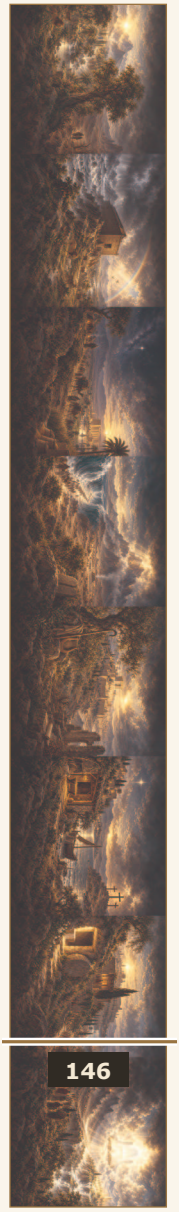
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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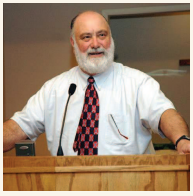
Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

AMOS 3:3

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CHAPTER 1

Walking With God - 1

Walking with the Lord

Introduction: The Question of Walking with the Lord

This is an introductory message to the series titled "Walking with the Lord." We will certainly be more specific as we get into the series.

The Bible says, "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

Walking with the Lord is the duty, obligation, and privilege of every child of God. The question that I must ask you is very simple: Are you walking with the Lord? Do you even know what it means to walk with the Lord? Do you have any idea what walking with the Lord entails and how to go about walking with the Lord? Many disregard and despise this inestimable privilege of communing with the Lord. So you ask, "Well, how in the world do people despise it?"

Sin Separates Us from Walking with God

The answer is simply, by sin. Sin is that which separates. Sin divides. Sin makes it impossible to walk with the Lord. If you look back to Genesis chapter 3 and verse 8, the Bible, speaking of Adam and Eve, says this: "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden."

At this point, Adam and Eve had sinned. They heard the voice of God walking in the garden. They'd previously walked with Him, but now they hide themselves because of their sin. So the implication is that they can no longer walk with Him now because of the sin.

The Bible says in Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." So obviously, sin does divide and sin does cause us to not walk with the Lord.

David said it very plainly in Psalm 66 and verse 18: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” So now we are talking about walking with the Lord. If we walk with Him, we must walk separately from and away from that which is contrary to Him and His law. The Bible tells us very plainly that Enoch walked with the Lord. Now, why do we not walk with the Lord?

Walking Before the Lord: The Prerequisite

I am going to answer that question, and I want you to listen. Why do we not walk with the Lord? The answer is because we do not know what it is to walk with the Lord. One of the reasons we do not walk with the Lord—listen carefully—is because we do not walk before the Lord. Every verse that follows uses the exact same Hebrew word for “before.” In Genesis 17:1, the Bible says, “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.” Notice what He said: “Walk before me.” He did not say, “Walk with me.” He said, “Walk before me, and be thou perfect.” The word is the word panim.

It literally means to walk as in my face, or walk as in my presence. So He tells Abram, “I am the Lord God Almighty. Walk in my presence. Walk as if you are before my face, and be thou perfect.” Walking before God means that Abraham was to walk as if he was in the very presence of God. It means that Abraham was to consciously do that which was pleasing unto the Lord and to abstain from that which was contrary to the Lord.

So let me spell it out. It just means that he was to walk in obedience, holiness, uprightness, and without hypocrisy. It also means that he was to serve the Lord. For instance, in 1 Samuel 2:30, the same exact Hebrew word, panim, is used.

Here is what God said concerning Eli and his house. 1 Samuel 2:30: "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Eli had sinned against God and allowed his sons to sin against God. Yet God said, "I said that your house and the house of your father should walk before me." Eli was a priest. This means they were not only to walk in the presence of God, but also to serve Him. Walking, therefore, has the connotation of serving the Lord as well.

David explained this word to Solomon. In 1 Kings 2:1-4, we read: "Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth. Be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: That the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel."

Here is the expression "walking before God." In 1 Kings 9:4, God confirmed David's interpretation: "And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness,

to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments."

The Meaning of Walking Before the Lord

What does it mean to walk before the Lord? It means that we not only serve Him, but that we walk in His presence and literally obey Him. Second Chronicles 7:17 says, “And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments.” So He said the same thing again.

Think for a moment. To walk before the Lord means that we are to walk in obedience. It means that we are to walk holily. We are to walk and follow His law and serve Him. Ask yourself this question: Why is there so much sin, meanness, wickedness, and rebellion in our society today? What is the answer? The answer is that people do not walk as in the presence of God.

The Consequence of Not Walking Before God

Let me give you a funny illustration, but a true illustration. Mel Trotter was a drunk, and Mel Trotter was saved by the grace of God. The story goes that Mel Trotter had stolen the shoes off of his baby's feet and was taking them to pawn them so he could just get a drink of whiskey. He was passing down the street when he saw that a gospel meeting was going on and heard them singing. The singing caught his attention. Because it was cold outside, he went inside and sat down to listen to the singing. When the singing was over, the preaching started. God opened his ears, God opened his eyes, and God opened his heart, and Mel Trotter was converted.

In fact, he began a rescue mission as well. Mel Trotter became pretty well known for trying to reach other drunks and prostitutes, et cetera. There was a lovers' lane area, and Mel would go down there and preach as these people were parked, committing fornication. He would preach to them. Some of them would drive off, some would laugh at him, and some would ignore him.

But he wondered what he could really do to stop this. So he got a neon sign—this was back in the ’30s—with nothing but a giant

eyeball. Every time it flashed, it said, “Thou God seest me. Thou God seest me. Thou God seest me.” Pretty soon, Lovers’ Lane was devoid of anyone there. This is what it means literally to walk in the presence of God in one sense of the word.

That is, we abstain from sin. When we do not abstain from sin, and when society does not abstain from sin, then, of course, it is because of what the psalmist said in Psalm 36 and verse 1: “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.” So the wicked do not fear God. That is why, in Romans 3 and verse 18, the Apostle Paul says concerning the wicked, “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” If one does not fear God, then obviously he is not going to walk before Him, and he certainly is not going to walk with Him, because sin, therefore, makes it impossible to walk with God.

There is another truth, and I am going to quote this verse a little bit later: if we do not walk before Him, we cannot walk with Him. Amos 3:3 says it like this: “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” We have to understand that wherever there is a positive, there is a negative. Wherever there is a negative, there is also a positive. If we are not walking before the Lord and with the Lord, then the negative is that we are walking contrary to Him and walking against Him.

Walking Contrary to God: Examples from Israel's History

Consider Jeroboam in 1 Kings 15. Jeroboam was a wicked man. He was the man who made the two golden calves—King Jeroboam. The Bible says in 1 Kings 15 and verse 3, “And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father.” Note what it says: “And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father.” If you are not walking with the Lord and before the Lord, you are walking contrary to Him and against Him. This is the truth set before us as we turn to 2 Kings 17.

I want you to understand that this is true not only concerning individuals; it is also concerning nations, society, or people. In 2

Kings chapter 17 and verse 7 we read: “And so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.”

Here are people rejecting all of God’s law and all of His commandments. They are walking in the statutes and laws of pagan, wicked, ungodly kings. Now look at 1 Kings chapter 11, where God divides the kingdom, giving ten tribes to Jeroboam and leaving the rest for Rehoboam. In verse 31, He says: “And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David’s sake, and for Jerusalem’s sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)”

Why is God dividing the kingdom? Why is the kingdom being taken away from Solomon and from Rehoboam his son? Here is why.

"Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father."

If you are not walking with the Lord, if you are not walking before the Lord, you are walking contrary to and against the Lord.

This does not concern only civil rulers or kings. In 2 Kings chapter 17, we find that it concerns entire nations and entire peoples. Israel left God and served as Solomon had done. Verse 18 says, "Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made."

Here we have the southern kingdom doing exactly what the northern kingdom had done, while the northern kingdom had already been taken into captivity. They knew that. The point is very simple: If you are not walking before the Lord, if you are not walking

with the Lord, then obviously you are walking contrary to Him and against Him.

Now, in Genesis chapter 6, verse 9, we will see another aspect of what it literally means to walk with the Lord. Our text is in Genesis 5, and we will return there. The Bible declares that a number of individuals walked with the Lord. Genesis 6:9 says:

Noah and Enoch: Examples of Walking with God

"These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Noah walked with God. My question at the very beginning of this message is: Are you walking with the Lord? Do you know what it means to walk with God? You must walk before Him—that is, as in His presence, as you are before His face—in order to walk with Him. If you do not do that, then you are walking against Him, and you are walking contrary to Him.

The Bible says that Noah walked with God. The Bible also says that he was a just man and perfect in his generations. If you want to know what that means, look in Genesis 7, verse 1: "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."

It is the same exact Hebrew word. "I've seen you living in my presence. I've seen you living before my face." So Noah, like Enoch, was doing that which was lawful, holy, right, and pleasing in the sight of God. He was conforming his life to that which was scriptural and obedient to God.

Now, go back to our text, to Genesis chapter 5. I am going to develop this far more fully. We are going to see this not only in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament as well—not all today, obviously. Notice, in Genesis chapter 5, verse 22, the Bible says, "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters."

Why do you think it is important that God tells us specifically that Enoch walked with God for 300 years after he begat Methuselah and after he begat sons and daughters? There is nothing in the Bible that is extraneous. God puts things there that we need to know. Why

should we know this fact? Because God is telling us that Enoch was a family man. He had a wife and children. Enoch was the father of the long-lived Methuselah, who lived 969 years, and he was also the great-grandfather of Noah.

As a family man, he had to provide for his wife and children. He must educate and train his children. He had all the obligations that every husband and every father had—and still has. And yet he walked with God. The point is this: Enoch never gave the excuse that he was too busy.

There was not enough time. He was a family man with a wife and children, and yet the Bible says he walked with God. Notice what else the Bible tells you in verse 22: "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." Three hundred years is a long time. None of us will make it that long, I can assure you. Why does the Bible tell us that he walked with God for 300 years after he begat sons and daughters? We never read in the Bible about any lapses or failures in Enoch. The Bible is telling us that he was consistent. He was constant.

He did not start and stop. When he walked with God, he began and continued for 300 years, while most of us cannot continue walking with God for a day or a week, or a puny 70 or 80 years. In all his obligations, he was walking before the Lord. While walking before the Lord, he was a husband, a father, working, educating, teaching, and doing everything husbands and fathers needed to do. I believe he learned the principle of 1 Corinthians 10:31: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Enoch was simply consistent and constant.

The Bible says that Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah 300 years and begat sons and daughters: "And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Enoch pleased God, and he walked with God. He lived 365 years, which means that at 65 years of age he started walking with God and did so consistently for 300 years, until God took him. He walked with God as if he and the Lord were walking together along the road, communing, talking, and fellowshipping. I think Enoch might say, "Well, you know,"

The Lord would say something like this: “Well, we’re closer to my house than yours. You just come on and spend a few days with me.” And Enoch says, “Sure.” When he gets there, he finds out that one day with the Lord is a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day. He was not, for God took him. The Lord God said, “Just come on home with me.” It does not say he died. God took him. He just went to be with the Lord, period. I am sure that he would much rather be with the Lord than in a world of sin and misery, that is for sure. But I want you to note something, because we are going to see this all through the Bible.

The Christian Life as a Walk

The Christian life is often referred to as a walk. The word “walk” is used to describe one’s continued course of action and his life. It is his habitual manner of life. Thus the word “walk,” W-A-L-K, is synonymous with lifestyle. It is how one lives.

Walking Implies Communion and Fellowship

Let me give you several things by way of introduction that the word “walk” implies. Keep these in mind as we go through this brief series of seven or eight messages. First of all, walking implies communion and fellowship. Husbands and wives will often take a walk together. Fathers and sons, fathers and daughters, mothers and children will take a walk. Alice and I used to walk regularly. We have not had time to recently. Interestingly enough, when we would walk, we always had company—not only with the dogs, but also, as you remember, our pet pot-bellied pig. She used to walk with us. Pony used to walk with us, following us. It did not matter if we walked one mile or two miles; they were there with us. Whenever you are walking, there is the implication of communion and fellowship.

It is not simply exercise. It is communion and fellowship. The same is true with our walk with the Lord. It is not just that we are exercising in a godly manner; it is indeed that we are fellowshipping and communing with Him.

Now, hold Genesis chapter 5, but turn in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 1. John says this in verse 3: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you,”

“That ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Adam was once our federal head and representative. Everything we had in Adam, we lost. Adam was created in original righteousness, holiness, and knowledge; but when he sinned, we sinned in him. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 that Jesus Christ is the second Adam. As the second Adam, He is our second federal head and representative. Everything that we lost in the first Adam, we gain back, plus more, in the second Adam.

In the first Adam, we were placed on a mutable footing; that is, we could change. That is why Adam sinned. In the second Adam, we are on an immutable footing because now we are seated in Jesus Christ. First John 3, beginning with verse 1, says, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” We are right now the sons of God, and when He appears, we are going to be like Him. In other words, we are on an immutable footing in Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6 says that which He began, He is also going to finish. While we are in Him, we have communion with Him. First John 1:6 says, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” If we say that we have fellowship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ while living in disobedience, sin, and rebellion, John says we are lying and are not doing the truth.

But verse 7 says, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ; therefore, fellowship with the Father and the Son naturally leads to fellowship with the brethren.

As we walk with Him, we are also walking with others who are walking with Him. That is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 9, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship

of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Walking implies fellowship and communion.

Secondly, walking implies purpose. There is usually a reason for taking a walk. Sometimes people walk simply for exercise, and sometimes for fellowship, but there are other purposes as well. There have been times I have asked people to walk with me so I could get them away from everyone else and share something with them. As we walk, we often confide in each other, share secrets with each other, or admonish each other. The Bible says in Psalm 25 and verse 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."

Walking Implies Purpose, Progress, Agreement, and Resolution

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. God reveals things to us as we walk with Him. Proverbs 3 and verse 32 says, "For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous."

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” Those who walk with the Lord, those who are saved, know things that the unsaved do not know and will never know unless they are saved by the grace of God. Moreover, Christians know things that not even angels know. Isn’t that amazing?

Look in 1 Peter 1, beginning with verse 10: “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.” Some of the Old Testament prophets who prophesied concerning Jesus Christ and all of that grace did not understand everything they were prophesying, but they searched diligently to try.

“Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”

Can you imagine that? Angels desire to look into certain things concerning Christ that only Christians know. There was no redemption for angels. You had the elect angels and the non-elect angels: those that were chosen and those that fell. Angels do not understand redemption. They do not understand being saved by grace through faith. Those elect angels who do not understand these things desired to look into them as well.

Obviously, there is a purpose in taking a walk. As we commune with Him, He reveals His secrets to us, teaches us, and we learn more and more. He enlightens us and gives us understanding as we walk with Him.

Thirdly, walking implies progress. One of the most notable things about walking is that you are making progress. You are moving from one point to another. You may also look back and see how far you have traveled or how much you have progressed.

There is not one person in this room who is perfect. I never will be until we get to glory. But one thing we can say is this: Thank God, I am not what I used to be. We can also say, I am not what I should be yet, but I am different today than I was yesterday. I am not what I am yet to be by the grace of God, but thank God I am not what I used to be.

So we can see progress in our lives. Sometimes it may be slow progress, but we can see progress. Sometimes the progress is so slow that we think, “I don't see why so-and-so back there can't see this. I've seen this for years.” Yes, and you've probably been walking for years when he has not been walking for years. We forget how slowly things sometimes transpire in our lives. But there is progress.

That is why the Bible says in Psalm 84 and verse 7, “They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.” Our walk should be continually going upward. Unhappily, many times our walk is up and down, when it should be on a plane. The Bible says in Proverbs 10 and verse 29, “The way of the Lord is strength to the upright.” The more upright we are, the stronger we should be. The Bible says in Habakkuk 3 and verse 19, “The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.” And Romans 1 and

verse 17 says, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.”

Here you may have a little faith, but you are increasing until you have great faith. Then he says, “The just shall live by faith.” The Lord is the strength of our lives. As we walk with Him, our progress in the Christian life should be improving. You cannot walk with the Lord without making progress in your Christian life. It is impossible. If you are not making progress, you are just not walking with the Lord.

Fourthly, walking implies agreement. When we walk with someone, the implication is that there is basic agreement. You remember Amos 3, verse 3: “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” I would never waste my time walking with someone with whom I absolutely disagreed and had nothing in common, unless he was willing to listen as I taught him, preached to him, or told him about the truth of God. Otherwise, I am not going to waste my time. Why? There is nothing in common.

We have no basis of fellowship. There is nothing to commune over or commune with. We are totally, absolutely different. The Bible says in Micah 4:5, "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." They will walk in the name of their god, but we will walk in the name of the one true and living God forever and ever. There is no basis of fellowship between those serving a false god and those serving the truth. If we are walking with the Lord, it implies that we confess, acknowledge, and believe that He is the one true and living God, and that beside Him there is no other.

Moreover, it implies that we agree with Him: that His Word is truth, that He is right, and that we are here to listen, learn, and obey. In Leviticus 18:4, God says, "Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God." In Deuteronomy 10:12, He says, "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?"

If I walk with the Lord, I am saying that I agree with Him concerning everything: my sin, Jesus Christ, the need of repentance,

and everything else. Fifthly, walking implies resolutions. There are times when friends have a disagreement or misunderstanding, and one may say to the other, "Let's take a walk." As they walk, they try to iron out the problem and work it out. The walk becomes an opportunity to discuss the problem; usually, as it is addressed, it leads to a solution and resolution of the conflict.

Our Lord invites us to reason with Him. He gives us a good incentive to reason with Him and work out our problems. He said in Isaiah 1:18-20, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

If I am sinning against God and God says, “Let’s reason together. Let’s think about your sin. Let’s think about what you’re missing by sinning against me. You’re missing forgiveness, you’re missing blessings,” then He also asks us to consider what will happen if we continue to sin against Him. That is pretty powerful reasoning in my book, and I would really like to reason with Him in that way. I understand that He is right, I am wrong, and I need to submit to His divine rationale.

Getting Alone with Jesus for Understanding

Our Lord has been teaching in parables, and Mark 4:33-34 says, “And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.” First, notice that our Lord does indeed give us truth as we are able to hear it. There is a reason why we did not learn certain truth years ago: we were not able to hear it or receive it. In Hebrews 5, the apostle said, “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.” He continued, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” In other

words, you are just not listening. You are dull-witted, hard-headed, and have wax in your ears; you are not able to hear.

Paul said the same thing to the Corinthians: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.” He said, “You’re a bunch of babies. I can’t give you the meat because you’re not able to hear.” Our Lord will speak to us as we are able to hear.

A lot of times you hear things in preaching or see things in reading your Bible that you do not understand. I have actually had people get mad at me over things that I preach. I think, Why should they get mad at me? It is right here in the Word. But they do not understand.

The proper response to not understanding something is not to get angry, go on a rampage, or cuss and fuss. Look at Mark chapter 4 and verse 34: “But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.” If you want to understand something, you need to get alone with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let Him teach you. Let Him open your eyes. He is the only one who can do it anyhow; He is the only one who can give you understanding.

Sometimes the people who get mad are the people who do not even read their Bibles. So here is my question: With whom do you walk? You are walking with someone. Are you walking with the Lord? What is your lifestyle? Walking with the Lord is not a once-a-week thing or a hit-and-miss proposition. It is a daily walking, an hourly walking, sometimes a minute-by-minute and moment-by-moment walking.

Conclusion: A Call to Walk with the Lord Daily

The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 8: “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” We cannot walk with the Lord until we learn to walk before the Lord—that is, as in His presence, before His face.

When you were a child, there were things you would do, but never in front of your parents, because you knew what would happen. If you live as in the presence of God, walk, and obey Him, you will be fearful to violate His law and sin against Him. You cannot walk with God until you learn to walk before Him as in His presence. Enoch walked before God, and he walked with God. Noah walked before God, and he walked with God. Abram walked before God, and he walked with God.

You need to start walking with the Lord. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and truth, and we pray You would help us and enable us to walk with Thee, to learn what it means to walk before Thy face, to honor Thee, to serve Thee, to obey Thee. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Walking With God - 2

Introduction and Review

The title of this brief series is Walking with the Lord. We began last week with an introduction from Genesis chapter 5, and this is the second message. Notice Genesis chapter 5, beginning with verses 22 through 24:

"And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."

Hebrews 11:5 also refers to Enoch: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death and was not found because God had translated him. For before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God." This passage is still in reference to Enoch. Last week we began this series and pointed out the fact that Enoch walked with the Lord.

Of course, so did Abraham and a host of others. The question I asked was simple: Do you walk with the Lord? I pointed out last week how it is impossible to walk with the Lord while one is living in

sin and rebellion. One cannot walk contrary to the Lord and walk with Him at the same time. That is why Amos 3:3 asks the question, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?”

I also pointed out last week that it is impossible to walk with the Lord until we learn to walk before the Lord. In Genesis 17:1, the Bible tells us that the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, “I am the Almighty God. Walk thou before me and be thou perfect.” I went through the Bible and showed you a number of passages where God demanded that we walk before Him. Actually, what it meant to walk before the Lord is to walk before His face, or in His presence.

Let me give you a good, clear illustration of this. In 1 Samuel chapter 15, you remember that God commanded King Saul to slay all the Amalekites. Watch carefully in 1 Samuel chapter 15, verse 1: “And Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel.”

"Now therefore, hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox, sheep, camel, and ass." So God has given Saul a direct order to slay all of the Amalekites.

Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. Yet, as 1 Samuel 15:7-9 says, "And he took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and the fatlings and of the lambs and all that was good and would not utterly destroy them, but everything that was vile and refuse that they destroyed utterly."

Saul violated God's word and commandment. He spared Agag the king and the best of all the other things, and then blamed it on the people when Samuel confronted him. Samuel told him that obedience is far better than sacrifice. But notice what happened to Agag: "Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites."

"And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." Note the words, "before the Lord in Gilgal." He literally hewed Agag in pieces in the presence of the Lord, or in the face of God.

Let me spell it out for you. Samuel did to Agag exactly that which God wanted done to Agag. He did it as an act of worship and as an act of obedience. He did it before the Lord—that is, as unto the Lord, in His face and in His presence. Walking before the Lord means that we must learn to walk in His presence.

Walking before the Lord implies five things. First, the word implies fellowship and communion. Secondly, it implies purpose. When you walk, you walk with a purpose. Thirdly, it implies progress, because when you walk, you move from one place to the other. Fourthly, it implies agreement. Usually two do not walk together except they be agreed. Fifthly, it implies resolution.

If we are going to walk with the Lord, we must walk before Him as well. That means we are to conform our lives and bring our conduct, our actions, and everything into agreement and conformity to His Word, so that we live holily and righteously before Him.

The question must be asked: How do we walk with the Lord? How do we know whether or not we are walking with the Lord? How can I tell whether Tom is walking with the Lord, or whether Robert is walking with the Lord? How do I know if I am walking with the Lord, or if any of the brethren are walking with the Lord?

Look at Hebrews 11:5 concerning Enoch, because we already preached from Genesis chapter 5 last week. We were talking about Enoch walking with the Lord. The Bible says, “By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death and was not found because God had translated him. For before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God.”

We have been commanded by God to walk pleasing unto Him. Colossians 1:10 says, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” According to the Apostle Paul, we are pleasing to

the Lord when we are fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of the Lord.

The Necessity of Faith

A good work is defined by God, not by man. It is God who determines what a good work is. When Paul speaks of the knowledge of God, we must understand that it is, in reality, the most precious thing on earth. The only thing we will take with us when we die is the knowledge of God that we have acquired in this life. That is the only thing we are going to take with us. Therefore, if we are going to walk pleasing unto Him, we must walk in every good work and in knowledge as well.

We must be like David. David was a man after God's own heart. The Bible tells us in Acts 13:22, "And when he had removed him, that is Saul, He raised up David to be their king, to whom also he gave testimony. And said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will."

A man after God's own heart, a man who is walking with God, is a man who is fulfilling the will of God. The question, then, is this: How do I know what the will of God is? The answer is found in 1 John 3:22: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

What is pleasing in God's eyes? Keeping His commandments—keeping His Word, keeping His law. Where, then, do we find the will of God? The will of God is revealed to us in Scripture. If we are going to learn to walk with the Lord, the question must be asked: Where do we begin? I suggest that we begin with the simplest.

Today I am going to deal with the simplest, because I want to show you from the Scripture that it pleases God when we walk by faith. Look in Hebrews 11, and let us read verses 5 and 6, because originally this is the context here of Enoch. Notice verse 5: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death and was not found because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Then we read this: "But

without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." One thing of which we are absolutely certain and dogmatically sure is that faith pleases God. He said it very clearly here in verse 6. You also have to make sure that you understand this verse in its context.

When I say that, I think of an illustration. I have a pastor friend in Indiana named Andrew Green. Andrew had a couple of daughters and three or four sons, and one of his daughters is named Faith—Faith Green. At Bible College, she met her husband, and as they were courting, she told her husband, James, that it was absolutely imperative that he marry her if he was ever going to be faithful to God and please God in the ministry. James said, "How is that?" She said, "Well, the Bible says, 'Without faith, it's impossible to please him.' So you have to marry me." They told Alice and me this as we were eating supper with them. I looked at James and said, "Well now, James, I have one more verse for you since you are now married. The Bible says in Romans 14:23, 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' So you stay with Faith and you'll be all right." Obviously, Faith took that verse out of context.

But the Bible does say that by faith Enoch walked with God, and without faith it is impossible to please him. You see in Hebrews chapter 11 the absolute necessity for faith.

Faith in the Person of God

The first point is this: walking by faith has reference to the person of God. Look in verse 6: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh to God must first believe that He is." It has reference to the person of God. Obviously, if one does not have faith, he will not believe in God, and he will not seek Him or believe that He rewards those that diligently seek Him. This should be the answer why it is impossible without faith to please God, because someone with no faith does not believe in God or His promises. Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 6 also makes exceedingly clear that this faith is not just in any God. This faith is in the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Without faith, one is an unbeliever.

Without faith, one cannot please God. Romans 14, verse 23 says, “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” It is not only impossible to please Him; whatsoever is not of faith is sin. So when someone comes to God without faith, it is sin, rebellion, and wickedness. God is not going to hear, nor is God going to look upon someone who comes to Him without faith. The Bible says in the book of Habakkuk chapter 1 and verse 13, talking about God, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” In other words, God cannot look at, approve, or condone sin and iniquity. So when someone comes to Him without faith, which is sin, God cannot condone or approve that individual. It is by faith that we believe that He is. It is by faith that we believe that He is the great I AM.

He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the beginning and the end. Faith believes in His person. Faith believes that God is who He says He is, that God is as He has revealed Himself in His Scripture, and that God is as He has revealed Himself in every one of His attributes. God is omniscient. God is omnipresent. God is omnipotent. God is eternal. God is immutable. God is infinite. God is glorious. In other words, faith embraces everything that God has revealed concerning Himself. One must believe that He is. One must believe that He is what?

He is the Creator, the Lawgiver, the Judge, the Redeemer, and the Savior. The Bible says in Psalm 14, verse 1, and Psalm 53, verse 1, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”

Whether these verses mean a denial of God's existence or the fool's declaration, “No God for me,” as an act of rebellion, it does not matter which way one interprets them. God says that the man who says this is a fool. Without faith, a man is a fool, because he will either deny God's existence or rebel against God and say, “No God for me.” One may be a theoretical atheist and say there is no God. Another may be a practical atheist who claims to believe there is a God but lives as if there is not. Yet he lives as if there is not a God.

He does not regulate his life according to God's Word; therefore, he is not living by faith. The practical atheist is even worse than the theoretical atheist because he is also a hypocrite. God condemns all who do not honor Him and recognize Him as God. Psalm 10, verse 4, says, “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not

seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." So the wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all of his thoughts.

As a child of God, our minds should be filled with the Word and truth of God, so that we try to think biblically and scripturally. Faith believes in God, but it believes in the God of Scripture—God as He has revealed Himself. God is as He has revealed Himself. After more than fifty years of preaching, I have heard many people say, "Well, I think God is this," or, "I think God…" You can think all you want to, but your thoughts are not divinely inspired, divine revelation, or Scripture. Many people serve a god of their imagination rather than the God of the Bible. Faith does not believe in false gods. Faith does not believe in foreign gods, nor does faith believe in foolish gods—gods of our own imaginations and gods of our own making. Faith does not believe in those gods. Faith believes in the one true and living God. And let me tell you something about God.

He does not need explaining. He does not need excusing. Nor does He need anyone to add to or to take from His Word. He has revealed Himself—fully and freely—in Scripture. That is it; that is who God is.

In Isaiah chapter 44, verse 6, God says, "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." There is no God. The only God that is is the God that has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ.

In Isaiah 44 and verse 8, He says, "Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any."

In Isaiah 45 and verse 5, God says, "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." Note what He says: "I am the Lord and there is none else. There is no God besides me."

If you do not believe in the God of the Bible, then you do not believe in God, for the only God that exists is the God that has revealed Himself in Scripture. Faith, then, has to regard the person of God. Faith believes that God has revealed Himself in three

persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Without faith in the triune God, who is one God but has revealed Himself in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is no salvation.

Salvation originated with the Father, was purchased by the Son, and is applied by the Holy Spirit. All three persons are absolutely essential and necessary in salvation. Faith believes that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Moreover, faith believes that the only way to come to God the Father is through His Son Jesus Christ. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:18, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Our Lord said it plainly in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

When you hear preachers say that there is more than one way of salvation, or that the Jews can be saved one way while everybody else must come through Christ, that is hogwash. That is heresy. There is only one way of salvation, and that is through Jesus Christ. The person who will not come through Jesus Christ will not be saved.

It is just that simple. The Bible says in Hebrews 10, beginning with verse 19, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." We have boldness to come to Him through the blood of Jesus Christ.

If we are going to walk pleasing unto the Lord, we must walk by faith. The Bible says that Enoch pleased God. How did he please Him? By walking with Him by faith. Faith respects, first and foremost, the person of God. Who is God?

Years ago, I was in a pastor's office in Americus, Georgia, talking with him about the doctrine of election. His door was open, and we had been fellowshipping and discussing it for thirty or forty minutes. His secretary was sitting outside at her desk. All of a sudden, she jumped up, ran in, and said to her pastor, visibly upset, "I don't care what the Bible says. I know God is not like that." Her pastor said, "Did you hear what you just said?"

That is exactly the way so many people are. They do not care what the Bible says. They have a figment in their imagination of who God is and what God is like. They are wrong.

The only God that exists is the God of the Bible, and He is exactly as He has revealed Himself in His Word. If you are going to walk with Him, if you are going to walk before Him, you must walk in faith, and faith has reference and recognition to His Person.

Faith in the Promises of God

Secondly, look in Hebrews 11 and verse 6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Faith, then, not only has reference to the Person of God; faith has reference to the promises of God. Why would you diligently seek Him if you do not believe in His Person or in His promises? The word "diligently" means to seek out, to search out, to investigate carefully, to be diligent, to crave, to beseech, and to desire. God says faith has reference not only to His Person, but to His promises. Those who believe those promises diligently crave them and desire them, seek them out, and search them out. They want them.

We recognize that there are so many promises in the Word of God. Since we have faith in the Person of God, we know that God is faithful in fulfilling those promises. In fact, God has given us example after example of that in the Bible. Hebrews chapter 11 is full of people who walked and lived by faith and who had faith in His promises.

I want to give you two illustrations from the life of Abram. Abraham is known as the friend of God, just like Enoch. He walked with God. But particularly, consider his faith in God: his faith in God's Person related to his faith in God's promises. Go back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 17, and begin reading with verse 15, because here God is promising Abram a seed: "And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her."

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

God had promised Abram a son in a set time. Who in our lifetime has ever heard of a hundred-year-old man and a ninety-year-old woman having a baby? Sarah was past childbearing years. Undoubtedly, when Abram heard this, he had to be shocked. John Lee Maddox, who lived in Thomasville, Georgia, was born when his father was seventy-five and his mother was in her sixties. That is the oldest I have ever heard of anyone having a baby. When Abraham hears that Sarah is going to have a baby, he is told that Ishmael might live, but God says, "I'm going to take care of Ishmael. But my covenant is going to be with Isaac."

Romans chapter 4 tells us how Abraham responded to this promise: "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

"And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." Note Abram's attitude as well as his faith. It is fully expressed in this statement: "who against hope believed in hope, that he might

become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be." God had given a promise and His word. Abraham's faith was in that which was spoken: "So shall thy seed be." Simply stated, Abraham believed in the promise of God.

He did not consider his own body now dead or the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not look at the circumstances, the situation, his weakness, his inability, or his helplessness. He looked only at the promise of God. His attitude was this: If God said a 100-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman can have a baby, we can have a baby.

The problem with so many Christians is that we dwell on the circumstances. We look at the situations and surroundings and ask, "How can it be?" Abraham did not do that. He looked at the promise and said, "God said this. This is it. It does not matter about the situation, circumstance, or surroundings. God said this, and this is what it is going to be."

God asked in Jeremiah 32:27, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?"

The answer is absolutely no. God is able to bring all of His promises to pass. Did God give Abraham a son? Yes. When Abraham was one hundred and Sarah was ninety, Isaac was born. If Abraham had not believed in God's person, he would never have believed in God's promise. These two things go together.

Genesis 21 shows the fulfillment and fruition of that promise: "And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him."

Isn't that interesting? God said, "This is what's going to happen," and it happened. This was Abraham's heir, his only child by Sarah. Ishmael had been born by Hagar, but Ishmael was not the covenant seed. So God had fulfilled His promise.

Now look in Genesis chapter 22. Watch carefully, because God was going to further test Abraham's faith: "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said unto him, Behold, here I am." The word "tempt" there means to test or to try. God tested or tried Abraham and said unto him, "Abraham," and he said, "Behold, here I am."

SCRIPTURE READING - Genesis 22:2-13 (KJV)

"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Note, if you would, that phrase, "offer him there for a burnt offering." "And Abraham rose up early in the morning." He didn't sleep in. "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife.

"And they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham.

"And he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and

looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."

Abraham is given a son in his old age, an heir. Then God tells him to take this son and offer him up for sacrifice. Note the perfect image here: Isaac, the son, carried the wood; Abraham, the father, carried the fire and the knife. The father had the wrath, and the son had the sacrifice. Thus it is the wrath of God falling upon the true sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaac went willingly, just like Christ.

Look in verse seven: "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Watch verse eight carefully: "And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." The Bible does not say that God will provide for himself. "God will provide himself." God will give God to be the burnt offering.

When Abraham laid Isaac upon that altar, he was not just going to kill him. God had said, "Take your son and offer him for a burnt offering." After Isaac was slain, his body would have been burned to ashes, because that is what a burnt offering is. Yet notice Abraham's faith. Go back to Genesis 22, verse five: "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." God had already told him to offer his son as a burnt offering, letting his body be consumed. Yet Abraham told his servants, "You wait here, the lad and I are going to go yonder and worship and we're both coming back." How could he say that? Abraham believed the promises of God. He believed that if he slew that son and burned him up in a burnt offering, God would raise him from the dead.

That is not speculation; it is what the Bible says. Hebrews 11:17 declares, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Isaac was therefore a figure, a type.

Isaac was a picture of Jesus Christ. Likewise, Abraham here would have been a picture and type of God the Father. Isaac willingly laid himself upon that altar, just as Jesus Christ willingly gave His life. Abraham believed that, according to God's promise, God would raise Isaac from the dead. The Son who gave His life believed that God would raise Him from the dead. As you read through the Bible, sometimes the resurrection of Christ is attributed to God the Father, sometimes to Christ Himself, and sometimes to the Spirit. This is not surprising, because there is one God who has revealed Himself in three persons.

By faith, when Abraham was tried, he offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Everything was in Isaac: everything—the covenant, his heir, everything. The figure, then, pictures God the Father giving His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Bible says that Abraham received Isaac in a figure; in other words, Isaac was a type of the offering and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Romans 8:32 says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Consider the impact of this fact upon the promises of God. When we comprehend this truth, it should increase our faith and encourage us in seeking the Lord. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" If God has given us His best, His greatest and dearest gift, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, what makes you think He will not fulfill the rest of His promises? If God has given us the greatest, shall He not also give us the least? If you are tempted to think that God might skimp on His promises, or back up and back off from them, consider this: if God the Father was going to skimp, if He was going to back up or back off, surely it would have been when His only begotten Son cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But He didn't skimp, back up, or back off. That's why the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 9, verse 15 says, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." If God was ever going to back off or back out of a

promise, it would have been when His Son was crying. No. Faith has regard to the person of God and the promises of God.

Faith in the Providence of God

"For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." The Bible says that God has magnified His Word above His name, Psalm 138. So if the promises of God ever fail, God is not God.

Very quickly, walking by faith has reference to the providence of God—not only the person and promises of God, but the providence of God. The providence of God is nothing less than the rule of God in time and in history. It is God working out His eternal decree in time and history. We've been taught to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This petition relates directly to the providence of God. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

In Romans 8, 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." We know that there are so many bad things that transpire in life. At least we label them bad simply because we do not understand that they're for our good. God has not promised that everything that happens to us will be good, but He has promised that everything that happens to us, He will work out for our good. It's kind of like Jacob, and I love that passage in Genesis 42 and verse 36.

When Jacob thought Joseph was dead and Simeon was being held in Egypt, his sons told him, “If you don't let Benjamin go back with us, that guy's not going to sell us any more food.” Jacob said, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.” How many of those things were against Jacob? Not one. Joseph's being in Egypt was God's means of saving the entire family. Simeon's imprisonment was merely a ruse to bring Benjamin there, which ultimately would bring Jacob and the entire family down to Egypt. Surely it was bad to think for twenty-two years that your son was dead when he was not. It was bad to think Simeon was a prisoner and might not be released. It was bad to think that if Benjamin went down, he might not return. But

none of it was ultimately bad. All of it was good, and all of it was being worked out for Jacob.

Here is our problem: most of us never look past today. We do not see the future, and we do not wish to see it. We are so interested in the here and now that we are not interested at all in the sweet by and by. We are not generationally oriented as our forefathers were and as the men of Scripture were.

We must rest on this simple truth: if we are going to walk pleasing unto the Lord, we must walk in faith. Walking in faith refers to God's person, God's promise, and God's providence. We must believe that whatever happens to us will ultimately redound for our good and God's glory. Why? Because God is in control. He is sovereign, and He works everything out. Our responsibility is to trust Him, submit to Him, lean upon Him, and have confidence in Him. It is His part to work everything out; we simply need to rest in Him.

The simple truth is that faith pleases God, and we cannot please Him unless we believe in His person, His promises, and His providence. Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Our hope is in Him. Our evidence is in His Word and in His providence. Because besides God, there is none other.

Application and Conclusion

That does not mean that we will not have dark days, difficult and dangerous times, or moments when we cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel. But during those dark and dangerous times, we still must trust in God, in His promises, and in His providence. One of my favorite verses is Isaiah 12:2: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

I taught that verse to our oldest daughter when she was three years old, or before she was three, because she was afraid of the dark. She would get up at night and walk toward the light switch, saying, "I will trust and not be afraid. I will trust and not be afraid," until she found the switch. Then she did not have trust anymore; she

had light. But when it was dark, she would say, "I will trust and not be afraid."

Let me give you one more verse, Isaiah 50:10: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?" If you are walking in darkness and have no light, here is the answer: "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

What that means is this: "Lord, I don't understand. I don't see how you can work this out. I don't see how this is going to redound to your glory for my good, but Lord, I trust you. And in my darkness and in my ignorance, I'm going to lean upon you."

If we are going to walk with the Lord, we must walk in faith, for without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your truth and Your Word. We ask that You would help us to walk before Thee and to walk in faith. May we regard Thy person as Thou has revealed Thyself in the Scripture. May we regard Thy promises, for they are true and faithful. May we regard Thy divine providence, knowing that You work everything out after the counsel of Your own will.

We pray again today for Sis. Father and her surgery this weekend, and for Sis. Brianna and her surgery this week. Lord, let Your hand be upon them. Give the doctors wisdom, and grant divine healing and blessing. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Walking With God - 3

Introduction and Review

In Ephesians 4, we begin with the first seven verses. This is the third message in the series Walking with the Lord. Paul writes: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called, in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all. But in every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Walking with the Lord, we must walk before the Lord and as unto the Lord, and then we will be walking with the Lord. I pointed out how Enoch and Noah and Abraham and a host of others walked with the Lord.

Last week, I dealt with Hebrews 11, verses five and six, where the Bible says, “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see

death and was not found because God had translated him, for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him." So Enoch walked with God and Enoch pleased God, the Bible says. Many people understood, as I pointed out, how Enoch was a family man and had to support all of his children and take care of his wife. And yet the Scripture says he walked with the Lord. Moreover, Enoch was a prophet, and he lived during a very wicked period.

Jude, verses 14 and 15, speaks of Enoch's prophecy: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these things saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Notice the words, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these things saying." Obviously, Enoch was not only a family man; he also lived during a very wicked period of time.

And yet the Scripture tells us that he walked with God. In the first message, I pointed out several general implications of the word walking. First, it implies communion and fellowship. Secondly, it implies purpose; you walk for a purpose. Thirdly, it implies progress. Fourthly, it implies agreement. Fifthly, it implies resolution.

If we are walking with the Lord, we are fellowshipping with Him, purposely seeking His Word and His will, and making progress in our lives by conforming our lives to His Word. We agree with Him that He is right and that He deserves all honor, glory, praise, and worship. We also seek to resolve any conflicts in our lives according to His Word and His will.

In the second message, I pointed out what is probably not only the most obvious but also the most fundamental and practical truth: we must walk by faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Walking by faith has reference, first, to the person of God: we must believe that He is. Secondly, it has reference to the promises of God, believing that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Thirdly, it has reference to the providence of God, because God is the One who orders everything and brings it to pass in our lives. We must trust Him and walk by faith in the daytime and in the nighttime—in fact, all the time. There is no time when we are not to walk by faith.

The Meaning of Walking with God

So what does it mean to walk with God? First of all, it means that the prevailing enmity of a person's heart has been taken away by the Spirit of God. We are sinners, but we are not fighting against God, shaking our fist in His face and telling Him what we are going to do. It means the prevailing enmity has been taken away. And there's no peace between the sinner and God.

Secondly, it means that the person has actually been reconciled to the Father. Thirdly, that person now has an abiding communion with the Father and what the Scripture calls the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. It also implies progress: we are making progress in our Christian life, actually going from faith to faith.

One author said, "To walk with God is to live ever as in his presence, to realize his presence, to abide continually under his eye. To recognize our Father as close by our side is the secret of much peace. We must ever regard Him, not as if He were far away in some inaccessible abode, but nearer to us than our nearest friend. In our chamber, by the wayside, at our work, in our recreation, when mingling with others or all alone, we must see one whom the world sees not. And we must hear a voice that the world hears not."

Another author suggested practical steps for walking with the Lord: "Say nothing that you would not like for God to hear. Do nothing that you would not like for God to see. Write nothing that you would not like for God to read. Go no place where you would not want God to find you. And read no book in which you would not like for God to ask, 'Show me what you're reading.'"

Obviously, if you do that, you are going to be walking with Him. I could add this: never spend your time in such a way that God would have to ask, "What are you doing?" We often say that to our children when we see them doing something, and we do not want God to ask us that. If we live like this, we will be cultivating in our lives what I am calling practical piety as well as practical obedience.

How does one actually begin and continue a walk with God? It must be pointed out that there is far more for the child of God than simply living and dying. The great and wondrous activity of the first Adam was that he walked with God. Our Lord said in John 10:10, "I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly." I'm sure it is stoned upon you because I preached on this before, but we now have more in the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, than we ever had in the first Adam.

Only two Adams have been our federal head and representative. The first Adam brought us down into sin, and the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, delivered us. Scripture says in Psalm 69 concerning Christ, “Then I restored that which I took not away.” Christ actually restored everything that we lost in Adam. Moreover, when He restored it, He placed us on an immutable footing in Himself. In the first Adam, we were mutable; we could fall. In the second Adam, we do not fall—not permanently, totally, or completely, because we are in Him.

In Ephesians 4:23–24, the Bible says, “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Do you remember that Adam was created with righteousness and holiness? Now, in Jesus Christ, the second Adam, we have a higher, greater, and immutable righteousness and holiness. Colossians 3:10 says, “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” The first Adam lost much of the knowledge. In the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, we not only have righteousness and holiness; we now have the knowledge restored by Him.

The apostle Paul begins to teach us how we are to begin and maintain a walk with the Lord. We need to look carefully at how God demands that we please Him as we walk before Him and walk unto

Him. We will be walking with Him, and then we will be pleasing Him as well.

In Colossians 1:10, the Apostle Paul says, "That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." As we walk worthy, we are walking as unto all pleasing, fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

The New Walk in Christ

I want to emphasize one thing before we begin to look at this verse: if we are Christians, we must have, and we will have, a new walk. It is impossible to be a Christian and not have a new walk. I never will forget one time years ago. I had a pastor friend who had a brother who was lost. His brother was an avid hunter, especially a bird hunter. I went to that church and preached the meeting, and God graciously and mercifully saved his brother. After the service that night, everybody was rejoicing, and we went out for something to drink, a piece of pie, or something like that at a local restaurant.

We were sitting at the table, and all of a sudden this new Christian started laughing. No one had said anything funny. I looked at him and said, "What are you laughing at?" He said, "Well, I was just thinking, my bird dogs won't understand a word that I say to them now. I'm going to have to retrain every one of them." What he meant was that he was going to quit his cussing, and they were not going to understand the things that he said. It is impossible to be a Christian and not have a new walk.

The Bible says in Romans 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, or equally as, we should walk in newness of life." Just as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead and gave Him new life, in that sense of the word, even so, equally as, we also are now to walk in newness of life. It is impossible to be a Christian and not have a new walk. How, then, do we begin our walk?

Walking Worthy of Our Calling

The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 1: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.” Note what Paul says: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.” The fact is, the Apostle Paul was a prisoner at the time of his writing the book of Ephesians.

His imprisonment, which many might have supposed would render him more likely to be despised, is here appealed to for a confirmation of his apostolic authority. It was the seal of that embassy by which he had been honored. Whatever belongs to Christ, even though it be despised in the eyes of men, should be viewed by us with the highest regard.

The apostle’s prison cell was more glorious than the most beautiful palatial estate of a king or an emperor. It all depends on whose eyes you are looking through. If we are looking through the spectacles of the Word of God, through the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ, even the most despicable Christian in the most despicable place is to be honored and revered.

Now, here is what Paul is saying: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you’re called.” What is he saying? You have your liberty, and you may walk. I am deprived of my liberty and cannot. If anyone may walk obediently, it is you. You have the liberty and freedom to demonstrate your obedience far more fully than I can demonstrate mine, because I am now confined in a filthy prison cell. It is just that simple. Paul was in bondage and could only exhort.

His submission to Christ is evidenced by his patient suffering. So he writes to the others, saying, You are not suffering. Therefore, you demonstrate your walk by obedience.

Now look back at Colossians 1, and then come back to Ephesians chapter 4. In Colossians 1:10, Paul is praying for the Colossians “that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Note the

words, “that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” Now look at Ephesians 4:1: “I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you’ve been called.” Obviously, the apostle Paul speaks about walking worthy and about walking pleasing to God.

How are we to do that? First of all, compare Colossians 1:10 and Ephesians 4:1. In both passages, the word “worthy” is exactly the same Greek word, axios. It literally means to walk after a godly manner or after a godly sort, to walk in a worthy or suitable manner. You could say, Walk in newness of life; walk evidencing the new life. The word “worthy” in Ephesians 4:1 and in Colossians 1:10 is the same word. Secondly, the word “walk” appears in both passages and is again the same Greek word, peripateo. It literally means to walk around or to walk about. Let me go a little more deeply into what the word means. It means not only to walk around or to walk about, but also to be occupied.

To walk means to regulate one's life, conduct one's life, make use of the opportunities in one's life, and progress. When he says, “Walk in a worthy manner,” he is saying that we are to go about our everyday business and everyday lives after a godly sort, after an obedient sort.

The word “pleasing” literally means having a desire to please. It means not only to please, but to have a desire to please. Do you always do that which is pleasing to the Lord? Only our Lord could say in John 8, “I do always those things which please Him.” We may have the desire to please Him, but we do not always do those things which please Him, nor do we do them in the manner that they should be done.

When He tells us that we are to walk worthy and all-pleasing, walking in a worthy manner means walking in a pleasing manner. How, then, do we walk in a worthy manner which pleases the Lord? In Ephesians chapter four and verse one, he says, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

Understanding Our Calling

We are commanded to walk worthy of a vocation wherewith we are called. Most people today understand “vocation” as a job or what one does to make a living: “My vocation is doctoring,” or “My vocation is preaching.” But the word “vocation” means more than a job or whatever one does. The Greek word for “vocation” here is kleisis, translated as “calling” ten times in our Bibles. Literally, we are to walk worthy of our calling.

In the same verse, “I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,” the word “called” is the Greek verb kaleo, while klesis is a noun. Kaleo simply means, “I call.” If we are going to walk worthy of our calling, or worthy of our vocation, we have to know what our vocation is. We have to know what our calling is.

I want you to hold Ephesians 4. We are coming back there. First, go in your Bibles to Romans 11, because I am going to take you through very quickly and show you a number of these times in Scripture how the word "calling" is used, so that you can see it. Look carefully at what the Bible says about this calling.

If you are going to walk worthy of your calling, you have to know what your calling really is. Romans 11:29 says, "For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance."

This is a very important point to understand. God does not call us by accident. God does not make mistakes. He does not call in error. He does not say, "Oh, I called you and I didn't mean to call you." I have gotten many phone calls from people who did not really intend to call me, especially people who carry their cell phones in their hip pocket. There is a phenomenon called "butt calling," because you sit down on the phone, it matches a button, and it calls a number. I have gotten several of those. It was unintentional, and I understand that. But God does not make a mistake.

When God calls us, He calls us effectually, deliberately, and purposefully, and He is not going to change that call. It is without repentance. He does not change His mind.

What are we talking about? Romans 1:6-7 explains it: "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints. Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Obviously, the word "calling" here refers to salvation. In fact, you could say that the called ones are the elect. They are the saints. They are the Christians. Notice also that he says, "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." A saint is not a dead person who has been beatified by the Roman Catholic Church. A saint is a living person who has been saved by the grace of God.

In 1 Corinthians 1, verses 23–29, the Apostle Paul says, “But we preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block unto the Greeks foolishness.” But “unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Here it is: the called—“unto them which are called both the Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

“For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God had chosen the weak things of the world to confound things which are mighty. And the base things of the world and things which are despised have God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in its presence.”

Notice how the word “calling” here relates to salvation, exactly as it did in Romans 1, verses 6 and 7.

In Ephesians 1, beginning with verse 15, Paul says, “Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention in you of my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of Him.” Watch this: “That the eyes of your understanding be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in

the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe according to the working of His mighty power."

There is the word "calling" again. Paul has commanded us in Ephesians 4, verse 1, to walk worthy of our calling. Here, he prays that believers may know the hope of that calling, the riches of God's inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of His power toward those who believe.

And of course, it relates to salvation. Ephesians 4:4 says, "There is one body and one spirit, even as you're called, in one hope of your calling." Isn't that interesting? There is one hope of your calling.

Paul explains this further in Philippians 3:13–14: "Brethren, I count not myself to apprehend it, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth in those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." So now it is called the high calling.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12, the Apostle Paul says, "Wherefore, also we pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." Again, the calling: God would count them worthy of this calling and fulfill the work of faith with power, so that the name of Jesus Christ would be glorified in them and they in Him.

Paul was in prison when he wrote Ephesians 4, and he was still in prison in 2 Timothy 1. He says, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." God has called us with a holy calling.

Hebrews chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, says, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." It is not only a high calling and a holy calling; it is a heavenly calling. "Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was

faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house." Note that we are partakers of the heavenly calling.

Now turn to 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 10. The apostle admonishes us: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fail." What calling is he talking about? Your salvation. You may ask, "How in the world can I make my election sure? I can't get in God's book of life and see whether or not my name is written there."

If you are sure of your calling, you can be sure of your election, because if you were not the elect, you would not be called. It is just that simple. That is what he means: make your calling and your election sure.

If we put together all of these verses containing the word "calling," we can ascertain what our calling is. It is a calling unto salvation, a heavenly calling, a holy calling, an effectual calling, an individual calling, a saintly calling, and a very practical calling.

The author of the call is God the Father. The person through whom we are called is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the application of that call is done by the Holy Spirit of God. We are to walk worthy of our calling. Our calling is to salvation, to sonhood, to obedience, and to newness of life in Jesus Christ. Our calling is to glorify God, our Heavenly Father, and to walk unto Him as pleasing in His sight. Why? Because He has singled us out and called us to Himself.

In Ephesians chapter 4, verse 1, Paul says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called." What is He beseeching us? That we walk worthy of the salvation which God has bestowed upon us through Jesus Christ.

Walking in Lowliness

So the question has to be asked: How do we walk worthy? How do we walk worthy of that calling? The apostle begins to explain that in verse 2: "with all lowliness and meekness and longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." That is how we walk. Verses 4, 5, and 6 basically help explain verses 1, 2, and 3. We are to walk worthy of the

vocation wherewith we are called; that is, we are to walk worthy of our salvation.

How do we do so? First, if we walk worthy, we must walk in lowliness. What exactly is lowliness? Obviously, walking in lowliness has nothing to do with poor posture or lack of self-respect. The Greek word for lowliness is a compound word which means humility, or having a humble opinion of oneself. Another word is modesty. It literally means a deep sense of one's littleness or smallness, humility or lowliness of mind.

Lowliness is the opposite of pride. Pride, by the way, is a root sin. What is a root sin? A root sin is that which produces a host of offspring, and each one is deadly.

Unhappily, man by nature is not lowly. Man by nature is proud, arrogant, haughty, heady, and high-minded. We're not like our Lord. Our Lord said in Matthew 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. And you shall find rest for your souls." If you will turn very quickly in your Bibles to Philippians, chapter two, you know this passage.

Philippians chapter two gives us a wonderful illustration of our Lord's lowliness. "Let this mind be in you," in other words, think like Christ thought, "which also was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery or something to be seized at to be equal with God," because he was, "but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man. He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death on the cross."

Here Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and God of Gods and Lord of Lords, left his heavenly estate to come down—not just to be made a man, but to be made a servant. The God of glory became a man. The King of Kings, who created everything, was born in a state. He left heaven in order to bring salvation to his people. He suffered and bled and died for our propitiation.

Lowliness is the opposite of pride, arrogance, haughtiness, a spirit of domination, a spirit of manipulation, and a spirit of control. Think about that. Some of the worst sinners in this area happen to be

preachers, though many other people are also big sinners in this, too. It is a very tempting area. Listen carefully: Peter, who was a pastor himself, exhorted other preachers: "The elders which are among you, I exhort." He described himself as an elder, a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

The word "elder" there refers to a pastor. Several different words refer to a pastor: the word "shepherd" really describes his person, the word "elder" refers to his age, and the word "Episkopos" refers to his office. Peter was exhorting the preachers.

"Feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint"—no one has to make you—"but willingly, not for filthy lucre's sake," not just for money, "but of a ready mind"; watch, verse 3: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." It is easy for me to look at Robert and say, "Robert, do this." It is more difficult if I have to live and be an example and say, "Robert, you just follow me. You do as I do. You live as I live." You see what I'm saying?

Here is a very clear instance. Turn to Acts chapter 20. Let me show you another one. This is very important. You might not think so yet, but hang on until I start making the application. Look at Acts chapter 20, verses 18 and 19. The Apostle Paul has met the elders of Ephesus, and he is speaking to them. In fact, let us read verse 17: "And from Miletus, he said the Ephesus is called the elders of the church." So he is meeting with preachers now.

"And when they were come to him, he said unto them, You know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying weight of the Jews, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and taught you publicly and from house to house." Now go back to verse 19: "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind," literally, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind.

Paul's Example of Lowliness

Do not stop and think? Paul was indeed a mighty apostle. God used him to write many books in the Bible. Yet he makes this statement: "serving the Lord with all lowliness or humility of mind." So here is my question: What was the humbling and crushing factor in Paul's spiritual life? What brought him to a lowly estimate of himself? I will tell you. It was his sin and the constant memory of his sin—not just sins in general, but one sin in particular: persecuting the Church of God. He never forgot it till his dying day.

Did God forgive Paul for persecuting the church? Yes. Did God's forgiveness erase the scar and the memory? No. Does God forgive each of us for our sins? Yes. But does that mean we no longer have any scars or memories of our sins? No. All of us have scars, and some are deeper than others. I am going to show you how deeply Paul's scar was in his soul.

Paul, making his defense in Acts 22:4, said, "And I persecuted this way unto the death. Binding and delivering into prisons, both men and women." Here he is confessing and acknowledging that he persecuted Christians unto death, probably more than Stephen. In Acts 26:10-11, he confesses the same thing: "Which thing also did in Jerusalem, in many of the saints that I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them, and I punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even in strange cities."

You want to see Paul's estimation of himself? In 1 Corinthians 15:9 he says, "For I am the least of the apostles that I am not meet to be called an apostle. Because I persecuted the Church of God." He does not say, "Wow, I was supernaturally converted on the way to Damascus," or, "God's using me to write all these books in the Bible and God's using me to reach all these people." He says, "I'm not even worthy to be an apostle. In fact, if you measure the apostles, I'm the least one."

In Galatians 1:13 he says, "For you've heard of my conversation or my conduct, or you could say my walk in times past in the Jews

religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it." Now, how do we walk in lowliness of mind? How did Paul walk in lowliness of mind?

Cultivating a Lowly Mind

If you wish to live a lowly life—not a low life, but a lowly life, one without so much pride, arrogance, and haughtiness, and without seeking control and manipulation of others—you must keep your depravity, rebellion, and sinful disposition and propensity in mind. You must never forget who you were and what you were when God found you and saved you. When you think of your sin and the things you did against Christ and against God's law, remember this: nobody, neither you nor anyone else, deserves to be saved.

Let me show you. In Ephesians chapter 2, Paul is writing to Christians, not unbelievers: “And you,” he says, “hath he quickened who were dead, and trespasses in sins. Wherein, in times past, you walked according to the course of this world.” You lived just like the world lived. “You walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Then he says, “...among whom also we all had our conversation, our conduct, our walk in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

What is Paul reminding us? He is reminding us of what we were without Christ and what we did. It is hard to tell this to a young person; they do not listen. But the sins of your youth—if God saves you, you will live to regret them and wish you had never, ever committed them. Is it not true that if you could go back and live your life over right now, there are many things you would not do and would certainly do differently? And is it not true that there are sins?

There are some things we have forgotten, but there are some we never forget. They remain on our minds, and we remember what we were. If you want to walk with a lowly mind, you have to remember who you are and what you were out of Christ.

Isaiah 51:1 says, “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye

are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." Here is what God is telling us. He is talking about God's people. If you are seeking the Lord, what is His admonition? Remember where you came from and what you were in and of yourself. Remember your depravity, your rebellion, and your sins.

Applications and Conclusion

Now let me make some applications and try to tie this together. We are talking about walking in lowliness. We can only walk worthy as we walk in lowliness. We are admonished in the Bible not to think more highly of ourselves than we should, nor to think more highly of our gifts than we should. Everything that we are and everything that we have, God gave us.

There are many times when we envy other people—not in a bad sense. I had a pastor friend who is now dead. He used to say to me, "I would give anything if I just had your mind and could preach like you and could remember Scripture like you." I would look at him and say, "Brother Max, I would give anything if I just had the heart that you have." There was no way in the world anybody could ever be angry with that man.

He was so loving, kind, and gentle. But you have to properly assess who you are and what you are in Christ, just as you have to properly assess who you were and what you were outside of Christ. The Bible says in Romans 12:3, "For I say through the grace given unto me to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." God says we have to learn not what we were without Christ, but what we are in Christ.

Here is the second application. Each time we remember our sins—and how can we not remember them, especially those that were exceedingly vile or wicked—it should humble us. It should enable us to confess and acknowledge how we have sinned against God, violated His law, and dishonored and displeased Him. At the same time, it should encourage us to thank Him for His forgiveness, His cleansing, and the washing away of our sins.

When we do that, we realize that we have no occasion for pride, arrogance, or haughtiness, because what we were without Christ was doomed and damned. What we are in Christ is only because of His grace and mercy. Everything that I am and everything that I have, He gave me; it is not anything of me. So you walk with a lowly mind when you remember your sins and the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

The third application is this: We have been called out of this world into the kingdom of God. We may be in the world, but we are not of the world; therefore, we must live as children of God. In Colossians 1:12, the Bible says, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light.” We have to thank Him because He has made us suitable to be partakers of the saints of light. If you would learn to do this regularly, it would remind you of your sins and of the grace God has given you.

How did he do that? Look in verse 13: “Who delivered us from the power of darkness and have translated us in the kingdom of his dear Son, and who we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Once you realize who you are and what you are without Christ, and who you are and what you are in Christ, it takes away all the pride and arrogance and enables you to give thanks to the Father through the Son in the Spirit, because salvation is of God alone.

Paul says that if you want to walk worthy unto all pleasing, you must walk in all lowliness. You must know who you are, what you were, who you are, and what you have in Jesus Christ.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee. We thank you for your word and truth. We pray that you would indeed teach us how to walk worthy unto thee, unto all pleasing, that we might be fruitful in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God. Give us, Lord, your grace, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Walking With God - 4

This is the fourth message in this series on walking with the Lord. In the book of Ephesians, chapter four, we begin with verse one: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as you're called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.”

Review of Previous Messages

“But every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Let me review the previous three messages. In the first message, I pointed out how Enoch walked with the Lord, and the Bible says that he pleased the Lord. In that same message, God told Abraham, “Walk thou before me and be thou perfect.” You cannot walk with the Lord until you learn to walk before the Lord. The word “before” there literally means in the face of, or in the presence of, the Lord. In

other words, you are to walk as if you are standing in the very presence of God Himself.

As we walk with the Lord, there are several implications. First, walking implies fellowship and communion. Many times, as you walk with your wife or husband or children, you fellowship and commune with them.

Secondly, it implies agreement as well, for the Scripture says, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Thirdly, it implies purpose. There is a purpose in our walk, and it is not necessarily just for physical exercise. Then there is progress: you move from one place to another. As Scripture says, we go from faith to faith. Finally, there is resolution. If there is a problem, sometimes, many times, as you walk, you work that problem out.

Walking with the Lord also implies that the enmity in an individual's heart has been taken away. In other words, he is no longer fighting with God; he is not at war with God.

Secondly, it means that the person has been reconciled to God the Father. Thirdly, that person now has an abiding communion with the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and, consequently, is making progress in the divine life as well.

In the second message, I moved on to Hebrews 11, verses 5 and 6, where the Bible says, “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, because before this translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” Verse 6 says, “But without faith it's impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is,” and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Walking by faith pleases God. It is absolutely fundamental, basic, and foundational. According to Hebrews 11:6, walking by faith has reference, first, to the person of God: without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must first believe that He is. Secondly, it has reference to the promises of God: He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Thirdly, it has reference to the providence of God, because God overrules everything and works everything out for our good and for His glory.

Last week, I began dealing with the third message on how to walk with the Lord. The Apostle Paul points out in Ephesians 4:1 that, if

we walk pleasing to the Lord, we must walk worthy. I compared Colossians 1:10 and Ephesians 4:1, and called attention again to verse 1: “I therefore the prisoner of the Lord.” Paul was using his imprisonment to demonstrate that he was confined and unable to walk in obedience; all he could do was patiently suffer. But these Ephesians had the ability and opportunity to walk in obedience. Therefore he says, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherever you are called.” We looked at “vocation,” the Greek word “klesis,” meaning calling. The Greek word “called” at the very end of verse 1 is “kaleo,” the verb.

When he tells us that we are to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called, the word “vocation” refers to our salvation. I took you through ten passages in the Bible and showed you how that word was used, and every time it referred basically to our salvation. Therefore, verse 1 tells us to walk worthy of being called unto salvation through Jesus Christ. He then begins to tell us how we are to walk worthily. In verse 2, we have only considered the first part: “with all lowliness.” If we are going to walk worthy, we must walk in lowliness.

The Greek word for lowliness is a compound word that literally means humility, having a humble opinion about oneself, or modesty. It also refers to a deep sense of one's smallness or littleness—humility and lowliness of mind. As I pointed out last week, lowliness is the opposite of pride, arrogance, haughtiness, a spirit of dominion, lordship, and manipulation.

If we truly want to maintain a lowly attitude, the Word of God tells us to consider what we were and what we are by nature, including our desperately depraved condition. We looked at Ephesians 2:1-3, where Paul told us what we were before conversion, and at Isaiah 51:1, where God says, “Hearken unto me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord, look unto the rock from which you were hewn and to the hole of the pit which you were digged.” Remember where you came from; remember what you were.

How can we maintain a proud, arrogant, haughty attitude if we understand that, without the grace of God, we were and are nothing

but ungodly, wicked, perverted sinners? That leaves little room for pride or arrogance. Even the mighty Apostle Paul, in 1 Timothy 1:15, claimed to be the chief of sinners. If you truly have a lowly mind, you would be willing to contend with Paul for that position, thinking that you were the chief of sinners rather than he. Lowliness of mind refers not only to modesty, but to taking an appropriate view of what we were.

If we are going to walk worthy of the Lord, we are to walk in all lowliness and meekness. Paul did not stop with lowliness; he continued by saying that we should walk in meekness. So if we are going to walk worthy of our calling, we must walk in meekness.

Introduction to Meekness

When we use the term "meekness" today, we tend to think of weakness: someone milquetoast, who refuses to stand up for himself, his rights, or others; one who is easily run over and manipulated. Obviously, biblical meekness does not relate to such a twisted, unmanly, unbiblical, and ungodly description.

Our Lord was meek. In fact, He claimed meekness as an attribute. In Matthew 11:29, He said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls." It was prophesied in the Old Testament, and in Matthew 21:5 it was said again, "Tell you the daughter of Zion, behold, thy king cometh unto thee meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

There was no one so meek and holy and mild as Jesus Christ. Yet the Lord Jesus Christ took a scourge of small cords, overthrew the money changers' tables, and drove them out of the temple in John chapter 2. When you think about meekness, do not think about weakness. Our Lord was raised in a carpentry shop and probably worked as a carpenter. You simply do not become weak working as a carpenter. Moreover, our Lord was manly. We could say that He was a man's man.

Biblical Examples of Meekness

A 90-pound weakling, even with a scourge of small cords, is not going to make anyone run from him. When our Lord took that scourge of small cords, He not only had muscle; He had determination behind it. Therefore, those people willingly fled from the temple. Obviously, meekness does not refer to weakness. Our Lord says, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.”

What use is a Christian profession that leaves us without the character of Jesus Christ? The Apostle Paul used the meekness and mildness of Christ as an encouragement. In 2 Corinthians 10:1 he says, "Now I, Paul, myself, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you." Note what he says: "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." We are talking about meekness.

During the days of Moses, Moses was called the meekest man upon the earth. Numbers 12:3 says, "Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."

Consider the meekness of Moses. The meek and mild Moses killed an Egyptian while defending a helpless brother. He faced Pharaoh, all of his magicians, and all the power elite of that day and stood them down. It was Moses, the mild and meek Moses, who pronounced all the plagues upon Egypt. It was the mild and meek Moses who pronounced the death penalty upon Pharaoh and the firstborn of all that he had. It was the mild and meek Moses who got on his knees and said, "Lord, I pray that a new thing will happen. I pray that the earth will open up and Dathan and Abiram and Korah and all that they have will go down alive into the pit."

It was the mild and meek Moses who had to confront and face an irritated and disobedient people for forty years. He did so with grace and strength and determination, yet he was called the meekest man upon the earth. Moses may have been meek, but he was not a pushover. Moses may have been meek, but he was no weakling.

Definition of Meekness

Meekness is neither weakness, meanness, nor a surrender of our rights, nor cowardice. If it is none of these, what is meekness? The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:2 that we are to walk not only in lowliness, but in meekness. How can we walk in meekness if we do not know what it is?

The Greek word for meekness is actually "praotes." It is translated as meekness, but it also has the thought of gentleness in it. Meekness is that excellent disposition of soul which makes men unwilling to provoke others and able not to be easily provoked themselves or offended with their infirmities or weakness. Meekness is opposed to angry resentments and peevishness. It keeps us from having an irritable disposition and attitude, from becoming angry and irritated when someone points out our own weaknesses and sins. Meekness enables us to hold our tongues and our words when we are provoked.

I understand that there is a time when we need to boldly speak. But everyone can testify that there are times when we wish we had not said what we said. We wish we had held our tongue. That is meekness. The Bible says in Proverbs 13:10, "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom."

So then, if Frank wants to rebuke me for my sin or my weakness, if I'm a meek individual, I'm going to accept that rebuke and accept it biblically. But if I'm proud and arrogant, then I'm going to resent it. I'm going to be angry. I'm going to lash back at him. So meekness, then, is that disposition of soul which allows us to receive review, instruction, and training without becoming irritated and offensive ourselves. It also enables us to hold our tongue and to keep our tongue instead of just simply being provoked.

John Gill said it like this: "in the exercise of humility, which shows itself in believers in entertaining and expressing the meanest thoughts of themselves and the best of others, in not envying the gifts and graces of others, but rejoicing at them, and at every increase of them, in a willingness to receive instruction from the meanest or the lowliest saints, in submission to the will of God in all adverse dispensations of providence, and in ascribing all that they

have and are to the grace of God. And so to behave is to walk agreeably to their calling of God and what the consideration of that may engage them to when they serve the lowest state in condition out of which they are called, in which they were before their calling, and that in the effectual calling they have nothing but what they have received and that others are called with the same calling that they are. And to walk humbly before God and man is to walk according to the will of God that calls. And it is walking as Christ walked, who is meek and lowly and is agreeable to the blessed Spirit, one of whose fruits is meekness and what is very ornamental to the saints and is well pleasing in the sight of God."

So John Gill just said exactly what I just said. Meekness is one of the attributes that is to be prevalent in the lives of all the saints of God. I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Titus and then the book of Colossians. We're going to go to the book of Titus first, Titus chapter 3, and then turn back to the book of Colossians 3. Notice Titus 3, verse 2. We can read verse 1 so that you can see. Paul is writing to Titus and he's telling him how to teach the people.

And he says this, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities, to powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." Now watch verse 2, "to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." Notice, "showing all meekness unto all men."

Now, I want you to turn back to the book of Colossians. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. Colossians chapter 3. And I will probably deal with this passage in greater detail in the not too distant future. But notice if you would, Colossians chapter 3, beginning there with verse 12. He says it like this: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another."

"If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you." But notice if you would, he says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind and meekness."

Now, let me point something out. Meekness is not in our flesh by nature. We are not naturally meek people. You strike me, by my nature I want to strike back. You cuss me, by my nature I want to cuss you back. We're talking about the unsaved nature. That's the flesh. That's the natural man. That is what we're talking about. Meekness is not in man naturally. In fact, if you will look in your Bible, since you're close there, to the book of Galatians chapter 5, Galatians chapter 5, and look in verses 22 and 23. Galatians 5, just pointing out the fact now, that meekness is not in man by nature because it is a work of the Spirit of God. It is something, as Paul said in the book of Colossians, that we are to put on.

Meekness as a Fruit of the Spirit

I'll explain that in a couple of weeks. But notice, if you would, in Galatians 5, in verse 22, he says, "But the fruit of the Spirit, this is what the Spirit produces, is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such, there is no law." Now, a meek individual is one that's able to receive rebukes. And I'll point this out a little bit later, he's also able to give rebukes. Meekness enables us to rejoice over the blessings and the gifts of God in the lives of others. For instance, when you stop and think, everyone in this room has their own proper gift from God. Some of these gifts are greater than others, so it just simply means this. If Roy has a gift greater than mine, if I'm a meek individual, I can say, "Bless God for giving Roy that gift." And I'm not envious of it, I'm not covetous of it particularly, I'm just thankful that God indeed did give it to someone.

Meekness allows us to have the basest thoughts of ourselves and the most generous and gracious thoughts of other individuals. Usually, in pride, we lift ourselves up, and in desiring the first place, we tear other people down. A biblically meek person will have low thoughts of himself; he will be modest. But he will also think graciously and kindly of other people.

I have often said that we always talk about this. I can mention John Sutton, my friend who just went home to be with the Lord Friday night. He was a gracious, kind, loving man, one who took adversity with great stride. There were things he went through that

would make the average Christian totally, thoroughly, and completely upset. But as much as I love John and as much as I see the grace of God in his life, one reason I can think so highly of him is that I know my own sins and my own weakness. I do not necessarily know his.

He, in turn, might think the same concerning me because he would know his sins. If you understand meekness, it will allow you to think about other people more generously and graciously as well. In this, we understand God's absolute sovereignty. God gives gifts to men as it pleases Him; that is what the Scripture says. Therefore, I do not have to argue, complain, or bellyache because God has given Frank something. God is sovereign and may give His gifts as He pleases. I do not have Frank's ability in some areas, and Frank may not have mine. I do not have Jim's ability in some areas, and he may not have mine. We have to understand this: every bit of it fits and flows together.

The Bible says in James 1:17, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above. God gives us gifts as pleases Him. That is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12:11, “But all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing severally to every man as he wills.”

Do you know why you have the gifts that God gave you? Because God was pleased to give them to you. Do you know why you do not have certain gifts? Because God was pleased not to give them to you. It is just that simple.

First Peter 4:10 says, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Frank ministered to me last night, and he was not even old. He has a gift that God gave him, and he used it. Whatever God has given you, use that gift to minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. The word “manifold” means variegated, multicolored. In other words, God has given grace and multitudinous gifts to various individuals. It is only as we begin to use those gifts.

Listen very carefully, because here is an area where most Christians have failed and are still failing. If you understand biblical meekness, you will find that biblical meekness enables us to help falling and fallen brethren. Stop and think of all the professing Christians you have known who have fallen by the wayside.

Meekness in Restoring the Fallen

I understand that many of these people were never genuinely converted to begin with. But some were. They have fallen into certain sins. They were tempted in the flesh, tempted with the eyes, and tempted with the pride of life. They have fallen.

Biblical meekness will enable us to minister to those individuals without you and me having what we would call a high and mighty attitude. It will enable us to minister to these individuals without having an "I told you so" attitude. It will allow us to minister to them without having an "If I had been in your place, I wouldn't have done that" attitude. This is still part of explaining biblical meekness. Consider Job 16 first, and then Galatians chapter 6.

Everybody knows the story of Job. Job's three friends had come around, and, of course, a lot of things they said happened to be true. They just did not apply to Job. Notice what Job said to his friends: "Then Job answered and said, I have heard many such things."

"Miserable comforters are you all? You're not worth a hill of beans. Shall vain words have an end?" In other words, won't you ever stop talking? "Or what emboldens thee that thou answerest?" Why are you answering? Look what he says in verse 4: "I could also speak as you do. If your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you and shake my head at you." Isn't that something?

Do you hear what he just said? He says, you're blowing a bunch of hot air at me. You're saying things that may be true in some areas, but they do not apply to me, and you are making matters worse. You are not giving me any comfort. You are not giving me any consolation. He said, I tell you what, I could be in this. I could say the same thing if your soul was in my soul.

How would you like that? How would you like me to tell you these same things if you were in my place?

Galatians 6:1-5 says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, that is, he's fallen, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.”

Meekness will enable us not to become an unnecessary burden upon others. As much as is humanly possible, we bear our own load. When we are weak and need help, we first go to our Heavenly Father.

Paul said in Romans 12:3, “For I say through the grace of God given to me, unto every man that is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think soberly according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

Meekness allows us not to become haughty, to take a haughty attitude, to speak proudly, or to indicate to the fallen brother that we would never committed the same sin that he committed if we were in his stead. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness,” considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

The only reason we have not fallen is because of the grace of God. If it was not for the sovereign power and grace of God, we would be in the same fix that the fallen brother is in. That is why we are to seek to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. When we come around with a haughty attitude, an “I told you so” attitude, or an “I would have never done that” attitude, we are not going to help anybody who is falling.

We must confess that only the grace of God has kept us from falling into the same identical sin. We are still flesh and blood and still easily tempted. So if we really want to help fallen individuals, fallen Christians, we must have a meek spirit. This is especially important for any preacher, teacher, or anyone trying to help their own children.

Second Timothy, chapter 2, verse 24, speaks of the servant of the Lord, or the pastor, or really any Christian in one sense of the word: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” Then verse 25 says, “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who were taken captive by him at his will.”

Meekness in Instructing Opponents

After telling us that the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, and patient, Paul says he must instruct “in meekness” those “that oppose themselves.” Have you ever asked yourself this question: How do men oppose themselves? The answer is by holding to error and refusing truth.

Many, in pride, think that they already know what is real and true, when in reality they know nothing. The Bible says in Galatians 6:4, “For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth his own self.” When a man thinks he knows something and does not really know it, he is still deceiving his own self.

Meekness will allow us not to become angry with such persons immediately and denounce them as heretics simply because they will not listen. It will allow us not to hold them up to public reproach and scorn, but to set about the business of patiently teaching them.

The grand error of such people is that they are ignorant of truth. Our business is to calmly show them the truth. If they get angry, we cannot be angry. If they oppose the truth, we must still calmly demonstrate and teach the truth. We may pity them, but we may not use hard words, denunciations, or ridicule against them.

Have you ever stopped to think about this? Every one of us has been in arguments, sometimes theological arguments. Have you ever noticed that the more you denounce someone, mock them, scorn them, and ridicule them, the harder and firmer they become in their own stance? That is human nature. Fallen man by nature stiffens up in rebellion, and his attitude is, “I’ll show you. You won’t teach me a

thing." This is why the Bible says, "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."

How many of you received truth the very first time you ever heard it? The truth is that you had to hear it over and over and over until God sovereignly opened your eyes. This is why I am saying, "in meekness instructing those that oppose the truth."

Lowliness and meekness are essential to being taught and led. Stop and think about this. A strong-minded, arrogant, proud, haughty individual cannot be taught, nor can he be led. Why? Because he thinks he knows it all. "You can't teach me." They already know it; that is their attitude. "I don't care what you say; my mind is made up." A proud, haughty person refuses to listen; his mind is made up beforehand. It is only the meek that God teaches, and that our Lord leads.

Psalm 25:9 says, "The meek will he guide in judgment and the meek will he teach his way." He is not going to teach the proud, the haughty, and the arrogant. No, it is the meek whom He will guide in judgment and teach His way.

The meek and lowly are ready to be led and ready to be taught. Look in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 10. We are coming back to Psalm 25, but look in Jeremiah chapter 10 and verse 23. The meek man understands this truth. The meek and lowly are ready to be led and ready to be taught. Why?

A meek and lowly man recognizes his needs. A proud, haughty man will not. Notice in Jeremiah chapter 10 and verse 23 what a meek and lowly man recognizes: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." If I know that, if I know it is not in man to direct myself, what am I going to do? I am going to ask the Lord to lead me. I am going to ask the Lord to guide me.

Psalm 76:9 says, "When God arose to judgment to save all the meek of the earth." Isn't that amazing? God saves the meek. Psalm 147:6 says, "The Lord lifted up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground." If you want to be lifted up, then, of course, you have to be meek. Psalm 149:4 says, "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." Wow.

Do you remember that passage in Luke 18, where our Lord is talking about two men who went to the temple to pray? One was a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: "I thank thee, Lord, that I'm not as other men are. I'm different. Lord, I tithe. I pray. I fast. I'm just thankful I'm not as other men are." The old publican smote himself on the breast, would not even lift his eyes toward heaven, and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Our Lord said, "Verily, that man went down to his house justified"—the one who said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." The Lord said he did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

David said in Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken heart: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Before making some applications, I want to give you a picture of biblical meekness that I trust will stick in your mind. Turn to Matthew 11.

Our Lord pronounced a blessing upon the meek of the earth. In Matthew 5 and verse 5, He said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Now, I want to tell you again what meekness does not mean. I read this years ago in one of Rushdoony's books. Rushdoony had talked about the fact that he had gone into a restroom, and someone had written on the bathroom wall, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Someone came along and wrote right under it, "If that's all right."

Do you see the concept of meekness they had? Well, well, we'll do it if everything's all right, if nobody opposes. In other words, their understanding of a meek individual was a weak individual and a milquetoast individual. It was David who said in Psalm 37 verse 11, "But the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

The Yoke of Christ as a Picture of Meekness

So the question is, who are the meek? I want you to look at Matthew 11 and begin reading at verse 28. You already know this passage, but

watch it carefully. Our Lord says, "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Now, look at verse 29 again: "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." Then He says in verse 30, "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Now, here's what I want you to consider. Consider for a moment that a yoke is for discipline and training. The Bible says in 1st Timothy 6 and verse 1 that servants are to be under a yoke. In 1st Kings 12 and verse 10, subjects are said to be under a yoke. But have you ever really considered the usage of a yoke? In fact, the yoke is used to train oxen. So how do you train an ox to pull or to plow? Here's the answer.

You take a young ox and yoke him with an older, experienced ox. The yoke fits tightly around the neck and shoulders of the older ox. The younger ox, inexperienced, merely has his head in the yoke, and it is very loose. When the plowing and pulling are accomplished, all the young ox is really doing is walking alongside the older ox. All of the burden, weight, and work are on the older ox. The younger ox is just being broken to yoke. That is all. So our Lord says, “Take my yoke upon you.”

“And learn of me, I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls.” Then He makes this statement: “For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” How could it be easy? Because our Lord has already done all the work, and He is doing all the work. He is now in heaven interceding for us. Our part is merely to submit, to be disciplined, to be trained, to be His subjects and His servants.

When He said, “Take my yoke upon you,” it is like my three-thousand-pound bull, with all that strength. You would not believe the strength in his neck. I cannot do a thing with him except pet him and love him. But if he were broken to yoke, he would pull plows, tractors, and trucks out of the mud. He could do anything with all that strength.

Our part is to be disciplined and trained. Meekness is nothing less and nothing more than disciplined strength under Jesus Christ. We

are under His direction and authority. Our lives are controlled by Him; we move at His command, and our attitudes are formed by His authority. In Him we live and move and have our being. He is our all in all.

If I become angry, I am to become righteously angry at His command and His Word. If I become submissive, I am to become submissive at His command and His Word. If I am to defend, I am to defend at His command and His Word. He controls my life. I bear His yoke; I am under His control.

When we walk worthy of our calling, we walk in lowliness and meekness. Meekness is disciplined strength under Christ. We are broken to yoke, and we plow at His pleasure and at His command.

Applications of Meekness

Now let me make a couple of applications. First, meekness and lowliness are perfectly tempered in Jesus Christ. You must remember that Jesus Christ is our life, our model, and our example. We must bear His yoke and plow the path that He plowed. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:23 concerning Christ, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judged him righteously." That is meekness. When He was reviled, He did not revile back. When He suffered, He did not threaten. He simply bore it. It was disciplined strength under God.

The second application is this: lowliness and meekness bring joy to one's life according to the Word of God. Psalm 22:26 says, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live forever." Notice, "the meek shall eat and be satisfied." Isaiah 29:19 says, "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

Here is a third application. Think about this meekness. It is not only an attribute produced by the Holy Spirit, a fruit of the Spirit; meekness is also an attribute, characteristic, and disposition to be sought after. I will explain.

In Colossians 3, Paul says, "Put on therefore as the elect of God, bowels of mercy and meekness," etc. But in Zephaniah 2:3, the Bible says, "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment. Seek righteousness. Seek meekness." So we've been commanded to seek after meekness. We must seek the Holy Spirit to produce that in our life.

May I remind you about a beautiful wife and what the Scripture says? In 1 Peter 3:4, the Bible is talking about a beautiful wife, and it says, "But let it be the hidden man of the heart and that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is a great price." If you read the preceding verses, the Bible says the woman's beauty is not to be in her ornaments or in her attire. It's to be in that meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is a great price.

Meekness is not weakness. Meekness is not cowardice. Meekness is not an inability to defend ourselves or our rights or others. Meekness is disciplined strength under Jesus Christ. We are bought with a price. We are not our own. Therefore, we are to glorify Him in our bodies and in our spirits, which are His. How do you walk with the Lord? You walk in faith, and you're learning to walk worthy of your calling in lowliness and meekness.

This is what God demands of each child of God if we're to walk pleasing in His sight. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your love. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. We acknowledge, Lord, that Thou art God, and besides Thee, there is none other. Without Thee, Lord, we are absolutely helpless and hopeless and useless. Thou art our strength. Thou art our life. May we be broken to yoke. May we honor Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Walking With God - 5

Introduction and Review

Ephesians 4, verses 1 through 7, says: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness, and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

This is part five in the series on walking with the Lord. In the very first message, I pointed out that you cannot walk with the Lord until you learn to walk before the Lord. That is exactly what God told Abram in Genesis 17: “Walk now before me, and be thou perfect.” Walking before the Lord means that we are walking before His face, or literally in His presence. It means living and moving before Him. I also told you there were five implications of the word walking: communion and fellowship, agreement, purpose, progress, and resolution.

Then we looked at Hebrews 11, verses 5 and 6, continuing our study there with Enoch. We considered walking by faith. The Scripture says very clearly in Hebrews 11, verse 6, “But without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Walking by faith refers to and implies belief in the person of God: we must believe that He is. It also implies belief in the promises of God, that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Overall, it rests in the providence of God, because it is God who brings everything to pass and works it out for our good and for His glory.

In the third message, I began looking at Ephesians chapter four, where the Apostle Paul says, “I beseech you, therefore, as a prisoner of the Lord, that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you've been called.” In the last three messages, I have been dealing with simply walking worthy. When the Apostle Paul says, “Walk worthy of the vocation,” he is actually saying, walk worthy of the salvation under which you have been called. The word calling occurs ten times in the New Testament, and each time it refers to salvation.

We began to look at how we are to walk worthy. In verse two, we looked at “all lowliness,” and I spent an entire message dealing with lowliness. The word lowliness literally means walking in humility, walking with a humble mind, walking with modesty, or walking with a sense of one's smallness, littleness, or lowliness of mind. Lowliness is the opposite of pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. It is also the opposite of a spirit of domination, lordship, and manipulation.

If you and I are indeed to walk lowly, then we have to remember what we were and what God brought us from. We looked at Ephesians chapter two, verses one through three. We also looked at Isaiah 51 in verse one, where God says, “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord, look unto the rock from which you were hewn and to the hole of the pit which you were digged.” If you understand what you were when God found you and what God brought you out of, there is obviously no reason for pride, arrogance, or haughtiness.

Even the Apostle Paul, in 1 Timothy 1, verse 15, described himself as the chief of sinners. Each one of us, if we are walking with a lowly mind, would be ready to thank Paul for that position.

Walking worthy also includes walking with meekness. In verse two, he says, “Walk with all lowliness and meekness.” Meekness is not weakness, merely poor posture, or a denial of our rights. Meekness literally refers to disciplined strength under Christ. It refers to those who have been broken to yoke.

When we get angry, righteously so, we get angry at our Lord's command. When we are submissive, we get submissive at our Lord's command. In other words, we've been broken to yoke. It is kind of like when I was a boy plowing mules: it was Gee and Haw. When you hollered Gee, the old mule knew which way to go; when you hollered Haw, the old mule knew which way to go. So when we're broken to yoke, when we're wearing the yoke of Jesus Christ, when He commands us, that is when we move. It is not that we're weak. It is disciplined strength under Christ. He controls us. We wear His yoke.

Walking with Longsuffering

The apostle tells us to walk worthy, and he tells us how to do that. He says we are to walk with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If we are to walk worthy of our calling, we must walk with longsuffering. This is the third matter in the apostle's description of how we are to walk worthy unto the Lord.

Longsuffering is derived from a very interesting word. The Greek word is makrothumia. It is translated in our Bibles as longsuffering twelve times and as patience two times. The word longsuffering refers to patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance, and forbearance. It means slowness in avenging oneself. It is not merely enduring a difficulty for a moment; it is continuing in patience and forbearance. It is the steadfastness and perseverance required to refrain from avenging oneself. Thus, longsuffering belongs to the worthy walk commanded by the Lord.

Longsuffering is restraint—the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate when one is wrong. It is an attribute that does not easily or quickly turn to wrath and revenge. Longsuffering means that you never permit a test, trial, or provocation to get you to the end of your patience.

John Gill said, "With longsuffering, bearing much and long with the infirmities of each other, without being easily provoked to anger by any ill usage, and not immediately meditating and seeking revenge for every affront given or injury done, and so to walk is to walk worthy of the grace of calling, or agreeable to it, to God that calls by His grace, who is longsuffering both with wicked men and with His own people." Longsuffering literally means bearing much and long with the infirmities of each other and not being easily provoked to anger by any ill usage.

I especially like this phrase: "and not immediately meditating and seeking revenge for every affront given." That means when Ron says something to me, I do not immediately start saying, "Lord, how can I get him back?" We used to do that as kids. No, that is not longsuffering.

In 2 Corinthians 6, beginning in verse 3, the Apostle Paul says, "Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed." Then, in verse 6, he says, "But in all things, approving ourselves as the ministers of God in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings by pureness." He continues, "By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned." He points out giving no offense in anything, that the ministry may be blamed in that sense, with longsuffering. So here is the question.

Since God has commanded us now to walk with all lowliness, meekness, and longsuffering, from where are we to learn longsuffering? How should this affect us? And how may we apply it to our lives? I believe that you will be able to comprehend the answers to those questions by considering a simple question. Answer it in your minds, not out loud: which one of you would have desired for God to slap you down, to run you over, and even destroy you for the very first sin that you committed? How many would be willing

for God to do that for the second sin? How about the third sin, the fourth sin, or the fifth sin?

Some of us are slow learners, are we not? We can go to the thousands and the millions. God has allowed us to live. I know the answer, and you know the answer: if our Heavenly Father was not longsuffering, none of us would be here today. We would have been dead a long time ago. That is how we learn longsuffering, and that is how it is to affect and apply to our lives.

That is why the Bible says in Romans 2 and verse 4, "...or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." God did not instantly smite us and slap us down when we first sinned and rebelled against Him. He did not do it the second time, the third time, the hundredth, the thousandth, or the millionth time. He allowed us to live.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

I could show you how God was longsuffering with Israel. How many times did they provoke Him just in the wilderness? Look at the longsuffering of God with the heathen. He allowed the Amorites to live an additional 400 years while Israel was in Egypt. I could show you in Scripture how God has been longsuffering with us. But I want to show you from Scripture that God not only expects, but demands, that we be longsuffering with each other. Hold Ephesians 4, but look in your Bibles to Matthew 18. Look at Matthew 18, beginning with verse 21. I think you will understand the implication of longsuffering here.

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 18:21-35 (KJV)

> Matthew 18:21: "Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until 70 times seven." Well, that doesn't mean that your patience ends at 490 times, but our Lord is using this as saying you don't run out.
>
> "Therefore, is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants? And when he

had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents, which would be millions and millions. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had in payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence, which is just a few cents. And he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down on his feet and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry and came and told unto their Lord all that was done. Then his Lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses." Wow.

The principle enunciated from this passage is exceedingly plain: "Freely you have received, freely give." God has been merciful, patient, and longsuffering with us. Therefore, He expects us to be merciful, patient, and longsuffering with others. God did not instantly smite us; God did not instantly destroy us. Likewise, we are not to instantly destroy others.

Walking in Forbearance

Galatians 6:10 says, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them which are of the household of faith." God tells us that, as we have opportunity, we are to do good

unto all, but we have a special obligation to do good to those who are of the household of faith. If we are to walk worthy of our calling, we must walk not only with lowliness and meekness, but also with longsuffering. Ephesians 4:2 continues, “Forbearing one another in love.” Fourth, then, if we are to walk worthy of our calling, we must walk in forbearance.

Longsuffering and forbearance are intimately connected. The Greek word for forbearance here is anechomai, which literally means to suffer, to bear with, to forbear, to endure, to hold up, and to sustain.

Once you study Scripture, you will find that the Bible usually divides Christians into several groups. There are weak brethren and strong brethren, and, since there are weak and strong, there must be some in between as well, progressing from one to the other. We could say it this way: John said in First John, chapter two, that there are babes in Christ, young men, and fathers. You do not expect a baby to act like a young man, nor do you expect a young man to act like a father. Each has its own set of characteristics and attributes. In Romans chapter 14 and 1 Corinthians chapter 8, God speaks of weak brethren and strong brethren as well. These passages show that Christians are not all at the same stage of spiritual growth, and that such differences require patience, endurance, and forbearance toward one another.

There is a problem between the strong brethren and the weaker brethren—in other words, between a mature believer and an immature believer. What is the problem? Romans chapter 14 tells us that it is the tendency of the weaker brother to judge the stronger brother. Their attitude is, “How can you do this? How can you say that? Why are you doing this?” In other words, you should not be doing this. They are judging and passing judgment on something they do not understand.

The tendency of the stronger brother is to disdain and despise the weaker brother. The tendency is to become impatient, cut him off, or be sharp with the weaker brother. We disdain them because of their weakness and because of their lack of understanding. Have you ever despised a weaker brother? Have you ever disdained someone and thought they were absolutely silly because they have no

understanding? They do not have the knowledge that you have. They do not have the maturity that you have.

Have you ever noticed this? If you have more than one child—an older child, perhaps a couple in the middle, and then a younger child—have you noticed that the older children usually do not even want to play with the younger child? Why? Because the other child is a baby, and they have matured. They have gotten out of playing baby dolls. It is the same thing in the spiritual realm, where a mature or stronger Christian does not willingly and readily want to put up with a weaker brother.

Teaching is one thing. Arguing, disdaining, and cutting someone off is quite another thing. Romans 14 gives the exact problem that has just been described: "Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things, another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him." The tendency of the weaker brother is to judge, and the tendency of the stronger brother is to despise.

When we run across a weaker brother, a babe in Christ, or, if we are fathers, young men, it would help us to remember that we were not always mature, strong, or fathers. We were in the same position they were in, and someone was longsuffering and had forbearance with us. It is the same principle.

Matthew Henry says, "Forbearing one another in love signifies bearing their infirmities out of a principle of love and so not as to cease to love them on account of these, that is their infirmities. The best Christians have need to bear one with another and to make the best of one another to provoke one another's graces and not their passions. We find much in ourselves, which is hard to forgive ourselves, and therefore we must not think it much if we find that in others, which we think hard to forgive them. And yet we must forgive them as we forgive ourselves."

When you see a young Christian who is proud and headstrong, who thinks he has the world by the tail and knows everything, and who impresses you as a know-it-all, stop and think back. Remember

when you were just as immature, ignorant, and impulsive, with far more zeal than knowledge.

Endeavoring to Keep Unity

I have had young Christians try to correct me theologically, though they had never even read their Bibles through one time. I have had young preachers try to correct and argue with me. I simply keep showing Scripture, verse by verse and in context. They cannot think things through because they are children—children in the faith. I am not beyond correction; if I am wrong, I want to be corrected. But I want to be corrected by someone who can take the Scripture and show me, verse by verse and in context, where I am wrong. Do not merely tell me I am wrong because your papa said this twenty years ago, or because you heard some preacher say it when you were a child. I want to see it from the Scripture.

The Apostle is telling us that if we are going to walk worthy of His calling, we are to walk in all lowliness and meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another in love. Here is the question: Why?

The Apostle Paul says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness and longsuffering, forbearing one another in love," endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Notice something very important in verse 3. It says, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit." It does not say endeavoring to make the unity of the Spirit. Only God can give unity, and that unity is based upon our common salvation, the salvation that each saint possesses. If we are to walk worthy of our calling, it is our duty, obligation, responsibility, and privilege to endeavor to keep that unity.

The Greek word is spoudazo, and it literally means to endeavor, to be diligent, to labor, and to exert oneself. Let me put it in such a way that you hopefully will not forget it. Literally, what he tells you in verse 3 is this: breaking your neck to keep the unity of the Spirit—doing everything within your power to keep it.

God has given us a unity as believers; it is our duty, obligation, and responsibility to keep it. Obviously, you cannot keep a unity if you are fussing and fighting or breaking up into parties, factions, and cliques. I have seen churches named Harmony Baptist Church, with New Harmony Baptist Church right next to it, within a hundred yards. What does that mean? It meant they had a split.

As you read through First Corinthians, you see that the Corinthians were full of divisions, strife, parties, and cliques. The Apostle Paul tells us not to be like that. There are always dangers of divisions and strife because we are different. We are at different stages of maturity in our Christian life. We also come from different sections of the country and sometimes have different cultures, manners, and habits.

Where I was raised as a boy, we had breakfast, dinner, and supper. Whenever I receive invitations for dinner, I call and ask, "What time did you want us?" They say, "About 11:30 or 12," and there is a long pause. I say, "What you really meant to say was supper, wasn't it?" Supper is at night, not dinner. But when you are from the North, it is breakfast, lunch, and dinner; down in South Georgia, it is breakfast, dinner, and supper.

We have different habits. There is a tendency for me to say, “Linda, you’re not from around here.” But she could say, “He wasn’t raised the way I was raised.” You follow me? It could be mutual. Not only are we different personalities, but we also have different cultures and different backgrounds, and we enjoy different things. So what he is telling us is that we have to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit.

The truth of the matter is this: we must keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That is what he said: endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Whatever we are working at in keeping the unity of the Spirit, it has to be in the bond of peace.

The Greek word for bond is syndesmos. That word refers to a bond or a band that binds things together. It refers to a bundle, just like the ligaments by which our muscles are bound together. Have you ever had a torn ligament? A torn ligament is very, very painful. In fact, it will actually just about make a muscle useless until it is

healed. Unless we want to be useless, and unless we want to make others useless, God tells us that we should be diligent in keeping that unity He has given us in the bond of peace. That is why He said in Romans 12 and verse 18, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

I believe God recognizes that sometimes there are some with whom we cannot live peaceably; I understand that. But He said, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you”—break your neck, is what He is saying—to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If God expects us to live peaceably with others, how much more does He expect us to live peaceably with each other?

Matthew Henry, commenting on verses two and three, said, “Now, without these things, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearance, unity cannot be preserved. The first step towards unity is humility. Without this, there will be no meekness, no patience or forbearance. Without these, no unity. Pride and passion break the peace and make all the mischief. Humility and meekness restore the peace and keep it. Only by pride cometh contention. Only by humility comes love.”

The more lowly-mindedness, the more like-mindedness. We do not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called if we be not meek and lowly of heart. For He by whom we are called, He to whom we are called, was eminent for meekness and lowliness of heart and has commanded us therein to learn of Him.

There can be no keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace if we are missing the attributes in verse two. Verse two is a prerequisite for verse three.

There is a hymn that we usually sing. All of you probably have heard it. The title of it is “Bind Us Together.” Here are the words: “Bind us together, Lord, bind us together with cords that cannot be broken, bind us together, Lord, bind us together, bind us together with love. There is only one God. There’s only one king. There’s only one body. That is why we sing. Lord, bind us together. Lord, bind us together.” There are two choruses that go with it as well. Here is the truth: He has bound us together.

The Threefold Unity in Verses 4-6

We must endeavor to keep that unity by not caring and rendering asunder the ligaments of lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance. Verses four through seven show how the Apostle Paul applies the first three verses. Usually, when you read verses four through seven, you may wonder what possible connection they could have with the first three verses.

He says, “There is one body and one spirit, even as you’re called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all who is above all and through all and in you all. But in every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” How does that connect with the first three verses? Actually, the Apostle Paul is telling us that there is a threefold unity we need to observe, which will enable us and help us to make sure that we follow verses one through three.

First, this threefold unity is evidenced internally. Look in verse four. Here is an internal evidence. He says, “There is one body and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling.” Hold Ephesians chapter 4 and turn back in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Beginning with verse 12, he says, “For as the body is one and has many members and all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ.”

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (KJV)

> Just like you have arms and legs and feet and toes and fingers, you're still one body. So likewise, there are many different members, but we have one body in Christ.
>
> “For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether it be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free and have been all made to drink into that one spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If a foot shall say, because I'm not the hand, I'm not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set members, every one of them in the body, as it had pleased him. And if that were all one

> member, where were the body? And now are there many members yet, but one body.
>
> "And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee. Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow a more abundant honor. And our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need, but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked. Why? That there be no schism or no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now, you are the body of Christ and members in particular."
>
> What did he say? We are one body, but different members. But we are one body that have been placed in that body by one spirit. Looking back in verse 18, he says it: "But now hath God set the members, every one of them, the body as it pleased him."

In verse 11, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame spirit, dividing to every man severally as he willed." One body, one spirit, and one hope of our calling. Romans 1, verses 6 and 7, says, "Among whom also you are the called of Jesus Christ. To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." There is one body, one spirit, and one hope of our calling. Everyone in this room has the same exact hope. We hope in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We are in one body; we are His body, and it is the Holy Spirit of God who has placed us in that body, and placed each member in it as it pleased Him to do so.

So I cannot say, "I do not need Levi." I do need Levi. I cannot say, "I do not need Jim." I do need Jim. I need every one of my fingers, both arms, and every member that I have. That is exactly what He is telling us here. There is internal evidence of our unity: one body, one spirit, and one hope of our calling.

Now verse 5 says, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” This is an external, or outward, profession of our unity. We acknowledge and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Since we acknowledge His Lordship, His Godhead, and His Deity, we have one faith. We have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. There cannot be two Lords. The word Lord is kyrios. It means boss, owner, master, sovereign. There can only be one sovereign, one absolute, and one ultimate. Since there is only one God and one Lord, there is one faith and only one baptism—the baptism that actually places you in the body.

Romans 6:3 says, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

So you have an internal evidence of the unity, and you have an external evidence of that unity because of our profession. If you look back to Ephesians chapter four, the circle of unity grows even wider with a heavenly application, for verse six tells us, "One God and father of all who is above all and through all and in you all."

Notice: one God and Father of all. You remember that? Shema Israel, Deuteronomy 6 and verse 4: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 8 and verse 6 says, "But to us there is but one God, the father of whom are all things, and we in Him and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things and we by Him."

What does it mean when he says, one God and Father of all who is above all? He is sovereign. Through all speaks of His providence, and in you all speaks of the same salvation. We all have the one God and Father who has saved us, who is our Sovereign, who works everything out for our good and for His glory. God the Father is the initiator, the author, the originator of our salvation. God the Son is the one who procured and purchased our salvation. God the Holy Spirit is the one who applies that salvation.

So he says there is one God and Father of all who is above all. He is the author and the finisher of our faith, and through all and in you all. Verse 6 brings us right back to the internal and external manifestations of our unity.

Now let me conclude with verse 7: "But unto every one of us"—Paul is talking to the Ephesians, so the application would be to us—"but unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

Grace According to the Measure of Christ's Gift

Let me ask you a question. Here is the thief on the cross. He said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom," and our Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise." How long was that thief saved before he died? An hour or two at the most, because they came along and broke their legs. Once they broke the legs, they died. How much grace did God give that dying thief? Not only sufficient saving, but sufficient to live for the several hours that he lived.

Look at verse seven again: “But every one of us is given grace.” How much grace does God give us? According to the measure of the gift of Christ. You have the grace and the gift that God gave you. I do not care how little or how much. The tiniest amount of saving grace is still saving grace, and the largest amount is still saving grace. In that area of saving grace, He also gives us other gifts. God has placed us in the body, the Scripture says, as it has pleased Him.

That means we have to function and work together. I was amused last week when Jim told us how to lose weight. He heard a man say, “The way to lose weight is very easy. Drink a pint of whiskey before a meal. You will still be hungry, but you cannot find your mouth.” That might work. But think about this: if my hand cannot find my mouth, my hand is useless. My hand has to be able to minister to my mouth. If it does not, I have to find some other way for something to minister to my mouth. Someone would have to if I am to continue living.

Wherever God places us in the body, whatever member we are, we are there only by the grace of God, for the honor and glory of God,

and for the ministry of the whole. I cannot look at Ron and say, “I do not need you.” I do. He has gifts and graces that I do not have. The same thing is true of Marshall; he has gifts and graces I do not have.

It is absolutely essential and necessary that we come together and stay together if we are going to function the way we should. The only way we can walk and function as we should is with all lowliness and meekness and longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, breaking our neck to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

Why? Because we recognize there is one body, and one Spirit, and one calling, and one Lord, and one faith, and one baptism, and one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. He has given us grace that we can function if we will. To walk worthy is to walk in such a way that we maintain the unity God has given us and recognize that we are one body in Jesus Christ—many different members, but one body.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your love, Your Word, and Your truth. I pray, Father, that You would indeed enable us to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called; to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace; to be longsuffering and forbearing with each other; to walk in humility and meekness; and to bring honor to Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Walking With God - 6

SCRIPTURE READING - Ephesians 4:17-32 (KJV)

Introduction and Review of the Series

Ephesians chapter 4. We are going to read today from Ephesians chapter 4, beginning with verse 17 and reading through verse 32. However, we will never get past verse 19 today. We have been dealing with the entire series, and the entire series is "Walking with the Lord." I am going to review today; this is the sixth part, although it is going to be the first of three messages. Each of these messages is self-contained. I believe not only this message, but the next two messages, are absolutely needed and necessary, especially if you are going to not only change your life, but help others as well. I would encourage you to be faithful and to be here if you can, especially for the next two Sundays.

The apostle said this: "I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past

> feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.
>
> "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.
>
> "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.
>
> "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

So far in this series, we have dealt with walking before the Lord and walking with the Lord. It is impossible to really walk with the Lord unless you walk before the Lord. The word "before" literally means "in the presence of" or "in the face of." We saw in the Bible how Enoch walked with the Lord, Abraham walked with the Lord, Jacob walked, and a host of others as well. But God told Abram, "Walk thou before me, and be thou perfect."

In our study of Enoch, we also found that Enoch was translated that he should not see death; for before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Then we looked at verse six after verse five of Hebrews 11: "But without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that cometh to God must first believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

If we are going to please the Lord and walk with the Lord, we must absolutely walk in faith. Then we looked at Ephesians 4:1-7, where Paul tells us that if we are going to walk pleasing to the Lord, we must walk worthy of our calling. In Ephesians 4:1-3, he tells us how we are to walk worthy of our calling. When he says that we are to walk worthy of our vocation, the word "vocation"—which occurs ten times in the New Testament—actually refers to our salvation. Thus, "walk worthy of your vocation" means walk worthy of your calling, your salvation, wherewith you have been called, that is, unto salvation.

He tells us to walk worthy "in all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love," and, thirdly, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We looked at a whole message on lowliness and an entire message on meekness. Meekness is not weakness, poor posture, or cowardice. No. Moses was the meekest man on earth in his day. Our Lord was meek, and yet He took the scourge of small cords and drove those money changers out of the temple. Meekness is disciplined strength under Christ. Those who are meek have been broken to yoke; that is, we wear the yoke of Christ and are disciplined by Him.

Walking Differently

God has made the unity that believers are to keep in the bond of peace, and we are to endeavor to keep it. In that light, Ephesians 4:4–7 teaches us that, after telling us to walk worthily, Paul now tells us—in verses 17 through 32—to walk differently. That is, we must walk in a different manner in our lives. We are different from the world, the ungodly, and the heathen, and that difference must be made manifest. If we have truly been redeemed, justified, reconciled, and sanctified, there must obviously be a difference. When we walk pleasing unto the Lord, we must not only walk in faith and walk worthily; we must also walk differently.

The Solemn Testimony of the Apostle

Paul says, “I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.” I want to call your attention to verses 17, 18, and 19. Consider

the word “testify.” Paul is testifying in the Lord. The word “testify” here is marturomai, actually from the Greek word martus, from which we get the English word “martyr.” When we hear “martyr,” we automatically think of someone who has died for the faith.

That is the connotation we place upon it today, but “martyr” originally just means, and meant, “witness.” Jesus Christ is called a faithful and true witness. He did not die for His faith as such; He died for His people. Yet He is a faithful and true martyr. You also have to remember that the Apostle Paul said in Romans 1:9, “God is my witness.” The word “witness” there is martyr: “God is my martyr.” God has not died; Paul is simply saying that God is a witness to his ministry.

When Paul says, “I therefore say and testify in the Lord,” the word “testify” means to take to record, to cite as a witness, to conjure, to beseech in God’s name, and to testify solemnly. Paul is saying, essentially, “I am bearing witness in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am ministering by His authority.”

The Apostle Paul is not only testifying to them; he may also be testifying against them. A witness can be either for the defendant or against the defendant. Thus, a witness has a twofold opportunity. Paul is solemnly testifying to them: if they will listen, he will be a witness for them and to them; if they will not listen, he will become a witness against them.

In 2 Corinthians 13:2, Paul writes, “I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare.” He is saying, “I have already witnessed to you. I have been a witness for you, and if you have not repented, when I get there, I will be a witness against you.”

He says essentially the same thing in 2 Corinthians 13:10: “Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.” Paul is trying to be a witness to them. If they refuse to listen, he will be a witness against them.

Therefore, when Paul says in verse 17, “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord,” he is giving a solemn witness: “You walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds.” “Gentiles” is the Greek word ethnos, referring to nations, pagans, or heathen. Paul is testifying that Christians should be different in their walk and lives from the ungodly, the unsaved, and the heathen. We are not like them in any way; therefore, we should be different, and that difference should be easily detected and manifested. After telling us in verses 17 through 19 that we should walk differently, he proceeds to explain exactly how the unsaved walked.

The Vanity of the Unsaved Mind

How did the heathen walk? How did the unsaved walk? In verse 17, he says: “I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.” The vanity of the mind here is a very general description. He is going to delineate it in verses 18 and 19. He gives a broad term in generalized terminology, and then he descends into the specific. How do they walk in the vanity of their mind?

When we hear the word “vanity,” we normally think of that which is vain, useless, worthless, or a waste of time. The interesting thing is that vanity not only means that which is useless and worthless, but it means more than that. It actually means that which is devoid of truth, perverse, depraved, and inappropriate.

You will find the word “vanity” and the word “vain” translated from different Hebrew words and sometimes different Greek words. But the very first time the word is translated as “vanity” in the Old Testament occurs in 2 Kings chapter 17, verse 15. I want you to see what is included under the term “vanity.”

Now he is talking about Israel and what Israel did to God. The Bible says: “And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them.”

If you read the context, Israel has descended into idolatry. When he says that they followed vanity, he is talking about idolatry. They followed idols. They became vain; that is, they became idolaters. They went after the heathen that were round about them. Very obviously, then, they worshipped Baal, Ashtaroth, and all the false gods.

Here, clearly, the word "vanity" means far more than simply that which is useless and worthless. It is true that idolatry is useless and worthless, but it is even more than that. It is perverse. It is depraved. Obviously, anyone who is involved in idolatry is also devoid of truth.

Notice 2 Peter, chapter two, and look, if you would please, at verse 18. He is talking about these men who are devoid of truth—these wicked men. The word "vanity" here, from the Greek word, also emphasizes perverseness and depravity. He says, "For when they speak great swelling words of vanity"—he is talking about vanity now.

"They allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error." Notice that vanity here is concerned with the lusts of the flesh and wantonness. The word "vanity" not only means that which is useless and worthless; it also includes idolatry. It includes being devoid of truth. It also includes being perverse and perverted as such.

We should understand how the unsaved walk, because we were once like that ourselves. Ephesians 2:1–3 says: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath."

Notice the words, "even as others." Paul is saying that we should really understand how the unsaved walk, because we used to walk that way ourselves. We walked in exactly the same manner. We lived

in the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. We were idolaters. We were children of wrath, even as others.

One of the problems we encounter as Christians is that oftentimes there are too many memories of our former lives; we remember too well what we used to be like. Yet the Apostle Paul goes on to tell us how we are different. Ephesians 2:4–5 says: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).” Here is what we were, but now God has intervened and supernaturally changed us.

If God has given us his love, if God has quickened us, and if he has given us life in Jesus Christ, then by his grace we must absolutely live differently. We are not like the unsaved. Ephesians 4:18–19 describes them: “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Paul speaks of a darkened understanding, alienation from life, ignorance of mind, and blindness of heart. He is breaking down the vanity of their walk and showing what characterizes those who are unsaved.

Darkened Understanding and Alienation from God

So I want us to consider these things one at a time. First of all, what is it like to be unsaved? What is it like to be a heathen? What is it like to be a pagan? Well, the Apostle Paul says, first of all, there is a darkened understanding. Well, the question should automatically arise: Well, how do understandings become darkened? What brings darkness to an understanding? And the answer is basically threefold. I want you to listen carefully. First of all, there is a judicial darkening of the mind or a judicial blindness of the mind. The word "judicial" simply refers to the law court of God. God is the judge. It is God who pronounces the sentence against the wicked and corrupt and perverse men. So a judicial darkening or a judicial blindness is usually imposed upon people for their rejection of God, His Son, His Word, and His truth.

Now let me show you. I want you to hold Ephesians chapter 4. I want you to go back to Psalm 69. Then we're going to the book of Romans. Psalm 69 is a messianic psalm. It speaks of Jesus Christ.

I'm not going to take the time to go through Psalm 69, but it is and it does have reference to Christ over and over. For instance, he will tell you in there, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," which is applied directly to Christ.

They hated him without a cause. Then he says, look, if you would please, down to verse 21: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." So all this happened to Jesus Christ on the cross. So let's begin looking at verse 22. Look what happens. Of course, you know, Israel rejected Christ. Watch carefully. He says in verse 22, here's the judicial sentence.

"Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them." Note if you would, he said in verse 23, "Let their eyes be darkened." And then in verse 24, "Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold upon them."

That is a judicial sentence. If you will look in your Bibles to the book of Romans chapter one very quickly. Romans chapter one and look at verse 21. Romans chapter one and verse 21. In this passage, the Apostle Paul makes this exceedingly clear. Romans 1 verse 21. Listen carefully to what he says. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations."

That is, they went to idolatry, “and their foolish heart was darkened.” That is a judicial sentence. Romans 11:7-10 says: “What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.” “I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to

provoke them to jealousy." So what did God do? God sent a judicial blindness upon the people. There was a judicial blindness.

Secondly, there is a retributive darkening, or a retributive blindness, where God always makes the penalty fit the crime. It is the lex talionis of Scripture. In Isaiah 9:19, God says, "Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother." Notice, through the wrath of the Lord the land is darkened. The people have sinned against God, and God is sending a retributive justice and a retributive darkening upon them because of their sins. The same truth appears in Isaiah 24:11: "There's a crying for wine in the street; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone." There is no happiness because of their sins. God is punishing them for their sins. The same truth is found in Ezekiel 30:18.

Thus, there is not only a judicial darkening of the mind; there is also a retributive darkening of the mind. Thirdly, there is what you and I would call a natural darkening of the mind. By natural darkening, I mean the darkening that comes in response to sin.

We actually reap that which we sow. The more we indulge in sin, the darker the understanding becomes. In other words, the more you indulge in sin, the dumber you become. In Isaiah chapter one, God even said that oxen were smarter than His people: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." There is a natural darkening in response to sin.

Albert Barnes said it like this: "A man who is intemperate has no just views of the government of the appetites. A man who is unjust has no perception of the loveliness of purity. A man who is avaricious or covetous has no just views of the beauty of benevolence. A man who indulges in low vices will weaken his mental powers and render himself incapable of intellectual effort. Indulgence in vice destroys the intellect as well as the body and unfits a man to appreciate the truth of a proposition in morals or in mathematics or the beauty of a poem as well as the truth and beauty of religion or Christianity. Nothing is more obvious than that indulgence in sin weakens the mental powers and renders them unfit for high intellectual effort."

This is seen all over the heathen world in the stolid, stupid mind, the perverted moral sense, and the incapacity for profound or protracted mental effort, just as it was among the heathen to whom Paul preached. You can see it today just as you could then. Darkened understanding comes from spiritual blindness, and it can be judicial darkening, retributive darkening, or natural darkening.

Look back in Ephesians chapter four. We are not to walk in vanity as the heathen do. In verse 18 he says, “Having the understanding darkened,” and then, “being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them.” It is bad enough to be alienated from the life of God, but it is even worse to be ignorant and alienated. The Greek word for alienation refers not simply to estrangement, but also to being shut out from intimacy and fellowship.

An unsaved man may confess that there is a God and even intellectually believe in Him, yet he is shut out from the life of God through his ignorance. Look back in your Bibles to Acts chapter 17. The Apostle Paul is preaching on Mars Hill to heathen philosophers. They were very religious, but they were heathen philosophers.

In Acts 17:29, Paul tells these pagans, “Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.” Since we are the offspring of God, it is absolutely foolish to think that God is made out of gold, silver, some graven image, or some graven idol.

The Athenians were heathen philosophers, many of them very smart in one sense of the word. They thought they knew God, or the gods, because they believed in a plurality of gods. In Acts 17:22, Paul says, “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious”—or literally, too religious. He explains, “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” They believed in a god or gods and had altars to all their false gods. In case they missed one, they even had an altar to the unknown God.

If you walked up to an Athenian and asked, “Do you believe in God?” he would say, “Yes, I believe in God.” In fifty years of preaching, I have no idea how many people have told me, “I believe in God,” and yet their lives were an absolute total wreck. Believing in God does not make you a Christian. Many people believe in God intellectually while being totally ignorant of God.

James 2:19 says, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” I once told a man who said he believed in God, “You're not even as good as the devil.” When he asked how that could be, I answered, “The devil believes, but he also trembles. And I don't see you trembling.”

You have to understand why men are alienated from God. He says they are alienated from God through the ignorance that is in them. If the knowledge of God is life to the soul, then ignorance of God is death to the soul. Moreover, when we say that knowledge of God is life, it is not just any knowledge. It certainly is not simply intellectual knowledge.

I have known people who have memorized Scriptures, gone to Bible schools, received theological degrees, and can argue rationally and intellectually about the existence and attributes of God. Such intellectual knowledge may be fine and wonderful, but it is not saving knowledge. There is a difference between intellectual knowledge and saving knowledge.

Let me show you. In John 17, the high-priestly prayer of our Lord, He begins to pray concerning life. Look what He says, beginning in verse one.

The Nature of Saving Knowledge

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Now, you want to know what eternal life is? Listen carefully. Eternal life is not living forever. If you define eternal life as living forever, then the unsaved would have it because they'll live forever in judgment or in retribution or in punishment. Eternal life is not just living forever. It

is true that we are eternal beings. What is eternal life? Verse 3 says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Eternal life is a personal, intimate relationship with God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ.

If you do not have eternal life now in time and history, you're not going to get it when you die. Because eternal life is a personal, intimate relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is strange that so many people who live ungodly lives want to go to heaven when they die. They are not interested in having a personal, intimate relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ now. What makes them think that when they die all of a sudden they are going to want that? Punishment will make you think you would want that, for sure. But eternal life is something that we enjoy now, and we will enjoy it more fully in the presence of God the Father and God the Son. That is true.

Notice what He said: eternal life is knowledge—"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God." This means knowing Him not just intellectually, but knowing Him personally in an intimate, personal, saving relationship.

How do I get this personal, intimate relationship? How do I get this knowledge? Our Lord gives the answer in Matthew 11:27.

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." How do you get to know who Jesus Christ is? God reveals it to you. You remember when our Lord asked His disciples in Matthew 16, "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" They said, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." But whom say ye that I am? Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And what did our Lord say? "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

The only way that you can know who God the Father is, is that Jesus Christ reveals Him to you. The only way that you can know who Jesus Christ is, God the Father reveals Him unto you. So what

God is telling us through the Apostle Paul is this: man by nature is ignorant of God. His alienation from God comes from this ignorance. Our alienation, our ignorance, and our blindness all hark back to original sin. We sinned in Adam. We fell in Adam. We were cursed in Adam. It is through Adam, the first Adam, that we are deprived of the true light of God. In the deprivation of that true light, there was nothing left but fearful darkness.

Original sin is very easily proven. Romans 5 verse 12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Some of you have Greek references right now, and it is interesting that you can find out that "all have sinned" is an aorist passive, which means it happened once and for all at one time. When did all men sin once and for all at one time? The answer is in Adam. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." You say, "I just don't believe in original sin." Hang on. Wait long enough and you will. Because death is the absolute proof of original sin. If you do not believe it, just when you die, you will understand. It is just that simple. Because you die because of your sin.

The apostle said that we are alienated from the life of God through ignorance. Our ignorance is inexcusable. You have heard the old expression, “Ignorance is no excuse of the law.” Let me tell you, ignorance is an excuse if you are talking about man’s law. There are so many laws that everybody violates federal, state, county, and city laws every day. You cannot possibly know them all. But when you hear that expression, “Ignorance is no excuse of the law,” you are talking about God’s law, because back then everybody had a Bible and everybody basically believed the Bible. God’s law is spelled out for us in the Bible, so ignorance is no excuse of the law.

We have a duty and responsibility to know God’s law, and we also have a duty and responsibility to know God. Why? We are His creatures. He created us; He is our Creator. By virtue of being His creatures, we owe Him honor and glory. Moreover, we are sinners, and because we have sinned against Him, we owe Him repentance as well. When God saves us, we doubly owe God, because we are no longer merely His creatures; we are now His children.

The Inexcusable Ignorance of Man

Our ignorance is inexcusable in a number of ways. First, God has revealed Himself in creation. All you have to do is read Psalm 19 and Romans chapter one. Psalm 19 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.” In other words, the heavens declare the glory of God. Romans chapter one tells us very clearly that creation demonstrates the power of God as well. God has spoken in creation. Creation has enough light to condemn you, but not enough to convert you.

God has also spoken through conscience. Romans 2:13-16 says, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” Notice what God says about the conscience: your conscience can either condemn you or excuse you.

I don't care if you go to the darkest Africa. You let one African take a spear and run up to another one, stab him in the heart, and kill him. The rest of the tribe will take that murderer, tie him to an ant bed somewhere, pour honey on him, and let the ants eat him alive. They know that's wrong. As ignorant as they are, they know that's wrong.

The problem with the conscience is that it can be seared or improperly taught. But there is a basic root of knowing something is right and something is wrong. You let an African defend himself from an attacker and, in self-defense, kill the attacker. They excuse him; they don't do anything. That's conscience.

So God has spoken to us in creation, in conscience, and through His commandments. The Bible says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable." Obviously, all of God's word happens to be commandments. Scripture tells us also in Hebrews chapter one that God has spoken to us in creation, in conscience, in

commandments, and in Christ. The Bible says that "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things."

Now, Romans 1:20 says this in light of creation: "So that they are without excuse." If you are without excuse before God just because of creation, think about your conscience, the commandments, and Christ. On Judgment Day, no excuses will be accepted. You lived in God's creation and ignored it. You refused to listen to your conscience and seared it. You had a Bible and refused to read it. You heard the preaching of Jesus Christ and rejected it. You are without excuse, even though you are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in you.

Blindness of Heart and Its Consequences

Third, all of this stems from the blindness of the heart. Ephesians 4:18 says, “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Our ignorance, our alienation, and our darkened understanding all flow from one corrupt fountain, a blinded heart.

Here is a truth that is not easily or readily received: unless God opens our understanding, we will never see the truth. It is just that simple. Let me show you. In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul contrasts the old covenant and the new covenant. He says, “And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.” Then he says, “But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.” In other words, if they do not see Christ, the veil is still there.

He continues, “But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.” Then, “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” It is only the Holy Spirit that can open our eyes, let us see truth, and have the veil

removed. Since we are in 2 Corinthians, look at chapter 4, verses 3 and 4.

Paul says, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” Notice this: unless God opens the eyes, unless God allows His light to shine, we will never see.

The blindness of the heart? Yes. Totally. Absolutely.

Now, go back to Ephesians chapter 4, because I want you to see where all of this leads. If you are wondering what is wrong in America, what is wrong in families and homes, or what is wrong with people—why they are so crazy today, and why they are doing things that are so absolutely perverted and depraved—here is the answer. Watch, if you would, verse 18.

Past Feeling and Given Over to Sin

He says, “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Now watch: “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” First, the Apostle says such individuals are past feeling. What does “past feeling” mean in this light? The Greek word literally means to cease to feel pain or grief, to become insensible, or to become calloused.

I've had calluses on my hands. I still have calluses on my hands, and for many, many years, as Alice can testify, I've had thick skin. I can cut myself and not even feel it. I may look down and discover blood, asking, “Where did that blood come from?” Barbed wire caught me, and I did not know it. If you push deep enough, I still may not feel it. There are times when my hands and calluses did not feel pain. Spiritually speaking, this is what Paul is describing.

It does not grieve these people. It does not upset the unsaved that they have no fellowship with the one true, living God. When you try to reach out to them, reason with them, witness to them, or testify to them, they are insensible to it. It is like water off a duck’s back. Why?

Because they are callous and insensitive to the truth. It does not hurt them.

It does not convict them. They are past feeling. They have thrown off all sense of shame and remorse. It is almost impossible today to shame some people; most folks will never blush at anything. Verse 19 says, “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness.” What is lasciviousness? The word refers to unbridled lusts, excess, licentiousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, and insolence. They have given themselves over to lasciviousness.

John Calvin said it like this: “Having destroyed the sensibilities of the heart and outlawed the themes of remorse, they abandoned themselves to all manner of iniquity. We are by nature corrupt and prone to evil. Nay, we are wholly inclined to evil. Those who are destitute of the Spirit of Christ give loose reins to self-indulgence, till fresh offenses, producing others in constant succession, bring down upon them the wrath of God. The voice of God proclaimed by an accusing conscience still continues to be heard, but instead of producing its proper effects, appears rather to harden them against all admonition on account of such obstinacy. They deserve to be altogether forsaken by God.” So he says, “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness.”

He goes further: “Who have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” The words “to work” clearly indicate their voluntariness in sinning, their volunteering to sin. They reveal the power of sin over them and their willing slavery to sin. They love their sin, enjoy their sin, and want to continue in it. Their intense desire is to work all uncleanness, commit every unclean lust, and live in continued commission of uncleanness in every sort of way with greediness. They want it, and they want more and more of it. They are never satisfied.

You should never even consider pornography. If you see it, immediately turn away from it. Porneia was the Greek word for fornication, and graphic is the Greek word for writing. Pornography is fornication writing. That is what it is. The problem is this: in Ephesians 4:19, God is saying that you get started on one sin, and pretty soon that is insufficient.

You have to go here, and then that's insufficient. You keep going until you're absolutely down on the bottom. You get started with pornography, and pretty soon that's not going to satisfy you. You're going to learn to work all uncleanness with greediness. You're going to want more and more and more because you're a sinner, because of your wicked heart. God is saying very clearly that this is what the evil, wicked, unsaved man does, whether he admits it or not, whether he likes it or not. That's his life. Men don't think anything about going out and getting drunk. They don't think anything about raping, robbing, pillaging, plundering, and stealing. That's their lifestyle. It's what they do. The more they do it, the more they want of it.

Ephesians 4:19 says, "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

If you read Romans 1:24, you will find that these wicked people, the Bible says, "God also gave them up to uncleanness." Did God give them up, or did they give themselves over? The answer is, both. Their giving themselves over is the punishment in kind. God gave them up and said, basically, if you want it, you can have it. He simply withdrew His grace and His hand, and thus their sin was made their punishment.

They willingly gave themselves over to it. They willingly became the slaves of sin. They willingly enjoyed the pleasures of sin for a season. They willingly became captives to their sin and ceased to fight against it. As Paul says, they work all uncleanness with greediness. It was God's judgment in giving them up, but it was what they willed, wanted, and desired. God said, “OK, you can have it.”

The Call to Walk Differently

The fundamental thought is this: the unsaved acknowledge no restraint. Insolently acting out whatever they desire, whatever their caprices are, they do so gladly, willingly, and readily. But Paul says, "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind." You don't walk like this. You walk differently. We cannot live, walk, talk, act, or think the way the ungodly do.

I was in a motel this past week on Tuesday night and wanted something chocolate. There was a little vending machine, so I put in the money for one piece of chocolate candy and hit the button. I got two bars. My first thought was, "That is probably what it should have cost to begin with, because you always pay more when you get something from a vending machine."

Secondly, I really did not want the candy anyhow. Since it was night, I took the extra bar to my room. When I checked out the next morning, I carried it to the desk and said, "When I went to your vending machine last night, I got two bars for the price of one. I paid for one bar and ate it. I did not pay for this one. You may have it or give it back to the vending machine owner, but I do not want it."

The lady looked at me strangely. I said, "If I am going to become a thief, it will not be for a dollar. It will be for a lot more than that. I cannot be bought that cheaply."

The point is that we are not lawless. We cannot be lawless. We do not walk to please ourselves. It is true that we are sinners. There is not one person in this room who is not a sinner or who does not fall short in a number of ways. I have my sins, and you have your sins. But the truth is that we hate our sins. Our sins grieve the Lord, and we know it; they grieve us as well. We confess them, acknowledge them, mourn over them, turn from them, and pray to be delivered from them. We seek God for repentance, and we cannot and will not return to our old ways and old lives. We have to live differently.

How do we live differently? How do we change our lives? That is the subject of the next two messages. For your meditation this week, look at verse 20. That will be our text next week, verses 20 and 21: "But ye have not so learned Christ." Has it ever dawned upon you that you must learn Christ—learn how to live and act in a godly manner? Walk worthily, yes, but walk differently. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to thee this day.

We thank you for your word. We thank you for teaching us how not to live, as well as teaching us how to live. We ask, Father, for your help and your blessing in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

Walking With God - 7

Introduction and Review of the Series

This is message number seven in the series Walking with the Lord. The title of the message is Walking with the Lord, and the subtitle is Learning Christ. Last week we dealt with Ephesians 4:17–19. The series began when we read from Genesis 5 about Enoch walking with the Lord and how he pleased the Lord, according to Hebrews 11:5–6. We also read how God told Abram, "I'm the Lord thy God, walk thou before me and be thou perfect."

It is impossible to really walk with the Lord until you learn to walk before the Lord, because the word before literally means in the presence of the Lord, or in His face. The most fundamental principle is walking by faith, because the Scripture says, "Without faith it's impossible to please Him. For he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him." We must walk by faith; that is basic and foundational.

Then we looked in Ephesians 4:1–7, where the Apostle Paul told us to walk worthy of the Lord with all lowliness and meekness and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep

the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We dealt with lowliness and meekness. Meekness is certainly not weakness, cowardice, or a denial of your rights. It is disciplined strength under Christ, because we are yoked to Christ.

The Grace of God Makes Us Differ

Then we came to Ephesians 4:17–21. The Apostle says, “This I say therefore and testify of the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, or ethnos, or nations, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who, being past feeling, have given themselves over into lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ. If so be that you’ve heard him, have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus.”

Paul has told us clearly that we are to walk with the Lord and walk by faith. We are to walk differently. We are not to be like the heathen, the pagans, or the other nations. We are to be different. What makes us different? First and foremost, it is the grace of God in our lives. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4:7, “For who maketh thee to differ one from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory, or boast, as if thou hadst not received it?” Everything that we have is by God's grace and mercy. It is God who made us to differ.

We did not save ourselves, call ourselves, or justify ourselves. It is God who made us to differ. Therefore, it is God who keeps us separate from the other nations. We do not walk in the vanity of our minds. The word vanity refers not only to uselessness and worthlessness, but also to idolatry and perverseness. Ephesians 4:18 says, “Having the understanding darkened, and being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”

Those who are past feeling are literally calloused. Nothing causes them shame or remorse. They have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to nakedness, to perverseness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Although it is the grace of God that makes us to differ, we must also confess that the grace of God that

leads us to salvation leads us unto obedience. The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:2, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.” The same God who saves us from our sins and makes us different by His grace is the same God who leads us unto obedience. He says, “But ye have not so learned Christ.” Obedience not only implies learning; it requires learning. How can you be obedient if you have not learned what to obey and whom you must obey? Obedience requires learning.

The Necessity of Learning Christ

The Greek word for disciple is mathetes, which literally means a learner, a pupil, and a disciple. Look carefully at verse 20: “but you have not so learned Christ.” Has the thought ever crossed your mind that you must learn Jesus Christ? Have you ever thought about the necessity of learning Christ? Has the meaning of the word Christian ever entered your mind? The word Christian literally means Christ-like, or a disciple or follower of Christ.

We are told in Acts 11:26 that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. But how can one be truly a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ if he is not Christ-like? To ascertain whether or not we understand the truth of learning Christ, look at the average Christian and the average church. If you look at the average professing Christian, you would have to admit that usually one cannot discern the difference between that person and an everyday unsaved worldling. Professing Christians usually look like, dress like, act like, and even talk like the unsaved. They attend the same movies, watch the same TV shows, vote for the same unsaved candidates, and are easily duped when it comes to biblical and spiritual knowledge. In fact, the average professing Christian usually accepts anyone else who professes to be a Christian, regardless of how they live and act.

J. C. Ryle says, “If you show me a man deliberately living an unholy and licentious life, and yet boasting that his sins are forgiven, I answer, he is under a ruinous delusion and is not forgiven at all. I would not believe he is forgiven if an angel from heaven affirmed it. And I charge you not to believe it too.”

“Pardon of sin and love of sin are like oil and water. They will never go together. All who are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ are also sanctified by the Spirit of Christ.” Thus, all who say they are saved and yet love sin and wallow in it are under a very ruinous delusion. There are weak Christians, ignorant Christians, foolish Christians, and even childish or baby Christians. Unhappily, most Christians usually remain in those states. They never make progress.

In their Christian lives, you have to ask why. If they are truly saved, why do most never really make progress? The answer is that they never really learned Jesus Christ. I understand that some people are saved and yet ignorant. All of us are ignorant to a certain extent; some are more ignorant than others. But ignorance is curable. Stupidity is not. Although a person may be in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, that does not mean that he has actually learned Jesus Christ. It has always amazed me how much time the average professing Christian can spend in church, how many sermons he can listen to, and never learn anything, remaining the same. Hardly anything changes us because we have never really learned Christ.

Philip's Ignorance and Our Need to Know Christ

Consider a conversation between Jesus Christ, Thomas, and Philip in John 14. Our Lord says, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

"And whither I go, you know, and the way you know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest. How can we know the way? Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also. And from henceforth, you know him and have seen him." Philip then said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known me, Philip? He that hath

seen me hath seen the Father. And how sayest thou then, show us the Father?"

But look at that question: “Have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known me, Philip?” Philip lived with our Lord and walked with Him for three years. He knew Him personally, intimately, and literally, and yet he did not know Him. If Philip could live with our Lord for three years and not truly know Him, how much greater is our lack of knowledge, for we have not lived with Christ as personally and closely as Philip did.

When you go back to Ephesians 4, look again at verses 20 and 21, the verses I am dealing with today: “But you have not so learned Christ. If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.”

Christ as Both Lesson and Teacher

These verses follow verses 17 through 19, where Paul tells us to walk differently. We are not to walk as the other nations walk, as the heathen and pagans walk. He describes their walk and then says, “But you have not so learned Christ.” In other words, Christ did not teach that trash. He did not teach you to live as they live. Paul is making an astounding statement and revealing a tremendous truth: we must actually learn Christ.

When someone lives as the heathen do, it is evident that he has not learned Christ, because Christ does not teach us to live ungodly lives, in vanity and ignorance, rebellion, or disobedience. If we know anything at all about Jesus Christ, we know that He is the holy, harmless, sinless Son of God. He was obedient to the Father in all things and submissive in all things.

John Calvin stated the difference between verses 20 and 21 and verses 17 through 19 in this way: “He, that is Paul, now draws a contrast of a Christian life so as to make it evident how utterly inconsistent it is with the character of a godly man to defile himself with the

Because the Gentiles walk in darkness, they do not distinguish between right and wrong. But those on whom the truth of God shines ought to live in a different manner. That those to whom the

vanity of the senses is a rule of life should yield themselves up to base lust is not surprising. But the doctrine of Jesus Christ teaches us to renounce our natural dispositions. He whose life differs not from that of the unbelievers has learned nothing of Christ. For the knowledge of Christ cannot be separated from the mortification of the flesh.

With that in mind, let me demonstrate the truth of what Calvin stated. Titus 2:11 says, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men.” Note now: this is the grace of God that bringeth salvation. What does that grace that brings salvation teach us? Verse 12 says, “teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.”

We are to look for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Notice that the grace of God that brings salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

You must remember that the Apostle Paul, the author of the book of Ephesians, is also the author of the book of Philippians. And he said this in Philippians 3, verses 10 and 11, listen carefully, "that I might know him," talking about Jesus Christ, "that I might know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead." So according to the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3 verses 10 and 11, to know Jesus Christ is not just simply to acknowledge Him, but is to be made conformable unto Him in life and in death.

Now let me ask you some questions that I hope will stimulate your mind. How well are we to learn Jesus Christ? What is to be the extent of our learning? I could also ask what is the evidence of our learning, which I will show you next week. But I want you to see a verse. The Apostle John answers that question or those questions for us. I want you to hold Ephesians 4, but turn right over if you would to 1 John chapter 4. 1 John chapter 4 and look if you would please at verse 17. This is an astounding verse. 1 John 4 and verse 17. How

well are we to learn Jesus Christ? What is to be the extent of our learning? Well, John says it like this. 1 John 4 verse 17. Watch.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." What is going to give us boldness in the day of judgment? "Because as He is, that is, as Jesus Christ really is, so are we in this world." Isn't that amazing? He said if you want to be bold in judgment day, you must live as Christ in this world now in time and history. As he is, whatever Jesus Christ is, so are we in this world. Isn't that amazing?

So we have to consider this. How are we to be made to liken him in this world? Let me show you another verse. Hold Ephesians 4, but go back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8 and look in verse 29. Romans 8 verse 29. We're talking about learning Christ. Look at Romans 8 verse 29. In this passage, the Bible says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Now watch that carefully. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son." The Greek word conformed is the word summorphos, which literally means to be conformed unto, to be fashioned like unto, to having the same form. Literally, here's what it means. It means to be pressed into the same mold.

Long time ago, Alice used to make butter. We had those little hand churns that you would hit—I forget what you call it now—but you would keep battering it up and down, and you would make butter. When it got thick enough, she would pour it into a butter mold and put it in the refrigerator. When it hardened, she could take it and dump it into a dish, and it was perfectly made like the mold in which it had been put.

That is what the Bible says: we are to be pressed into the same mold of Jesus Christ. As He is, so are we in this world. We are to be duplicates of Jesus Christ in this world—in obedience, in submission, in character, and in holiness. If we are like Him, we will be able to say with Him, in John 8:29, to the Father, “For I do always those things that please Him.” Would it not be wonderful if you could say that to God the Father: “I do always those things that

please thee"? That is what he is talking about when he speaks of being made like unto Christ.

Look back to Ephesians 4, verses 20 and 21: "But you have not so learned Christ. If so be that you have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus." Here is the truth that you must grasp today: Jesus Christ is the lesson, and Jesus Christ is the teacher. We are taught by Him. He is the lesson and He is the teacher. We must learn to look to Him not only as our lesson, but as our teacher. We are not learning about Christ; we are learning Christ. There is a big difference. You can learn about anybody—Mohammed, Gandhi, Nixon, or anybody. But if you learn someone, you know them intimately: their heart's desire, their motives, everything about them, and you identify with them. Therefore, to learn Jesus Christ, we must take our seat and our position as learners, students, disciples, and followers.

The Meaning of Discipleship and Continuing in Christ

Look back at verse 20: "but you've not so learned Christ." The Greek word mathetes is translated as disciple in the Bible. Manthano is the verb here, the same word in its verb form. It literally means to be a pupil or a disciple; to learn, to be apprised of, to increase one's knowledge, to hear, to be informed, to learn by use and by practice, and to be in the habit of and accustomed to.

You will see the importance of that word, one word, next Sunday, Lord willing. It literally means that we are to be in the habit of and accustomed to living as Jesus Christ lived. This one word occurs twenty-five times in the New Testament. Its emphasis is not simply on imparting knowledge, but on awakening a thorough and complete commitment of oneself to Jesus Christ. It means more than the impartation of knowledge.

Remember Matthew 11:29: "take my yoke upon you and learn of me. For I am meek and lowly. And you shall find rest for your souls." Our Lord said, "take my yoke upon you and learn of me," not learn about me. The little Greek preposition means to learn from Christ, out of Christ, off Christ.

We are not just learning about Christ; we are learning Jesus Christ. He is the lesson. He is the teacher. In John 8:30-32, we read: "And as he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Note what He said: "If you continue in my word." The proof that you have ever savingly believed is that you continue to believe. The proof that you have ever savingly repented is that you continue in repentance. The proof that you have ever savingly received the Word of God is that you continue in the Word of God. He said, "If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed." What does that little word indeed mean?

Indeed, what marks a true disciple is that he continues. He has learned Christ, learned from Christ, out of Christ, and in Christ. A real, genuine disciple learns, holds on to the truth, and continues in the truth. He does not give it up.

I have heard people say, "So-and-so used to be a Christian, but he is no longer a Christian." Really? You know what the Bible says in 1 John 2:19? "They went out from us, that it might be made manifest that they were not of us; for had they been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us." The proof that you are a real, genuine disciple is that you continue in the faith and continue in what Jesus Christ has taught you. You understand Proverbs 23:23, where the Word of God says, "Buy the truth, and sell it not."

The full sense of learning in being a disciple is receiving Christ and His work, together with the implications of Jesus Christ and His work in every area and sphere of life. We are forever changed by Him. We learn Jesus Christ; we learn Him.

Hearing and Being Taught by Christ

Look at Ephesians 4:21: "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." Paul, in an effort to excite their attention and earnestness even more, tells the Ephesians that they have not only heard Christ; they have been taught by Him. Let me ask you a question: Have you heard Jesus Christ? You say,

“How in the world could I hear Christ?” That is another sermon in itself. Yes, we hear Christ in and through His Word, but consider what He says in John 10: “Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.” What did He say? “You believe not because you are not of my sheep.” Then He says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

“And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Notice this: “My sheep hear my voice.” John, have you heard the voice of the Lord? You say, “I've never heard anyone speak from heaven.” No. But you've heard Him through His word in your heart, in your mind, and in your life. You've heard Him through the preaching and teaching of your word.

Every time I read this passage, I think of years ago, when I was driving through Atlanta, trying to get home. I do not know where in the world I was coming from—Ohio, Indiana, somewhere—late at night. Alice was not with me because all the children were small, and I was just trying to stay awake. I had the radio on; it was about one or two o'clock in the morning. I never will forget it.

I finally found some preaching. There was an old black preacher, and I thought, “He'll keep me awake. I'm going to listen to him.” He was preaching from John chapter 10. He read these verses: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” I never will forget that old, gruff voice.

He said, “Now if you had Christ Jesus, you in the Father's hand. And you in the Son's hand. And the Son's in the Father's hand. No man can pluck them out of his hand.” Then he said, “If you're there, God, the Father won't pluck you out of his hand. God, the Son won't pluck you out of his hand. God, the Spirit won't pluck you out of his hand.” “And come to think of it, them's only three that can do any

plucking anyhow." I thought, That's true—very, very true. It was worth it just to hear him say that.

But notice: "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me." Our Lord teaches us three things: His sheep hear His voice, He knows His sheep, and His sheep follow Him. John 10:3 says, "To him the porter openeth," speaking of Christ, "and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." So He called you. Have you heard Christ? Do you follow Him? Are you listening?

Have you been taught by Him? He only teaches truth. Obviously, if you are holding error, heresy, and falsehood, you have not been taught by Jesus Christ. He said, "if so be that you have heard Him." The Greek word is akouo. It means more than hearing or hearkening: to give audience, attend, and consider what is being said; to give ear to a teacher; and to hear and perceive by the ear what is announced in one's presence.

So it has the implication of comprehension and understanding. It is not just that you hear with your ear; you understand and comprehend what is being said and what is being taught. Do you realize that even in the Old Testament, the mark of a true believer was being taught by God and receiving His words?

Job 36:22 says, "Behold, God exalteth by his power, who teacheth like him?" God is the ultimate Teacher.

Turn to Deuteronomy 33. This is a tremendous passage, and it reveals some great truths. I preached on this passage many, many years ago. Verse 1 says, "And this is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death."

"And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of his saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Note those words: for them. "Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one of them shall receive of thy words."

Isn't that amazing? Every one of them shall receive of thy words. So God's saints hear His words. He teaches them.

Now look in your Bibles to John 6:45. I could quote it, but I want you to see it. In fact, let us read verse 44 and verse 45 so that you can see it in its context. Our Lord makes a tremendous statement in John 6:44–45.

He says, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up in the last day." Remember, can is the term of ability. No man has the ability to come to Christ apart from the power of God. "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Well, how does God draw? And by the way, the word is draw, not drag. How does God draw? We look in verse 45, "it is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." Wow. Our Lord said, "it's written in the prophets." Where is it written in the prophets? Let us go back in our Bibles to Isaiah 54, verse 13, because our Lord is quoting from it. Here he says it like this: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord. And great shall be the peace of thy children." All my children shall be taught of the Lord.

Turn right over to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 31, verse 34. This is where our Lord is quoting from: "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord. For they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, said the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

What did he say? They shall all be taught of the Lord. That is exactly right. When God draws us, He opens our understanding. He teaches us. He illuminates us. He enlightens us. He releases our will from the bondage of sin. He elevates our affections that we may desire Him. And He gives us grace and the ability to come to Him.

Now, when we're saved, God still continues to teach His people. The Apostle Paul says this in 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 9: "But as touching brotherly love, you need not that I write unto you, for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another." There are certain things that God just teaches us.

He puts it upon our heart. Now, I want you to turn, since you're in 1 Thessalonians, turn right over, if you would please, to 2 Timothy

and look in chapter 3. 2 Timothy chapter 3. And look, if you would, at verses 14 and 15. Look what Paul tells Timothy. 2 Timothy 3, verse 14. He tells Timothy, "but continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and has been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them," watch, "and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures."

"which are able to make thee wise in the salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus." Continuing the things that thou hast learned, what did our Lord say? "If you continue in my word, then are you truly my disciples?"

Now, let me show you a contrast. Turn back in your Bibles to the book of Romans chapter 16, Romans 16 and verse 17, Romans 16 and verse 17. We'll read verses 17 and 18. Romans chapter 16, notice verses 17 and 18. Romans 16 verse 17, Paul says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and avoid them."

"For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly. And by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Note, if you would, he says, you mark those that cause divisions and offenses contrary to what? To the doctrine which you have learned, that you've been taught. So God's people do learn some things.

The Truth in Jesus and the Mark of Antichrist

Now, let me show you. We learn that the truth is in Jesus Christ. We learn that Jesus Christ is the truth. We learn that His Word is truth. We learn that anything and everything that is contrary to Jesus Christ or His Word is untrue and an antichrist. Let me show you. Look in your Bibles to 1 John 2. Turn right on over to 1 John 2. 1 John 2, notice if you would please verse 22. 1 John 2, verse 22. Look at this. "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." So if you tell me that Jesus Christ is not the Messiah, He's not the Anointed One, He's not the Sent One of God, God says you're a liar. And if you try to deny the Father and the Son are one, God says you're a liar. It's just that simple. Look in chapter 4 and verse 3. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God."

Here is how you can discern: “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. But every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is that spirit of Antichrist, wherever you've heard that it should come, and even now is already in the world.” Look in 2 John 1:7. John again writes, “For many deceivers are entered in the world and who confess not that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

If you learn that Jesus Christ is truth, then you know that anything contrary to Christ is not true. Anything contrary to Jesus Christ is antichrist. In Galatians 2, Paul said that he withstood those evil men that the truth of the gospel might remain with them. Jesus Christ is truth, and Jesus Christ is the gospel. Without Jesus Christ, there is no gospel; and without the gospel, there is no salvation. A denial of the gospel is a denial of Jesus Christ, and a denial of Jesus Christ is a denial of salvation.

How God Teaches His People

How does God teach us? He teaches us through His Word and by His Spirit, as the Word of God is expounded, explained, and applied. If you read through the Scriptures, you will find that our God opens our hearts exactly as He opened the heart of Lydia in Acts 16: “So the Lord opened her heart.” As a result, she attended to the things spoken by Paul.

The Lord opens our understandings as He opened the understandings of the two men on the Emmaus road: “Did not our hearts burn within us when He spoke to us by the wayside?” Later, speaking of His disciples, Luke 24 says, “Then opened He their understandings, that they might understand the Word of God.” Thus God enlightens us.

For in Psalm 36:9, he says, “For with thee is the fountain of light, and in thy light we shall see light.” It is only in God that we see true light. It is only in God that He gives us pastor-teachers who will feed us according to knowledge and understanding. That is what He said in Jeremiah 3:15: “And I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

Applications and Warnings

When we learn Christ, we learn to be holy, to be obedient, and to think. You will find the word muse in the Bible. To muse means to think, to meditate, and to contemplate. Put an A on it and it negates it: amuse means not to think. Why do you think television is called amusement? Why are there amusement parks? All entertainment is amusement; you do not have to think. God teaches us to think.

First Peter 1:13 says, “Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind.” That means you had better get ready to think, study, and meditate. “Be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts of your ignorance, but as he which called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

God teaches us to think and to be obedient. He teaches us not to fashion our lives according to our former ignorance, which we will see next week. He teaches us that we are to be holy as He is holy.

Consider this fact: “but you have not so learned Christ.” We must learn Christ. Scripture teaches that all of His sheep, all of His people, shall be taught of the Lord. When many professing Christians are not being taught, are not progressing in the Christian profession, and are not becoming more and more holy, submissive, and godly, you must wonder whether or not they are sheep.

He does teach His own, and the evidence that He teaches His own is that they follow Him. What did He tell the Pharisees in John 10:26? “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” The sheep will always follow the shepherd. If you are not following the shepherd, you may not be a sheep.

One may object, “But I am really a sheep; I am just not a good student, just not an obedient child.” Really? Hebrews 12 teaches that if we are truly His child and are not obedient, we will be chastened.

"If you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is he whom he chasteneth not? But if you be without

chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons." If you can sin and get away with it, never being whipped or chastened, you do not belong to God. So when someone says, "Well, I'm saved; I'm just not a good student, and I'm not very obedient," really?

If you are truly His sheep, God will be whipping the living daylights out of you for your laziness, slothfulness, worldliness, lack of study, and disobedience. If you want to tell me that you are really a sheep and are disobedient, explain 1 John 2:4: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Wrestle with that one for a while. "My sheep hear my voice." If we are truly His sheep, His elect, and His children, we hear Him—either in instruction or discipline. But we will hear Him. Hebrews 12 says, "Now no chastening then, for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterwards, His chastening leaves a peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby."

So when God chastens us, it works. It always works. How do we know whether or not we are learning Christ? And what is the practical application of learning Christ? How do we actually apply it in our lives?

Let us pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your love and grace and mercy. Help us, Father, to learn Jesus Christ. He is the lesson. He is the teacher. We do not need to know about Him; we need to know Him and receive of Him. Lord, teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, and make us godly and obedient. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 8

Walking With God - 8

SCRIPTURE READING - Ephesians 4:17-32 (KJV)

Introduction and Reading of Ephesians 4:17-32

Let us open our Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4. This is number eight in the series "Walking with the Lord," and I would call it part two of "Learning Christ," which I dealt with last week. Let us begin reading with verse 17 through verse 32.

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true

> holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.
>
> "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.
>
> "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

The Necessity of Learning Christ

> We have been dealing with walking with the Lord. The Apostle Paul has told us in Ephesians 4 about walking worthily, and now he is teaching us how to walk differently as well. I pointed out last week, particularly verses 20 and 21, where he says, "...but ye have not so learned Christ."

If so be that ye have heard him and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus. We must actually learn Jesus Christ. Learning Christ is absolutely necessary. In this passage, the Apostle Paul tells us how not to live, how to live, and how to change our lives. In essence, he tells us how to learn Jesus Christ. He informs us clearly how to discern whether or not we have learned Christ and are learning Christ.

Jesus Christ does not teach or instruct us to live unholy, ungodly, unethical lives as His children. We may be in the world, but we are not of the world. In 1 John chapter 2, verses 15 through 17, God says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." He is not talking about His creation. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." He describes the world that we are not to love: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of

the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

When He says, "Love not the world," He is talking about the world of sin, the world of man, described as the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," by whom "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Paul is saying that he is dead to the world; he does not want the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life.

Our Lord is teaching us in Ephesians chapter 4 how to walk, and Paul is teaching us how to learn Jesus Christ. If we are going to learn Jesus Christ, we will learn to love not the world. Moreover, we will learn to mortify our flesh with its affections and lusts thereof. In Romans 8:13, Paul says, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

The word “mortify” simply means to make dead. That is where we get our English word “mortician,” someone who deals with the dead. He tells us that we are to mortify the deeds of our body. In Colossians 3:5, he says, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Isn’t it interesting that he says, “Mortify therefore your members”? That is the extension of your life, the extension of your body. He names these specific things that we are to make dead.

The question automatically arises: How do we know whether or not we love the world? How do we know whether or not we are indeed mortifying the deeds of the body? Christ teaches us not only not to love the world, but to mortify the body. He teaches us exactly how to do so, because it is explicitly stated in His Word. So an even more profound and provocative question would be this: How do we accomplish these tasks? How do we make sure that we do not love the world? How do we make sure that we do indeed mortify the deeds of our body?

The Colon in Verse 21 and the Connected Sentence

Look in Ephesians 4:21 again: “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.” Most of the time when we read Scripture, we read it simply to say, “I’ve read my Scripture for the day,” and then it is over. We never really pay attention to the text. But look carefully at verse 21. He says, “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:” What comes after the word “Jesus”? It is a colon—two little dots. One of the most important aspects of the use of a colon is emphasis. Usually, a colon means, “Hold on. Wait a minute. I know what I have just said, but the most important thing is about to follow.” That is exactly what a colon means. If you look at verse 21, you see the colon; if you look at verse 22, you see a semicolon.

If you look at verse 23 at the end, you see a semicolon. You will notice that there is a period at the end of verse 24. That means the sentence does not end until verse 24. This entire sentence began in verse 17 and does not end until verse 24. The Apostle Paul is telling us that we must learn Christ, and he is telling us exactly how we are to learn Christ—exactly how a good student and a good disciple learns Jesus Christ.

Learning Christ is really simple. It is practical and easy to apply. The problem is not the complexity in learning Jesus Christ. The problem is not the difficulty in applying the truth. The problem is that this is extremely painful to our flesh. We may expect a battle from our flesh, because our flesh is not going to lie as easily, readily, and submissively upon the altar as did Isaac. Our flesh will scream and cry and demand its own way.

The Simple Analogy of Putting Off and Putting On

In Galatians 5:16–17, the apostle says, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” The flesh fights against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. They are absolutely contrary, one to the other. Therefore, “ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

When you and I do naturally what we would do, we are usually sinning, because the flesh loves to have its way. So let me spell it out for you: How do we learn Christ? I said that the concept was simple, and it is. Allow me to explain. Answer these questions in your mind; do not answer them out loud. How many of you go to sleep each night with your work clothes on? How many of you go to work each morning in your pajamas? When your clothes get dirty, do you simply go into your house and put clean clothes on over your dirty clothes? When those get dirty, do you put on more clean clothes? Do you keep adding clean clothes over your dirty clothes until all of a sudden you cannot function or move because you have on so many clothes?

Each night you put off your day clothes and put on your night clothes. Each morning you put off your night clothes and put on your day clothes or your work clothes. When your garments are dirty and filthy, you take them off, and then put new or clean garments on in their place.

This is something you have done all your life. Ever since you were able to understand, you understood this concept: put off, put on, put off, put on. You cannot put something on until you put something off. That which is true in the physical realm is equally true in the spiritual realm. When you read Ephesians chapter 4 and also Colossians chapter 3, you will find that the words “put off” and “put on” occur over and over.

In verse 21, Paul says, “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:” There is the colon, and then you look at the next sentence in verse 22 and see the semicolon. In verse 23, you see a semicolon as well.

The Threefold Process: Put Off, Be Renewed, Put On

A semicolon is used to connect two related sentences. Verses 22 and 23 are related, and they lead to the final truth of verse 24. When you read verses 17 through 24, it is one sentence. In verses 21 through 24, Paul gives general instruction on how to learn Jesus Christ. Then, in verses 25 through 32, he gives particular instruction on how to learn Jesus Christ. He gives us the doctrine in encapsulated form

in verses 21 through 24, and then expands upon it in verses 25 through 32.

Verse 22 is connected with verse 21. In fact, verse 21 says, “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:” Here is the truth: “that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.”

Something has to be put off, and that which has to be put off is the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. This is something that you and I must put off before we can put on, and we must put it off. Part of this putting off is part and parcel of learning Jesus Christ.

When verse 22 says, “that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man,” the word “conversation” simply means your former conduct, your former lifestyle. It was the way you walked and the way you lived. Our former conduct is nothing more or less than an exhibition of the old nature with all of its corruption.

For instance, when you were unsaved and got in trouble, the easy way out was to lie. You did not have to face responsibility or take responsibility. You were not accountable. You just lied.

When you were lost, if you needed money, what was wrong with stealing, fraud, or deceit? Anything was open to you because you were in the old nature, and your old nature was corrupt. You thought nothing of violating the law of God. The Apostle Paul uses the phrase “the old man” to refer to the old nature.

The old man is that which we were and are in Adam. It is where our sin was imputed, and because sin has been imputed, we are sinners as well. This old man is corrupt and deceitful. John Gill, commenting on the phrase “the old man,” says: “By the old man is meant the corruption of nature. Called a man because natural to men, it lives and dwells in them. It has spread itself over the whole man. It rules and governs in men and consists of various parts and members as a man does. It is called old because it is the poison of the old serpent, with which man was infected by him from the beginning. It is derived from the first man that ever was. It is as old as man is, in whom it is, and is likewise called so with respect to its

duration and continuance and in opposition to and contradistinction from the new man or principle of grace."

It is called ours because it is continually with us. It is in our nature; it cleaves to us and abides in us. Thus, when Ephesians 4:22 says that ye put off, concerning the former conduct or lifestyle, the old man, it means everything that you are by nature—everything that you were taught all your life as an unsaved man.

The way this old man can be put off is because our old man was crucified with Jesus Christ. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." When Christ was crucified, our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed. Henceforth, we should not serve sin. The old man is corrupt.

It is that which we are by nature. But since our old man has been crucified in Jesus Christ, it is not to dominate us, rule and reign in us, or hold sway. Romans 6:11 says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Notice the words, "likewise reckon." The word "reckon" literally means to count or to impute. Count yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin. Here is a man who was a drunk all his life, and he died. He is lying in his casket, dead as a hammer. You may hold a fifth of whiskey over his face and say, "Here it is, but would you like some more?" What is he going to do? Nothing, because he is dead.

This is what God is saying: We have to learn to count ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but also alive unto God through Jesus Christ. Sin is not to reign in our mortal bodies. He did not say, "Let not sin therefore be in your mortal bodies." It is here. He said, "Let not

therefore sin reign in your mortal bodies." In other words, sin is not our Lord; Jesus Christ is our Lord.

The power of sin has been broken in the child of God. Do we sin? Yes. Do we have to sin? No. We are sinners, but through Jesus Christ we now have the ability to say, "No. I'm not going to be an adulterer. I'm not going to be a drunkard. I'm not going to be a thief. I'm going to obey Christ and bring my life in conformity to His Word." Sin is not to have dominion over us.

Notice, if you would, as you turn back to Ephesians chapter 4. Look what he said in verse 22: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Now, you do not have to turn there, but in Colossians 3 and verse 9, Paul said it again: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." When you look back at verse 22, that old man with his deeds is not only corrupt; he also has deceitful lusts. So the analogy of our life without Jesus Christ is described as an old man that is corrupt and full of deceitful lusts.

Now, I hope you remember the passage in Jeremiah chapter 17, verse 9. Let me quote it, and you will remember it: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" If the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, combine that with what the Bible says in Ephesians 4, verse 22, about deceitful lusts.

The Deceitfulness of Sin and the Old Man

You have to stop and ask yourself this: What controls an unsaved man? The answer will be his passions and his pleasures. Sin dominates an unsaved man. It rules over him. It reigns over him. It manipulates him. It seduces him. It deceives him. When sin says "jump," they jump. When Scripture speaks of deceitful lusts, remember this about sin: Sin always promises happiness, excitement, gratification, and pleasure, but it always produces death.

Have you ever noticed—and I realize that alcohol is not sinful in and of itself; I understand that—that when an advertisement for alcohol comes on television, they never show a drunk lying in the

gutter, wallowing in his own vomit? They show a beautiful young woman and a handsome young man sipping and having a wonderful time. And when your flesh lusts after another man or another woman, they never show you a broken home and children begging for their mama and daddy, while neither one of them happens to be around. Sin promises all of these. That is why Scripture speaks of deceitful lusts.

Now listen, let me quote this for you. In James 1, verses 13 through 15: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” What did the Bible say? “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

In other words, when there appears something outside of you that promises to satisfy a desire that you have on the inside, that is your lust. When you see that thing on the outside, you are enticed; and when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and when sin is finished, it bringeth forth death. But notice, every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust. And it is a deceitful lust. Now, let me show you how deceitful sin is.

This is how deceitful sin really is. It will deceive even a child of God if we allow it to do so. The apostle warns believers in Hebrews 3:12-13: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Notice that he is speaking to brethren. Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. So sin will deceive. It is just that simple. It will deceive anyone if we will allow its deception and embrace that deception.

Now, remember, we are talking about learning Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4:21 says, "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." What does he tell you to do first? Verse 22 says, "that ye put off concerning the former conversation or conduct or lifestyle, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."

We must put that off. The question is, what must be done in light of the understanding that our old man is corrupt and filled with deceitful lusts? The answer is found in verse 23: "and be renewed in the spirit of your mind."

Renewal of the Mind and Capturing Thoughts

Notice that verse 23 begins with the conjunction "and." A-N-D. Verse 22 ends with a semicolon, which means that what follows is related. It is a continuous thought, beginning with "and": "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." These two things are to take place simultaneously.

First, the old man must be put off. That is with respect to your former conduct or habits of life; they must be laid aside—anything that pertains to a corrupt or fallen nature. Secondly, we must be renewed in the spirit of our minds. Let me put it to you very bluntly: our minds cannot be renewed with the old man, the old ways, the old habits, and the old thought patterns still in place. If our minds are to be renewed, we must put away everything that is contrary to a renewed mind.

Look at verse 23: “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” The word “renewed” in the Greek is the Greek word “ananeoō.” It is a present passive infinitive, asserting an obligation and treated as a command. Literally, we are commanded to have a renewed mind, but the renewal is not a self-renewal. It is accomplished on us rather than by us. We are to be constantly and continually renewed by Jesus Christ.

There are specific commands that we must obey and that we are clearly exhorted to follow regarding our minds. Romans 12, verses 1 and 2, says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Then, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed.” How? “By the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

When he says, “that ye may be transformed,” the Greek word for “transformed” is where we get our English word “metamorphosis.”

What's a butterfly do? He goes through changes. Literally, he says that we're to be metamorphosized; we're to go through changes. How? By the renewing of our mind. Do you remember Philippians 2 and verse 5? "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Let this mind be in you.

First Peter 4, verses 1 and 2, says, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." We are to be armed with the mind of Christ, to have the mind of Christ, and to be renewed in the spirit of our mind.

In Ephesians 4, we are not through; this passage shows how to learn Jesus Christ. Verse 21 says, "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:" What must you do? "Put off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts;" and, joined by a conjunction, "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." These two thoughts do indeed go together. Putting off the old man, corrupt according to deceitful lusts, must be accompanied by renewal in the spirit of the mind.

Notice that verse 23 ends with a semicolon, and verse 24 begins with the conjunction "and" again: "and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." What he is telling us is this: these things must absolutely go together. We must, number one, put off the old man; number two, be renewed in the spirit of our minds; and number three, put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. We are to put off and put on, and in between, we are to have our minds renewed.

Verse 22 tells us to "put off concerning the former conversation, the old man," and verse 24 tells us "that ye put on the new man." What is the new man? The new man is the man that we are in Jesus Christ. He is the man created in righteousness and true holiness.

The way this works is very simple. When we put off the old man—that is, the old habits and the old conduct—our minds are renewed. We understand scriptural truth, obedience, submission,

godliness, holiness, and sanctification. We understand that we have been set apart and are to live differently. When we do not walk, talk, and think the way the ungodly do, we learn to think scripturally and biblically and to walk as Jesus Christ walked, in righteousness and true holiness. Righteousness and true holiness are found only in Christ and in His Word. Thus, we seek to bring the totality of our life into conformity to His Word.

Because we are talking about having our minds renewed, notice 2 Corinthians 10:3: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." In other words, we are not fighting to have our lusts satisfied. We are not fighting to commit adultery, steal, or kill. No, we are not walking after the flesh; we are not warring after the flesh. Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.

Then he goes on to say, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." You know what your stronghold is? It is your place of defense. What is man's stronghold? Watch, if you would, in verse 5: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Here is my question: As a new man in Jesus Christ, how many thoughts are we allowed that are unbiblical, ungodly, unrighteous, and unholy? None. We are to bring every thought to the obedience of Jesus Christ—every thought. Isn't that interesting? Isn't that amazing?

So he tells us that we must put off, we must be renewed, and we must put on. How do you do that? It is very simple. When this old habit, this old thought pattern, comes up in your mind, you have to say, "Lord, I refuse that. I reject that. I will not have that. Lord, I want to be renewed in the spirit of my mind. I ask Jesus Christ to renew my mind. And Lord, by Your grace, I want the mind of Christ. I want to be armed with the mind of Christ. And Lord, here is what You say that I should do in the place of that. And I'm going to put my mind upon that."

If I were to hold up a pen and ask you what it is, you would tell me it is a pen. If I asked what color it is, you would say black and white.

If I were to take my Bible and hold it up, you would say it is the Bible; if I asked the color of the cover, you would say it is black. While you were thinking about the pen, you were not thinking about the Bible; while you were thinking about the Bible, you were not thinking about the pen. No matter how hard you try, you cannot think of but one thing at a time. So if I put off that wicked, wrong thought, ask to be renewed, and start thinking things that are biblical and scriptural, where is my mind? It is now on the new man, not on the old man.

These three things go together: we put off, we are renewed, and we put on. It does no good to put off an old habit or any old unbiblical conduct unless you put on a new habit and new biblical conduct in its place. If you are merely interested in putting off and reforming yourself according to your own dictates and thoughts, you are doomed for failure.

The Danger of Self-Reformation (Matthew 12:43-45)

If you do not replace an old, unbiblical habit with a new, godly habit, inevitably the old habit will return, and it will return with a vengeance. Your last state will be worse than your first state. Our Lord says, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

Self-reformation does not work. It cannot work. We are to put off, be renewed, and put on.

In Ephesians 4, Paul mentions a number of items that must be dealt with, particularly in our lives. He tells us what to put off and what to put on in its place. The list in Ephesians 4 is certainly not extensive, but it is illustrative; it illustrates the principle. Paul could not cover every sin, every habit, and every sinful thought pattern, or we could not even carry our Bibles. But he does give us principles in order that we may apply them and work them out in our own lives.

Specific Put Off/Put On Examples (Verses 25-32)

Here it is in a nutshell, in verses 21–24: if you are going to learn Christ, you have to put off the old man, be renewed in your spirit, and put on the new man.

How do we do that? Paul gives us some illustrations. In verse 25 he says, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” Clearly, lying is a sin that must be put off. If our minds are renewed in Christ Jesus, we learn to speak the truth. The truth is the truth. Ephesians 4:15 says, “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

I can speak the truth in a hateful manner, irritate people, and drive them away. Or I can speak the truth lovingly, kindly, and civilly, and it may or may not be accepted. He says, “speaking the truth in love.” Truth hurts, and truth may be offensive. However, truth is still truth and must be spoken, especially to each other. You will never know how many people have come to me in times past, sat in front of me, and lied like a dog. You cannot help someone unless they tell the truth and face the truth. Nor can you help anyone unless they are willing to hear the truth and act upon it.

The apostle is saying that we are one body, members one of another, and we owe the truth to each other. It may hurt, and we may not like it, but we still must tell the truth. Here is what you put off: you put away lying, and you put on in its place speaking the truth, every man with his neighbour. That would be everybody, though he is particularly talking about the saints of God in that area. We do not have to speak the truth in a hateful or ugly manner, but we still must speak it.

Look at verses 26 and 27: “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil.” Verse 26 tells us to put off unrighteous anger and put on righteous anger. “Be ye angry, and sin not.” That is a positive. There is a way to be angry and not sin. On the other hand, we must put off anger that is sinful and wicked. “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

How can you tell the difference between righteous anger and sinful anger? A sinful anger will always manifest itself in one of two ways. The first, and the way most people understand anger, is volcanic. You become so angry that you cuss everybody out, tell everybody off, rant and rave, scream, and explode without caring who hears it. That is sinful anger.

But another sinful anger is internalized anger. Ed does me wrong, and I do not explode or cuss him out. I simply smile and say, “You just wait, buddy. I’m going to nail you. I’ll get you sometime when you’re not expecting it.” I internalize that anger and let it eat my guts out. That is sinful anger.

Anger is an emotion, and it is not necessarily sinful in and of itself. If all anger is sinful, then there is a problem, because in Mark chapter 3 the Bible says that our Lord “looked round about upon them with anger.” He was angry. Anger is not meant to blow up and cuss everybody out, nor is it meant to be internalized and eat your insides out like a canker. Anger is an emotion to deal with sin and problems and get them resolved. The problem is that most of us get angry with each other instead of getting angry with the sin.

Notice what he says: “Neither,” he says, “be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” What does that mean? Whether your anger is righteous or unrighteous, God says to work it out before the sun goes down. You are not to go to bed with your wife or husband mad, angry, and upset. Work it out before the sun goes down. If you have righteous anger dealing with sin, work it out before the sun goes down. Put off unrighteous anger and put on righteous anger that works the problems out. Note what he says next in verse 27.

"Neither give place to the devil." What does that mean? When you do not work out your anger before the sun goes down, you are giving him place and giving him ground. If you do not want the devil in your life, do not give him ground. Do not invite him into your house or into your life. If you give him ground, he will take it; if you invite him in, he will come in. Therefore, put off unrighteous anger, put on righteous anger, and deal with the problem before the sun goes down, because otherwise you will give place to the devil.

Now watch verse 28: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." God says we are to put off theft and every aspect of it. Fraud, deceit, dishonesty, and anything like that must be put off.

Our renewed minds will replace that old habit, or that old way of life, with honest labor and a cheerful, generous, sacrificial heart. “Let him that stole steal no more.” Put off stealing and dishonesty. What are you to put on? You are to put on work, “the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” In other words, you put on not a covetous spirit, but a generous, gracious, sacrificial spirit.

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” You put off corrupt communication, and you put on that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. All corrupt communication is to be put off. Corrupt communication is that which is bad, rotten, putrid, corrupted, and not fit for use. It is language that is worthless and of poor quality. It is a waste of time and breath. Everybody understands that many things are not worth saying and should never be said.

What do we put on in their place? We put on quality communication, that which is holy and godly. Such communication builds up; it does not tear down. Gossip, innuendo, slander, false accusation, libel, and malicious implications are all forbidden in verse 29. What is commended to be put on is that which edifies, builds up, promotes, strengthens, and encourages. In other words, Paul is saying that we must put on language and communication that promotes one another’s growth in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness, and happiness.

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Verse 31 is a total put-off verse: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.” There should not be a root of bitterness in you—no wrath, no anger, no clamour. Clamour is useless noise: when somebody says, “Well, I don’t have the solution to this problem, but bless God, I’m going to put my two cents’ worth

in." You do not have an answer; you just want to spout off. All that is to be put off. What is to be put on in its place? Look at verse 32.

It is a complete put-on. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." We are to put on kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. How many have heard Christians say, "Well, I'll forgive, but I'm not forgetting"? If you do not forget, then you have never really forgiven. When God for Christ's sake forgave our sins, He forgot them.

That is, He does not use them against us, manipulate us with them, or hold them against us. When someone sins against you, you may not have the power to obliterate it from your mind, but you do have the power never to speak of it again. If it comes into your mind, you can put it out of your mind. We are to forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. I cannot say, "Ed, I remember what you did two years ago." If I forgave him, I forgot. I am not going to manipulate him or try to use it against him.

Grieving the Holy Spirit and Conclusion

Now, I skipped verse 30, so let us go back to it: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." In this context, how do you grieve the Holy Spirit of God? You grieve the Holy Spirit by refusing to put off the old man, by refusing to be renewed in your mind, and by refusing to put on the new man. The Holy Spirit who indwells us, inhabits us, and is our seal unto the day of redemption is grieved when we follow the old man, when we do not have a renewed mind, and when we do not put on the new man.

Paul said you must learn Christ. How do you learn Christ? By learning to put off the old man, be renewed in your mind, and put on the new man.

Let me make a couple of applications. Everybody knows the answer: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. How do you build a house? One step at a time. You may not be able to change everything in your life, but you can start by changing one thing and then go from there. The journey of a thousand miles is begun with

one step. You can change your life by taking a step a day, if you have to.

Your goal should be to become something entirely different from that which you are by nature. Your goal should be to become the child of God that your obedience and the grace of God can make you, for your good and His glory. The only way you can accomplish that goal is to put off, be renewed, and put on. That is how you learn Jesus Christ.

Father, in Thy name, we ask for Your grace and Your mercy. We pray that You would help us, teach us, and build us up in the most holy faith. Help us to change our lives, Lord. Help us to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man in Christ Jesus. And I bless it. We ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

Walking With God - 9

Introduction and Review of the Series

Ephesians chapter 5, verses 1 through 7, says: “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 savor. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

In this brief series, we have pointed out that you must walk before the Lord before you can actually walk with the Lord—that is, walk in His presence. We talked about walking by faith. Then, in Ephesians 4, we had three messages on walking worthily: what it means to walk worthy before the Lord. We also had three messages on walking differently, learning Christ, and bringing our lives into conformity to

His Word. Now we come to Ephesians 5, and this message is walking in love.

Be Followers of God as Dear Children

Paul begins: “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.” When he gives us that command, he is following a simple principle, enforced by the consideration that children ought to be like their fathers. He reminds us that we are the children of God, and therefore we ought, as much as possible, to bring our conduct into line with our heavenly Father.

Our Lord used this same principle in Matthew 5:48: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” In Matthew 5:27–47, He tells us how not to live and then how to live, culminating in verse 48: “Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” In other words, we ought to resemble our Father.

If His image is stamped upon our hearts, and if His grace runs through our veins, then obviously we should be like Him. Ephesians 5:1 therefore says, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.”

The Greek word for followers here is mimetes, which literally means a follower or an imitator. If it sounds like our English word mimic, that is because it is related and is the source of our English word mimic as well. He tells us that we are to be followers of God as dear children.

What are dear children? There are children, and then there are dear children. How would you make a distinction between children and dear children? The word for dear here is the Greek word agapetos, which literally means beloved, esteemed, that which is dear, a favorite, one who is worthy of love, and one who is dearly beloved.

Paul says, “Be followers of God as dear children.” The Scripture says in Psalm 4 and verse 3, “But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself.” A dear child, then, is someone who is indeed a follower of God, someone who is obedient, someone who acts like his heavenly Father. So he calls us dear children.

Walk in Love: Love is Not a Feeling but an Act of the Will

In verse 2, Paul tells us that if we are going to walk pleasingly and acceptably to our Father, we must walk in love: “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.”

Do you walk in love? You should know whether or not you actually walk in love. Unhappily, the problem, as well as the truth, is that most professing Christians have absolutely no idea what it means to walk in biblical love. Love is not some warm, fuzzy feeling. Love is not a desire to please everyone. Love is not a desire not to offend anyone. Love is not emotions, nor is it emotional feelings.

Too many times I have heard people say concerning love, “But I don’t feel anything.” Oftentimes, when you find a couple that are on the verge of divorce, one will say to the other, “But I have no feelings for you.” There may be truth in that statement, only because love is not a feeling. Love is an act of the will. You cannot command feelings. You can command the will. I cannot look at Steve and say, “Steve, I command you right now to feel sick,” or, “I command you right now to feel happy,” or, “I command you to feel strong.” I cannot command feelings. But I could command him to do something, because whatever he does would be an act of the will.

That is why the Bible says in Ephesians 5 and verse 25, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.” What is He doing when He says, “Husband, love your wives”? He is commanding us to love our wives. Husbands must therefore choose to obey and to love their wives. It has been commanded by our Heavenly Father.

We may not always have certain feelings for our wives. We may not always be emotional, or get that warm and tingly feeling when we are around them, but that is beside the point. We have been commanded to love them. Love is not feelings. I want to show you that love is not some warm, tingly, fuzzy feeling. In 1 Peter 3, verse 8, the Word of God says, “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.” Now God has commanded us here to love as brethren.

Are you warm and fuzzy and emotional with the brethren? I hope not. We are never ever commanded in the Scripture to have certain feelings toward anyone. I have never had warm, fuzzy feelings toward Pat. I have never had warm, fuzzy feelings toward Steve, and I do not want them either, brother. Love is not feelings. When we have been commanded to love the brethren, there are some brethren who are not too lovable. There are some brethren who are irritating.

There are some who have idiosyncrasies, things that you and I do not like. But that is immaterial. God does not even command us to like the brethren; He commands us to love the brethren. Isn't that interesting? Consider this: If I said, "Boy, that Steve, he's got some idiosyncrasies. He's got some strange things, and I don't know if I like that or not," he might be looking at someone and saying, "You know, that preacher, he's got those idiosyncrasies. He's got some strange things, too. I don't know if I like that or not." What we can say about one, another can say about us as well. So it is not whether we have feelings; God has commanded us to love each other whether we have any feelings or not.

Love as the Mark of Discipleship and Evidence of Salvation

Now look at 1 John 3:14. After you see this passage, you might decide, "Yes, we probably better love the brethren." The Scripture says, "We know"—note, underline that now—"we know" one of the ways that we know: "We know that we've passed from death unto life," that is, this is one way we know we're saved, "we know that we've passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." We know that we pass from death unto life because we love the brethren. If we do not love the brothers, that is because we abide in death. We're not saved. It's that simple.

Now look at John 13:34. Here is what our Lord says: "A new commandment I give

Our Lord has commanded us to love each other. Moreover, He says this is the true mark of His disciples: that they love each other. In John 13:34–35, He says, "unto you, that ye love one another; as I

have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Look at John 15:12: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Then, in verse 17: "These things I command you, that ye love one another."

Romans 12:10 says, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another."

Before explaining Ephesians 5:2, let me point out that we have some limitations in the English language. A good example is the word love. I can say, "I love my wife." I can also say, "I love my dogs," or, "I love avocados." Obviously, I do not love avocados the way I love my animals, and I certainly do not love my animals the way I love my wife. We have one word for love, and we use it for everything: hot dogs, hamburgers, and french fries.

Greek Words for Love and the Meaning of Agape

In the Greek language, they could express things a little differently. There are three main words in the Greek language for love. The first one everyone knows is the Greek word agape—agape love. It is the highest form of love. It is used over and over in Scripture concerning God's love, and it is also used concerning our love. Even in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world," agapao is the verb: "I love," or God loved us. He is using agapao, or agape, the noun, to indicate love. Agape love is the love that gives.

Agape expects nothing in return. The second Greek word is phileo. It is also translated "I love," and it is where we get our English word family. Phileo love is the love that gives and receives. I could say, "I love my wife," and my wife loves me; or, "I love my children," and my children love me; or, "I love my dogs," and my dogs love me. It is the love that gives and receives. There is a third Greek word that is never used in the Bible: eros. It is where we get our English word erotic. It has to do with nothing but sensual or sexual pleasure or lust. It is the word that is used when someone takes.

When Paul says in Ephesians 5 and verse 2 that we are to walk in love, he uses the word agape. To walk in love concerns your everyday

life—how you go about your business, what you do on a daily basis. It is your lifestyle.

Love is Obedience to God's Law

How do we walk in love? How is that accomplished? Many times we do not feel loving or even loveable. We do not have warm, tingly, fuzzy sensations and feelings. Sometimes we feel downright mean. We want to be nasty and ugly. Love is not feelings. Love is an act of the will. More than that, love is also obedience to the law. When God commands us to walk in love, He is commanding us to be obedient.

He is saying that we should choose to obey, and that choosing to obey is our duty and responsibility, regardless of how we feel. Feelings have nothing to do with it. Romans 13:10 says, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” What is love? Love is the fulfilling of the law. How do I walk in love? I fulfill God’s law.

I do what God commands me. Love works no ill, and the reason it works no ill is because it is the fulfilling of God's law.

Now, go back in your Bibles very quickly to John chapter 14. Then we are going to end up in 1 John just momentarily. Look in John chapter 14, and look, if you would please, at verse 21. Interestingly, our Lord equates love with obedience. In John 14:21, He says, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Now note, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." How do we know that we love God? We keep His commandments. Skip down to verse 24. Look what He says: "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." So obviously, love then is indeed the fulfilling of the law. If we love Christ, we obey Him. If we do not love Him, we disobey Him. Love is obedience. And we choose to obey, or we choose to disobey. Obedience and disobedience do not rely upon feelings or emotions.

They are an act of the will. Obedience is our submission to God, and disobedience is our rebellion to God. It has nothing to do with feelings, either good or bad. Look in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 5.

Notice, if you would please, verses 2 and 3. Watch: "By this we know"—you might underline that in your minds and in your Bibles—"that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Now let me go ahead and read verse 3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

Now go back to verse 2: "By this we know that we love the children of God"—that would be the brethren—and we could read it like that: "By this we know that we love the brethren, when we love God, and keep his commandments." So, I could look at Ron and say, "Ron, here's the truth."

“I've never had warm fuzzy feelings towards you.” Does that mean I don't love him? Of course not. What is love according to verse 2? He said, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.” How do I know that I love Ron? Because I respect him. I respect his wife, his children, and his property. I act toward him the way God commands me to act toward him. Regardless of whether I ever have emotions or feelings, I still love him because love is the fulfilling of the law.

Verse 3 makes it even clearer: “For this is the love of God.” You want to know what the love of God is? Here it is: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” Note also, “and his commandments are not grievous.” It does not grieve us that we obey. It does not grieve us that we cannot disobey, murder, pillage, plunder, loot, or steal. We love him, keep his commandments, and it does not grieve us. We are thankful to be able to keep his commandments.

Walking in Love as Christ Loved Us

Now go back to Ephesians chapter 5 and look at verse 2, because what I have just covered is, in one sense, the easy part of that verse. He says, “Walk in love,” and I have shown you from the Bible that love is obedience to God's law and an act of the will. Now that we have been regenerated by his grace, we can choose to obey God and his commandments. But look at the rest of verse 2: “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.”

What do you mean that “walk in love” is the easy part? Look at the little word “as”: “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” The word “as” is the Greek word kathos, translated in our Bibles as “even as,” “just as,” “in proportion to,” “according to,” and “agreeable to the fact.” We are to walk in love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us. Wow.

That's a pretty tall order. We are to walk in love just as, commensurate with, agreeable to, and in proportion to that Christ loved us. We may never, in this life, be able to love like Christ quantitatively. We are not God; he is God. We cannot ever have the depth of his love. But although we may not be able to walk and love as he loved quantitatively, we may love as he loved qualitatively. In other words, we may not have the quantity, but we may have the quality. Our love should be of the quality and of the kind that Christ had, who loved us.

Notice what he said in verse 2: "And walk in love, just as Christ also hath loved us." How did he love us? "And hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Do you understand that Jesus Christ gave himself for us? Everything that he did was for us. When he left his home in glory, it was for us. When he became incarnate, it was for us. When he walked on this earth, it was for us. When he gave obedience to God's law, it was for us. When he sacrificed Himself, it was for us. Yes, it was done in obedience to the Father, and yes, the Father was glorified, but He did it for us.

The Bible teaches us in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21 that Jesus' obedience was for us: "For he," that is God the Father, "hath made him," that is God the Son, "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

That is the doctrine of imputation. Jesus Christ is the only one who has ever given to the law that which it demands, the only one who ever gave to the law a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. God took our sins and imputed them to Jesus Christ. He put them on Christ's account, and Christ died as our substitute, as our sacrifice, in our place. Then God took that perfect righteousness which Jesus Christ worked out and imputed it, putting it to our account. Thus, we are not only forgiven; we now have a perfect

righteousness in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, then, is not just our substitute and our sacrifice. He is our righteousness.

In verse 2, he says, "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering." The word offering here is prosphora, which means an offering, the act of bringing, that which is presented, or that which is given as a gift. Christ literally gave himself as a gift. But that is not all. He says, "and a sacrifice to God." His offering and sacrifice was to God. The word sacrifice is thusia, translated sacrifice twenty-nine times in our Bibles. Christ loved us and gave himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God the Father for a sweet-smelling savor.

John Calvin comments on this sweet-smelling savor: "While this statement leads us to admire the grace of Christ, it bears directly upon the present subject. No language indeed can fully represent the consequences and efficacy of Christ's death. This is the only price by which we are reconciled to God. The doctrine of faith on this subject holds the highest rank. But the more extraordinary the discoveries which have reached us of the Redeemer's kindness, the more strongly are we bound to His service."

"Besides, we may infer from Paul's words that unless we love one another, none of our duties will be acceptable in the sight of God. If the reconciliation of men affected by Christ was a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savor, we too shall be unto God a sweet savor when that holy perfume is spread over us."

Jesus Christ has offered himself as a sacrifice unto God. When we think of sacrifice, we think of something dead. All of those lambs and oxen and rams in the Old Testament died. Even in the New Testament, before Christ accomplished our redemption, those animals given for sacrifice died. We think of Christ as the great sacrifice, and what did he do? He died. But although we are commanded to walk in love and to emulate Christ, our sacrifice is a little different. Let me quote one passage, and we will look at another. You should be able to quote this passage.

Paul said in Romans 12:1–2, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be

not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." So he tells us that we are to offer our bodies now as a living sacrifice.

Christ gave Himself and died in our stead. Now Paul says we are to live in His stead: our bodies are to be a living sacrifice. In Hebrews 13, the context is Jesus Christ. Going back to verse 12, we read, "Wherefore Jesus also"; therefore Christ is the subject in this context. Verse 15 says, "By him"—that is, by Jesus Christ—"therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

The Sweet-Smelling Savor of Obedience vs. the Stench of Sin

Notice the words in verse 15: "By him"—that is, by Jesus Christ—"therefore let us offer"; there is that word—"the sacrifice"; there is that word—"the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Just as Christ loved us, we are to love, and we are to walk, and we are to give an offering of praise and sacrifice to our God. We are a living sacrifice, and that praise is to be given constantly and continually.

If we are walking in biblical love, we are going to be walking obediently. We are going to be walking in accordance with the law of God. The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 5:2 that the work of Jesus Christ was a sweet-smelling savour to God the Father. All of us understand what it is like to smell a good steak on the grill or barbecue chicken. We like that smell. That is what a sweet-smelling savour was in the Old Testament: the offerings or the incense that was going up. Jesus Christ has given Himself as a sweet-smelling savour.

Our Lord delights in our obedience. Our obedience is a sweet-smelling savor to our Heavenly Father.

Let me quote just a few Scriptures, and I want you to listen, because in each of these passages the word abomination is used. The

word abomination literally means a stench in the nostrils. That means a stench in God's nostrils.

Proverbs 11:20 says, "They that are of a froward heart are an abomination to the Lord: but such as are upright in the way are his delight." Now God says the froward—that is, the perverse and the rebellious—are a stench in His nostrils, but the man who is upright, who walks according to His Word, is His delight.

Then, when you get to Proverbs 12:22, the Bible says, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight." Now, how do you deal truly? You deal honestly, justly, and righteously. You are not defrauding someone, stealing from someone, or trying to get the best of someone; you are dealing honestly and truly. So God says that lying lips are a stench in His nostrils, but those who deal truly are His delight. That is a sweet-smelling savor to Him.

Then, when you get to Proverbs 15:18, the Bible says, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." So anything that a wicked man can do, even a sacrifice, is a stench in God's nostrils. He does not like it. But the prayer of the upright is His delight. In other words, that is the sweet smell unto God.

Let me ask you a question. I am not trying to be funny, but I am trying to prove a point. Do you know the difference between a sweet smell and a stinking smell? How many of you really enjoy smelling a skunk? Do you enjoy the smell of a rotten egg, or that which is putrid and rotting? The answer is no.

We find such odors offensive and get away from them as quickly as possible. When they arise, we leave the area or erase them as quickly as we can. I do not know if you have ever tried to wash the scent of a skunk from your clothes or body. I used to catch skunks. They make wonderful pets once they are deodorized. A skunk is a better mouser than a cat. When I was a boy, my uncle would pay me to catch a skunk and bring it to him, because he had 100,000 chickens and liked those skunks to catch the rats. But have you ever tried to wash the scent of a skunk off a dog? It is a chore.

Alice and I love our dogs. But if one of them gets in a fight with a skunk, that dog belongs to Alice; it does not belong to me then. We find those odors offensive.

Have you ever stopped to think that if the work of Jesus Christ, obedience, and godliness are a sweet smell to God, what is the stench in His nostrils? He tells us. “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” That is a sweet smell.

Now He comes to the offensive odors: “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” First, fornication is a very broad term that includes all illicit sexual relations. Uncleanness is another broad term, referring to that which is impure and lustful.

It is not only used in a physical sense; it is also used in a moral sense. Covetousness, in verse 3, is connected both to fornication and uncleanness, because it is a covetous, unclean desire that leads to fornication. Stop and think about this. These sins are a denial of God's supremacy and sovereignty, and therefore they also make one an idolater. Look down to verse 5: “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater.” He said the same thing in Colossians 3:5: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

The man who is covetous has already, in his own mind, heart, and life, dethroned God and enthroned himself. By his actions he is saying, “I don't care what God says. I don't care what God commands. I want what I want. I'll do what I want to do.” It is just that simple. God tells us here that fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness are not to be once named among us.

The Greek word literally means not so much as one time. In other words, one time is one time too many. These sins should never, ever be named among the saints of God. Paul had to deal with a horrific offense in 1 Corinthians 5. A man was living in fornication, probably even incest, with his stepmother. In verse 1, the woman is not called his mother, but his father's wife. Evidently his mother had died, and his father had remarried, probably a younger woman. The Bible says, “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles,” or the heathen and pagans, “that one should have his father's wife.”

Warning: No Inheritance for the Wicked and the Deception of Vain Words

“And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Verse 1: “It is reported commonly there's fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles.” What is he saying? Even the heathen have better sense than this. So Paul makes it clear in Ephesians chapter 5 that, if we're walking in love, this is not to be named at all among the saints. This should show you how far we have fallen and how much we have strayed from the truth of God's Word. Very seldom is there a church today where there is not fornication and adultery and covetousness. Look at the pastors who have to leave the ministry every year because they get involved with the church secretary or some other woman in the church. I'm simply pointing out the fact: this is not to be even once named among the saints.

Now skip down to verse 4. He says, “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.” Filthiness refers to that which is obscene, ugly, and dirty.

I never will forget, years and years ago, I had a Christian brother. My wife was out of town, and his wife was out of town. He invited me over to his house to watch a movie. They had gone to some meeting on Jekyll Island, I think. We didn't have television, and I hardly ever go to a movie theater, so I went over to fellowship with him and watch the movie. The movie was not on five minutes before the foul, filthy language began. I looked at him and said, “Turn it off.” He said, “Why?” I said, “I'm not going to sit here and listen to that language. I don't talk like that. I don't know anybody that talks like that. That's not reality. That's not real life.” He said, “Pastor, I'll turn it off.” But he added, “I'll tell you one thing. You're sheltered. Where I work, the women speak worse than that.” I said, “Well, they might, but I'm not going to listen to it.”

When he talks about filthiness, he is talking about that which is ugly, dirty, filthy, and obscene. Then he talks about foolish talking. What is foolish talking? It is that which is foolish, impious, and godless. The word for foolish talking is morologia in the Greek. It is made up of two Greek words, moros, which means foolish, and logia, words.

The verb is lego, “I say.” So, actually, foolish talking is moronic talking. It is talking like a moron, talking as if you have no sense or rationality. God says that this is not to be named among you. Then he speaks of jesting. Jesting is scurrility, ribaldry, low jesting; it is that which is bad, obscene, and vicious.

He says, “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.” Does that mean there is a convenient time for filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting? No, that is not what he is talking about at all. He says that we are to put these things off because they are not convenient. The Greek word for convenient is aneko, which refers to that which is fitting or due. Here is what he is saying: neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting is fitting for the child of God. It is not our due. It is not what we are owed, and it is not what we owe God. What do we owe God? He says in verse 4, “but rather giving of thanks.”

In Colossians 1:12–13, he says, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,

and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet, or suitable, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. In other words, God has saved us, so we are to be continually giving Him thanks. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting is fitting for the child of God, nor is it fitting for God. It is not our due; we owe Him thanks, and that should consume us.

"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

What he mentions in verse 5 are the same sins he just mentioned in verse 3. He says you had better understand and know this: any whoremonger, unclean person, or covetous man who is an idolater does not have any part or parcel in the kingdom of God. He is not going to inherit it.

Hold this thought and go back in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Notice verses 9 through 11. Paul says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." He says, do not be deceived; anyone who lives like this is not saved. Then he says, "And such were some of you."

That is past tense: "Such were some of you." Yes, God saves these kinds of people, but the people who are living like this now are not saved. That is what he is saying. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

When you go back to Ephesians chapter 5 and look at verse 5, you understand that he says, "For this ye know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." I do not care if you have been baptized. I do not care if you are a church member, a Sunday school teacher, or even a preacher. If you are living like this,

God says you have no part in the kingdom of God. He says they are lost— not saved, not converted. It is just that simple.

Now skip down to verse 6: “Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” Do you realize the average Christian is so easily deceived? Why? Because the average Christian does not know his Bible. Look at the area of politics. How many politicians promote themselves as Christians and Bible believers, and when they are elected to office, turn around and do everything contrary to Christ and contrary to the Bible?

We've been conditioned to think that everybody who professes to be saved is saved. That is not true. He says, “Let no man deceive you with vain words.” It is not your lips that determine whether you have been converted; it is your life. If your life does not support your lips, then you are a liar. It is just that simple.

Anyone who thinks he is a Christian while living in such rebellion and wickedness is deceived. God says we are not to be deceived. Moreover, “For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” These things bring God's judgment and wrath: fornication, covetousness, uncleanness, filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting. After saying, “Let no man deceive you with these vain words,” he says, “Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” In other words, this is what he is saying.

If somebody wants to live ungodly, let him live ungodly. You cannot stop him, but you must not be partakers with him. Do not be deceived or get into the line of thinking, “Everybody’s doing it, so I might as well do it too. It looks like he got away with it. Maybe I can get away with it, too.” You must not be partakers with them, and you must not envy them. One of the problems today is that so many Christians, who happen to be poor, envy rich men who are wicked.

Asaph had this problem in Psalm 73, and he confessed it: “For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” All you have to do is look around. Look at the Clintons, the Bushes, George Soros, or the Kennedys. Wow. They have it. But the Bible says in Proverbs 24:1, “Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.”

I do not care how rich they are; I do not want to be with them. It is like walking down the road in a thunderstorm with lightning while a man carries a metal pole. I do not want to be near him. These men will receive God's judgment sooner or later. The Bible says in Proverbs 24:19, "Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked." God says you cannot be partakers with them. Do not have anything to do with them, be envious of them, or desire to be with them. If they are going to do it, let them do it, but stay as far away as possible.

Applications: Walking in Love Through Obedience

Now let me make some applications. Walking in love signifies walking in obedience to the law of God. When we walk in obedience out of the grace and mercy found in Jesus Christ, we are walking acceptably and pleasingly to our Heavenly Father. To walk in love, then, is to walk in obedience. A second implication, according to verses 3 through 7, is that if we walk in love, we put off the lust of the flesh. We are not walking to please our flesh, and we refuse to be involved in or participate in anything contrary to our Lord and His words. We refuse to be partakers with those who are disorderly and disobedient.

Moreover, we are not to be deceived simply by someone's profession of faith. He said, "Let no man deceive you with vain words." Unless a person's life backs up his profession, that profession is false. Ultimately, the wrath and judgment of God will fall upon such individuals. So God says, "Be not partakers with them." If we are going to walk with our heavenly Father, we must walk in faith, walk worthily, and walk differently. We are to walk in love, and walking in love is walking in obedience to the law of God.

We do not have to have feelings to obey. "I don't feel like praying." That is beside the point. God commands you to pray. "I don't feel like reading my Bible." That is beside the point. God commands you to study the Word of God. "I don't feel like loving my wife." God commands you to love your wife. "I don't feel like loving Pat. He's mean and cantankerous." God commands me to love him anyhow. Love is not feelings. Love is an act of the will, and love is obedience to the law of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before thee. We thank you for your word and truth. I pray, Father, that you would make us more holy, more godly, and more biblical. May we learn to walk in love as we learn to walk differently, worthily, and in faith before thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

Walking With God - 10

Introduction and Context

In Ephesians chapter 5, beginning with verse 8, the Apostle writes, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

We have been talking about walking with the Lord and walking before the Lord, walking in faith, walking worthily, walking differently, and walking in love. Now we come to walking in light.

Interestingly enough, in Ephesians chapter 5, verses 3 through 7, Paul has just warned these Ephesian believers that they are not to be like unbelievers. They were not to partake in the sins mentioned there. He also tells us that we are not to think those who engage in

those sins are saved. Anyone who thinks that way is certainly deceived. So he tells us to walk in love in this passage.

Please remember that walking in love has nothing to do with feelings, emotions, or sentiments. It has to do with obedience, because the Bible says that love is the fulfilling of the law, and obedience will always be distinguishable from disobedience. When we come to verse 8, Paul says, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

Before explaining what it means to walk in the light, he reminds these Ephesians that they were once darkness. This reminder is mentioned in order to stir up their thankfulness, gratitude, love, and remembrance of what God has done for them. The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." So, he tells us that God has called us

We Were Darkness, Now Light in the Lord

The Greek word for darkness is skotos, and it literally refers to darkness, obscurity, and blindness. This word is used metaphorically to describe our ignorance of divine truth, our ignorance of morality, and even salvation. It is translated as darkness thirty-two times in our Bibles. The word darkness in this text describes what we were before God regenerated and saved us. The same word also describes people today who are unregenerate and unconverted.

Notice what the Apostle says in verse 8: “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.” In other words, we were not just in darkness; we were darkness. Darkness itself cannot dispel darkness. If we are darkness, only light can dispel darkness, and that light must be from a source outside of darkness.

In Psalm 18:28, David said, “For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.” David said God is a source of light, and God will lighten his darkness. In describing the wicked, God says in Psalm 82:5, “They know not, neither do they

understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course." They walk on in darkness.

Proverbs 4:19 says, "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." We have looked at this passage before, but in 2 Corinthians 6:14, where God demands separation, He says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" He is setting the stage, saying that there is a light and there is a darkness as well.

Walking in Light vs. Walking in Darkness

Walking in the light demonstrates and evidences that we are not in darkness. When one refuses to walk in the light, he is still in darkness. Darkness is dispelled only by light.

In 1 John 1:6, John writes, "If we say that we have fellowship with him," that is, with God, "and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." Anyone who says he is having fellowship with God while walking in darkness, God says, is a liar and does not do the truth.

Look in 1 John 2, verses 8 and 9: "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you," because "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." Again, God says that if there is no obedience, you are still in darkness. Verse 11 says, "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

Here is something you should consider: according to Scripture, men either walk in darkness or they walk in light. Let me say it another way: men are either darkness or men are light. There is no in-between. You are either in the dark or in the light; you are either saved or unsaved. I used to tell people that being saved is like a woman being pregnant: either you are or you ain't. There is no in-between. It is just that simple. That is what light and darkness symbolize. You are either saved or lost. It is just that simple.

Ephesians 5:8 says, "For you were sometimes darkness." That is past tense. "But now are you light in the Lord. Walk as children of

the light." You are light in the Lord; we are not light in and of ourselves. We cannot be light in and of ourselves. If we were in darkness, there is absolutely no way that darkness can light itself. We must be lighted by another. The Apostle Paul makes clear that this other is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ as the Light of the World

Matthew 4, beginning with verse 14, gives us a prophecy concerning Christ: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." Then we read, "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Isaiah was prophesying concerning Jesus Christ, speaking of this great light, and Jesus Christ came preaching. Matthew says, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet." Where did Isaiah say that? The answer is Isaiah 9:2: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

What we are being taught by this prophecy, and what the Apostle Paul is teaching us in Ephesians 5, is indeed that salvation is of the Lord. He is the light of the world. He must lighten our eyes, illuminate our minds, release our wills from the bondage of sin, and enable us to come to Him in repentance and faith. Before we get back to Ephesians 5, we are directed to turn in our Bibles.

to the book of John chapter 8. John chapter 8, because I want you to see what the Apostle Paul is really enunciating when he says that you're a light in the Lord and walk as children of light. So in John 8 and verse 12, I want you to look at the claim that Jesus Christ makes. John 8 verse 12, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." So Christ says he is the light of the world and if we follow him, we're not going to be walking in darkness. We're not going to be doing the deeds of darkness, but we are going to have the light of life. Now if you will look in John 12

and verse 46, John 12 and verse 46. Again, Jesus Christ says it like this, John 12 verse 46, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

Note, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." Now, I want you to turn back to John chapter 1. Here's an interesting passage because John the Baptist is speaking, and of course it's being spoken about John the Baptist I should say. So notice if you would, John the Apostle is writing about John the Baptist and he says in John 1 in verse 6, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." Now I want you to see what is said of the forerunner of Jesus Christ. "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light," and notice the word Light is capitalized, "that all men through him might believe. He," that is John the Baptist, "was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." And then you go on down, and of course you find out that we're speaking here of Jesus Christ.

The Deity of Christ and the Light

So Jesus Christ is called the light. Now in the Old Testament, God is likened unto the sun for brightness. You have to remember that God created the sun, and when you and I think of the sun, we think of light because it is the sun that gives light. It is the sun that illuminates. But since God created the sun, God is the source of all light and he himself is the sun. So look in your Bibles to Psalm 84, and then we're going to go back to 1 John. Psalm 84 and look at verse 11. Psalm 84 verse 11. Watch carefully. Psalm 84 verse 11, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory."

“No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Note, “For the Lord God is a sun and shield.” God is likened unto the sun, the giver of light. In 1 John 1 in verse 5, John writes, “This then is the message that we've heard of him and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Now, let me show you what I'm trying to do. Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. Malachi 4 and verse 2 says, “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with

healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts." Go back and look at verse 2: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings."

I want you to understand that this is a messianic title. Since in the Old Testament the sun was a representative of God himself, the true giver of light, Jesus Christ is claiming to be the light of the world. So Jesus Christ is claiming to be the light of the world.

We read about the Sun of Righteousness arising. I want you to understand that Jesus Christ isn't only claiming this messianic title when he claims to be the light of the world. He is also saying, "I am God."

There's a passage in the Bible, 1 Timothy 3, verse 16. It says this: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." But note what he said: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

Jesus Christ claimed to be God over and over in the Scripture. In John chapter 10, the Jews understood the implication of Christ's claim in this passage. In John 10 and verse 30, our Lord says, "I and my Father are one." Jesus Christ was calling God his Father. Moreover, he says, "I and my Father are one." So he is identifying himself with God the Father. We know that there is one God, one God who has revealed himself in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But he said, "I and my Father are one."

Now look what happens because the Jews understand this implication. In verse 31: "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him." Jesus answered them, "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" The Jews answered him, saying, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

Wow! Every time I get to this passage and read it, I always smile. The reason I smile is because of the stupidity and the ignorance and the blindness of unsaved men. They got it backwards. Note what they said. In verse 33: “The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” No, no, no. God made himself man.

That's the way it is. That's why the Bible says in Philippians 2, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." So it was not man making himself God; God had made himself man. Jesus Christ is saying, I'm the light of the world. The Apostle Paul says that Jesus Christ is the light of the world. If Jesus Christ is the light of the world and we are his children, we are indeed children of light. Look back in your Bibles to Ephesians 5 and verse 8: "For you were sometimes darkness, but now are you light in the Lord. Walk as children of light."

The Duty to Walk as Children of Light

So we have a duty, a responsibility, and an obligation to walk as children of light. We're not to walk in darkness. Walking in darkness is not only foolish, it's dangerous. I dare say probably everyone in this room has gotten up out of bed during the night without a flashlight or without turning a light on, and either stumbled and fallen, stubbed your toe, or run into something. I have known of people who actually stumbled and fell and killed themselves. In fact, it happened to two recently. So I'm simply pointing out the fact that we're to walk in the light.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 5, the Apostle tells us, "You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." If we're in Christ, we're children of light and children of the day. We're not of the night; we're not of darkness. What does it mean to be children of light and children of

the day? "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."

There is a vast difference here between children of the light and children of the night. In John 12:35, our Lord says, “Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.” He was saying, “I am here with you, and as long as I am here with you, you walk in the light, that you may be the children of light.”

Romans 13:12 says, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” What is involved in casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light? Verses 13 and 14 tell us: “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

Over and over, it is repeated that we are children of the light, and if we are following our Lord, we are walking in the light. Put all these thoughts together in Ephesians 5:8, where we read, “For you were sometimes darkness, but now you light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.” These passages mesh together and show us the implications of walking in the light. What then are those implications? The command is clear: walk as children of light.

The Fruit of the Spirit and Proving What is Acceptable

Note verses 9 and 10. Verse 9 says, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Verse 9 is in a parenthesis. At the end of verse 8 there is a colon, which means, Hold on; wait a minute; something else is coming, and it is important. In verse 9 there is a semicolon, which means that verses 9 and 10 go together.

Why is verse 9 in a parenthesis? In the Bible, you will find many times that words, clauses, or sometimes a whole sentence happen to be in a parenthesis. What is the use of a parenthesis? Usually, something in a parenthesis—a word, a clause, or a sentence—is inserted as an explanation or as an afterthought into a passage that is grammatically complete without it.

Look at verse 8: "For you were sometimes darkness, now you light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." That could be grammatically correct right there. It is a sentence. You can understand verse 8 and verse 10 without verse 9. But the parenthesis puts in an afterthought, or at least something else that further explains the truth that has been enunciated. Verse 9 is placed in parentheses because it further explains what Paul meant by walking in the light.

Paul is not giving us a complete description of what it means to walk in the light. He is giving us a few parts of what walking in the light consists of and entails. He is showing us part of a holy, pious, and godly life by way of example. Verse 8 says, "For you were sometimes darkness, but now you light in the Lord, walk as children of light." Then he adds, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."

Before I explain verse 9, let me remind you of something you have heard today but may not have put together yet. Here it is: God the Sovereign is light. First John 1:5 says, "God is light, in him there's no darkness at all." So the Sovereign is light. The Son is light. Jesus Christ said, "I am the light of the world." The Spirit is light. He is the one who enlightens our minds and impresses us with the truth of God.

So we have the Sovereign is light, the Son is light, and the Spirit is light. But may I point out the fact that the Scriptures are light? In other words, the Apostle Paul tells us in Acts chapter 26 and verse 18 exactly why God sent him. Here is what he said: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." What was Paul doing? He was preaching. Now let me show you how the Scriptures are light.

In 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 10, the Apostle Paul says, "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ,

who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." How did he bring it to light? Through the gospel. What? The gospel is light. It reveals the Son who is light, and it reveals the Sovereign who is light, and it is the Spirit who is light who gives us understanding.

Now notice 2 Peter 1, beginning with verse 19. Here he is talking about the Word of God: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed. As unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Since you understand that the Sovereign is light, the Son is light, the Spirit is light, and the Scriptures are light, go back to verses 8 and 9 of Ephesians chapter 5: “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.” If you want to know what it means to walk in the light, Paul says it means that we are walking in the Spirit and walking in the truth. In John 14, John 15, and John 16, the Holy Spirit is specifically called the Spirit of Truth. He alone guides us and leads us into goodness, righteousness, and truth. If you are walking in the light, you are walking in the Spirit and in the Scriptures.

That leads us to verse 10: “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” How do you prove what is acceptable to the Lord? The answer is by living it, by actually doing it. As we study and see the Scripture, we find out what pleases God. That is how He tells us to walk, and we do it, and He blesses us.

I do not know everything, not even everything about the Bible. There is much about the Bible that I do not know. But after more than fifty years of preaching, there are a number of things I have proved in my life. Through obedience, I have proved the Word of God true in numerous ways. You cannot outgive God. You cannot outmercy God. You cannot help being kind. Whenever you please God and do that which is right, God will always bless you, and you will prove it in your life.

We are to walk in the light, not to be children of darkness. We are walking in the Spirit, walking in the Scriptures, and proving that which is acceptable unto God in our lives.

Any time you come across a positive in Scripture, you should always ask about the negative. Any time you come across a negative in Scripture, you should always ask about the positive, because positives and negatives go together.

No Fellowship with Darkness, But Reproving It

What the Apostle Paul has done so far is give us all positives. Now he is giving us some negatives, which will ultimately end with a positive. If we are walking in the light—that is, walking in the Spirit and walking in the Scriptures—here is the negative. Look in verse 11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." That is a negative. Here is a positive: "But rather reprove them."

First of all, he tells us not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. In all probability, Paul has in mind the mystery religions of the heathen. This would certainly include anything wicked, ungodly, sinful, rebellious, and contrary to the Word of God. The command not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness means that we are not to be partakers with them, communicate with them, or join together with them. We are not to be joined with such unfruitful works in any manner.

They are called unfruitful works not only because they are unbiblical, but because they are absolutely, totally worthless and useless. Many such unfruitful works oblige the initiated, upon pain of death, to keep secret what they have seen, heard, and done. They are called unspeakable mysteries. Some take oaths that if they reveal anything they have seen or heard, their tongue is to be torn up by the roots, their guts ripped out and buried for the sea ebbs twice and twenty-four—crazy things.

What did our Lord say in John 18:20? "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing." Our Lord was open with everything He said and taught. Paul could also be referencing Gnosticism. John certainly preached against Gnosticism

very clearly in 1 John. Gnosticism was supposed to be a secret way to heaven through knowledge. One had to be initiated and possess secret passwords and other secret things in order to be accepted by God. Many cults, isms, schisms, and everything else proceed in the same way.

He says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." That is negative. But notice verse 11: "But rather reprove them." The word reprove is very interesting. It comes from the Greek word elegchō, and it answers to the metaphor of darkness. Literally, it means to drag them to the light. Convict them, yes; convince them, yes—that is how the word is interpreted in the Bible. But if we are going to reprove them, we are going to drag them to the light. We are going to expose them to the light, let them see their error, and let them see their wickedness.

The wicked always seek to keep their deeds secret. Many sins are committed in the dark. That is why you have secret initiations, secret passwords, and secret this and secret that. The Bible tells us about these wicked things, and God says, No. We reprove them. We bring them to the light.

Now watch verse 11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Why are we to reprove them? Verse 12 gives the reason: "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." There are all kinds of religions and initiations. You remember that Corinth had five seaports. There was a huge temple in Corinth, and they worshipped there through prostitution. I understand there were a thousand prostitutes at that one temple for the free use of the visitors. God says that whatever they did in secret was a shame. You look in the Old Testament and read about Baal worship and Moloch worship, and it is vile. Their lives, actions, and conduct were so shameful that we are not even to speak of those things.

Now look at verse 13: "But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light." All things that are reproved—that is, rebuked or convicted—are made manifest by the light. "For whatsoever doth make manifest is light." How do we reprove the wicked? We have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them—convict them, convince them, drag them to the truth. The

reason is that it is a shame to speak of those things done in secret. But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light. For whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 4, and let me show you.

Let me give you an illustration. Suppose Pat has done something wrong, and I become irritated with what he has done. I cuss him out, tell him off, rip him up one side and down the other, and chew him up and spit him out, as they say. Although I may have relieved a lot of anger in myself, have I helped Pat? No.

I probably made an enemy, made him even madder, and made him more determined. If he found out that it irritated me so much, he might keep irritating me just because he is that big a sinner. That is the way people are. You try to push me, and I do not want to be pushed; I will just show you.

When he tells us that whatsoever reproves or makes manifest is light, I want you to see what the Apostle Paul tells Timothy. In 2 Timothy 4:1, he says, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;" and then, "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

So, if Pat has done something wrong or is doing something wrong, instead of cussing him out, becoming angry, and telling him off, I should say, "Pat, let me show you what the Scripture says about your actions. Here is how God says your conduct is wrong. Here is how God says you are to change that conduct so that you can please Him."

I am making manifest his wickedness, exposing it to the light, and reproving it by the light. Hopefully he would repent. But if he does not, he still has been brought to the light. This has nothing to do with feelings, per se. Our emotions often get involved, but it does have to do with doctrine.

Hebrews 4, verse 12, says, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." So if I am

going to reprove, rebuke, and convince, and drag someone to the truth, I had better be using the truth. I had better be saying, Here is the light. The light is none other than the Word of God.

Look at verse 14. After telling us that we are the children of light and are to walk as children of light, he gives us a good example of walking in the Spirit and walking in the Scriptures. Then he tells us to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them. He tells us why, and he tells us how to reprove: with Bible light, the light of Scripture. Now he says in verse 14, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Awake and Christ Will Give Light

We know that Jesus Christ is the light giver. No one can see anything without Jesus Christ. That is why He told Nicodemus in John 3, verse 3, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Unless God turns the lights on, nobody is going to see.

So here is the question: Does verse 14 apply to saints, or does it apply to sinners? There is plenty in the Bible about saints sleeping and, of course, arising from the dead. We understand that only God can quicken us. But do you understand that sleep, in reality, is a picture of death? In fact, the Bible talks about those who sleep in Jesus.

Are we talking about saints, sinners, or both? Go back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 13 and verse 11: “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Obviously, he is talking to Christians. In Ephesians chapter 5, verse 1, he is talking to dear children, speaking about walking in love. Now he is talking about walking in light. In the context of Ephesians chapter 5, he is talking to Christians when he says, “Awake thou that sleepest.”

In other words, wake up and learn how to walk. Wake up and learn how to live. Arise from the dead, that stupor that you are in, and Christ shall give thee light. Christ is the light of the world. He will give us understanding as to how to live and conduct our lives. If

we are walking in the light, we are not walking in darkness. You cannot walk in the light and walk in darkness at the same time.

Let me make a couple of applications. First, I hope you understand that for the child of God, the Word of God is our light. David said in Psalm 119, verse 105, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” We lighten our way by walking in the Scripture. God’s Word is a light and a lamp.

Applications: Believers as Light and Motivation for Repentance

Let me tell you something else that may shock you. Jesus Christ said, “I am the light of the world.” Yet in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 14, He says, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” If Jesus Christ is the light of the world, how can we, His disciples and followers, be the light of the world as well? We are the light only because we have been lighted by Him. He is not in the world physically today; He is here spiritually. That is true.

He is here in us and through us. But may I remind you that the moon has no light of its own? The light you see on the moon is a reflection of the sun. So we are a reflection of the light of the world, which is Jesus Christ. We are a reflection of the light of the Spirit and the light of Scripture. Therefore, He tells us, "Ye are the light of the world."

Let me point something else out. I always tell people this is an excellent motivation to seek repentance. Our Lord will bring to light every secret of man and every secret sin, because He is light, and light exposes darkness. In 1 Corinthians 4:5, the Scripture says, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness," and "will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." He will make manifest the counsels of the heart. Paul said in Romans 2:16, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

All these sins that men think have been well hidden will suddenly be brought into full light. That makes me want to make sure my sins are forgiven. I want to make sure that I walk in the light, as He is in

the light. Paul is teaching us how to walk pleasingly and acceptably to the Lord.

And if we're walking in light, we're walking in the Spirit and in the Scriptures, because they are truth. They are light, just as Jesus Christ is light and truth, and God the Father is light and truth. Walk in the light as children of light.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth, and pray that You would indeed teach us how to walk before Thee. May we walk in faith, worthily, differently, in love, and in light, pleasing Thee in all things. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 11

Walking With God - 11

Walking Accurately

SCRIPTURE READING - Ephesians 5:15-33 (KJV)

Introduction and Reading of Ephesians 5

The Bible says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He

might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence the husband."

Today we begin another truth in walking with the Lord. We have seen what it means to walk before the Lord, what it means to walk in faith, what it means to walk worthily, what it means to walk differently, what it means to walk in love, what it means to walk in light, and now today God commends us to walk accurately.

The Meaning of Walking Circumspectly

He says in verse 15, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." The word "see" is the Greek word blepō, which literally is a verb and simply means "I see." However, it is translated in our Bibles as "take heed" 12 times. It can also mean "beware" or "beware of." So actually, the apostle is saying, "Take heed then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." The Greek word for "circumspectly" is akribōs. It means literally to walk diligently, exactly, accurately, and circumspectly.

Our English word "circumspectly" is from the Latin word circumspectio, and it literally signifies to look around, to be aware of your surroundings, to use caution, to avoid danger, and to make sure that your enemies do not surprise you or come too nigh. It also means that you use every possible means to secure your interests by lawful means. What the apostle is telling us, literally in verse 15, is that we who have received the truth must be careful of our conduct.

We must walk by the rule which God has given to us in every situation and circumstance, making sure that we exemplify biblical principles in our lives.

For the child of God, it is not sufficient simply to claim the promises of God. We must live by the precepts and principles in the Word of God as well. We have to live our lives in such a way that our enemies may never say that our doctrines and our lives are unholy and empty.

Not as Fools, but as Wise

When you look at verse 15, it is a warning, a "take heed" verse. The apostle is telling us that we must take heed that we walk accurately. There is no need to take heed in heaven because everything is perfect there. But while we are on earth, there is a great deal of which we must take heed and beware. We have to beware of every situation. Remember the truth that the apostle Paul enunciated in Galatians 6 and verse 16: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them and mercy upon the Israel of God." The word "rule" there is the Greek word kanōn. It is where we get our English word "canon," C-A-N-O-N, not C-A-N-N-O-N.

We talk about the Old Testament canon, the New Testament canon, or the canon of Scripture. The word kanōn in the Greek literally means a measuring stick, measuring rod, or what we would call our yardstick, simply the measuring stick. The apostle is saying, then, peace be upon those—and he tells you the Israel of God is those who walk according to this rule, that is, the Scripture, because the Scripture is indeed our rule for faith.

When he tells you to take heed, he gives you a negative and a positive: “See then that ye walk circumspectly,” or accurately. Here is the negative: “not as fools, but as wise.” He tells us that we are not to walk as fools. Fools do not walk accurately. I could multiply Scriptures on the subject of fools, but let me quote some to show what he means when he tells us not to walk as fools.

Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and knowledge.” So, what is a fool? A fool is someone who will not listen, hear, or heed. Proverbs

1:22 says, “How long then, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge.” Again, fools hate knowledge.

Proverbs 13:19 says, “The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.” A fool is someone who will not listen, will not learn, and will not depart from evil. He is going to do what he wants to do regardless. Proverbs 13:20 says, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” If we want to be wise, we need to walk with wise men; if we want to be destroyed, we need to walk with fools.

Proverbs 14:8 says, “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.” Verse 9 says, “Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.” Fools make a mockery even of sin. When he tells us, “See then that ye walk circumspectly,” or accurately, “not as fools, but as wise,” the word for “fools” is the simple Greek word asophos.

The word “foolish” simply means foolish or unwise. The Greek word for “wise” is sophos. Asophos and sophos sound alike and are exactly alike except that the word for fool has an alpha, or “a,” in front of it, which always negates the word. Thus, you have someone who is a fool, someone who is unwise, and someone who is wise.

The word “wise” refers to someone who is skilled, someone who is an expert in knowledge. I want you to hold Ephesians 5, but look in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 5. The apostle, in verses 13 and 14, describes a wise man without even using the word “wise.” “For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.” Notice the word “unskillful.” Now look at verse 14: “But strong meat belong to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

A foolish man is unskillful. He is unwise. He does not have his senses exercised to discern good and evil. Obviously, the Word of God is telling us that we are not to walk as fools, but as wise.

Now turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 16 and look in verse 19. You are going to see the word “wise” again. “For your obedience

has come abroad unto all men. I'm glad therefore on your behalf." Then the apostle says, "But yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." He wants us wise to that which is good and simple, or naive, concerning evil.

Redeeming the Time

How many of us would much rather have lived our lives without hearing some things and knowing some things? We can still be simple or naive in that sense of the word. The point is this: when Paul says in Romans 16:19, "But I would have you wise concerning that which is good," the word "wise" in Romans 16:19 is exactly the same word found in Ephesians 5:15. God wants us to be wise and not foolish.

There are many Greek words brought directly from the Greek language into English. For instance, our English word "deacon" comes straight from the Greek word diakonos. It is spelled just a little differently, but the word is transliterated and not translated because "deacon" simply means a servant. Almost every hospital has a cardiac unit. Kardia is the Greek word for heart, and many of our medical terms come straight from the Greek as well.

Everyone has heard the word "sophomore." You have it in high school and in college. The word "sophomore" is made up of two Greek words: sophos, meaning wise, and mōros, meaning foolish or moron. A sophomore is nothing more than a wise fool or a wise moron. It is just that simple.

So when our Lord says, "See that you walk circumspectly, not as morons, but as wise," He does not want us to be stupid. He does not want us to be foolish. He wants us to be wise. In order to do that, we have to walk accurately. How do we do this? Verse 16 says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." How in the world do we redeem the time? Now the Greek word for "redeem"

Here is exagorazō. That word is translated "redeemed" four times in the New Testament, and it is used in reference to the redemption of Jesus Christ. But the word actually means to redeem by payment of a price, to recover from the power of another, to ransom, to buy

off, or to buy up for oneself. So he tells us that we must redeem the time. What does that mean? It means that we are to make wise and sacred use of our time, of every opportunity for doing well. The zeal that we have in doing that is what you and I would call the payment price or the purchase money that we would exercise in redeeming the time.

The Greek word for "time" is kairos, and it refers to a time. But it also refers to what you and I would call a season or an opportunity. We have said it is an opportune time, or that the time is seasonal. It means it is right. There are seasons of opportunity. For instance, a farmer understands that he harvests his crops in the fall. That is the harvest season. We do not usually harvest at any other time, except perhaps a garden in the spring; as far as crops are concerned, it is usually in the fall.

Although we can speak of seasons in that sense, we must also understand that each of us has a limited time on this earth. Our life is seasonal. We can use this in reference to our lifespan. We all use this illustration: "Let's make hay while the sun shines," understanding, of course, that you cannot make hay when it is raining.

That is exactly what our Lord is talking about here. In John 9:4, He used another illustration: "I must work the work of Him who has sent Me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work." In this context, day is life and night is death. We cannot go beyond our lifespan. Everyone sitting here wishes we could go back and relive our lives, knowing what we know now, but we cannot. Therefore, there has to be a redeeming of the time.

Now he tells us why: "because the days are evil." The Greek word translated "evil" is ponēros. It is translated "evil" in our Bibles fifty-one times, "wicked" ten times, "wicked one" six times, and "evil things" two times. When he says, "redeeming time because the days are evil," the word "evil" could, in one sense, refer to what we would call trials and tribulations, perils, pains, annoyances, and troubles. In an ethical sense, however, it always refers to that which is bad and evil. You remember our Lord taught us to pray in Matthew 6:13, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

How do we redeem the time because the days are evil? Moses, the man of God, answers that question in Psalm 90. Holding Ephesians 5, let us begin with verse 10: “The days of our years are threescore years and ten,” seventy, “and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years,” eighty, “yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away.” Some die before seventy; the average is seventy. Some live beyond seventy, into their eighties, and some into their nineties. A few hearty souls make it past a hundred. I showed Alice a little black lady on the internet who had just set a new world record in the hundred-yard dash for her age group.

She was 100 years old. From 80 to 100, she set a new world record, doing push-ups and sit-ups at 100 years old! I thought, My goodness, she can outdo me. I am 30 years younger, but some make it. I never will forget talking years ago to a fellow in his 80s, a very wealthy man. He said to me, "It's too sad that when you're old enough to have it, there's not enough strength to enjoy it."

And that's basically true. Look at all the wisdom we have—the things we know how to do—but we just cannot do them anymore. That is what Moses is talking about. Notice verse 11: "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." In light of this fact, he says in verse 12, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

When Moses says, "Teach us to number our days," he is not asking for a mathematical calculation of how long we will live. He has already told us that, by God's grace, we may make it to 70 or 80 if we live a normal, average life. He is not asking how old we will be before we die. Rather, he is saying that we need to make the most of each day we have.

You do not have yesterday. You cannot go back and undo anything that has been done except the repentance. That's all. You do not have tomorrow; tomorrow has not yet come. The only day you have is right now. Make use of this day. Redeem this time by living godly, obediently, and holy; by walking accurately; and by bringing your life into conformity to the rule, principle, and precept of Scripture. That is how you redeem the time.

Understanding the Will of the Lord

Now go back to Ephesians chapter 5. Watch how he reiterates everything he has just said. Verse 15: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Then: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." "Be ye not unwise"—in other words, do not be moronic.

Do not be a fool. If you are going to be wise, you must understand what the will of the Lord is. Where do we understand God's will? The answer is from this book. You remember what David said in Psalm 119, verses 9-11? He asked, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" Here is the answer: "By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandment. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Obviously, if we are going to redeem the time, walk accurately, and not as a fool, then we must walk according to God's Word by hiding His Word in our hearts.

Literally, in verse 17, Paul is giving a command: "Stop being unwise. But, you understand what the will of the Lord is." Ignorance of our duty and neglect of our souls are evidences of the greatest folly. On the other hand, knowing God and His will is the best and truest wisdom.

Walking in the Spirit vs. Drunkenness

In the rest of Ephesians, Paul gives us some basic fundamentals. He does not give us a detailed, exhaustive list of what it means to be wise or to redeem the time. Instead, he addresses the most basic and fundamental foundations, probably touching the areas in which you and I need this the absolute most. I could spend a multitude of messages explaining these verses, and I have already done that in times past, even when I dealt with the family. But let me show you, as concisely as possible. The question you have to ask yourself is this: How do I walk accurately? To walk accurately means I am not walking as a fool, I am redeeming the time, and I am understanding what the will of the Lord is.

How do we do this? First of all, in verse 18 he said, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.” There is an analogy here that indicates both a comparison and a contrast. There are stated similarities between being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit, and yet at the same time there are extreme differences. This could be an entire message, showing how being drunk and being filled with the Spirit are synonymous, and then showing how they could be absolutely different.

Interestingly, on the day of Pentecost, when Peter and all of those men were filled with the Spirit and began to preach and teach, they were accused of being drunk with new wine. Acts 2:12 says, “And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, ‘What meaneth this?’ And others mocking, saying, ‘These men are full of new wine.’” In other words, they were drunk.

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, ‘You men of Judea, and all you that dwell in Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words. For these are not drunken as you suppose, seeing it but the third hour of the day,’” that is, nine in the morning. “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I'll pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams, and on my servants and on my handmaids I'll pour in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy, and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood, fire, and vapor of smoke.’” They said, “The problem with these men, they're just drunk.” No. Peter said, “They're not drunk.”

Albert Barnes comments on, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit.” Barnes gives a negative, and John Gill a positive. Barnes writes: “It is not improbable that in this verse there's an allusion to the origins of Bacchus or to the festivals celebrated in honor of that heathen god. He was the god of wine and during those festivals men and women regarded it as an acceptable act of worship to become intoxicated and with wild songs and cries to run through streets and fields and vineyards.” Thus, Bacchus was the god of wine.

Bacchanalia was the festival, and Bacchus was honored with extreme drunkenness, revelry, fornication, and everything else. “Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess” could refer to Bacchus; it could also refer simply to being drunk. Yet the command is, “Be filled with the Spirit.”

John Gill writes of being filled with the Spirit: “Believers may be said to be filled with the Spirit as with wine, or instead of it, or in opposition to it, when the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit, which is compared to wine for its antiquity, purity, and refreshing nature. And they are filled with it,” speaking of the Holy Spirit, “who have a comfortable sense of it, and a firm persuasion of interest in it, and are delighted with the views of it, and are, as it were, inebriated with it. And they are filled with the Spirit, in whom His grace is a well of living water, and out of whose belly flow rivers of it, and who have a large measure of spiritual peace and joy expressed in the following manner,” that is, walking in the Spirit.

Here is what the apostle is teaching us: If we are going to walk accurately and redeem the time, we must learn to walk in the Spirit. There is much confusion today about this, even about being led by the Spirit. Obviously, if we are going to walk accurately, we must walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

Notice verse 19. Here is another aspect of walking accurately: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

Biblical Music

Singing Psalms and Giving Thanks

Secondly, if we walk accurately, our music, individually and corporately, will be biblical and scriptural. In verse 19, when he says, “speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,” that is the division of the book of Psalms. Some psalms are called psalms, some hymns, and some spiritual songs. So what he is talking about here is singing Scripture.

We have psalters at the house and have used them repeatedly. Alice plays many songs, and some of the Psalms are very easy: “Great

is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God." There is a song about Him. That is what he is talking about singing. But notice what else he says: "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." In other words, we are not singing the world's songs; we are singing the Lord's songs. We are not listening to the junk of the world, and that is exactly what most of it is—junk.

Yesterday I stopped to fill the car with gas. Alice went in to pay so I could pump it. In the car next to me, rap music was blaring. I did not even have my hearing aids in, and I was trying to signal to Alice that the pump was not working. She came closer and closer until she was from here to Gary, and asked, "Is it on yet?" I said, "I can't hear a word you're saying because of that filthy, wicked music next to me." Finally, the girl shut the door, reducing the noise, and then drove off. I am not interested in hearing that stuff. The point is very simple: God's people do not sing that stuff. We do not sing those worldly songs; we sing to the Lord.

Let me ask you a question: Have you ever sung to the Lord? Everyone who knows me knows I cannot sing; I cannot carry a tune in a bucket. But when I am alone, I often sing to the Lord. If I am off key, wonderful—I do not care, and He does not care. The Bible does not say, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord." It may be noise, but that is all right. Sometimes I sing in the car, and Alice sits there and groans and bears it. That is all right too. This is what he is talking about: singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Albert Barnes gives this comment on verse 19: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." He says, "In praise of the Lord or address to Him, singing is here meant as a direct and solemn act of worship, and should be considered such as really as prayer. In singing we should regard ourselves as speaking directly to God, and the words therefore should be spoken with a solemnity and all becoming such a direct address to the great Jehovah."

Have you ever stopped to think of singing as worship? I am not just talking about corporate singing, but about the individual songs you sing to the Lord. It is worship. If we are going to walk accurately, we will walk in the Spirit and learn to sing the Psalms individually unto the Lord.

Look at verse 20. Here is the third thing: if we are going to walk accurately, we will be continually giving thanks to our Heavenly Father and Lord Jesus Christ. He says, “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” When we fail to give thanks, as we often do, it demonstrates that we are truly ungrateful. It is our duty and obligation to be thankful to one another as well as to the Lord, particularly to the Lord. I am thankful for every gift I have ever received, and, when I have the opportunity, I thank the individual who gave it. But how often do we take gifts from God and never thank Him?

Our life, our health, our protection, our provision, and our preservation—all come from God. He said, "In everything, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." People ask, "How can I give thanks when I've just lost my husband, my wife, or my child?" The answer is simple: You can give thanks unto God for the time He allowed you to have and enjoy them. Brother McCurry lost his wife Evelyn after sixty-seven years. That was, and still is, very difficult. Even when a child is taken at a young age, we can be thankful that the Lord allowed us to have that child. "In everything give thanks," he says, "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus."

Giving thanks is also an act of worship. In 2 Samuel 22:50, David says, "Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name." Giving of thanks and singing of praises are joined together; both are worship. First Chronicles 16:8 says, "Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds unto the people." Giving thanks is done publicly.

First Chronicles 16:34-35 says, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever. And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise." Here thanksgiving and prayer go together: petition, begging God for salvation.

First Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." In everything. Hebrews 13:15 says, "By him"—that is, by Jesus Christ—"therefore

let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." The book of Psalms is full of praise and thanksgiving unto God for His grace and mercy. We should use the Psalms to excite us to thank and praise the Lord.

Submitting to One Another

So if we are going to walk accurately, we are going to walk in the Spirit. We are going to sing unto the Lord, and we are going to give thanks unto the Lord. Fourthly, if we are going to walk accurately, we are going to walk in submission: “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” There is no one who can walk independently, and there is no one who can walk unsubmissively. The general principle is set down in verse 21: “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

Steve would have to submit to me when it comes to my teaching the Scripture. But I would have to submit to him when it came to anything mechanical, because I do not know anything mechanical. John Calvin wrote, “God has bound us so strongly to each other that no man ought to endeavor to avoid subjection. And where love reigns, mutual services will be rendered. I do not accept even kings and governors whose very authority is held for the service of the community. It is highly proper that all should be exhorted to be subject to each other in their turn.” There is a proper submission for everyone.

In 1 Corinthians 11, God gives us His established order. There is an orderly way that God has ordained for us to live, and that orderly way is based upon submission. In verse 3, God says: “But I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.”

Here is God, who is the absolute head, God the Father. Under Him is God the Son. Under Him is man, and under him is the woman. You say, "I don't like that." Well, I'm sorry. That's the way God ordained it; that's the way God set it up. The woman is to be in submission to the man, but I've got news for you. When you read also in 1 Corinthians 11, you'll find that the man is nothing without the woman.

I might be the head of my house, but I'm going to tell you there are times I submit to Alice. I submit to her cooking and her house cleaning. I submit to her when she tells me what needs to be done around certain things, because that's not my field. There is a proper submission to each one. God has this established order.

Someone says, "Well, I think it's bad that the woman should be in submission to the man." I got news for you: it's not bad, it's good, because the man is to be in submission to Jesus Christ. Everyone is to be in submission. Jesus Christ Himself was not only in submission to His Heavenly Father, but, as a child, Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate, was just as much God when He was born of that virgin and in that stable, in that manger, as He was when He got grown.

In Luke chapter 2, when He was 12, His family found Him in the temple, hearing and answering questions from all those scribes. His mother said, "Son, we've sought thee sorrowing." And He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Then verse 51 tells us, "And He went down with them," that is Mary and Joseph, "and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. And His mother kept all these things in her heart."

Jesus Christ, who is God, was in submission to His creatures whom He created. They were His mother and father, and He submitted to them. So there's nothing wrong with submission. It's God's orderly way.

Submission in Every Relation of Life

In order to walk accurately, there must be submission in every relation of life. One of the greatest tragedies in our day is that rebellion is evidenced in our daily lives. Our personal lives are wrecked, our families are devastated, our churches are hotbeds of antinomianism, and our government is in open defiance and rebellion to God, covenants, and men. It is everywhere you look. Nobody wants to be in submission.

Paul, in Ephesians chapter 5, tells the wives, “Submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” And then he tells you why: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body.” Therefore, “as the

church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." In other words, the wife is required to be in submission to her husband because the husband has been constituted the head. The husband represents Jesus Christ, and the wife represents the church.

Just as the church is to be in submission to Jesus Christ in everything, so is the wife to be in submission to her husband. God has ordained the marital picture to be a picture of the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ.

What about the husbands? "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." The husband is to be in submission to Jesus Christ. It is easy for a wife to be in submission to a husband who loves her the way Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. It is just that simple. God requires the husbands to be in submission as well.

Then, in chapter 6, verses 1 through 3: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." God requires children to be in submission to their parents. Isn't that amazing? No one escapes submission. Each man has his own sphere of submission.

Now let me point something else out. In verse 5, "Servants"—and when you see the word "servants" here, you might as well say "slaves"—"Slaves, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to

God demands that slaves be in subjection to their masters and serve them, not as men-pleasers, but as pleasing unto the Lord and doing the will of God from the heart. He also enjoins the masters to be in submission to Him. He reminds them that they have a Master in heaven: "You mistreat yours, I'll take care of you." God is saying that servants have a Master as well, and He will regard masters as they regard their servants.

The general meaning of this passage is simply this: Christianity does not break up the relations of life. It does not produce disorder, lawlessness, and insubordination. Rather, it conforms and confirms

proper authority, and it truly lightens every just and proper yoke. It lightens the yoke of the child in submission, the wife in submission, the husband in submission, and even the yoke of slaves who are to be in submission.

The servant is to serve with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. Whatever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether bond or free. Masters are to do the same, forbearing threatening, knowing that their Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with Him.

Infidelity is that which destroys and disorganizes. Christianity does not do that. The only workable, sensible, and rational order is God's order. Everything else devolves into chaos. In Proverbs 8:36 our Lord said, "All they that hate Me love death." Individual lives love death; families love death; the church loves death; government and societies love death. If we love life, we will follow God's orderly way.

The Whole Armor of God and Prayer

If we walk accurately, we walk in the whole armor of God. He says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

We cannot live without the armor of God. We have enemies who wish to destroy our souls and our spirituality. He says, "Arm yourselves with the armor that I've provided for you." Since we only have a day, we're to do this daily. It's a daily thing.

If we walk accurately, we learn to pray for each other and for God's preachers. Paul says, "And as for me, you generally pray for everybody but specifically pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I'm an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak." If we're going to walk accurately, we learn to pray for each other and specifically for God's preachers.

I always tell people that I appreciate all prayers, but there are times when I appreciate prayers more than others. I especially appreciate prayers when I am in the den of lions. There are times that are far more dangerous than others, and preaching situations that are far more difficult. This is what Paul is talking about. Paul says, “I want boldness to preach and declare the Word of God. Pray for me.” Remember that. Then he says, “If you want to know anything about me, I am going to send Tychicus to you. He can tell you everything that you need to know.”

Application and Conclusion

He tells us that we have to walk accurately. How do we apply this? As Christians—not unbelievers—we may either walk as fools or walk as wise. We can be morons, or we can be wise men. If we choose to walk as morons, we will bring the chastisement and judgment of God upon us, as well as shame in our lives. If we choose to walk as wise men, then we know what the will of God is. We walk accurately in that will, doing it and submitting to God and God alone.

The second application is akin to this: We must examine every area of our lives and each relationship to determine whether we are wise or foolish in that relationship. As Christians, we cannot say, “We are wrong in every area.” No, we are not wrong in every area. There are some areas in which we are right, but some areas may be questionable. Examine those areas and ask, “What can I do more to be more biblical, more godly, more holy, more obedient, more

submissive, and more conformed to the Word of God?" There are certain requests and petitions that I usually pray every day. One is that the Lord would make me more holy, more godly, more obedient, more submissive, and more conformed to His Word.

You cannot walk accurately without that. The more conformed you are, the more accurately you can walk according to His Word. Therefore, when the apostle says, "See then that you walk circumspectly," see that you walk accurately, "not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Walk accurately. The only way you are going to walk accurately is by walking according to the Scripture.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, Your grace, Your mercy. Help us to be accurate in our walking; make us more holy and more godly, more obedient, more submissive, and more conformed to Your Word. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name, Amen.

CHAPTER 12

Walking With God - 12

Walking in the Spirit

SCRIPTURE READING - Galatians 5:13-26 (KJV)

Introduction and Review of the Series

> "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.
>
> "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of

> the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.
>
> "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."
>
> In bringing the concluding message in this series on walking with the Lord, let me remind you where we have been. I began this series with a message on walking before the Lord. We found that Enoch walked with God and Abram walked with the Lord. God told Abram, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." You cannot walk with the Lord until you learn to walk before Him.
>
> Then we dealt with walking in faith and showed you from the Word of God how we are to walk worthily. There were at least three messages on that passage from Ephesians chapter 4. Then came walking differently, with several messages from Ephesians chapter 4. I also pointed out how we are to walk in love, walk in light, and walk accurately. If you are not comfortable with your understanding of these eleven messages, go back and listen.

Paul prayed for the Colossian Christians in Colossians 1 and verse 10, and he gave this petition: "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." He said that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. If we are going to walk not only worthy of the Lord, but also pleasing unto the Lord, there is one aspect of our Christian walk that will guarantee that we walk pleasing to the Lord. That aspect is walking in the Spirit. We must walk in the person and presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the triune Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Certainly, He will lead us, guide us, and direct us as pleasing unto the Father, through the

Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, He will teach us the truth of Micah chapter 6 and verse 8, where God says, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

The Pitiful State of the Church and the Offense of the Gospel

Christianity as a whole today is in very pitiful shape. Our churches are basically filled with unbelievers. Compromise with sin in the world has made the church user-friendly and worldly-oriented. Instead of seeking to preach and teach the whole counsel of God, most churches have opted to entertain the world, and they have swallowed political correctness to the absolute extent that they do not wish to offend anyone or upset anyone at any time.

The truth of the matter is that there is an offense to the gospel. In Galatians 5:11, the Apostle Paul says, "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased." The Word of God is offensive to unbelievers. Men who are in rebellion to God do not wish to hear of God's sovereignty, His lordship, His law, His commands, and His demands. Obviously, there is an offense to the gospel.

Our churches are not only in pitiful shape because they have many unbelievers and have left the Word of God; we also have, in our churches, true believers who are walking in the flesh rather than in the Spirit. The fact that they are walking in the flesh is evidenced not only in their individual lives, but in their families, their churches, and their societies. We are not to walk after the world, nor are we to walk after the flesh in any sense of the word.

The Bible says in 1 John 2:15 and 17, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." He then explains what is in the world: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." All that is in the world is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

The Command to Walk in the Spirit

There are specific Scriptures that actually command us to walk in the Spirit. Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Here is a verse that tells us plainly: some walk after the flesh, and some walk after the Spirit. Verse 4 says, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:16 says, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” We read it earlier, but here it is again: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” Then, in Galatians 5:25, the Apostle said, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

Now go back to Galatians 5, beginning with verse 13, and consider the condition of the church in Galatia. You cannot really understand what Paul is saying unless you understand the condition of the church in Galatia. That condition is important because the church in Galatia resembles our modern-day churches in a multitude of ways. The truth of the matter is, yes, there were true believers in the church of Galatia, but they were not walking in the Spirit; they were walking in the flesh. They were true believers, yet their walk was not governed by the Spirit. This is the condition Paul is addressing as he speaks to the church in Galatia.

The Misuse of Christian Liberty in Galatia

Because they misunderstood and misapplied the doctrine of Christian liberty. Look what he says in verse 13: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty." That is a fact. There is a principle, a precept, a truth, and a doctrine of Christian liberty. He says, "ye have been called unto liberty." But then he adds this: "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

Liberty means that we have been delivered from sin and wickedness. Let me say this another way: liberty is not licentiousness. Christian liberty does not mean that we are allowed to do as we please, but we are free now to do as God commands us. What the Apostle Paul is saying in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 13 is

that you cannot use Christian liberty as a cloak and as a veil for the sins of the flesh.

Now, if you look in chapter 5, verse 1, here is the principle. Paul says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Certainly we are free in Christ. We are free from man's laws and man's traditions. We are free from days and times and customs and rites and rituals that are religious in nature, but not necessarily biblical. It is true that we have been set free in Jesus Christ. It is also true that we are not under the law as a means of justification. We are not trying to work our way into heaven. We are not trying to earn our salvation in any sense of the word whatsoever.

But just because we have been set free from sin and tradition and rules and regulations does not mean that we are free to sin. I want you to hold Galatians 5 and go back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 6. We will come back to Romans 6 a little bit later, just like we will come back to Romans chapter 8. But look in Romans chapter 6, and let us read the first six verses. Notice this passage, Romans 6 beginning there with verse 1. Paul asked, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" In other words, someone says, "I was a wicked sinner and God's grace abounded to me." And some would say, "Well, if we want more grace, let's just sin more greatly." And Paul says in verse 2, "God forbid"—that is, perish that thought. Do not even think that; that is absolutely ridiculous. Why? Here is what he says: "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

Paul writes, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

He continues, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." He is talking about the fact that we are dead to sin. This is what the Apostle Paul is referring to in Galatians chapter

5, when he says, "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." We are not debtors to the flesh, and we are not debtors to sin, but by love we are to serve one another.

If you really want to understand the doctrine of Christian liberty, then you need to study Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians chapter 8. We do have Christian liberty, but that liberty does not give us the right to sin or to licentiousness. It does not give us the right to despise, ignore, misuse, or abuse each other. Paul goes on to tell us in verse 14, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Our Lord said the two great commandments were, number one, to love the Lord with all your heart, and number two, to love your neighbor as yourself.

Paul gives a very serious warning in verse 15: "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." "If ye bite and devour one another" is an illustration taken from animals. Wild animals bite, tame animals bite, and they end up devouring things.

Alice and I were laughing this week because Belle, our oldest bulldog, caught and killed a squirrel. She guarded it up on the hill while the other two dogs, including one much larger than Belle, stood back looking at it. She would not let them near the squirrel. She finally brought it to the driveway, and Alice took pictures of her guarding it. When Belle got distracted and ran to the barn, Bedford, the larger dog, picked up the squirrel and ate it. He devoured it. It was just that simple. The warning is that believers must not treat one another in this destructive way.

She wanted to guard it and kill it—kill it and guard it—but he wanted to eat it. So this is what he is saying: “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” Biting and devouring refers to slanders, accusations, reproaches, and every kind of offensive language, as well as acts of injustice arising from fraud or violence.

Let me put it to you bluntly. Here is what was going on in the Galatian church: they were fussing, fighting, and feuding. Do you realize we have not changed at all? Such is still par for the course.

You look in the average church and you will find cliques, schisms, divisions, parties, feuds, and contentions. They are so commonplace that very little can be done in the average church. Usually, you will find in someone in the average church a Diotrephes attitude.

If you do not understand what a Diotrephes attitude is, look in the little book of 3 John, right before Jude and then Revelation, at verses 9 and 10. John had to deal with a man named Diotrephes. He wrote, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not." He would not even listen to the apostles. John continued: "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words:" and, "not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

What was his attitude? "I'm running this thing. You're gonna do what I say, and if you don't, I'm gonna kick you out or you're gone. I'm just not gonna put up with it. I'm in charge." Do you understand that? That is the Diotrephes attitude. Galatians 5:15 says, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." I have threatened for years to preach an entire message on this verse, with the title "Cannibal Christians." That is exactly what happens.

Walking in the Spirit

We turn into cannibals. We have a chicken mentality—not that we are afraid, but if you have ever been around chickens, you know that if one gets sick, gets hurt, or has a little blood, what does the rest of them do? They peck him to death. I used to say Christians are the only ones who will slay their walking wounded. We are the only ones who attack our own.

Very seldom do we fulfill the command in Galatians 6:1–2: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault"—that is, he has gotten caught up in trouble or sin—"ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

The church in Galatia was having problems. Our churches are having problems, and individual Christians are having problems. So what is the answer to our individual, familial, and ecclesiastical problems? The Apostle Paul tells us that we are to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. That is the answer. In light of everything happening above, he says, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

Walking in the Spirit as the Antidote to the Flesh

Here is the first point I want to emphasize: Walking in the Spirit is the antidote to walking in the flesh. We have been looking at this series, “Walking with the Lord,” for twelve weeks. During that time, I have pointed out repeatedly and tried to instill one simple truth: your walk is your way of life. It is your lifestyle, what you do every day, how you function, and how you live. Therefore, he tells us to walk in the Spirit, and we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

In verse 25, which we read earlier, the Apostle says it like this: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Living in the Spirit indicates the person, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit, while walking indicates our outward actions. Living in the Spirit simply means that the Holy Spirit of God indwells us, possesses us, leads us, and that we are under His influence and His direction.

Now, holding Galatians, return to Romans chapter 8 and consider verses 9 and 10. Romans 8:9 says, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." If God the Holy Spirit indwells us, we are in the realm or sphere of the Spirit. Now look at what he says in the latter part of verse 9: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." What does that mean? Anyone who is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit is not a Christian. He is not regenerated, converted, or saved.

Watch verse 10: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Then go back and look at verse 4. Romans 8:4 says that "the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Verse 5 adds, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."

So he is actually showing us a division right here. There are those who are minding the things of the flesh, and those who are minding the things of the Spirit. There are those who walk after the flesh, and there are those who walk after the Spirit. So my question is this: How then do we understand the term "flesh"?

The word "flesh" is used several different ways in the Bible. It can refer to all humanity: "All flesh is as grass." It can refer to the flesh on our arms and bodies, and it can refer to many things. But in the context of Romans 7 and 8 and Galatians chapter 5, it refers to what I would call our depraved nature, our evil inclinations, our wicked propensities. The Apostle Paul said it like this in Romans 7:18: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

He goes on to say, "For to will is present with me"—that is, to will to do that which is right—"but how to perform that which is good I find not." In other words, I cannot do it in my flesh. I might know better, but I cannot do it in my flesh. So he said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

When the Apostle says, "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh," you have to ask, What is minding the things of the flesh? It means that we are interested in and concerned only with our fleshly desires and our natures. The Greek word is phroneo. Literally translated as "mind," it means to think, to regard, to savor, to direct one's attention, to seek one's interest and one's advantage, and to cherish and strive for a thing. If you are minding the flesh, you are cherishing it. It is your chief interest. You are savoring it and delighting in it. You want it more than anything in the world.

Walking after the flesh seeks to fulfill its desires and lusts. To walk after the flesh means that you are forever pursuing, desiring, and doing the things that please your flesh, whatever that may be.

We can walk down the street and see, lying in the gutter, a drunk—filthy, unwashed, unkempt, wallowing in his own vomit. We turn our heads and say, "I would never live like that. I would never do that." Or we look at some adulterer or fornicator. What we normally do is look at the grosser things of the flesh and say, "I do not want that." But what we do not understand is this: the flesh can

The flesh can be refined and cultured and religious. The Pharisees, you remember, were following after the flesh. What did the Pharisee pray in Luke 18? "I thank God that I am not as other men are. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. I thank God I'm not like that old publican over there." That's flesh. That's pride. That's arrogance.

When we're minding the things of the flesh, it doesn't mean that we're wallowing in the gutter in our own vomit. It doesn't mean that we're minding adultery and fornication. It means that we can have a cultured, refined, even religious flesh, and we mind that. When we're minding how people think of us—"I'm going to do what's right, because if I don't, someone might think I'm a hypocrite or someone might think bad of me"—we're not doing it to please the Lord; we're doing it to please our flesh. So, minding the Spirit means that we're savoring and have our minds set on the things of the Holy Spirit.

What does He do? John chapter 16, verse 13, says: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." The Holy Spirit is here called the Spirit of truth. "For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." So what does the Holy Spirit do?

He teaches us the Word of God and leads us in reference to the Word of God. He leads us to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are minding the things of the Spirit, those who are walking in the Spirit, are thinking of the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, His honor, and His glory, and seeking to bring their lives into conformity to His Word.

In other words, minding the Spirit and walking in the Spirit is basically what the Apostle Paul said in Colossians 3, verses 1 and 2: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." If we wish to please our Heavenly Father, then we need to walk in the Spirit, because walking in the Spirit is indeed the antidote to walking in the flesh.

The Flesh and Spirit are Contrary

That brings me to the second thing. Not only is walking in the Spirit the antidote to walking in the flesh; it is contrary to and antagonistic to the flesh. Galatians 5:17 says, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

The word "lusteth" literally means that the flesh fights against the Spirit. The Greek word is epithumeo, which means the flesh places all of its desire and passion against the Spirit. Scripture tells us that they are contrary the one to the other. The word "contrary" is the Greek word antikeimai, meaning to be opposed to, to be contrary to, and to be an adversary. The flesh is the adversary of the Spirit, and the Spirit is the adversary of the flesh.

This sets forth a clear and decisive truth: you cannot walk in the Spirit and walk in the flesh at the same time. You will walk in one or the other, but you cannot walk in both of them at the same time.

It is true that we are in the flesh, and it is true that we will not be able to walk in the Spirit perfectly in this life. But it is impossible for you to walk in the flesh and walk in the Spirit, because they are contrary. They are opposites and adversaries. You walk in one or the other. It is just that simple.

Our fallen natures prefer the realm and sphere of the flesh; our renewed natures prefer the realm and sphere of the Spirit. This is why the Apostle Paul emphasizes that our old man has been crucified with Christ. Romans chapter 6, beginning with verse 5, says, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him.”

The old man is what we were in Adam, what we are in Adam. Our old man is crucified with him. Why? “That the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no

more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law"—that is, as a means of justification—"but under grace."

He said that our old man has been crucified with him. And in verse 7, "he that is dead is freed from sin." Look at verse 12: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." He did not say, "Let not sin therefore be in your mortal body." We are sinners; sin is there. Sin is not to reign.

This whole passage teaches that when our old man was crucified with Christ, we were delivered from the dominion and power of sin. Let me say it bluntly: sin is not our Lord. Jesus Christ is our Lord. Here is the difference between a saved man and an unsaved man. When sin speaks to an unsaved man, when sin demands that the unsaved man jump, the old unsaved man has to say, "Yes, master, yes," because sin is his lord and his master. When sin speaks to the Christian man, the Christian man can look at sin and say, "No, I don't have to obey you. I've been delivered from your dominion. Jesus Christ is my Lord and I choose to obey Him."

Look again at verse 11: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The word "reckon" means to count; it means to impute. What do we do in reference to sin? We count ourselves dead. We reckon ourselves dead because our old man has been crucified with Jesus Christ.

How much influence can the world, the flesh, sin, and the devil have over a dead man? Do you understand that you cannot tempt a dead man? I don't care how big a drunk a dead man was; when I hold a fifth of liquor over his grave, it is not tempting him at all. He

is dead. That is the truth of Romans chapter 6, and that is what the Apostle Paul was emphasizing in Galatians chapter 5 about walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh. We are dead indeed unto sin.

In verse 16: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Then he says, "But God be thanked, that ye were"—past tense—"the servants of sin," under his lordship, "but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin"—free from its dominion—"ye became the servants of righteousness."

"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh." The Apostle Paul is saying, If you do not understand what I have already told you, I am going to spell it out and make it very simple. "For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

Do you remember before your conversion, when you eagerly, willingly, readily, and joyfully plunged into sin? You yielded your members and said, "Here I am. I want you." Just as you did that to sin, now do that to the Lord Jesus Christ. Eagerly, willingly, readily, and joyfully say, "Lord, I am going to obey You. I eagerly sought sin; now I am eagerly seeking righteousness."

"For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." There was no righteousness in you. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin"—that is, free from its dominion—"and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

The Apostle is telling us that we are dead to sin. Two of the greatest truths I have ever learned are, first, the sovereignty of God: God is absolutely sovereign and in control; and second, that I have been delivered from the dominion and power of sin. Am I a sinner? Yes. Are you sinners? Yes. Do we have to sin? No. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we have the ability to say no to sin. It is just that simple.

We have no obligation to sin. We have no obligation to the flesh. We have no obligation to the world. We have no obligation to the devil—none whatsoever.

If you've never read Pilgrim's Progress, I would encourage you to do so. I want to give you a brief quote, one of my favorite passages from Pilgrim's Progress. It is the passage where Pilgrim meets Apollyon, the devil. Pilgrim is escaping from the city of destruction and is headed to Mount Zion.

Apollyon: “Whence came you, and whither are you bound?”

Christian: “I am come from the city of Destruction, which is the place of all evil, and I am going to the city of Zion.”

Apollyon: “By this I perceive that thou art one of my subjects, for all that country is mine, and I am the prince and god of it. How is it then that you have run away from thy king? Were it not that I hoped thou mayest do me more service, I would strike thee now at one blow to the ground.”

Christian: “I was, indeed, born in your dominions. But your service was hard, and your wages, such as a man could not live on, for the wages of sin is death. Therefore, when I was come to years, I did as others considerate persons do, look out if perhaps I might mend myself.”

“There is no prince that will thus lightly lose his subjects. Neither will I as yet lose thee. But since thou complainest of my service and wages, be content and go back. And what our country will afford, I do hereby promise to give thee. I'll make you richer.”

Christian: “But I have let myself to another, even to the King of princes. How can I with fairness go back with thee?”

Apollyon: “Thou hast done in this according to the proverb, ‘Change the bad for a worse.’ But it is ordinary for those who have professed themselves to be his servants after a while to give him the slip and return again to me. Do thou so also and all shall be well.”

Christian: “I have given him my faith, and sworn my allegiance to him. How then can I go back from this, and not be hanged as a traitor?”

Apollyon: “Thou didst the same to me, but I am willing to pass by all, if thou wilt yet turn and go back.”

Christian: “What I promised thee was in my nonage.”

Walking in the Flesh Is Natural

And besides, I count that Prince under whose banner I now stand is able to absolve me, yea, and to pardon also what I did as to my compliance with thee. And besides, O thou destroying Apollyon, to speak the truth, I like his service, his wages, his servants, his government, his company, and country better than thine. Therefore leave off to persuade me farther. I am his servant, and I will follow him. Isn't that amazing?

That is the attitude that we have to take when it comes to sin, Satan, and the world. No, we are His servants. We must determine to follow Jesus Christ regardless of sin, the flesh, the world, and the devil.

The Naturalness of Walking in the Flesh

Now, go back to Galatians chapter 5 and look at verse 17. Here is the third truth: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Walking in the flesh is that which we do normally and naturally. Walking in the flesh is so normal and natural that, if we are walking in the Spirit, "ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Every one of us was taught various things as children, but no one ever had to teach us how to sin. We picked that up naturally. It was part of us because it was in us. We are sinners by nature, proud and arrogant by nature. I saw a little four-year-old girl, a pretty little thing, and asked her, "Did anyone ever tell you that you're pretty?" She looked at me and said, "I'm not pretty, I'm beautiful." I smiled and said, "And vain too, aren't you?" She was shaking her head; she had no idea what vain meant. But that is natural. We do that normally.

It is absolutely normal and natural to please, pamper, and satisfy the flesh. What the Apostle Paul is saying is that if we walk in the

Spirit, we cannot do the things that we would—those things we have determined, purposed, planned, and desired, all to please the flesh.

The Greek word there is thelo, which means, “I will.” “I will to do this. I will to do that.” This is even so in the business world. Do you remember James chapter 4? James said, “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.” The flesh says, “I'm going to do this.” No. God says we cannot do the things that we normally would do.

By nature, be honest. If Steve stood up in the presence of everybody and cussed me out, you know what my nature wants to do? Cuss him back. Rip him up one side and down the other. I'll show him. If he hurts me, what's my normal, natural response? I'll get revenge. I will not stop at the post office. That is for sure.

All such normal and natural responses are sin, wickedness, and ungodliness, because what we normally would do by nature is in the flesh. Paul is saying that we cannot allow our old man to be resurrected. By nature, if we're cursed, we curse back. What God tells us is that we must mortify the deeds of the flesh. Go back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8, beginning with verse 11. Romans 8 and verse 11. Watch carefully. Romans 8, verse

Paul says, “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.” We do not owe our flesh anything. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

To mortify means to make dead; that is where we get the English word “mortician.” The word “mortgage” is related to it as well. If, by the Spirit, we make dead the deeds of the body, we shall live. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have

received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

Paul has been talking in Romans chapter 8 about walking in the Spirit and minding the things of the Spirit; now he adds being led of the Spirit. That brings us to the last point. In Galatians chapter 5, after speaking of walking in the Spirit, he says, "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law"—that is, we are not under the law as a standard of justification. What does it mean to be led of the Spirit? Walking in the Spirit is the same as being led by the Spirit; it is identical with it and synonymous with it.

Being Led by the Spirit

So you have to ask yourself this question: How does the Spirit of God lead us? The answer is that He always leads us in agreement with and in accordance with the Word of God. The Holy Spirit of God never, ever leads us to violate the Word of God. He never leads us to violate the law of God. He does not lead us into sin. He does not lead us to satisfy and pamper the flesh. He does not lead us to glorify the flesh. He leads us into obedience and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Does the Holy Spirit of God prompt us? Of course He does. But those promptings are always in line with Scripture. He will prompt us to pray, witness, study, obey, and worship. He will prompt us to do many other godly and holy exercises, but all of them are always in conformity to the Word of God. He never, ever leads us contrary to Scripture.

The Holy Spirit has been and continues to be blamed for a multitude of sins. So many people misunderstand, misuse, and misapply the leading of the Holy Spirit. They do some of the stupidest, craziest, most wicked things and then blame it on the Holy Spirit.

I know of one pastor who left his wife and ran off with a woman in the church. When he was finally confronted, here was his excuse: "Well, the Holy Spirit led him to run off with this woman, because

this woman was more spiritual than his wife, and he needed a godly helpmate in the ministry."

May I tell you what that is? That is hogwash. That is a lie. That is sin. The Holy Spirit does not lead us to violate God's law.

Some of you will remember a few years back—I think it took place down here in Florida—there was a woman who took her grown son to an indoor gun range. He stepped up to shoot, and as he was shooting his pistol at the range, she stepped up behind her son, shot him in the back of the head, and killed him. When she was asked why she did it, her answer was that the Holy Spirit led her to do it because she wanted to save her son from all the trouble that

When I was in college many years ago, there was a woman in Greenville, South Carolina, who found her husband asleep on the couch. She came up, put a .38 revolver to his temple, pulled the trigger, and killed him. Her excuse was that the Holy Spirit led her to do it. Ever since that time, when Alice tells me to get my feet off the couch, I do. I try not to go to sleep on the couch.

But you understand what I am trying to say? It is absolutely stupid. It is ridiculous to blame the Holy Spirit for our rebellion, wickedness, and lust. Yet people do that all the time. It is hogwash. God the Holy Spirit leads us; that is true, but He always leads us in conformity to the Word of God. The leading of the Holy Spirit is the act or ministry of God the Holy Spirit whereby He brings us into obedience and submission and into greater conformity to the Word of God. He enables us, empowers us, and enlightens us.

If there is any holiness, godliness, obedience, or submission in us at all, it is because of His work, not because of our flesh. For, as Paul said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." The leading of the Spirit is the same as walking in the Spirit. If you want to save yourself from a lot of heartache, learn to walk in the Spirit. It is the antidote to walking in the flesh.

Discerning the Walk: Works of the Flesh vs. Fruit of the Spirit

Let me make an application. I have pointed out that it is impossible to walk in both at the same time. We may be in the flesh, and we may

not be able to walk perfectly in the Spirit right now, but there is a vast difference between walking in the Spirit and walking in the flesh. How can we tell whether we are walking in the flesh or walking in the Spirit? Suppose Steve asks me a question and I answer him. How can I tell whether I gave him an answer in the Spirit or in the flesh? What if we have a disagreement? How can I tell whether it is a fleshly disagreement or one based upon spiritual reality?

The answer is very simple. Our fallen nature prefers the realm of the flesh; our renewed nature prefers the realm of the Spirit. Each realm manifests itself by producing its own fruits. Are you walking in the flesh? Here is how the flesh manifests itself. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these;"

"Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Everybody tries to say, when it comes to adultery, fornication, witchcraft, and all this kind of stuff, "Well, the devil made me do it." The devil didn't make you do anything. That was your stupid flesh. And the flesh does not have to be just adultery and drunkenness. It is also hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, and revellings.

How do I know I am walking in the Spirit? Verse 22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

If we are desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, or envying one another, we are walking in the flesh, not in the Spirit. The antidote to 99.9% of our problems is to learn to walk in the Spirit and not the flesh. Walking in the flesh exacerbates and makes our problems worse; walking in the Spirit resolves them. If we walk in

the Spirit, we are mortifying, making dead, the deeds of our flesh. We are walking worthily and pleasingly to our heavenly Father.

Father, we ask You today to help us walk in the Spirit. Teach us to mortify the deeds of the flesh, that we may honor Thee in all that we do. Give us understanding, open our minds, illuminate us, enlighten us, teach us, and make us holy and godly. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

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