

THE CHRISTIAN WALK (Continued)

Ephesians 4:17-32

II. A Christian Is To Walk Differently. Ephesians 4:17-32.

After having written of the intimate relation which exists between Christ and His followers, Paul urges believers to prove their faith by changes in their own lives. In other words, he says, "I recognize your Christian profession. Others call you Christians, but are you what you ought to be? Do you stand apart from your former life? Are you the kind of Christians Christ wants you to be? We have been called to be saints, to flee from this present and evil generation, and to separate ourselves from the world." After dealing in generalities, Paul now becomes very specific and tells some of the qualities the Christian should be demonstrating to an unbelieving world. The Apostle saw life as a walk, taking a step at a time, and a day at a time. A Christian's walk is a lifetime occupation whose chief business is to talk, act and live as followers of Christ.

1. Do not walk as the natural or unregenerate man does. Ephesians 4:17-19.

(1) What man is by nature. 4:17-18.

"This therefore I say, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as even also the rest, the nations, are walking in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in the understanding, being alienated from the life of God, on account of the ignorance which is in them, on account of the hardness of their heart."

(2) What man is by practice. 4:19.

"Who having cast off all feeling, themselves gave up to licentiousness, for working of all uncleanness with craving."

"Therefore" resumes the exhortation of the first verses in this chapter to walk worthily. "Walk" here means "to conduct one's self," or "to order one's behavior." It includes all the manifestations of life, inward and outward, seen and unseen, private and public. To walk with God means to have a secret fellowship with Him, and refers chiefly to the inner spiritual life, such as Enoch exhibited. We are to live and walk in the consciousness of the call of God to a high plane of living.

"Vanity" simply speaks of the lack of attainment. "Ignorance" denotes a lack of knowledge of divine things, which is something that is inexcusable.

When one becomes a Christian past sins are left behind, all things are new, and better days lie ahead. At conversion "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The old sinful practices and evil habits pass away without difficulty. The saved man detests his former life of sin. To the things that formerly enticed him, and to the people who previously allured him to sin, he says, "I am no longer the same man." Before one is saved he behaves as Satan wants him to, but after salvation he is a different person and strives to please Christ.

Anybody who is saved has experienced a visible, admirable, thorough and permanent change. He enjoys a satisfaction that he never knew before. A Christian sees differently, thinks differently, feels differently and acts differently.

2. Put off the carnal. Ephesians 4:20-22.

(1) Christ stands for a new sort of living. 4:20.

"But ye learned not thus the Christ." In these seven words Paul takes us from heathendom to Christendom. In effect he says, "But as for you, it is another story now. You have come to know Christ."

(2) If we are true to Christ, we will live differently. 4:21.
"If indeed Him ye heard and in Him were taught, according as is the truth in Jesus."

(3) We are obligated to lay aside our former manner of life. 4:22.
"For you to have put off according to the former conduct the old man, which is corrupt according to the desires of deceit." This act of putting off the old man has to do with the manner of life. The break between the old life and the new one is to be very definite. The laying aside of bad habits is to be once and for all. Only a complete break with the life prior to conversion will satisfy the demands of Christ. We cannot walk with one foot in the old life and the other in the new; the paths go in opposite directions.

3. Put on the spiritual. Ephesians 4:23-24.

(1) Must be renewed in the spirit of the mind. 4:23.
"And to be renewed in the spirit of your mind." The command really is, "Be continually renewed." That means not only to be fed when famished, but to come daily to a bountiful table; not only to have a good sleep when at the point of exhaustion, but daily to seek rest and renewal of strength. Live close to the heart of God.

(2) Must be clothed with a new life. 4:24.
"And to have put on the new man, which according to God was created in righteousness and holiness of truth."

The new man represents a new life, with the thoughts, the affections, the activities, the possessions and the relationships different and acceptable to the Lord.

4. Practical implications of this change of clothing. 4:25-32.
We must:

(1) Put away lying. 4:25.
"Wherefore having put off falsehood, speak truth each with his neighbor, because we are of one another members." When one becomes a child of God, he is to lay aside lying once for all. The break is to be as definite as the severing of a limb. Sinful principles and practices are to be renounced and abandoned permanently when we follow Christ.

(2) Put away anger. 4:26.
"Be angry and sin not; let not the sun set upon your provocation." The words, "be ye angry," which are in the present imperative, command an abiding attitude of righteous indignation against sin and sinful things, but the exhortation, "and sin not," is provided as a check and restraint. There is a noble and an ignoble anger, a necessity for anger and a danger in it. A righteous wrath is something that not only may be, but ought to be, as was evidenced in the life of our Lord. "And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other." Mark 3:5. However, that type of anger which is mingled with irritation, exasperation and embitterment will close hearts, diminish faith and confidence, take away the sweetness of life and destroy peace.

(3) Defeat the devil. 4:27.
"Neither give place to the devil."

(4) Put away stealing. 4:28a.
"He that steals let him steal no more." Isn't it tragic that Christians have to be admonished to quit stealing? This sin needs to be denounced. What a pity and shame that church members will steal song books! Somebody says, "Well,

I didn't mean it." Maybe so, but you did. A person may commit murder while under the influence of liquor, but the victim is just as dead as if he had been killed while the man was sober. Somebody else says, "Well, I have paid enough money into the church to have a book, so I just took it." Suppose you walked into the grocery where you have traded and stole a ham, and when it became known would you say and get by with the statement, "I have paid enough money to them to have a ham so I just took one"? Do you think you could get by with it? God's Word plainly states, "The tithe is the Lord's," and anyone who does not pay it is stealing from Him. Many church members would not steal from their fellowmen, but do not hesitate to steal from God.

- (5) Put away worthless talk. 4:29a.
"Let not any corrupt word go out of your mouth."
- (6) Speak to edify. 4:29b.
"But if any good for building up in respect of need, that it may give grace to them that hear."
- (7) Put away all that grieves the Holy Spirit. 4:30.
"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by which ye were sealed for the day of redemption." "Grieve" means to make sorrowful, to plunge into deep sorrow, or to cause acute pain. "Grieve" is a love word. One can anger an enemy, but he cannot grieve him. The words are mutually exclusive. Only one who loves another can be grieved by him or her. We are not grieved over the conduct or experiences of those for whom we have no concern. We are grieved when our loved ones fail, or go down in some sin, but not nearly as much as the Holy Spirit is grieved when Christians fail or fall.
 - a. The causes of grief to the Holy Spirit.
 - (a) Unholy imaginations.
 - (b) Impure thoughts.
 - (c) Corrupt words.
 - (d) Sinful actions.
 - (aa) Ignoring His presence.
How would you like to live in a home where there were those who ignored your very presence and did not speak to you when you spoke to them, and passed you by as though you were not in existence? Did it ever occur to you that you are treating the Holy Spirit just that way? He speaks, He pleads, He directs, He desires to teach us, but His very presence is ignored. It is just as though He had never talked and told us anything.
 - (bb) Neglecting the means of grace.
 - (aaa) Prayer.
It is often neglected. Then, sometimes it is hurried and unresl.
 - (bbb) Bible study.
Many seldom read and study the Bible.
 - (ccc) Church attendance.
Many attend church irregularly or infrequently.
 - (cc) Rejecting His teachings.
When Christians, through prejudice, unbelief or wilfulness, refuse to accept His teachings and obey Him they grieve the Holy Spirit.

- (dd) Undue devotion to the things of the world.
The Holy Spirit is grieved by the unholy ambitions, unhallowed affections, forbidden pleasures and worldly pursuits of Christians.
- (ee) Exhibiting the carnal nature.
This is done through worry, envy, jealousy, pride, hatred, malice, bitterness, anger, covetousness, spite, gossip, unkindness and unforgiveness.

b. The consequences of grieving the Holy Spirit.

- (a) It will destroy our happiness.
- (b) It will impoverish our lives.
- (c) It will limit our usefulness.

c. The cure for grieving the Holy Spirit.

The remedy for this sin is repentance. That is an old-fashioned word, but we need to hear it again and again. It includes a sorrow for sin and a willingness to put it away.

(8) Put away all unkindness. 4:31.

"All bitterness, and indignation, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking let be removed from you, with all malice."

(9) Be kind and forgiving. 4:32.

"And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, according as also God in Christ forgave you."

It is the duty of the Christian to be different. Since he is different from the unsaved person, he should manifest that difference by his manner of life. We act out what we are.