

Thursday Group Studies
The Fatherhood of God
Study 3
November 2nd 2017

Walking with the Father

To whom do we look to ‘walk’ with in this life? It is one thing to live ‘under’ someone or some creed but quite another to agree with someone enough to walk with them. *Do two men walk together unless they agree?* (Amos 3:3). The Scriptures use the word walk to speak of communion, not merely proximity, *I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people* (Leviticus 26:12). We become experts in maintaining proximity but less so at walking with another.

God planned and agreed to walk with humanity. He created us through His Son with whom he had always ‘walked’, in order that we would be structured to walk with him as Father. Who knows better how to walk with the Father than the eternal Son? So the first couple knew the blessing of this. The most glorious aspect of their life in the garden was their walking with God. God agreed to walk with Israel from the calling of Abraham. This continued through the exodus, at Sinai and David. It was what the prophets declared would happen when Messiah came. It was Father’s central gift of Covenant love. The Father agreed to walk with his Son in our flesh. The Father agrees with his Son in our flesh and blood that all has been accomplished for people from all tribes and nations to walk together with them. This agreement between Father Son and Spirit concerning walking with us is the primary agreement that secures our participation. Our participation simply involves living in their agreement. It is good counsel then to refresh our hearts in what the Father has made to be so.

He agrees that we now have authority (from Father, not power from within ourselves) to be his children (John 1:13).

He agrees that Jesus is his gift to the Church as Lord over all His Fathering love and gifts (Ephesians 1:22).

He agrees that his covenant of communion has been accomplished and sealed (Hebrews 13:20).

He agrees that all our sins have been and remain forgiven (Hebrews 10:17).

He agrees that he will never be confronted by any sin of ours or others that was not taken up and born away from us in his Son on the cross (Romans 8:1).

He agrees that we are embraced by him “just as if we had never sinned.” (Romans 5:9).

He agrees that he has made us holy to him (Ephesians 1:4).

He agrees that the evil one has been defeated and may not hold us in bondage ever again (John 12:31).

He agrees that the Holy Spirit should continually beat out the joy and delight to be had in the Father from within our hearts (Romans 8:16).

He agrees that the grace he showers upon us is effective in bringing us home to glory (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

He agrees with Jesus that the place Jesus went to prepare in the cross, resurrection and ascension is the renewed creation in which we will be fully at home with him (John 14:2).

He agrees that the creation we share in now will be renewed to its full glory (2 Peter 3:13).

He agrees that his patience leads to repentance (coming to see him fully as Father) (Romans 2:4).

He agrees that true life for humanity is his love found in His Son (John 1:15-17).

He agrees that nothing will ever separate us from himself (Romans 8:39).

So we could go through every blessing that the Father has made to be “Yes!” for us in his Son.

These are not ‘iffy’ entitlements to be drawn from a reluctant Father. They were first of all His grace-plan, then his realities, worked out in Jesus in our flesh and blood, and finally brought home by the Spirit to those who out of a transformed heart simply agree that they are so.

Yet we live in a world in which the necessity and abundance of Father’s agreement is rejected or ignored. *To look elsewhere for help is to reproach God 'for poverty, or want of means, or cruelty or excessive rigour'* (John Calvin).

We saw that in our current culture, seeking entitlements has become the way we operate. The spirit or driving force of seeking entitlements assumes a lie about Father’s love. Instead of living in the flood of his presence with his gifts and giving we believe the lie that there are no gifts and his giving is at best unpredictable and at worst non-existent. So the drive to enrich and fulfil our lives by claiming entitlements results from and is a continuing attack upon the Fatherhood of God. Who would wish to walk with such a tardy father?

As Calvin said this behaviour has the blinded audacity to accuse the Father of poverty, lack of means, cruelty or excessive restrictions. So behind its self-confident bravado, entitlement claiming is the frantic attempt to walk independently of the Father and therefore his creational plan for His creatures.

Imagine the terrifying results had Jesus walked according to the spirit of entitlement. Can we see that this is precisely what the evil one was tempting him to do, not just in the temptation scene but all through his ministry? His true humanity, therefore his true Sonship and true Redeemer-hood would have disappeared into the murky ineffective world of every other sinner.

The spirit of patience and our walk with the Father

Inevitably the spirit of entitlement by which the world ‘walks’, produces impatience. Everyone and every institution and organisation is seen as being there to give us our entitlements. Where these entitlements are not given, contested or refused our hearts get unsettled, angry and we may become ‘justice seekers’. So in essence the spirit of impatience is the accusation of the Father for being distant, uncaring and unable to truly parent us in the way we would wish. So if we are to walk with the patient Father, and be patient as he is, then patience must be reinstated gift wise to us by Spirit. When a sinner is reinstated in/by/with Christ to walk with the Father they

are returned to a place to live freely in patience and kindness. This is a reinstatement to agree with what God agrees with about our sin our creation and our communion with Him.

Every scheme that humanity has devised to be full apart from walking with Father has diminished us, shrunk our joy and crippled our hope. But Father is in the 'enlargement' industry for sinners. He enlarges hearts in order that they agree with him and walk with him. Then they discover that the enlargement continues, *We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;* (2 Thessalonians 1:13). So we are to agree with Father and *"Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child; "Enlarge the place of your tent; Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; Lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs.* (Isaiah 54 selected).

So far from our walking with Father being a place of frustration at not getting our so called entitlements, it is a place where expectations of great delight are constantly replenished by the mighty river of Father's delights (Psalm 36:8). Where our hearts are flushed with the gifts and giving of the Father then our restless impatient spirits are returned to rest

Now we come to the 'but'! Often, Christians are waiting for the 'but' in the proclamation. The 'but' often seems to undo the wonder of life with Father, returning it to the realm of duty and burden. The 'but' we come to in this study is different. It is the 'but' that reminds us there will be a battle. When Jesus came, rejecting the way of entitlement and grasping, he came freely receiving and luxuriating in the river of Father's delights. Yet he was constantly and violently provoked and buffeted. Patience for him was no way of bliss. In fact his determination to walk with the Father roused more and more battles. Did these battles contradict the Father's presence, his ability to enlarge the heart of his Son? Apparently not for the Lord endured the provocation and grace upon grace learned the fullness of obedience from within that suffering and opposition!

So when the Apostles speak of patience they do not mean patience as in waiting passively for something to happen, or having a careless, "C'est la vie" spirit that is always chilled out. The word means to show steadiness under extreme provocation. So there then is what we could call 'general' patience and then the gift of long-suffering brought to believers caught up in the battle raging around their knowledge and experience of the Father. That will be where the evil one's attack will focus for us as it did for Jesus. So our 'but' doesn't leave patience as a theoretical thing but leads us to see where it is most dynamic for living and walking with the Father.

Father's patience and kindness

The Father who has agreed to walk with us and commands that we agree with his gifts and giving is marked by his longsuffering nature. *Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth* (Exodus 34:6). That patience is first part of Father's nature means that it is indispensable in the way he deals with the creation and his children. It is not simply a nicety. There is something wonderful about how we were created that means 'Father's deep calls to our deep' when the he deals with us over time. *Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?* (Romans 2:4). Father's patience is not, 'Time will heal all

wounds” nonsense, but that through time he is so at work that things actually happen from the heart out.

Paul considered himself a clear demonstration of God’s patience, *Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life* (1 Timothy 1:16).

We saw how Jesus played out Peter and the Disciples, patiently waiting through all the battle and struggles of their unbelief, till the kindness of the Father was received eagerly and fully. Kindness seen and received brings the full change of mind as to the parenting of the Father. All the education Paul had could not produce repentance. All the experiences and words Peter had shared in as he accompanied Jesus had left him powerless before a young girl. Then the kindness of Father, always present, began to penetrate. A miracle? True! A miracle worked when the Father refused to put Peter, Paul and the disciples on the junk heap when they deserved it: Miracles worked when the Father suffered long and often as did Jesus, believing in the ministry of grace that would come in the cross and break open His kindness to their hearts.

Hence we too are called to walk with the Father in his patience, as those who by grace have discovered it to be life giving. Entitlement thinking will never be patient in love (Ephesians 4:1). It quickly turns to frustration and anger, choosing to be provoked and seeks ways of retaliation (dressed up nicely of course in our religiously and politically correct culture).

As we like Paul are examples of Father’s patient love and kindness, then we know the hope to put on the garment of patience that defines us as Father’s child and Father’s servant (Colossians 3:12, 2 Corinthians 6:6).

Impatience in the Church drives many to demand change and be angry and critical of maturity or lack of it perceived in fellow members. This is a deadly spirit and leads to a divorce from the Bride. We often justify our impatience by a claim to be right. We well may be right in a theological sense but compared to the spirit of the Father and Jesus we will be way wrong.