

The Walk of the Child of God-The Walk of a Christian

By Paris Reidhead*

From the Fourth and Fifth Chapters of Ephesians, I propose to speak to you this morning on the theme of, THE WALK OF THE CHILD OF GOD, THE WALK OF A CHRISTIAN.

We've had a great deal in the papers in Canada at least, (and I am sure it was true during summer months here as well) concerning marathon walkers. A certain Doctor from England has revived interest in walking, and recently we had day by day descriptions of the walk from Montreal to Toronto. Well, it is a very profitable thing that we should be interested in walking, not only from the standpoint of the exercise that it gives, but from the analogy that it affords. And we are brought face to face with the fact that the Bible has a great deal to say about walking.

In fact, the word that you find here used in the first verse of the fourth Chapter, and in the 17th verse of the fourth chapter and on through, this same word is used 96 times in the New Testament. Very few of those times is the word used in reference, however, to physical walking. Usually it has to do with the conduct of one's life, the directions of one's purpose and the manner in which they present themselves to their fellows. In other words, the spiritual counterpart to walking.

The Text that we use is given here in this first verse of the fourth chapter, and we shall relate to it several other texts so that the picture can be filled in: "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called." (Eph. 4:1)

The first thing that I have to say about the Christian's walk is that it flows out of a relationship with God. You know that you that have had children in your home, that it's a most interesting thing to see the little ones begin to walk, take their first tottering step, stumble and fall and courageously get up and go on. It is wonderful to watch. You know that it is because there is life that there is the walk. Some of the children, these days, have secured the dolls that stand just about as tall as they are. Now I understand that there are a great many remarkable things that these dolls will do, and I am not at all amazed about that. But one thing they cannot do is learn to walk in the manner in which a child does because they do not possess life. If there was some way that you could take this little image of a child and put a child's brain in it and a child's heart in it, presumably you could teach the little one to walk. But it lacks life, and therefore it is doomed to stand in the corner hour after hour waiting until the neglectful child comes back for a few more moments of interest. It cannot by itself walk. I'm afraid that too often we find that there are those who would have the name to live as Christians, who would claim to be the children of God, but are rather like the little mechanical man that is peddled on the street by the illegal vender who watches to see when the policeman comes to ask him for his license and move him down again. And here the little man is all wound up and he struts across the sidewalk, bumps into the edge and stops.

I wonder if it isn't possible that a great many that name the name of Christ are rather like the mechanical man. They are wound up by a good evangelistic campaign, or perhaps they are wound up by a good dedication service or a prayer meeting, or by a vow service. Somehow they purpose in their hearts that they are going to walk, and they leave and for a little while they walk with some vigor and then they will slow down and finally you will find them slumped over in about the same posture that they were before the meeting or the dedication or the campaign. They just can't walk aright. We recognize that mechanical Christians are just as useless to the cause of Christ as mechanical figures are for industry, and little imitation plastic dolls are for a family. A terribly poor substitute for the real thing.

Now our Heavenly Father wanted children, but He wanted these children to partake of His Life, and to partake of His Nature. The way that one becomes a child of God is by repentance. This is to renounce his father, the devil, to leave the family into which he was born by nature and in which he'd consented to stay by choice, that is the family of death and sin, and then to present himself as a criminal at the door of Grace, there to plead for mercy; on the basis of the recognition of his crimes, on the basis of the renunciation of his father the devil, on the basis of the affirmation of his intention to please God, this one who

stands there at the door of Grace is received and is given a new heart and a new life and a new nature and a new Spirit and is made a new creation.

Now obviously he is born as a babe, and will take a few tottering steps, and will endeavor to stand upright. But the experience of all of us is, that the one that is born again has difficulty in learning to walk in the Way and the will of God.

God didn't intend to have a Church filled with perennial infants. The Apostle Paul was particularly concerned that he should not preside over a playpen of those that were paralyzed at spiritual birth. He did not want to lead home to Heaven those who had been forgiven, and those who had been pardoned but had remained in the crib stage, cutting and gouging and biting and fighting, just creeping and falling. This wasn't the Apostle's interest. It wasn't his thought. Rather you find him expressing great agony of spirit that those that have been born of God should go on to maturity.

We find him writing to the Church at Colossae in these words, "Christ in you, the hope of Glory." (Col. 1:27b) You would think this is enough, wouldn't you? No. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (Col. 1:28)

Do you believe in Christian perfection? You ought to if you believe the Bible, because the Bible indicates that maturity is the goal of Grace, not just life but maturity. We have heard it read for us in this fourth chapter, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man," that is a mature man... "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13) Babes are lovely, but their purpose is to grow and maturity is the end that God desires for every Christian.

And consequently Paul is greatly concerned that they should get into that relationship whereby they can walk and without which they never can walk properly. What is this relationship out of which the Christian Walk flows? Is it the New Birth? No. The New Birth is indispensable to it, and is a "not without which." But everyone that is born is born as a babe, and we are told that we are to partake of the Word, the milk and then the meat that we may grow. And growth, maturation, development is to bring us to this standard that is set forth here.

The end therefore of the Christian Life, - you hear people often say, "Well, why don't you leave all of this Christian Life Teaching, and why don't you leave all of this Deeper Life Teaching, and get on with the job of winning souls?" Vance Havner it is who said, "that if he had the choice of leading five people to a saving knowledge of Christ, or leading five that are saved and forgiven into a right relationship with Christ, he would choose immediately to lead the five on into that normal relationship, out of which the walk grows; because when they are there they will lead far more than five to the Lord Jesus."

And so Paul's great concern seems to be with the Church and he reflects the concern of Christ. He said, "I pray not for the world, but for them that Thou hast given Me." (John 17:9) Does this imply that the Lord Jesus has no interest in the world? that He's not burdened about the lost? obviously not. Our Lord is vitally interested in the world but He has sovereignly decreed, that everything that is done for the world is to be done through the Church, His Body, and "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:23) And therefore He said, I'm not praying for the unsaved. I am praying for these Thou hast given me that they may be in a relationship, they may all be one, one of the union; that I may live in them the way Thou hast lived in Me, and they will live in Me the way I lived in You in order that they may walk as they ought to walk so the world can believe. Paul therefore writing to this Church says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk WORTHY of the calling wherewith you are called."

What is this calling? Is it just a call to repentance? Ah it's more than that. It's that, but more than that. Can you not see the Lord Jesus stand before you and hold out those nail pierced hands? Do you not hear His entreaty through the words of Paul, "I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by these mercies of God," these nail scars, this sword wound, these nail holes in My feet, My sacrifice for you, "I beseech you therefore brethren by these mercies, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." (Rom. 12:1)

We must observe therefore that it is impossible, even for a converted person, to walk as God has outlined and ordained he should walk in the natural energy of his own personality. How tragic it is that when most of us come to Christ we come only for our own concern. I was listening to the Timeans from West Africa for a week at Glen Rocks. And Mrs. Timean and her husband repeatedly stated that in their experience in West Africa every one that came to pray came because of their own need. The person was sick and they came for health. They were confused and troubled, they came for deliverance. They were under the oppression of the evil spirit, they came for protection. But those who prayed and those who came, came because of their need. And I am afraid that the churches of America are filled with people that have come to Christ because of what they want out of Christ and have never come to see what Christ wants out of them. And thus it is that when you come with your need, God graciously meets it. But having met your need as you viewed it, you still not do not, are not in such relationship that in the energy that you brought to Him you can walk as He wants you to walk.

You see most of us are concerned about our past, our deeds, when we come to Christ. One has lied and stolen and sworn and disobeyed the Commandments of the Lord, in such a way that there is great guilt on the conscience. And the person comes, saying what can I do about my sins? There's a mountain on my back. There's this vast barrier that separates. What can I do about my sin. And then one sees the Cross, and that Christ died for our sins and died for sinners. And they receive Him as the substitute, as the One who made Atonement, and they receive pardon, and they receive forgiveness. But in the conceit of the human mind, the fallen human mind, the individual feels, Well now that my past is under the Blood, now I am set to do the will of God; so conceited as to think that that energy with which one serves Satan is now usable in the Kingdom of God, and for the Service and Glory of God. It isn't true. It isn't true.

That energy with which you serve the god of this world is useless when it comes to serving the God of Heaven and earth. God has decreed no flesh shall glory in His sight. It is impossible to walk this walk in the energy of human personality. And thus the Lord Jesus says, "I beseech you that you present your body a living sacrifice." Why? Well we hear it here. This that we have in the fourth Chapter is related to that which is given in the third Chapter, where Paul so eloquently and fervently prays, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit deep in the inner man; in order that Christ may take up His lasting dwelling place in your hearts through faith." (Eph. 3:14-17) This is the relationship that the Lord Jesus wants.

He wants you to recognize that you can't serve Him, you can't perform the ministry for Him, and you can't do that which will endure for His Glory. Oh you know the hardest job God has is to create a market for what He wants to supply. He doesn't have any difficulty saving lost people. His problem is getting nice people lost enough to need the salvation the Lord Jesus died to bring. His problem isn't getting weak people strong. His problem is to get, strong people weak, to bring them to the place that they are at the end of themselves, where they realize they cannot do the work of God in the energy with which they serve themselves. And oh how patiently God works with us and yet how strenuously and stringently He works with us when He feels we've exceeded the bounds of patience. When God begins to let something come in and hit the things we've done in the energy of our personality, and this collapses, and that collapses, and the houses we built with such labor and pain settle down around our heads, and we're there in the ruin of them. And we begin to say, What is all of this? And God begins to show us that in mercy He let the little play houses we built collapse to show us that nothing that is done in the energy of human personality can endure for the glory of Christ.

And by the same token, the walk that we walk in the energy of our own dedication and earnestness and sincerity is so far short of the walk that He expects of us that it just doesn't even count; it isn't in the same League at all; it doesn't have any value to it. No. We are to be filled with the fullness of God. God didn't save you just to take you where He is, but He saved you that He could come where you are. He wanted to have a people that would be a witness to Him. He knew you couldn't. He tried it with Israel, and a Nation that was born of the will of man, and of blood, and of the flesh couldn't present the witness that He wanted. And so He said He would have a new nation that would be born not of the blood, not of the will of the flesh, and not of man, but of God. And in this new thing, the Church, God Himself dwells in every member, and His desire is that every member might recognize His presence, and present their bodies to Him and invite this One to fill them completely and live through them and walk through them. His own life.

And so this walk flows out of a relationship. The normal Christian life, “being filled unto all of the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:19) No wonder Paul couldn’t wait to put the benediction at the end of the letter. After he had had this glorious revelation and embodied it in this testimony that we are to “be filled unto all of the fullness of God,” you see his hands go up in ecstasy and hear the cry, “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us. Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages world without end.” (Eph. 3:20-21) Then having carried this testimony to this high point, he says, “I beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling.”

What are you called to be? You’re called to be a vehicle for the risen Christ. You’re called to be a channel through which His life can flow. You’re called to be to Him as the light bulb is. Here we have these lights that cast some illumination on our meeting. I suppose this morning about six o’clock there was a silly little conversation carried on by the lights. And one whispers over to the other, I think I’m going to have a nervous breakdown. I’ve been in this socket for all these years and I just don’t feel that I’m up to giving this much glow. It says 150 watts, and I’m sure that I don’t have any more than 50 watts in me. And my little filaments are worn, just worn out as I’ve tried to stimulate enough activity to get the glow that’s needed. Is that what happened? No. No.

And yet you hear people say, “I’m just so tired in the work of the Lord. I’m so weary with it. I’m so exhausted by it all.” What are they doing? Well you know what we have in Hebrews the 4th chapter, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. And he that has entered into rest is ceased from his own labors.” (Heb. 4:9,10) And this is what has happened to the light bulb. They’ve been screwed into the socket. They’re abiding there, and they are just vehicles through which the electricity can pour. And what God is asking of you and asking of me is that we will abide in Him in our helplessness and our weakness and our impotence and our emptiness, in our brokenness, in our death to our own ability, we’ll abide in Him so that the resurrection life of Christ by the Holy Ghost can flow through the windings of our personality, and we can walk and witness and live as we ought to live. This is so marvelous and yet it is so seldom seen.

And so Paul says, “I beseech you that you walk worthy.” There are certain evidences of the one who has been filled with the Spirit of God, and is filled with the fullness of God. Notice now how this walk is going to be manifest. We are to walk “with all lowliness,” with all lowliness. And we are to walk “with all meekness, and with long suffering, forbearing one another in love.” (Eph. 4:2) We are to strive. This word even means strive unto death strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

You know, I was talking with a teacher quite well known across the nation, a Bible Teacher, and he was saying, and I don’t agree with him in this, but I understand the point and I’m using it. He was saying that people often that talk about a subsequent experience to regeneration, of being filled with the Spirit, or baptized with the Spirit, seem to evidence such a carnal pride that they’ve had something the rest haven’t had, been somewhere the rest haven’t been, done something that others haven’t done.

He said it just nauseates him when he sees people that completely misunderstand the purpose of all that God does for His child. And dear friend I would have you notice that when we as preachers talk about D. L. Moody¹ having an experience in New York City where he was filled with the fullness of God, and Charles Finney² having an experience where he was filled with the fullness of God, we may be doing a disservice to you, because we are implying that if you are filled with the fullness of God you’ll be a Moody or you’ll be a Finney. Now if you’ve ever read this into what I’ve said or anyone else has said, I want to disabuse your mind at this moment.

I have at home a little instrument called an electric razor. It’s a motor, not a vibrator, but a motor. Now it’s made for the purpose of as its name indicates and it does a reasonably good job at it, when that little motor is filled with electricity it still a little motor filled with electricity. Do you see? you follow? And when you have a big motor filled with electricity it’s a big motor filled with electricity. And the fact that the little motor is filled doesn’t make it big. It just makes it full. And when you are filled with the fullness of God, you won’t be big, you’ll just be full. That’s all. You’ll just be what God wanted you to be, the member in His Body that He intended you to be, performing the service He intended you to perform, living as He intended you to live,

¹ Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church

² Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) An American Presbyterian minister and leader in the Second Great Awakening in the United States.

witnessing as He intended you to witness. There are a lot of people you know that like to stand on the shoulders of Jesus Christ so they can be seen over the head of the crowd. This is making merchandise out of the Son of God, and it is a vicious practice that's carried on in the 20th Century where people seek to acquire their status by some experience they have had or some position that they hold. And beloved I insist that when you have come to the place that the Scripture holds to be normal and filled with the fullness of God the evidence of this outwardly among your fellows will not be as some have suggested. Oh the answer, the questions that you get when you minister in conferences. People come and say, "Well, now I'd like to experience the fullness of God. I'd like to know the sanctifying fullness of the Holy Spirit. I'd like to be a normal Christian in every sense." And you say, "Why?" "Well, you see I have a class and I don't feel...Or, I'm a Pastor and I don't feel... Or, I'd like to..." But almost invariably you have the same attitude toward the fullness of God that you have toward salvation. People come to Christ because they have a need that they want met, and so subsequently they have a need that they want met and they come to God that God can do something for them.

But my friend, what I'm talking about isn't so much something God is going to do for you, but it's something you're going to do for God in the sense that you're going to become a vehicle through which He can sovereignly work out His purpose in your life - an instrument. You may, you know it might just be that you've had a tremendous work of some sort in the energy of the flesh. It's amazing how much can be done without God. It's amazing! You go to India, or I see as I have pictures presented to me from India, and you see these people that out of religious motivation lay and measure the continent, clear across the country with their body, or hold their hand until it's atrophied, or stare at the sun until they are blind, or sleep on a bed of spikes, and all these other terrifying things. And they do it with religious motivation, because they want to arrive at a certain state or gain certain merit. It's just amazing how much can be done by dedicated and intense human personality without God.

It just could be that when you come to the end of yourself and you come to the place that you are filled with the fullness of God that your walk is going to be an entirely different direction than it was before. It may have been at this time that in the energy of your flesh you were climbing the stairs and then all of a sudden when you realize where you are going you come, and God may lead you off into obscurity. He leads you off into some quiet ministry of intercession, may lead you an entirely different way.

Beloved, we have here a walk of the Spirit-filled man, the walk of the man who is filled with the fullness of God, and it is said to be a walk in lowliness. Not in pride, not in arrogance, not making merchandise of God, or making God a means to an end; but being filled with the fullness of God, we're going to walk in lowliness with meekness. Have you been filled with the fullness of God? If that's true, then this is how you walk, if you're "walking worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called. With long suffering." With long suffering. Oh how difficult it is to enter into this. It's impossible to the natural heart. There's something in us. You know there's a veil that separates between a soul and God. There's an inner veil and an outer veil. I suppose that it's a very simple thing for most people to give up worldliness, to give up these gross things. I don't believe that this is any great problem to the average person. But do you know the thing that stands in the way of people meeting God. It's this inner veil of this sort of transparent thing that separates from God, this net of transparent nylon. These are the self sins...self-pity, self-vindication, self-justification, self-exaltation, this weaving of the net of the self sins. And before anyone can ever experience the fullness of God, the Cross has got to cut right through all of these expressions of the self life. And when one is filled with the fullness of God, look at the contradiction to it. Instead of there being highness of mind, high minded and heady, there is lowliness. Instead of there being pride in activity, there's meekness. Instead of there being justification and vindication of one's self there is long suffering. Instead of there being insistence upon ones rights, there's a forbearing of one another in love. Instead of there being division as we saw in the Church at Corinth, there is striving even unto blood "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3) Is this what you want when you asked to be filled with God? Is this the walk you walk? When you've desired to know God in all of His fullness, have you wanted this?

Turn to Philippians and let me read, rather to Colossians, Chapter 1 and let me read just a few verses. Verses 9 through 11. "For this cause we also since the day we heard it do not cease to pray for you and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." What is this walk that is worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing? "Being fruitful in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might according to His glorious power," unto fame and success in your chosen Christian work. Is

that what it says? Oh no. Oh no. I'm reading from the reversed vision again. This is the way most people think about it however when they think about being filled with the fullness of God. This is what God says: "Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power unto all patience." This is how you walk worthy of the Lord. And long suffering -- grit your teeth and hang on to the bitter end. Is that what it says? No. "With long suffering with joyfulness." And then, "giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col 1:12)

Oh Beloved, are you walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing? Are you walking worthy of the calling wherewith you are called? You know in Ephesians 5:18 we read, "Be filled with the Spirit (Be being filled with the Spirit.)" Can you tell the way a man, by the way a man walks whether or not he is filled with spirits, alcoholic? I don't think you have too much difficulty. Do you? There's a characteristic walk. He staggers, sways, stumbles and falls. You're either filled with the fullness of God or filled with self, and you can almost invariably tell when a man is walking filled with self; There's staggering. He stumbles this way. I'm going to serve God. And then a little while later he stumbles back the other way and he's serving himself. Up and down. Back and forth. But just as when one is filled with alcoholic spirits he loses control of his walk and he walks impulsively and erratically, jerkily, so when one is filled with self and walking in self energy--in moments of dedication -- I'm going to pray, and then lack of prayer. It's a staggering type of thing. But when you're filled with the fullness of God, there's a characteristic walk, steadily, purposefully, directly. And how will it be manifest? Lowliness. That's of the mind. The attitude toward self. Well how can anyone be high-minded when he knows that in himself there's no good thing. There's nothing but sin. He's going to walk in lowliness because he realizes he can't even stand by himself much less walk. And then he's going to walk in meekness. Regardless of what he's done. Think of the Apostle Paul saying with this marvelous ministry of healing and miracles and knowledge and all of these ministries, and Paul says I am less than the least of all saints. Meekness.

And long suffering. Forbearing one another in love. "Striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." You know people are following you. They're watching you. How do they watch you walk? When you go out of church, how do you walk? When people watch you in business, they follow you Monday and they see you in the office and the shop and the factory and the store, how are you walking; have you ever wondered perhaps why there aren't more people following you. Do you think it could be because you are walking so erratically? Up and down, and back and forth? Let me ask you. Have you been filled with the fullness of God? Are you walking in the fullness of God? Are you walking worthy of this calling? If you aren't the track you are leaving behind you is one of losing your temper here and being pious there and witnessing on this side and getting excited and impatient on that side. And it's just a stagger back and forth. Drunk with self, because you are walking in the energy of your personality. Oh can't you come to the place where you realize that people are following you, and watching the way you walk? And that you can't walk as you ought to walk in your own energy. It's only when you come to the end of yourself and let God fill you with the Holy Ghost. And He takes up His lasting dwelling place in your heart through faith that you are filled with the fullness of God and then you go on to be being filled with the fullness of God that you can walk as you ought to walk -- Worthy of the Lord. Watch your walk this week will you? Maybe even before this evening there will be some of you will want to come back this evening and find out how to be filled with the fullness of God, because you know your walk isn't as it ought to be.

Let us stand for prayer.

Our Father, we rejoice that Thou art so faithful and frank and candid with us as to tell us that we can't, and left us no doubt about this at all. If any of us leave this morning thinking that we have in ourselves the requisite strength and power to walk as we ought to walk, it's just deliberate self-deception. Thy Word is so clear on the matter. And Father, help us also to fully appreciate that when Thou hast told us what we can't do then Thou hast given us full revelation of what Thou dost want to do; Thou dost want to fill us with Thine own fullness and walk through us Thine own life. And we would ask Thee this morning that the Holy Spirit would create in the hearts of this people a market for what Thou dost desire to supply. Help us to watch our walk, Lord. Help us to look as we go today and in the days of the week and to see whether we are walking worthy of the calling wherewith we've been called. For Jesus sake.

While we remain with bowed heads and bowed hearts we are so happy to have our brother Gordon Ham, Pastor from Merrick, Long Island with us. I am going to ask if he will pronounce the Benediction.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the spiritual refreshment that has come to us this morning. We pray that the Holy Spirit will use the message that we may walk worthy of Thee and the high calling which is ours. We pray that Thou wilt grant unto each and every one of us Thy blessings. Strengthen the inner man that Thou mightiest work in and through us to Thine own Glory. And may Grace, Mercy and Peace be ours now and forever more. Amen. (Amen.)

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, September 4, 1960 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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