

Walking With God

by Thomas Cook

The sermon emphasizes the importance of walking with God through companionship, fellowship, and continuous progress in our spiritual journey.

Scripture: Genesis 5:24, Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 4:18, Isaiah 35:8, Amos 3:3, Micah 6:8, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 5:25, Philippians 3:13, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holiness"

Description

Thomas Cook preaches on the concept that holiness is not just a state but a way, a highway where believers walk with Christ by consecration, faith, surrender, and trust, growing more like Him each day. Walking with God involves companionship, fellowship, and progress, where believers experience the real presence of Christ, engage in intimate friendship with Him, and steadily progress in their spiritual journey, never going back but always moving forward towards becoming more like Christ.

Transcript

Holiness is not only a state but a way, and not only a way, but a highway, wherein the redeemed are to walk; and walking along that highway we shall always have Christ at our side.

We get into the highway of holiness by a definite act of consecration and faith, and walk upon the highway by continuous surrender and trust. Christ is the door, and He is the way. Walking with Him, we shall grow more and more unworldly and heavenly-minded, more transformed, more like Christ, until our very faces shall be radiant with Divine glory. As with Moses, who "wist not that the skin of his face shone" with the reflected radiance which it had received when he was in the presence of Jehovah, so from those who walk with God there emanates an unconscious influence which makes the ungodly tremble before them as Satan in Paradise Lost, when he saw the sinless pair in Eden, "trembled to behold how awful goodness is."

When the old Hebrews wanted to describe a man who reached their ideal in religious life, they used the simple but comprehensive phrase, "he walked with God." To them there was nothing higher than unbroken and unclouded communion with their Maker. That was, in their view, the secret of all holiness, and the New Testament has nothing higher than that to reveal. "We all with unveiled face beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image." When we sit before the camera, and have our portraits taken, our picture is printed on the prepared film; but when we behold and continue to behold the image of Christ we become the camera, and His image is printed on our souls. The teaching is, that we

become like those with whom we keep company.

"We say we exchange words when we meet," says Professor Drummond, "what we exchange is souls. And when our intercourse is close, and very frequent, so complete is this exchange that recognizable bits of the one soul begin to show in the other's nature, and the second is conscious of a similar and growing debt to the first. This mysterious approximating of two souls, who has not witnessed? Who has not watched some old couple come down life's pilgrimage hand in hand with such gentle trust and joy in one another that their very faces wore the self-same look? These were not two souls, it was a composite soul. Half a century's companionship had told upon them, they were changed into the same image." What glorious possibilities are here suggested to those whom God hides in the secret of His presence? Who can think mean thoughts, or speak ungenerous words, in the presence of Christ? His mere presence must suggest immediately the right thing in the controlling passion, the subduing of pride, and the overcoming of selfishness. In His company, who could help but always be at his best, and if this influence is perpetuated, what could not life become? Walking with God implies at least three things:

I. COMPANIONSHIP

We could hardly be said to walk with a person without a distinct sense of that person's presence. Was not this our Lord's promise to His disciples (John xiv. 21-24), and which Jude did not understand when he said, "Lord, how is it Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us and not unto the world?" It was altogether incomprehensible to them at the time, but afterwards they knew by blessed experience that He meant a real personal revelation of Himself, such as fills up the measure of the soul's need -- a manifestation such as only the divinely illuminated soul can understand. Not a manifestation to our bodily senses; that would be impossible. God is a Spirit. Nor is it an intellectual revelation to perceptive reason. It is a manifestation to the inner consciousness of the believing heart, so that the Divine presence is as real as the sense of the presence of any human being. Christ becomes more really present than if we could touch Him, or hear His loving human voice; forming a companionship more intimate, sweet, and enduring, than that of any earthly relationship, sweeter than that of a friend with friend, of father and son, of mother and child. Such communion is independent of matter or space or time, it is a fellowship of spirit; as is all true friendship, all love, human or divine.

Mr. Spurgeon once said that he never passed a single quarter of an hour in his waking moments without a distinct consciousness of the presence of the Lord. How much better this spiritual presence than a bodily presence could be? A body is subject to locality, space, and time, but now we can all have Him. He is able to be with all men always, everywhere, at the same time, even unto the end of the world. A late writer represents Christ as saying, as He stood by the disconsolate sisters of Bethany, "If I had been away from the body, I should have been present when Lazarus died." It was expedient that the bodily presence should be withdrawn, that everywhere He could come and go like the noiseless, invisible wind blowing the wide world over wheresoever He listeth. A present personal Christ solves every difficulty, and meets every requirement of Christian experience. We are not surprised that this "Companionship of the Presence" has been described as "the secret of secrets of the Christian life." We were outer court worshippers before, but this is entering into the inner court. In this experience we know Him.

More present to Faith's vision keen

Than any earthly vision seen;

More near, more intimately nigh

Than any outward earthly tie.

II. FELLOWSHIP

When we speak of having fellowship with Christians, we mean that we have union of hearts. As we speak together, heart goes out to heart. Close friendship and familiarity are always engendered when kindred spirits walk much together. They become communicative. One tells his trouble, and the other tries to console him under it, and then imparts his own secrets in return. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." No human friendship can be half so close and intimate as that which the lowliest Christian can have with his Saviour. In the New Testament the Christian's relationship to Christ is represented as a personal, conscious acquaintance with Him, which ripens into a close and tender friendship. Such is the mutual confidence now blessedly established between God and redeemed man, that even here on earth it is true that the Lord talks with Abraham, and through him, with all the family of the faithful, "face to face as a man talketh with his friend."

It has been well said, "If you walk with God you must talk with God, or you will soon cease to walk with Him." But the intercourse is not one-sided. We must listen as well as pray "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." On the one side we overhear God saying to Himself, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" And on the other we hear the child of God complaining with hurt surprise, "The Lord hath hid it from me and not told me." We talk to Him, unbosoming our secrets, opening our hearts as we cannot do to any earthly creature. He talks to us quite as freely, allowing us to look into His heart and work as He explains the purpose of His grace, opening up with a friend's generous confidence the bearing of the yoke, the cross, and the thorn, upon our future, with Him and for Him.

What blessed revelations about the Father, the covenant, and the kingdom come daily to those who have formed with Christ this close, intimate and indissoluble friendship! There is a story told of a merchant prince of Glasgow, who was walking with a friend through the crowded streets of the city, when suddenly the companion heard him say, "Oh, man, go on a bit. The Lord Jesus is wanting a talk with me." It was so. He heard the whisper of the Holy Spirit, he felt the trysting tap of his Saviour, and dropped behind to let his soul go out in holy converse with his Lord. Need we wonder that the friend was awed as he beheld the heavenly light in the countenance of the praying one, and that he lifted his hat as he watched that soul have its vision of open heaven and a present Saviour? Men who walk with God understand in their own real experience what it is to hear the soft footfall of the Divine Master, and to hear His whisperings in their hearts.

Many Christians are in too great a hurry to know this life of intimate fellowship with Christ. The Master comes to abide with them, but the place is too confused, and He withdraws. "As thy servant was busy here and there, He was gone." We must make time for meditative habits and communion with God. The soul grows thin in its activities. Says Dean Vaughan, "Many a Christian's incessant action is the grave of his spiritual life."

III. PROGRESS

God never goes back, and if we walk with Him, we never shall. Walking is a regular, uniform motion, step by step, each one in advance of the last. It is not a rush, a leap, a spurt, but a steady progress from one point to another. Those who walk with God are not always speaking of palmy days and bright hours of fellowship that are gone. It is better with them now than ever in the past. They do not now and then climb to ecstatic heights and then descend into the valley of lukewarmness. The Christian life with them means

steady progress. They go from point to point, from strength to strength, enjoying more, loving more, understanding more, receiving more, and giving more -- in all respects they go forward. Such Christians are never satisfied with present experience, "the goal of yesterday is always the starting-point of today." Napoleon believed that still further conquests were necessary to the existence of his empire, that only by pushing its bounds farther and farther could he retain the territory he had conquered. In the Christian life this is certainly true. Going forward is the only security against going back. It is much to be born of the Spirit, and still more to be filled with the Spirit, but these experiences do not exempt us from the necessity of daily progress in Divine things. By slow degrees the likeness of Christ is perfected, as day by day we sensibly dwell in the secret of His presence. Walking with God means step by step in the will of God. A man who carries a lantern at night does not see the whole path home; the lantern lights only a single step in advance; but when that step is taken another is lighted, and so on until the end of the journey. In like manner God lights our way. He makes one step plain, and when we take that, another, and then another. We have nothing to do with life in the aggregate. Each moment brings its duties, responsibilities, burdens, and needs. Our business is to live a moment at a time, and that moment for God. Dr. Kitto's advice is, "Think not on a holy life, but on a holy moment as it flies. The first overwhelms by its immensity, the other sweetens and refreshes by its lightness and present stimulus; and yet a succession of holy moments constitutes a holy life."

The question of great or small has no place here. We cannot live a life greater or grander than to be led step by step in all life's details by the Spirit of God. Progress always lies along the path that God chooses. The great thing is never to lose the thread of the Lord's leading. Obedience secures uninterruptedly the Divine presence. It is only in that path that we can "go forward." Those who have learned thus to walk with God so live in "the practice" of the Master's presence, that it becomes impossible to live without Him, and gradually, little by little, the transformation into His likeness proceeds, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, until in the beatific vision we see Him face to face, and the likeness is complete.

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