**THIRSTING FOR THE SPRINGS - SERMONS BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**22. A CHRISTIAN WALK by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Walk in love."*

*Ephesians 5:2*

*"Walk as children of light."*

*Ephesians 5:8*

*"Look carefully how ye walk."*

*Ephesians 5:15*

THERE are characteristic walks. We may sometimes tell the occupation of a man from his gait. There is the firm and springy and masculine step of the soldier. There is the somewhat ungainly and yet alluring walk of the sailor. There is the stately walk of the born prince. We are told that there was a certain imperial dignity about the carriage of the peasant Robert Burns as he moved in Scotland's fairest halls. And concerning the Christian, there is in his spiritual habits a characteristic manner of going. There is a peculiar carriage and behaviour. As he moves down the streets of time there are certain marks which distinguish him from the ordinary crowd. And in the words which I have taken for exposition the Apostle names to us some of these characteristics. He is distinguished by love and light and circumspection. There is about him a certain disposition of heart, a certain sunny purity of love, and a certain scrupulous and vigilant exactness.

"Walk in love" Now let us see the setting of this. A piece of counsel is often burden some and depressing, because we ignore its context. If I confine myself merely to the Apostle's words which I have just quoted, it seems as though he were laying upon me the duty of creating a fountain, and that a fountain of love; and the counsel depresses and disheartens me. Is it within my power to be a creator of love? Is it within my province to set fountains in motion? One thing in God's word is perfectly clear, we are never called upon to create fountains. Our duty is to direct the flow of rivers. "All my springs are in Thee." Therefore, if I am in any way discouraged by the counsel of the text, let me look into the context if perchance I may behold the springs. What is it that precedes my text? This welcome word, "As beloved children." What is it that precedes my text? "As Christ also loved you." The very setting of the words is suggestive of an evangel; the river is born out of these two springs. I am able to walk in love because I am myself beloved. We are everyone beset and engirt with Divine affectional energy. We too often dismiss love as a sentiment, and by sentiment we mean something more ineffective than the coloured vapour of the rainbow. It is because we so frequently interpret love as an idle and passive feeling that we so utterly misconceive the grandeur of the gospel of love. Real love is an energy, as individual in its characteristics as electricity or air. It is a power as real in the spiritual realm as any of the forces which move in the realm of matter. "God loves me." That means infinitely more than that God is well disposed toward me. It far exceeds the hospitality of an open door. It is an outgoing friendly affection ate force. It is a veritable ally moving round about my life, hungering to serve me.

Now it is part of our wonderful endowment that we can resist and repel this Divine energy of love. I go out in tile early morning when the air is sweet and soft and clear, and is working in manifold ways the miracle of resurrection. It steals from the open country right up to my house door, yet I can repel it. I can close every window and every crevice, and deny the gracious minister right of entrance. I may be enswathed in electrical force, it may be all about me, yet, if I immure myself in a glass sphere, I can resist its approaches. All I need to do is to erect a non-conductor, and the friendly visitor is paralysed. And when that heavenly air which we call the love of God moves round about my life intent on a reviving ministry, 1 can shut it from my life, I can erect a non-conductor. I can rear a prejudice. I can establish the barrier of some selfish purpose. I can set up the obstinacy of a stubborn will. I can keep the heavenly visitor at the door. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Or I can let in the heavenly force, as I can open the window to let in the morning air. How can I let in the love of God? Chiefly by thinking about it. To give thought is to offer hospitality. We entertain the thing that we most contemplate. That thing comes nearest to us which is most prominent in our minds. If I think about the Lord, and about the love of the Lord, if I meditate upon it as it is seen in life and in death, it will steal into my soul as the sweet air steals into the open chamber. And then see what happens. Once admit the energy of the Divine love, and all things are subdued unto itself. If I welcome the love of God, God makes of me a lover. Energised by love, I shall walk in love. "As Christ loved me and gave Himself for me," so shall I give myself in affectionate service to others. In this high sphere, giving is the rule of living. Because I am beloved I shall find myself able to love. Possessing the fountain I can direct the river.

"Walk as children of light." What a radiant vocabulary is elicited even when we pronounce this beautiful figure! It calls round about it quite a company of shining ones; words, such as cheery, bright, sunny, inspiring optimism! We sometimes say of a little child, "She is the sunshine of the house," and what that little child is in the home, Christians are to be in the long, monotonous streets of the world. We are to be children of light. First of all, is not the figure suggestive of warmth? We are to be like hearth fires. There are so many things to make the world cold. Bereavement makes one very cold. If death comes into our house, even in the middle of June, the house becomes a very clammy place. Disappointment is also very chilling, and all round about us there are souls that are just frozen in the bonds of calamity, and broken ambition and bereavement. I notice that some of the municipal authorities in Canada, during the recent extraordinary severity of the weather, made great fires in the streets, that the poor might gather around them and have the frost taken out of their paralysed limbs. And is not that a figure of what happened in the olden days, when the Christ of God moved amid the streets of man? Was not He like a great hearth-fire, round which the consciously-cold gathered for cheer and warmth? "Then came all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." How beautiful it is that they drew near to the heavenly flame and felt revived! And is not this the promise that is made to Christians, that they too, like their Master, shall be "burning lights"? "He shall baptize you with fire." The presence of that flame is a splendid argument for our religion. Men may mistake our logic and may ignore our doctrine, but they will be wooed by our fire. But then the figure is not only suggestive of warmth, it is suggestive of guidance. Men need our light in their perplexities and bewilderments. And don't let us think that we need to be "stars" in order to shine. It was by the ministry of a candle that the woman recovered her lost piece of silver. Perhaps it is the candle people, the one or two talent people, who are of most service in this sphere. It is possible to find a diamond by the aid of a match. I think it is likely that when all things are reckoned up, and the wonderful labours of life are all made known, it will be found that the candle-folk have discharged a wonderful ministry in guiding poor, sick, lost pilgrims to the Saviour's feet. We are called upon to be "burning and shining lights," "children of light."

"Look carefully how ye walk" Literally interpreted, the Apostle seems to say, "Walk with scrupulous exactness, never relax your vigilance, be careful where you put your feet, watch the next step."

"Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene; one step enough for me."

Now it is usually little things that cause us to stumble. I do not fall over a beer barrel, but I slip over a piece of orange peel. I have never stumbled over a bale of cotton, but if one flag in the pavement projects a third of an inch, I may be brought to grief. I can avoid the bigger thing; I am careless about the trifles. The little things cause me to stumble. "Look carefully how ye walk." Recollect the importance of details. Life is made up of steps and incidents and trifles. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."

Let me add one concluding word. One way to attain unto a fine walk is to hold company with those that possess it. I think I have noticed when a soldier lad has come home, and he is met by one or two of his old comrades, that as they walk down the streets together, with the hero in the middle, the two mates unconsciously seek to throw off their slouch, and attempt the step and the dignity of their much-drilled and well disciplined friend. We, too, shall strive after a finer carriage if we hold company with our Lord. "Oh, for a closer walk with God!"