

Walking With God—Where are We Going?

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father, we want to thank You for reconciling us to Yourself, and that we are Yours forever. What a wonderful thing that is just to think about! Yours forever—thank You for redeeming us to Yourself. Now because of that we can come to You, and we do. We come to You right now and ask that our hearts would be open because You have opened heaven. And as You have opened up to us, we want to open up to You today. Lord, Your Word is Your sword, and it is Your sword in Your hand. So we want to give You back Your Word. We want to pray that it will be food for us today. We do not want it to be teaching although it has a tendency to be that. We give it to You that You might make it into bread and feed us and strengthen us so that we can go on ahead and walk with You. In Jesus name. Amen.

Enoch and Noah Walked with God

This is the third time I will be sharing on this subject, "Walking with God." And these are the verses that I have been sharing about walking with God. I put it in the order that we looked at them, and I want to read them again.

Hebrews 11:5: "By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death and was not found because God had taken him, for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

In this whole idea of walking with God you come to this verse that says he pleased God, and you think to yourself: how did he please Him? What did he do to please Him? If Enoch pleased Him, I want to know how to please Him. I want to do just like that.

I want to preface this next Scripture by saying that Enoch lived in a time that was not long before the flood. It was only a hundred or so years before the flood but back then they were living to 800-900 old. So we have him living in what we could say are the last days before the first judgment of the whole world. There was a judgment of the whole world that we find in Genesis, and that is when the flood came. There will be another judgment that comes on the whole world, and that is ahead of us. It is coming, not in a frightful way because we are under the blood, but it is coming in a serious way. Judgment is coming on the earth, and it has probably already begun. So this is what it says about Enoch and how he pleased God.

Genesis 5:22: "After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."

So I believe that in the last days the message that God is giving us is to walk with Him. And it says twice in these three verses that he walked with God. So this must be important that within these three verses the testimony of Enoch to the world is that he walked with God. That is what the world needs to have testified to them: that people walk with God. There is only one other man in the whole Bible that says, "He walked with God." And that is Noah in Genesis chapter 6. They are the only two people that the Bible actually says that they walked with God. I am not

saying that others did not walk with Him, but it says these guys had a testimony. And again, this was the testimony that God had left to the world that was just about to be judged—two men who walked with God. With that in mind I am not saying I want to show you how to walk with God. This is not a how-to message.

I mentioned there were three w's about walking. *Why* should we walk with God? Or why walk with God? *What* is required in walking with God. And today we will do another one.

With just a real quick review, we mentioned the 'why.' It is because God desires us to walk with Him. When He created us, He created us like Him because He has a way that we can relate. He could have just said, "I am happy with dogs. They are faithful, they love Me." But no, He gave to us: "Let us make man in Our image," and it was so that we could have fellowship with Him, a fellowship that no other being has like this. And the whole thing is that He desires us to walk with Him because He wants to reveal Himself to us. And we might say, "Yes, He can reveal Himself and His greatness through nature, but He wants to be more intimate than just being seen in His creation, although He is seen in His creation and we marvel at it. However, He wants to be more intimate. He wants to disclose Himself to us.

I also told you that when I began to date my wife, our first few dates were just walks because I could not do too much on a teacher's salary. But that is where we connected. That is where she could disclose herself to me and I could disclose myself to her, and that opened the pathway for a more intimate relationship than it began with. That is really what God is desiring. He is not happy that we just begin a relationship with Him and stop there. But He is taking it to a point, to an end, a desire where even our walking brought us together as man and wife. And that is the desire of God's heart—Christ and His bride.

So then we said that this is a good thing. Then *what* is required? What does God require in order to walk with Him?

Micah 6:8: "He has shown you O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Amos 3:3: "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?"

And this idea of 'agreed' has two kinds of meaning. It can be translated two ways. It can be translated with this idea: can two walk together unless they meet somewhere to walk? We talked about God having chosen places to meet us. He has chosen to meet us at the mercy seat, and that is what we did this morning. We were meeting God at the mercy seat and finding out that we are reconciled, that the door is open to us. He said, "I will meet you here; I have reconciled you."

Secondly, we talked about Him meeting us in the Word. The Word is full of God; it is full of the revelation of God. He has put His revelation of Himself in the Book. And He said, "I will meet you in here."

We talked about a third way which is meeting us in prayer when we go into the prayer closet. It is not just that we are asking for things, but we are also seeking who He is, seeking to find more

and more that open door. “I want to see You more and more. I want to find You. I want to seek You in my prayers. I want to know You in that way.”

Another way is that He meets us when we gather together, just as He met us here this morning. As we gathered together here this morning we met the Lord. That is one way.

And Micah says, “What is required of you?” The idea is that we have access to God in these ways, but God has access to us through the Holy Spirit who indwells us. That is His access to us. We think His access to us is that we have a quiet time, but His access to us is His Spirit in us who draws us towards Him. The Holy Spirit is working in us to convict us of sin and shows us what righteousness is. He does these things, and then He brings it into our lives. What is required of us? You do justly. In other words, you do things that are right. You do the right things in God’s sight, and God leads you. As He shows you what is right, you do the right.

“And love mercy.” He gives us the right attitude toward our brothers and sisters. We talked about the Pharisees saying, “How can you eat with sinners?” And the Lord said, “Because they are sick.” The whole attitude is changed. Our heart is changed toward our brothers and sisters, and this is the idea of walking with Him. And He also walks with us and walks through us because the Holy Spirit is living in us and so we do the works of God. We talked about having the works that do not bring us salvation, but they show others what salvation is because we are walking in the good of the Lord’s life in us, and He is walking through us. Then people go and they glorify God because they see the good works just like they did in the Gospels.

And the third ‘W ’ is *where*. Where are we going? In looking at this I want to look at one part of a verse.

Where are We going

John 21:19b: “And when He (Jesus) had spoken this, He said to him, (Peter) ‘Follow Me.’”

So we want to ask, “Where is He leading me? And where am I going?” Now when we look at this, we have to consider where it comes in the Gospel. It is at the very end, and what that means is this: Jesus has already had His ministry on earth. That is over with. Jesus has already gone to the cross and carried out the will of God. That is in the past. Jesus has been raised from the dead. So what is left? Where is He going? Now we know that when He was forty days on the earth, He talked about the kingdom of God, but where is He going? That is a question that we have to think about. Where is He going? The only thing left for the Lord to do after the forty days on earth is to ascend to His throne and inherit the kingdom that was meant for Him. That is where He is going.

In Luke we find Him talking about the people who were rejecting Christ. It spoke of a king who went away to receive his kingdom and then he came back. That is what Christ is doing; He is going to receive His kingdom. But I want to push it a little further. He is going to take us into His kingdom, into the place, into the realm where He rules. That is where He is going. So He says here, “Follow Me.” And the translation of this word here is not like when Jesus called His disciples to follow Him at the beginning of the Gospels. He said, “Follow Me,” and that is a different word

than the word here, "Follow Me." That word to His disciples is "Come to Me." The translation of this one is more like this: "Travel with Me." "Accompany Me."

This is a whole other way of looking at things. So the Lord is saying, "I want you to travel with Me, accompany Me. As I go to inherit My kingdom, I want you to come with Me into that kingdom which is Mine." So that is where we are going. We are coming into the kingdom of God. He is about to ascend to His throne, and He is going to bring us into the kingdom of God with Him. A kingdom is a realm that is ruled.

What does this mean? And what does this life look like? That is what we want to look at today. It is like the beginning of the life of Abraham in the Lord, that time he was called Abram. The Lord said to Abram, "Get out of this place and go to a place that I will show you." And this whole idea of coming into the kingdom of God is just like that. We are coming out like Abraham not knowing where we are going. We do not know what is in the kingdom of God. We do not know where it is. But He said, "I will show you." However, in order to do that what do you have to do? You have to go with Him. You have to travel with Him. Leave where you are and go to a land that I will show you.

Travel with Me as I ascend to My kingdom and My throne, and I will bring you into that kingdom where I rule. I am not going to tell you how to do these things because I am just finding out myself. I am not an expert on these things. So I am not going to do that, but I am going to tell you what our experience will be in traveling with Christ.

As we ascend with Him we are moving away from all we know, from how we live life and what life is about, and we are moving into this new life. We are moving from one realm to another realm. Abram moved from Ur of the Chaldees, and he came into a land that he did not know. I left California knowing I was coming to Richmond but not knowing what was here. It is the same thing we are going to see here. It is like old things pass away; all things become new. This is what it is like when we travel with the risen Lord Jesus Christ because He has already done the work of reconciliation, and now He is making us sons of the kingdom by bringing us into that kingdom.

Ascending

So what I want to do is use the Psalms of Ascent, 120-135. I am not going to cover them all, but I just want to deal first with this idea of ascending because we have made it a religious word. "I am ascending."

What does ascending mean? It means you are going up or you are getting away from the lowlands. We are going from a place that we were, and we are going to a better place. And it is a lot like Pilgrim's Progress; traveling with Jesus is a lot like that, and I want to show you in that way. As we look at the Psalms of Ascent, there are two things that I have noticed in the Psalms that lead to a place of ascending. People would go up the mountains into Jerusalem to go to a feast whether it was Passover, the Feast of Weeks (which is Pentecost), or the Feast of Booths (which is right after Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement).

Psalm 120

When you read these Psalms, there are two things that the Psalmist shows as a mark of starting to ascend.

One of them is Psalm 120:5: “Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!” The Psalmist becomes aware of his own condition. This is always a beginning of ascent because you see how far down you are. There is no other place you can go but up. “Woe is me, I dwell, I am living in this place. It is not just that I am there to visit; I am dwelling here.” These were bad places. Meshech is a Gentile land and Kedar would be a son of Ishmael, an Arab place. In other words, it is just coming to this conclusion, this epiphany: I am in the wrong place. It is not necessarily a physical place, but I am in the wrong place.

I remember in my own life when I was on a basketball tour in New Zealand. I went thinking that this was the right thing for me to go, but it was not the right thing to do. The graciousness of the Lord is that He lets us make mistakes, and He does not throw us away. So when I got to this place in New Zealand, which was thousands of miles away, I had no fellowship. I got to the place at 10:00 at night and the sun was still up. I was sitting on a park bench, and I was crying: “Oh God, I have blown it. I do not think I can ever get back, and Lord, I need You.” That is when the Lord comes in. When you honestly come before Him and your confession is this: “I am in the wrong place.” Wasn’t that so with the prodigal son in the Bible? Did he not come to this place of saying, “I am in the wrong place. Look what I am eating, look what I am doing. I am in the wrong place. I need to go back and say, “Father, I will be a servant,” because he did not know the love of his father. He had lived with him all these years, but he did not know him. I had been a Christian for a few years and had been walking with the Lord, but I just did not really know the love of the Lord. Even though I am going, “I have blown it, and I do not think I can ever get back.” What does that show you about my knowledge of God? My knowledge of God needed to be enhanced, and only He can enhance it. And He waits for us to come to that place of saying, “Oh God, I am in the wrong place.”

The other place is that you have found something about the Lord. It is not just that you read it and found it is true, but this truth has been brought into your experience. It is like the first time I read “The Normal Christian Life,” and it was in that period of time when I was in New Zealand. I knew that Jesus died for my sins, but it was brought into my experience in a whole new way. I could not get any closer to God than I was then because I was in Christ. What a wonderful thing! And it is brought into our experience. This is just another step that is added on to the one you just began with. So this is the way the Lord works. He lets us find out where we are, and then He gives us the next step. You take that first step of just confessing, “Lord, this is where I am,” and then He gives us the next step by showing us something of Himself. And it is brought into our experience, not into our heads, not into our notebooks, but into our experience, and it sets us free. It sets us free to follow God, to walk with Him.

How do we see this matter of ascending? We can see it expressed in this hymn, “Higher Ground.” It is like a marching tune. “I’m pressing on the upward way. New heights I’m gaining every day.” Not once in a while, but every day. “Still praying as I onward bound, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.” And we kind of picture it like this. There is a gradual upgrade, and we are

always going up. It is a picture of what ascending is. When I get to this point, I am going to be ascending forever.

The whole thing is that our destination is up to where the Lord is. That is where we are going, and I believe that God contours our ascent to our lives. We are not leaning to some kind of religious thing; He contours it to the life we have. If you have gone up a mountain, the road goes to the contour of the mountain. It does not go straight up; it goes to the contour. Why do they do that? Because if it was the other way you would die. You would never make it up. It is like when you read Psalm 24: “Who may ascend unto the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol.” Who can do that? That hill is too high to climb, but the Lord takes us in the contours of our lives. He uses the circumstances of our lives. It is not that the Lord is leading us down; it is like when I went on that tour. It was my own desire to let me down, but when I got to that turning point, then it led me the other way. Isn’t that the story of our lives? Our lives are like that. If you look at the life of Peter or the other apostles, the life of Moses, Abraham, Jacob, and that is what you see in their lives. God does not go, “Well, you should have done better.” God takes us as we are, where we are, and then leads us accordingly as He sees what is needed. And He lets us go to those places where we can see that we need Him because that is the whole idea.

These are Psalms of ascent. You can either say it is a Psalm of ascents or you can say they are Psalms of ascent. All of these are separate Psalms on this journey. If I am going down I have a Psalm, if I am going up I have another Psalm because I am getting through. So I have different Psalms coming at different times. Sing to the Lord a new song. Why do we sing a new song? It is because we come to a new experience of Him and of who we are, and then we can go and say, “Ah, the Lord is good.”

Psalm 121

Psalm 121: “I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from whence comes my help?” Where does it come from? “My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

This becomes my new confession. My first confession is this: I am in the wrong place, and it is nobody’s fault but mine. As I take that next step I find out that my help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. That is the greatness of His power to help me; He made heaven and earth. And sometimes initially when we are praying, when we are down in that place, our cry is this: “God, help me because no one else can.” How wonderful it is that whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved! Isn’t that a wonderful statement? Wonderful truth! We know it is true because it has happened to us. We have been there, and our first cry was, “God help me because there is no one else.” How wonderful it is that He hears our cry and He answers us!

In verses 3-8 you have a discovery because once you start on that way you find out this: “He will not allow your foot to be moved.” In other words, He is not going to let you slip all the way back down the hill. He is not going to let you slip out of the path, out of His grasp.

“He who keeps you will not slumber.” He will be your protection; He will preserve you from evil. You might run into evil, but He said that He would preserve you from it. He will preserve you from the destruction brought about by the evil of going your own way or whatever it is, and you

meet new life. This has become my discovery that He is committed to my traveling with Him. “I am committed. I am going to see you through, and I am going to come alongside of you and help you as you go on your way. I am not going to carry you on My back, but I am going to help you get up and walk with Me, travel with Me.”

Psalm 124

In Psalm 124:1-6 as we are ascending, we find out that this becomes our testimony.

“If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, let Israel now say—if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive, when their wrath was kindled against us, then the waters would have overwhelmed us, the stream would have gone over our soul; the swollen waters would have gone over our souls. Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth.”

That becomes our testimony. If it had not been for the Lord—there but for the grace of God. We want to look at this and the way it is played out, and we can see some of the ways it is played out in Psalms 126, 129 and 130.

Psalm 126

Psalm 126: “When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion.” What does that imply? They were captives. Have you ever been captive? We can be captive to a whole lot of things. We can be captive to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life. We can be a captive to those things. We can be a captive to our own thoughts, imaginations about what Christian life is or what I think I need to fulfill my life. Oh, if I only had a girlfriend, oh, if I only had a good job then my life would be different. We are never satisfied, we never appreciate the Lord or go on with the Lord because we are fixated on that place that keeps us captured. It keeps us in that one place, and we cannot get out. And some of those things are cages of our own making. We can be captive to a religious system. God is only pleased with you if you do these things. You have to do things, and that is the way things are. So we become captive if we step out of bounds, if we are not right with the Lord, and it robs us of all our joy. Now we try to make sure we are in the system and are working in the system. We want to be sure that we are the cog that is not missing the tooth, so to speak. We can be captive to the world system, and what the world says is success or fulfillment. But here it says, “When the Lord brought me back,” you go through one of those things again. I am going down and He brings me back, so I am back on the path.

“We were like those who dream.” It is a wonderful thing; I cannot believe that God would rescue me. I cannot believe it. Then it says that we are filled with singing. It is a wonderful thing.

Psalm 129

Psalm 129: “Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth. Let Israel now say—many a time they have afflicted me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed against me. The plowers plowed on my back; they made their furrows long. The Lord is righteous; He has cut in pieces the cords of the wicked.”

This is saying that as Christians we will face persecution. Now in our free country we have not faced much outward persecution, but we face contrariness because we walk in a kingdom that is contrary to this world. I grew up here in the United States in a nice middle-class or working-class family, and I became a Christian. Notice it says, “from my youth,” so it begins when you are born again. The world is contrary to you when you are going on with the Lord, and it begins when you are born again. Getting kids to a place of being baptized after they are born again is difficult because things are against them. “I do not want to do that, I do not want to tell this in school; I will be ridiculed.” Already, the time is coming that you cannot meet. There is a subtle way of persecution coming into the church. It is not like it is in China where Christians are suffering harsh persecution as well as in India and North Korea. The whole idea is that we are going to face persecution. My favorite book is “Mimosa,” and at the very beginning of her life when she turned to the Lord as a little kid, she faced persecution from her father, because she would not take the ashes of Sheba. The whole village was against her because of that, yet she persevered because of the Lord.

It says, “Yet they have not prevailed against me; the Lord has cut the cords of the wicked.” In other words, the things that would tie me up and make me go another way, the Lord has cut those, and He has made me free. That is where you see Paul and Silas when they were in the jail in Philippi, but the cords of persecution were cut. Even though they were suffering persecution the cords that held them from being who they are were cut. And what do you find them doing in the jail? Singing and praying. To what effect? The other prisoners are listening. Amazing!

Psalm 130

In Psalm 130 this is the low point of the whole thing.

“Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”

I want to deal with this because this is really talking about sin—“if you mark iniquities.” It is talking about sin. If it had not been for the Lord, we would be immobilized by despair over our sin. When we see our sin, it is not just that we commit a sin here and there, but sometimes when we have committed a sin and the enemy comes in like a flood and says, “Ah, you are just seeing the tip of the iceberg, Buddy.” Then we see ourselves beset by sin. And that word ‘beset,’ the archaic definition of it is that you see you are covered with it. It is like grass being covered by dew or tomorrow our lawns being covered by snow. You just see you are covered with it, and that leads to despair. How can I ever get out of this?

Or sometimes we just find that we are going along and then we have a besetting sin that keeps cropping up and cropping up. And it is like we see our sin nature as dyed-in-the-wool sinners. And I thought about what that means. There are two ways you can dye wool. One of them is that you make the wool into a fabric, and you take that big piece of cloth and dip it into dye. That’s one way. The other one is to dye it fiber by fiber by fiber, and when you sew it, because it is already dyed you do not have to dye it again. And the reason they put dye in the wool that way is because they do not want it to wash out. And Floyd always told us: “You are going to find

out that you are dyed-in-the wool sinners. Sometimes we do that and we become like Paul: “Wretched man that I am, who can free me from the body of this death?”

Then we have this little verse in Psalm 130: “But there is forgiveness with You.” That is to me one of the most wonderful Scriptures in the Book. There is forgiveness with You. In other words, where do I go to loose my anguish, to loose my despair? I was raised up as a Catholic, and it was penance; you do penance. In other words, you do some good things to counter balance your sins so you can get back on top. But how long does that work? As a matter of fact, it does not work because as you start trying to do your works, all of a sudden you keep sinning.

“Forgiveness is with You.” There is no making up for our sin. So stop trying to make up for it. The One whom I am traveling with is the High Priest. He is the One who brings me to the mercy seat. He is the One who is kind and does not upbraid us because He is made in the likeness of our flesh except for sin. We have this One who is traveling with us, so that when we face these things, it does not mean that we have to go back down the hill and start over again. It is kind of like Sisyphus the Greek scholar. Sisyphus was a guy who was cursed, and his curse was that he had to roll a big bolder up the hill, and he would get almost to the top and it would fall all the way down again. Then he had to go down and push it all the way up and the same thing would happen—for eternity.

And brothers and sisters, if we are thinking of doing penance we might as well change our name to Sisyphus because that is what it is going to be like. But forgiveness is with you. The One who forgives us is our High Priest because He has been the sacrifice for our sins, and He has born the iniquity of us all—*all of our iniquity*.

Psalm 131

Psalm 131 says this: “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me. Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.”

You are getting onto your ascent when you are finding out how much the Lord is for you and with you in all these things. All of a sudden you do not need something else to tell you that God loves you and He is with you and He is for you. In other words, it is like this: “Lord, unless you change my circumstances, I feel that You do not love me.” We are looking for something outward to show that God loves us. And this is the place of saying, “God, I have been in this experience with You so far up this road. So I know that when I hit a rough time while going this way, I do not have to look for signs of favor. I know You favor me. I know I am in Your favor”.

It is like Psalm 23 when it says, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” Why? Because You are with me. I know You are with me. In all my experiences that I have had so far, You have been with me, and You have not deserted me. Or as Paul said in Philippians 4, “I have learned to be content with my circumstances. Whether they are good or bad, I have learned to be content.” How is it? How can I be content? “Because I know whom I have believed and am assured that He can keep me until that day.” I am growing in my faith because my faith is in Him.

Dwelling Together in Unity

Psalm 133: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Psalm 122 says, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'"

We all have our individual walk, and one of the things that the Lord gives us is the grace in our individual walk with brothers and sisters. My best friend just moved up here. What a blessing that has been for me because we have a history together.

Another down I had before I went on that tour was being at the Rose Parade because we lived in Southern California. I was at the bottom, and a cheer leader at the junior college I used to go to, and I do not even know her or her name. But she knew me because she knew I was a Christian, and she called the guy I played with and said, "I saw Jim Bogdanowicz last night, and he is in a bad place." She did not talk to me, but she just saw me walking up and down the streets and knew that I was in a bad place. The next day the guy called me and told me what she said. I was restored through that thing; God was watching out for me. But the whole thing is that God gives us others.

About two months after that Jerry and I and a few others met for the first time. Jerry had just come to the Lord New Year's Eve 1973. I had just rededicated January 1974, and we met at a church in the park for 'hippies, 'a hippie church. There was a core of us, my two brothers, Jerry, Ed Lee, and Luke Police, Floyd's son, five of us. We met together and there was a bond that was formed of going on. And the Lord gives you that. It was like, "Come, let's go up to the house of the Lord together. Let's walk together." Oh, there is such strength in walking together. There is such safety in walking together and working together. That is why it says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together."

Psalm 84

I have two more things to share. First, if you go to Psalm 84:5: "Blessed is the Man whose strength is in you, whose heart is set on pilgrimage (ascent). As they passed through the valley of Baca, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion."

Each one completes the course. Isn't that wonderful! Can't you set your hope on that? Can't you look at that and put that on your refrigerator and say, "Each one appears before God in Zion." The whole thing is they go from strength to strength. I want to change that. "They go from faith to faith, so that as you are going from here, you go from faith to faith each step of the way. Each time you fall down, you get up. The righteous man will fall seven times, but he will get up and finish the course. Each time that we go from faith to faith, we find something more of the Lord that helps us through the next layer that we find in ourselves, and we are brought to completion. He who began a good work will complete it. Well, the whole thing is that we will stand before Him in Zion in His satisfaction and in His glory."

The Lord's Discourse with Peter

The last thing I want to say is this. Where is the grease to keep me going? In John 21:15-17 we have the discourse of the Lord with Peter, and He says to Peter: "Peter, do you love Me? And He asked him that three times. But He asked it in different ways. First it is a comparative love, "Do you love Me more than these?" Then He said, "Do you love Me?" So the focus is on Him. Then He said again, "Do you love Me?"

A lot of people say, "Well, Peter denied Him three times so Jesus is assuring him three times." I do not like that because I do not feel the Lord would do such a thing. I think He is too gracious. "You did this three times, I am going to do this three times." But I do think that the Lord was doing this. He was going from the outer court of Peter's life to the inner court to the most holy place. Now think about this. The first time He asked him, "Do you love Me more than these?" That is the outer court. Actually the word agape can be translated in a way, "Are you devoted to Me more than these? Is your devotion to Me greater than these things?"

The next time He asked him? "Are you devoted to Me?" You can be devoted and still be lacking. I can be a devoted husband to Barb. I can clothe and shelter her, I can even be affectionate with her once in a while, hugging and kissing her, hold her hand. I can do those things, but it does not necessarily mean that I have affection. Or I can be a devoted teacher and not really care about my students because I am a teacher. I can be devoted. I do my lesson plans, I do my grading. I teach.

But Peter never came up to agape; he said phileo, and the last time Jesus came down to phileo. It is not that He came down to Peter's level. No, He got to the inner most part of him and said, "Peter, do you love Me as a friend? Do you have a tender affection for Me so that you can be moved by Me? Is your heart tender towards Me that it can be moved?" I think this is what the whole idea is because Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than he lay down his life for a friend." That is the love of a friend. A brother might not do it. There are times that I would not do things for my brothers or sisters or even my mom and dad.

I am a devoted father. When my kids were throwing up, I was with them in the bathroom, but it was not because of my affection for them. It was because I was a devoted husband. I was waking up and doing what I was supposed to do. But the idea here is that devotion is a wonderful thing, but if it is not forged by affection it is a clanging gong. If you have not love, all these things can happen, but it does not really count. I am not saying that I have to look deep down and say, "Do I love the Lord and things like that." Peter got to the point of what he was saying, "The third time He asked him, he said, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You." Let's cut off the "I love you." He just came to this point, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I do not even trust myself to say, 'Oh yes, Lord, I love You.'"

That is the hardest thing for me to say even when I am praying, "Lord, I love You," because I know myself, and I know how fickle I am. What kind of love is that?" But I can come to the Lord and say, "Lord, You know because You made me. You know everything that is in me, and so I do not even trust myself. I am just going to say, 'You know, Lord because You know everything.'"

And the wonderful thing about the Lord when he did that, He then gave him a prophecy of how

he was going to die. But the thing is not just how he was going to die, He was saying that Peter did love Him so much that he would lay down his life for Him. You see, the Lord knows. And it was after this that He said, "Travel with Me into My kingdom." Peter had traveled with Him as a disciple. Actually, he did not travel with Him, he followed Him as a disciple. Now he said, "Travel with Me into My kingdom because you are meant for My kingdom, and I want to take you all the way to where you stand before God in Zion." And He says, "Welcome, my beloved."

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father, we want to thank You that this is Your desire that we walk with You, and I thank You, Lord, that these are not phases of how we walk but they are all one. This is all included in our walk that You show us who You are, that we have access to You and You have access to us, and You lead us into the works that adorn us as Christians and to the attitudes that adorn us as Christians, and then You bring us fully into Your kingdom. Lord, thank You that You let us fail, thank You that You let us get to the point of saying, "Woe is me, I dwell in Meshech and in the tents of Kedar", but thank You that You do not leave us there. Thank You that You give Your hand to us, and You let us know that our help is in You. Lord, we want the testimony of these Psalms in our lives. We want this year to walk with You, to travel with You. And that is what we ask, Lord, as we close up here. We ask that this year we would find ourselves newly traveling with You and finding ourselves in the kingdom of God as we walk. Thank You for giving us Yourself. Thank You for reconciling us to You. Thank You for saying, "Travel with Me." Lord, we want to do that, and we give ourselves to You afresh. In Jesus name. Amen.