

“A Christian Walk Is...!”

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Intro. – Nobody has made much ado about it, but, the medical doctors in Beverly Hills, CA are getting outlandishly expensive. Recently a man fell down a flight of stairs and hurt his leg. He went to a Beverly Hills MD, who “fixed him up.” As the man was leaving, the doctor said, “Don’t worry, you’ll be walking before the day is over.” “He was right,” said the patient, “this doctor took my car for his fee!”

The Christian *life* is often likened to a walk. In fact, in the book of Ephesians, there are several pictures of this: e.g. “...walk in a manner worthy of your calling you have been called.” (4:1); “...that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk...” (4:17); “....walk in love...” (5:2); “...walk as children of light...” (5:8). In each of these, and the many more that could be given, our life in Christ is referred to as a *walk*.

In the book In His Steps (by Charles Sheldon), an entire congregation is challenged to “*flesh out their faith*” i.e. challenged to ask the question in all of life’s circumstances: “What Would Jesus Do?” (aka WWJD).

Such clearly explains the purpose of our lives in Christ. This also explains the purpose behind this message.

Purpose: to better understand what a Christian walk is

I A Walk in HOLINESS (vv 1-8)

A. In Order to Please God (v 1)

1. Everyone lives to please somebody and more times than not it is to please SELF:
 - a. “be yourself” is about the worst advice to give to most people.
 - b. “He who thinks himself good for everything is good for nothing.”
2. Christians can’t go through life pleasing only themselves:
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6 “*But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, not with a pretext for greed – God is witness --, nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.*”
 - b. pleasing God must be our motivation – i.e. a grace responsive life...
 - c. pleasing God means more than doing His will – e.g. Jonah eventually obeyed God, but his heart was not in it... The result – God could bless His Word, but could not bless His servant!
 - d. our service must be (Ephesians 6:6) “*Not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasures, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the heart.*”

B. In order to Obey God (vv 2-3)

1. The word “commandments” = military term = “orders handed down from CO (Comm. Officer).
 - a. we’re soldiers in God’s ranks = must obey orders
 - b. 2 Timothy 2:4 “*No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.*”
2. Sexual immorality specifically addressed:
 - a. God created sex = He alone has authority to determine its use = always within the boundaries of marriage as defined by God in His Word...
 - b. God’s commands on sexually immorality (adultery and fornication) not robbing people of joy, but, is protecting so we won’t lose joy...!
3. God’s command is clear = abstain from fornication:
 - a. “sanctification” = NOT 2nd work of grace or baptism of Holy Spirit... but is an ongoing pursuit of holiness “in Christ.”
 - b. no amount of liberal theology or worldly philosophy can change this:
 - Illus. – taking vote on “same sex unions” – how can Christians vote on something God has already resolved?! (abortion... euthanasia... stealing... lying... etc.)

C. In Order to Glorify God (vv 4-5)

1. *Vessels* refers to our bodies – to be used only to bring honor to God!... Not to our pleasures...
2. Not to be like those who know not God = εκκλησια -- “Called Out Ones”

D. In Order to Escape the Judgment of God (vv 6-8)

1. Illus. – read of a church member criticized preacher for preaching against sin in the lives of Christians. “After all,” she said, “sin in the life of a believer is different from sin the lives of the unforgiven.” “Yes,” replied the preacher, “it is worse!”
2. To despise God’s commands is inviting regression back into sin = elsewhere in Scripture this is call *grieving the Holy Spirit* (Ephesians 4:30) and *quench not the Spirit* (1 Thessalonians 5:19)...
3. Sexual immorality problem then and problem today – e.g. gay churches... premarital sex common... Illus. – clientele to crisis pregnancy center from local Bible college...)
4. Yet God said and continues to say = *walk in holiness!*

II To Walk in UNITY (vv 9-10)

A. Unity Always Generates Concern (Love for the Brethren)

1. The transition from *holiness* to *love* isn’t hard = the more we live like Christ, more love like Him!
2. Four basic words used in Greek for “love” 1) eros; 2) storga; 3) phileo; 4) agape:
 - “agape” love demonstrated and defined by God... not a love based on “feeling” but a love expressed through one’s will regardless of feelings and/or personal preferences.

B. Unity is Our Greatest Tool

1. What will get world’s attention? = unity... love/respect for each other.
2. Unity is our greatest tool for evangelism = “They will know we are Christians by our love...”
3. How we get along with each other is a direct reflection on our relationship with God!

C. Unity is to Excel Even More

1. Unity is always based on TRUTH (John 17:17) = note: difference between union and unity...
2. God desires you and I to excel in our unity/love for one another.
3. How does God cultivate our love/unity to increase? By permitting circumstances that force us to practice agape love...
4. Love/unity is the “circulatory system” of Christ’s Body... Why we MUST walk in unity if our walk is going to be Christian!

III To Walk in INTEGRITY (vv 11-12)

- emphasis here is on Christians’ testimony to those who are not Christians...:

A. We Are to Lead a Quiet Life

1. The emphasis here is quietness of mind/heart = inner peace the world can’t begin to understand...
2. Before God, our lives are to be consistent with our name/profession (Christian) “students or learners of Christ” all which leads to integrity!

B. We Are to Mind Our Own Business (Work With Our Hands)

1. For the most part, Greeks despised manual labor = more thinkers/philosophers... most work done by slaves...
2. So, new Christians misunderstood Christ’s second coming. They quit their jobs, became freeloaders depending on support of unbelievers... = testimony down the tubes!
3. Idle people spend time interfering and get themselves and others in heap big trouble...
4. Servants of the Lord don’t have time to get caught up into matters of the world...
5. Several reasons given why Christians (those able physically/mentally) should work:
 - a. paying of debts – if the unforgiven are paying their bills, so must we!
 - b. work to be able to help those with genuine needs (Ephesians 4:28)
 - c. not the least of which, we must provide for our families = point: work is a blessing not curse

C. We Are to Behave Properly Toward Outsiders

1. “Outsiders” is a familiar word for “unforgiven”...
2. Paul concerned about our testimony to those outside of Christ...
3. It’s a no brainer = to lack integrity... will result in more harm than good for cause of Christ!

Conclusion: In summary, let me refer again to the book In His Steps. Edward Norman is one of the characters. He was the owner/editor of the local newspaper, who thought he was *wholeheartedly* following Jesus. When he began asking the question, “What Would Jesus Do?” he began to see how half-hearted his commitment really was. He began to question whether Jesus would allow liquor and/or tobacco advertising... if Jesus would publish a Sunday edition... if Jesus would hesitate to take a stand on moral issues... etc.

Some people argued that “if you don’t publish these things someone else will; so, you might as well do it.” But Edward Norman decided to do what Jesus would do. Initially it cost him dearly: subscriptions and lost revenue from advertisements. He was even severely criticized and questioned by his own employees... Eventually, what resulted was a newspaper unlike any before it!

My point? See how practical the Christian walk is? The servant of Christ Jesus will have:

- 1) A holy life by abstaining from sexual immorality...
- 2) A harmonious life by loving God and the brethren...
- 3) A life of integrity having a solid testimony to give to those who are lost...

When unforgiven people see this kind of life one of two things results: 1) they will oppose it with envy or 2) they will desire to have this life for themselves. Either way, God will be glorified by a Christian Walk!