

YOU NEVER WALK ALONE



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Here are a pair of friends... "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3.

The application of the parable is very plain. The two whom the prophet sees walking together are God and Israel, and his question suggests not only the companionship and communion with God, which are the highest forms of Christianity, and the aim of all forms and ceremonies of worship, but also the inexorable condition on which alone that height of communion can be secured and sustained.

Two may walk together, though the one be God in heaven and the other be one on Earth. But they have to be agreed thus far, at any rate, that both shall wish to be together, and both be going the same way.

First, let us look at that possible blessed companionship which will bring joy into your life. There are three phrases in the Old Testament, very like each other, and yet presenting different facets or aspects of the same great Truth. Sometimes we read about "walking before God," as Abraham was bid to do. **That means ordering the daily life under the continual sense that we are "ever in the great Taskmaster's eye."** Then there is a "walking after God," and that means conforming the will and active efforts to the rule that He has laid down, setting our steps firm on the paths that He has prepared that we should walk in them, and accepting His provinces.

But also, high above both these conceptions of a devout life is the one which is suggested by our text, and which, as you remember, was realized in the case of the patriarch Enoch, who "walked with God." For to walk before Him may have with it some tremor and may be undertaken in the spirit of the slave who would be glad to get away from the jealous eye that rebukes his slothfulness, and "walking after Him," may be a

painful and partial effort to keep His distant figure in sight, **but to "walk with Him" implies a constant, quiet sense of His Divine presence which forbids that I should ever be lonely, which guides and defends, which floods my soul and fills my life, and in which, as the companions pace along side by side, words may be spoken by either, or blessed silence may be eloquent of perfect trust and rest.**

Now as Christians, far above us as such experience seems to sound, **such a life is a possibility for everyone of us.** We may be able to say, as truly as our Lord said it, "I am not alone, for the Father is with Me." It is possible that the dreariest solitude of a soul, such as is not realized when the body is removed from me, but is felt most in the crowded city where there is none that loves or fathoms and sympathizes, may be turned into blessed fellowship with the Lord. **Yes, but that solitude will not be so turned unless it is first painfully felt.**

As Daniel said, "I was left alone, and I saw the great vision." **We need to feel in our deepest hearts that loneliness on Earth before we walk with God.** If we are so walking, it is no piece of fanaticism to say that there will be mutual communications. **Do you not believe that God knows His ways into the spirits that He has endowed with conscious life? Do you not believe that He speaks now to people as truly as He did to prophets and apostles of old? As truly, though the results of His speech to us of today be not of the same authority for others as the words that He spoke to a Paul or a John.**

The belief in God's communications as forever sounding in the depths of the Christian spirit does not at all obliterate the distinction between the kind of inspiration which produced the New Testament and that which is realized by all believing and obedient souls.

High above all our experience of hearing the Word of God is our heart's stand, that of those holy men of old who heard God's message whispered in their ears, that they might proclaim it on the housetops to all the world through all generations. But though they and we are on a different level, and God spoke to them for a different purpose, **He speaks in our spirits, if we will comply with the conditions, as truly as He did in theirs.**

As really as it was ever true that the Lord spoke to Abraham, or Isaiah, or Paul, **it is true that He now speaks to the man who walks with Him.** Frank speech on both sides beguiles many a weary mile, when lovers or friends foot it side by side, and this pair of friends of whom our text speaks have natural intercourse.

God speaks with His servant now, as of old, "as a man speaketh with his friend," and **we, in our part, if we are truly walking with Him, shall feel it natural to speak frankly to God.**

As two friends on the road will interchange remarks about trifles, and if they love each other, the remarks about the trifles will be weighted with love. **So we can tell our smallest affairs to God, and if we have Him for our pilgrim companion, we do not need to lock up any troubles or concerns, of any sort, big or little, in our hearts, but may speak them all to our Friend who goes with us. The two may walk together.**

That is the end of all religion. What are creeds for? What are services and sacraments for? What is theology for? What is Christ's redeeming act for? **All culminate in this true, constant fellowship between men and God, and unless in some measure, that result is arrived at in our case. Our Christianity, let it be as orthodox as you like, our faith in the redemption of Jesus Christ, let it be real as you will, our attendance on services and sacraments, let them be punctilious and regular as may be, are all "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals."**

Get side by side with God, that is the purpose of all these, and fellowship with Him is the climax of Christianity. It is also the secret of all blessedness, the only thing that will make a life absolutely sovereign over sorrow, and fixedly unperturbed by all tempests and invulnerable to all "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." **Hold fast by God, and you have an amulet against every evil, and a shield against every foe, and a mighty power that will calm and satisfy your whole being. Nothing else, nothing else will do so.**

As one said, "O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and in Thyself only are we at rest." **If the Shepherd is with us, we will fear no evil.**

Secondly, I am afraid that very few so-called Christian people habitually feel, as they might do, the depth and blessedness of this communion. Only a small percentage of us have anything like the continuity of companionship which our text suggests as possible.

There may be, and therefore there should be, running unbroken through a Christian life one long, bright line of communion with God and happy inspiration from the sense of His presence with us. Is it a line in my life? Or is there but a dot here, and a dot there, and long breaks between?

The long, embarrassed pauses in a conversation between two who do not know much of, or care much for, each other are only too like what occurs in many professing Christians' intercourse with God. Their communion is like those time-worn inscriptions that archaeologists dig up, with a word clearly cut and then a great gap, and then a little bit more legible, and then another gap, and then a little bit more legible, and then the stone broken, and all the rest gone.

Did you ever read the meteorological reports in the newspapers and observe a record like this: "Twenty minutes of sunshine out of a possible eight hours?" **Do you not think that such a state of affairs is a little like the experience of a great many Chris-**

tian people in regard to their communion with God? It is broken at the best, and imperfect at the completest, and shallow at the deepest. **Christians must rise to the height of their possibilities, and live as close to God as He lets you live, and then nothing much will trouble you.**

“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.” “AND THESE THINGS WRITE WE UNTO YOU THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL. GOD IS LIGHT AND IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL. IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM AND WALK IN DARKNESS, WE LIE, AND DO NOT THE TRUTH.”

Thirdly, and finally, a word about the simple explanation of the failure to realize this continual presence. “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” Certainly not. Our fathers, in a sterner and more religious age than ours, used to be greatly troubled how to account for a state of Christian experience which they supposed to be due to God’s withdrawing of the sense of His presence from His children. **But that is not the cause of the interrupted communion between God and the average Christian.**

We make allowances for all the ups and downs and changing moods which affect us in this present life, and I make allowances for the pressure of the imperative duties and distracting cares which interfere with our communion. **Though, if we were as strong as we might be, they would not wile us away from, but drive us to our Father in heaven.** But when all such allowances have been made, I come back to this text as the explanation of interrupted communion.

The two are not agreed, and that is why they are not walking together. The consciousness of God’s presence with us is a very delicate thing. It is like a very sensitive thermometer, which will drop when an iceberg is a league off over the sea, and scarcely visible.

We do not wish His company, or we are not in harmony with His thoughts, or we are not going His way, and therefore, of course, we part. At bottom there is only one thing that separates a soul from God, and that is sin, sin of some sort, like tiny grains of dust that get between two polished plates in an engine that ought to move smoothly and closely against each other. The obstruction may be invisible, and yet be powerful enough to cause friction, which hinders the working of the engine and throws everything out of gear.

A little cloud that we cannot see may come between us and a star, and we shall only know it is there, because the star is not visibly there. Similarly, **a Christian, quite unconsciously, has something or other in his habits, or in his conduct, or in his affections, which would reveal itself to him, if he would look at it as being wrong, because it blots out God.**

Let us remember that very little divergence will, if the two paths are prolonged far enough, part their other ends by a world. Our way may go off from the ways of the Lord at a very acute angle. There may be scarcely any consciousness of parting company at the beginning. Let the man travel on upon it far enough, and the two will be so far apart that he cannot see God or hear Him speak. **Take care of the little divergences which are habitual, for their accumulated results will be complete separation. There must be absolute surrender if there is to be uninterrupted fellowship.** Such, then, is the direction in which we are to look for the reasons for our low and broken experiences of communion with God.

When we awake sometimes like a child, with a start, and find that your mother or father is gone, when we wake like a child to find that we are all alone, **then do not let us be afraid to go straight back. Only be sure that we leave behind us the sin that parted us.**

You remember how Peter signaled himself on the lake, on the occasion of the second miraculous draught of fishes, when he

floundered through the water and clasped Christ's feet. He did not say then, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He had said that before on a similar occasion, when he felt his sin less, but now he knew that the best place for the denier was with his head on Christ's bosom. So, if we have parted from our Friend, there should be no time lost ere we go back.

May it be true of us that we walk with God, so that at last the great promise may be fulfilled about us, "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." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Confession of sins restores us back to fellowship with the Lord. And we then

produce the character of Jesus Christ. Galatians 5:22, 23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." And then we agree and then we walk two together.

The challenge is walk in Truth, walk in love, walk worthy of your vocation, walk in the light, the principle of being filled with God the Holy Spirit. So confess your sins, judge your sins, or examine yourself before the Lord to maintain continual fellowship and communion with Him.

AGREE WITH GOD!

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