

What is our power for walk?

E. Dennett.

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This question was recently addressed to us, and, as it may be helpful to others, we propose to answer it somewhat in detail. That the difficulty may be first understood, we give the exact form in which it was put; viz., Is Christ or the Holy Spirit our power for walk? Now, before we take it up in this way, it may be well to point out, what all will admit, that Christ is our example in His walk through this world. This is stated, indeed, distinctly by the apostle John. He writes, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John 2: 6.) And if all the scriptures which speak of the example of Christ are collected, it will be seen that they are used in a twofold way — either, as John, to point out God's standard for the believer (see 1 Peter 2: 18-25); or to encourage us in following in His steps (Heb. 12), where Christ is set forth as the Leader and Completer of faith; as a perfect example of dependence from beginning to end; as One who died a martyr's death (though His death was much more than this): and we are exhorted to have His walk before our souls as an encouragement to a like endurance in the path of faith. "Ye," says the apostle, "have not yet resisted unto blood" (as He did), "striving against sin."

Every believer will assent to these statements; and the question, then, now comes, By what power is such a walk to be attained? One or two scriptures will give us the needed information. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8: 13, 14.) Again: "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit." (Gal. 5: 25.) Two things are here plainly taught: first, that the hindrance (if we may so put it) to our walking as Christ walked, lies in the deeds of the body, or, as in Galatians, in the flesh which always lusteth against the Spirit, and seeks to re-assert its control over the child of God; and secondly, that the only power by which the flesh can be held in check — kept in the place of death, according to the judgment of God upon it in the cross of Christ — is the Holy Spirit. There is also the additional instruction, that we may be led of the Spirit; i.e. that He is not only our power for repression, for the mortification of our members (Col. 3), but He also enables us to walk — is therefore our power for progress in the divine path. We must hold by these teachings most tenaciously, because we thereby learn that we have absolutely no natural resource; that we are shut up entirely to the energy of the Holy Ghost for conflict and walk, as for every activity of the divine life.

This then, at first sight, would seem to settle the question at the head of our paper. But there is another consideration, and this, if truly comprehended, will go to the root of the difficulty which is felt by so many souls. For be it observed, that though it be accepted that the Holy Spirit is our only power for walk, the question may still arise, How then is it that He does not enable us to follow Christ more energetically? There are numbers of true-hearted saints who long to be like Caleb, but who are disappointed at every step they take. They do follow, but instead of doing so fully, they feel that they are rather like Peter, following afar off. Now it will help all such to understand that, notwithstanding they possess the Spirit of adoption, and are thus

sealed, He will be inoperative, put forth no energy, unless the eye is on Christ; i.e. unless Christ is constantly before the soul as the object of faith. As the apostle says, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." That is, his faith had Christ as the Son of God as its object — Christ glorified at the right hand of God, glorified as man, but withal the Son of God, being ever, in this connection, the true and proper object of faith. He Himself said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." And when we are living every hour, yea, moment by moment, in dependence, Christ, as so exhibited, filling the vision of our souls, the object of our contemplation, the Spirit of God is ungrieved, and leads us on by His mighty power, so that the divine life which has been bestowed upon us flows out in the same channels, whatever the difference of volume, as those in which the life of Christ found expression when He was in this world. It is on this account indeed that the Spirit is termed in Rom. 8: 9 the Spirit of Christ.

This also explains another difficulty. To walk like Christ, it is sometimes asked, must we look at Him in His earthly pathway, or as seated at the right hand of God? We have already explained the uses made of the example of Christ in the Scriptures; and it will be readily seen that it is not Christ on earth, but Christ glorified, who is the object of our faith. It is, of course, the same Christ, but Christ as He now is, in the condition of glory, not as He was "after the flesh," is always presented to our souls. We study the life of Christ as displayed in this scene to learn how He acted, comported Himself in the different circumstances through which He passed; and our souls are drawn out in adoring wonder as we behold the manifestation of His perfections, graces, and excellencies; but we know Him now only as glorified (see 2 Cor. 5); and it is therefore to Him as such, we repeat, that we now look.

Together with this is connected another thing. Contemplating the glory of the Lord, which shines forth without a veil, we are gradually transformed by the power of the Spirit — gradually, because it is from glory to glory — into the likeness of the One with whom we are thus occupied. And the same Spirit, who is the power of our transformation while our eyes are upon Christ, works mightily within us for the exhibition of Christ in our walk. Walking as Christ walked is not, therefore, external imitation, but the display of the inner life, in proportion as we are changed into the same image, in and through us, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

We do not add more for the present; but our readers will see that, when we speak of power for walk, we cannot separate Christ from the Holy Spirit. I might scripturally say, with the apostle, "I can do all things through Him' (doubtless, Christ) 'who strengtheneth me;' for He is both my life and my strength" (Col. 3; 2 Cor. 12): and I can also scripturally say, "It is through the Spirit alone I can mortify the deeds of the body." So in the life of our blessed Lord. He acted and wrought, and at the same time all that He did was by the Holy Ghost. E. D.