

Northeast Church of Christ

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From the Pen of Paul: *Walking With God*

IN THE ROLE OF THE FAITHFUL in Hebrews chapter 11 it is said of Enoch, “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb. 11:5). What was it that Enoch did that caused this writer to say that “he pleased God”? In the list of genealogies that include Enoch, this explanation of his life and translation is given: “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him” (Gen. 5:24). Notice the parallel phrases in these two accounts. “For God took him,” in Genesis 5:24, becomes “God had translated him” in Hebrews 11:5; “He was not” becomes “was not found”, and “Enoch walked with God” is equal to “he pleased God.” Enoch must have been an exceptionally good man for God to make an exception “that he might not see death.” One thing is very clear about this man; he pleased God because he walked with Him. Another one of the ancients, also listed in Hebrews 11 as one of those who walked by faith, was Noah; in Genesis 6:9 we are told that “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.” The Hebrew writer goes into some detail in describing what Noah did, saying that Noah “moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Heb. 11:7). But perhaps the best explanation of what it means to walk with God is given in the Genesis account when the statement is made, “Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Gen. 6:22).

Thus, for it to be said that “Noah walked with God”, it was necessary for him to do “according to all that God commanded him.”

The life of a Christian is described by a variety of word-pictures in the New Testament. One such word-picture is found in the word “walk.” We too, like Enoch and Noah, must walk with God in order to please Him. The Christian life is pictured as a “walk.” Notice some of the ways this is used in the Scriptures:

We are to “walk in newness of life.” “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). We walk in newness of life because “our old man is crucified with Him” and we are “alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:6, 11). Or, in the words of Paul to the Ephesian brethren, we have “put off concerning the former conversation (life) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” and “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24). Earlier, Paul had told them, “And you hath He quickened (gave life) who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). Jesus called this process being “born again” or being “born of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:3, 5). From these Scriptures, and a variety of others, it is clear that our walk with God includes walking in newness of life. Peter even described our old life as a time when we

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“What is the work of the elders of the church? I believe that some are elders in name only.”

MOST CHURCH PROBLEMS WOULD BE SOLVED if elders would do their job. I am convinced that the preachers are running the church and the elders are doing the work of deacons and the deacons are doing very little and maybe nothing. There are exceptions to what I have stated but very few.

The Bible refers to elders as shepherds in Acts 20:28. We may learn therefore from shepherds what the work of an elder is. A good shepherd will know the flock. A good elder will know the members of the church over which he presides. A good shepherd is watchful for the flock and good elders will be watchful over the church. They are always on the alert for false teachers and fake preachers. Good shepherds see to it that the sheep are fed. Good elders will see to it that the church is fed. Good shepherds see to it that the sheep are fed good, solid, sound food and good elders will see to it that the church is fed good, solid, sound doctrine.

Good shepherds lead their sheep and good elders lead the church by example and by seeing to it that the Bible is followed in all things. Good shepherds know where they are going and good elders know where they are going spiritually. Good shepherds take care of the sick sheep and good elders take care of the spiritually sick in the church. Good shepherds go after the straying sheep and good elders go after the stray members of the church. Good shepherds want to know more about their work and good elders want to know more about their work. Good shepherds may have to discipline some in the flock and good elders may have to discipline some members of the church.

Good shepherds take their work seriously and good elders take their work in the church seriously. Good shepherds want their flock to stay healthy and good elders want the church

where they labor to stay spiritually healthy. Good shepherds know the rules for shepherding and good elders know the Bible which is the rule book when it comes to shepherding the flock of God. Good shepherds know that there are lambs in the flock and good elders realize there are babes in Christ. Good shepherds demand the facts about the flock, and good elders demand the facts about the church.

Good shepherds know other good shepherds, and good elders know other good elders. Good shepherds would not think of turning a wolf or bear loose within the flock and good elders would not think of having two-legged wolves and bears within the church. We could say more but space will not permit.

From the work of a shepherd we can see the work of an elder. When I consider the work of good shepherds and compare it with the work of elders, I can see some lagging behind. We have some elders that would not cross the street to learn how to become better elders. There are some that do not know half the flock where they serve as elders. Some elders do not care about the false teachers and preachers that are in the church. They never read good religious journals to keep up with what is going on. Some elders let the church run them instead of overseeing the church.

One of these days the elders will give an account unto God and they must give an account for the souls of members of the church where they have served as elders (Heb. 13:17). What will the answer be? It will be very serious then. I wonder if the elders of the church realize how serious their work and the responsibility they have before God is? The most serious work in all the world is serving as an elder in the church of Christ.

—*Malcolm L. Hill*

“walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries” (I Peter 4:3). And, as Christians walking with God in newness of life, Peter tells us we should “no longer live the rest of (our) time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (I Pet. 4:2).

Another way of stating this fact, and another statement having to do with our walk, is found in Romans 8:4: “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” As seen in the previous point, we “walk not after the flesh” because we are walking “in newness of life.” But, what does it mean to “walk after the Spirit?” To walk after the flesh is to obey the dictates of the

flesh, to allow the appetites and passions of the flesh to chart our path. The Scriptures are inspired of the Spirit (II Tim. 3:16-17), and therefore the Spirit dwells in the law of Christ revealed through those inspired men; and, when we hear and obey their words we are walking after the Spirit. Paul goes on to explain it in these words, “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). We do this when we “do His commandments” (Rev. 22:14), or when we “do the will of My Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

(Continued next week)

—*Paul M. Wilmoth*