

THE SERMON NOTEBOOK

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SUBJECT: WALKING IN THE LIGHT

TITLE: WHEN WE WALK THE WALK

TEXT: 1 JOHN 1:7

INTRODUCTION. God wants lost people to know him (John 20:30-31). He also wants those who know Him to know that they know him. But how can we know for sure that we know Him?

For five summers, I worked for the Quitman County (Mississippi) Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), a division of the US Department of Agriculture. People said we were measuring cotton. In reality, we were plotting fields on an areal photograph so that the ladies in the office could determine the exact acreage with a planimeter. We began each year with a two day school, one day in classes and another in the field. One summer, since I had more experience than some of the young men, the supervisor asked me to take half the boys and “measure” one field and plot it on the “map.”

We finished well ahead of the other group and sat in the shade of the woods adjacent to the field we had just measured. After some long-forgotten conversation, I told them what I did the rest of the year. I was a ministerial student at Mississippi College. I served as the student pastor of the Dockery Baptist Church, Cleveland, and every Sunday morning I preached at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. When ever possible, I also helped out on our farm in Tunica County, seven miles west of Sledge - better known today as the hometown of Charlie Pride.

No one had ever told me I couldn't do it, so I shared my faith in Christ with the group. The supervisor at the time was a bi-vocational pastor and I knew he would not object. After a few minutes, a young man named John said, “I wish I could know I would go to heaven.” I answered him with Paul's words to Timothy: “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12b). This man was very religious. His sister was in training to be a nun at the time. But he had no way of knowing whether or not he could go to heaven. And I do not know whether or not he was ever saved.

The simple fact is, God wants Christians to know they are saved, and He wants lost people to know they are lost. He saves lost people, but unlike many churches, He does not drop them as soon as He counts them. At the point of salvation, God gives us His Holy Spirit - we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, or baptized by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit immediately begins the process of sanctifying us. Sanctification is a process by which God conforms us to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). Sanctification begins at the time of Justification and continues - or should continue - until our Glorification. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit, if we permit His mighty, supernatural work within our heart He will nurture and develop us, conforming us daily to the image of Jesus Christ.

Those who are obedient to the Holy Spirit are more likely to have assurance of their salvation. Those Christians who quench or grieve the Holy Spirit are more likely to doubt their salvation.

First John 1:7 teaches that those who walk in the light have two very special blessings: (1) they have fellowship with God, and (2) they are being cleansed daily.

“But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

I. CHRISTIANS SHOULD AND MAY WALK IN THE LIGHT.

A. You Either Walk in the Light or in Darkness.

This is the second of five times in this brief passage that John uses the condition of the third class. The condition of the first class assumes the statement to be true, the condition of the second class assumes it to be false, and the condition of the third class means that it may be true or it may be false - you may do it or you may not. Just as Justification is not forced on anyone against his will, Sanctification is not coerced. God wants you to live a spiritual life. You may, or you may not.

If you are walking in the light you are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, but if you are walking in the dark you are walking in the power of Satan and the old sin nature. You do not live in a spiritual vacuum; you are either walking in the light or you are walking in darkness. You are either spiritual or carnal. Sadly, far too many Christians think of people only in terms of their being saved or lost. We must never confuse Justification and Sanctification. In Justification we are pronounced just, and in Sanctification we are grown, nurtured, and developed. Justification is a mighty act of God. Sanctification denotes the mighty, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Make no mistake about it, Sanctification is supernatural. You can no more sanctify yourself than you can save yourself.

You ought to walk in the light (walk in the spirit). You may or you may not do it, but you should. You cannot sanctify yourself and it does not happen by accident. If you humble yourself before God and let the Holy Spirit fill your heart He will work a mighty work in your life. When this is happening you will have assurance of salvation. If this is not happening, you are either lost, or you are a backslider who needs to confess your sin, repent, and ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. How may you know if you are spiritual? This passage will help provide some answers.

1. We need to understand the principle of being spiritual.

- a. We must walk by faith, 2 Cor. 5:7.
- b. We must walk in the truth, 3 John, vs. 4.

- c. We must walk in the light (spirit), 1 John 1:7.
2. This is the doctrine of spirituality.
- a. God supplies the power and the incentives.
 - b. We are responsible for the commitment to walk in the spirit.

This is in the active voice - we must keep on walking in the light. It is in the subjunctive mood - maybe you will and maybe you won't. An act of the will is required in Sanctification. Remember, in Sanctification there is assurance of salvation.

It is absolutely essential that we understand God's part and our part. You cannot sanctify yourself. Only God can do that and He is not going to do that against your will. In fact, He is not going to do that without your doing your part. While He does all the sanctifying, our part is vital. Nothing happens against our will. If you are not spiritual, if you are not walking in the spirit (walking in the light), then there is no one to blame but yourself. Priesthood of believers is not only a privilege, it is also an awesome responsibility.

ILLUSTRATION.

The new pastor accepted the invitation to eat Sunday dinner with farmer Jones and his family. While Mrs. Jones was "gittin' dinner on the table," she visited with the pastor's wife. The new pastor and Mr. Jones sat in rockin' chairs on the front porch, "rockin' and vis'tin'." From time to time they commented on the children playing in the yard, but mostly the pastor asked about various fields he could see from the yard. Finally, he turned so he could see the most beautiful he thought he had ever seen. The ground for the garden had been cleared of trees and bushes, brush piles burned and the land disced and broken (for city folks, that means plowed into rows). The pastor exclaimed, "Brother Jones, you and the Lord certainly have a beautiful garden!" To which Brother Jones replied, "You should have seen it last year when the Lord had it to Himself." That sort of gives special meaning to "working out your salvation."

B. Now Let Us Look at the Work of the Holy Spirit and the Believer.

- 1. Look at the work of the Holy Spirit before and after salvation.
 - a. He convicts the lost of sin, judgment, and righteousness, John 16:8ff.

- b. He is the Agent of salvation.
- c. He baptizes us into Christ.
- d. He seals us in Christ.
- e. He guides in truth (sound doctrine), John 16:13.
- f. He glorifies Christ, not Himself, John 16:14.
- g. He gives spiritual gifts
- h. If you grieve the Holy Spirit He will still indwell you, but fellowship suffers.

2. We must walk in the power if the Holy Spirit.

This is expressed in various ways. Sadly, some people disassociate themselves from other believers over terminology, when they may be using different words that speak of the same thing. Unfortunately, when it comes to religious matters, people often throw more heat on the subject than light, and that includes Christians. We do not choose Christ, He chooses us; yet Paul writes, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). The Holy Spirit empowers us and nurtures us, but we must be make a commitment to walk in the light.

3. A spiritual believer will do certain things.

- a. A spiritual believer imitates Christ.
- b. A spiritual believer glorifies Christ.

4. A spiritual believer is not under the law, Gal. 5:18, 23.

5. One who is filled with the Holy Spirit cannot keep on sinning, 1 John 3:9-10.

He will commit acts of sin, and if we deny that we do not know the truth (1 John 1:8). Romans 3:23 is very clear: “For all have sinned (past tense), and come short (present tense) of the glory of God.” However, one who has been indwelt and is being filled daily with the Spirit of God cannot continue in sin in such a way as to make it a lifestyle.

C. Two Non-meritorious Words Describe The Believer’s Part.

- 1. We must believe to be saved.
- 2. We must confess Christ daily.

D. Those Who Walk in the Light Are Blessed Two Ways.

1. They have fellowship with one another.

Fellowship does not mean a “church social.” Nor, does it denote all the chattering that goes on while people are supposed to be getting ready to worship the Lord before most services. One elderly deacon walked down to the front and asked the organist to lower the volume so they hear each other talk! The New Testament word rendered fellowship actually mean a participation in something, thus, a partnership in ministry, worship, and service.

2. They are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christian, you were cleansed by the blood of the Lamb of God. Since you have become a Christian, you have been cleansed from sin (committed daily, Rom. 3:23b) continually by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is in the present tense. When we confess our sin (1 John 1:9), we are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

II. NOW, CONSIDER WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CLEANSED BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

A. Many Have a Limited Understanding of the Blood of Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus shed every drop of His blood.
2. Not one drop of His physical blood has ever touched you.
3. His blood may have splattered on some who were never redeemed.
4. His physical blood represents something important.
5. There is power in the blood of Christ.
6. Learn this well and your you will understand your salvation better.

B. There Are Many References to the Blood in the Bible.

1. “In Him (Christ) we have redemption through His blood,” Eph. 1:7.
2. Jesus Christ...washed us from our sins in his own blood,” Rev. 1:5.

C. The Blood of Christ Is Always Associated With Salvation.

1. In the Old Testament, animal sacrifices portray the Cross.
 - a. Scripture is to be interpreted literally unless it is obviously figurative.
 - b. However some literal things are to be interpreted symbolically.

ILLUSTRATION: In 1 Corinthians 10:1b-4 (NASB), Paul writes, “Our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for **they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.**”

2. Jesus shed physical blood, but the blood in the Bible denotes the deeper things the blood represents.
3. Jesus did not bleed to death.
 - a. He was dead when the soldier checked on Him.
 - b. He had yielded up His spirit.
 - c. No one took His life, He laid it down on Himself.
 - d. His physical death does not fully explain His death for our sins.
 - e. Yet, He did die for our sins.
 - f. There was a death that preceded His physical death.
 - g. His physical blood has never touched us, but His blood cleanses us from sin.
4. The blood of Christ is the most powerful thing in the world.
 - a. We are not saved by His physical blood, but one drop of what it represents is powerful enough to save every person in the world.
 - b. No one can be saved apart from the shed blood of the Lamb of God.
 - c. The blood of Christ refers to the spiritual death which the real blood represents.

CONCLUSION. On the Cross, Jesus took our sins upon Himself. The agony of the Cross is seen in the exclamation, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” During those three hours of darkness, the Father turned His back on His Son because He could not look on sin. When He said, “It is finished,” He literally meant that He had completed His mission. After that, He yielded up His spirit.

While on the Cross, Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves. The only way any lost person can be saved is to have his sins washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. And the only way

any Christian can be cleansed of sin is through the blood of Christ, as this verse plainly reveals.

If you are a Christian you should walk in the Light. You may, and you may not. But if you do walk in the light you will have fellowship with God and with other believers. Furthermore, the blood that washed away your sins when you were saved will cleanse you when you confess your sins today, (1 John 1:9).

INVITATION