

The principle thought found in these verses is Christian progression. In verse 1, the phrase, ***How ye ought to walk,***” implies motion, progression and a continual approach toward a definite goal. (Have you set any goals in your Christian achievements?)

Christianity is not an ornament we wear, a luxury to enjoy, a ceremony to observe, **but a life**, and in this life if we are not advancing, we are backslidden. John Flavel wrote, **“What the heart is to the body, that the soul is to man, and what health is to the heart, Holiness is to the soul.”**

In a very familiar passage of scripture, Paul wrote, *“But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

Let me interpret the verses by way of introduction:

1. Our Life Molded After Worthy Examples: v. 1

“...that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God,”

NOTE: They had not only received the wisest counsel from their teachers, but had also witnessed their holy and consistent lives. Paul says to Timothy in **I Tim. 4:12** *“...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”* (Follow me as I follow Christ.)

2. Our Life Should Find Great Joy In Divine

Approval: vs. 1 *“...and to please God.”*

NOTE: It is possible then to please God. What a powerful incentive to live a holy life.

NOTE: One Puritan wrote, “I count all that part of my life lost which I spent not in communion with God.”

3. The Christian Life Is Capable of Vast Expansion:

v. 1 *“...so ye would abound more and more.”*

NOTE: As we advance in our Christian life, our happiness increases. There is no limit to a higher, holier, and happier life, but our faith.

4. A Higher Sanctity Of Life Involves Conforming To Divine Nature: v. 3 *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification,”*

NOTE: God is holy and the loftiest aim of the believer is to be like Him.

5. In The Upward Life There Must Be Harmony With God’s Will: v. 3 *“For this is the will of God,”*

NOTE: What God proscribes must be carefully avoided, and what he prescribes must be faithfully and cheerfully done in the manner He prescribed it.

6. There Must Be A High Regard For God’s Message And Messenger: v. 2 *“For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.”*

7. There Must Be Repeated And Earnest Exhortations: v. 1 *“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you...”*

NOTE: Doctrine without exhortation makes men all brain, no heart; exhortation without doctrine makes the heart full and leaves the brain empty. Both together make a man.

I. There Must Be Discipline: I Cor. 9:27 *“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”*

A. In Prayer And Bible Reading: I Tim. 4:13 *“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”*

B. In Preparation For Worship: Heb. 10: 19-22
“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” (This takes a little time and preparation.)

C. In Private Life: (What we are where no one knows us is what we are.) (And what we do in private God sees.)

II. There Must Be Denial: Mt. 16:24 *“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”*

A. Deny Self Interests: (We all have interests outside of the church and Christ, but we must control them.)

B. Deny Sensual Appetites: Ju. 18, 19 *“How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”* (Natural lusts.)

III. There Must Be Decrease: Jn. 3:29, 30 *“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.”*

The primary subject in these first twelve verses of chapter four is the Sanctified life of the believer. V. 3 The first virtue that Paul speaks about is that of love; and brotherly love more in particular.

But in verse eleven, he passes from the subject of brotherly love to the necessity of maintaining a quiet and peaceable disposition. Love and peace are twins. It's impossible to separate them. Brotherly love can have no place in the heart from which peace has fled and where war and discord reign.

The quiet Spirit is not a weak, meaningless, cowardly condition of mind, but contains in it all the elements of patient endurance, unconquerable bravery and invincible moral power. Our Lord is gentle and harmless, but He can break forth in wrath and fury if need be.

A quiet Spirit is another practical evidence of possessing a genuine Sanctified life. Peter, in **I Pet. 3:4** says about a woman that meek and quiet spirit was an ornament of great price, in the sight of god. But I also believe that us men could learn a valuable lesson here.

How To Obtain A Quiet Spirit

I. Through A Studious Lifestyle: v. 11 “...*that ye study to be quiet,*” (The word “study” signified to seek after an object with Holy and active ambition, as though it were the highest honor to possess it.)

A. This Is Different From The Restless Spirit Of The World: Is. 57:20 “...*Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*”

B. The World Attains It's Selfish Ends In The Midst Of Tumult And Confusion: But The Godly Will Attain His Through Prayers:

I Tim. 2:1-2 “*I EXHORT therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be*

made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

C. Unfortunately Most Churches Will Have Some Whose Tongue Is A Perpetual Clatter: (They are full of suggestions for others, while they live in turmoil themselves.)

Ja. 3:6 *“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”*

D. A Quiet Spirit Cannot Be Secured Without Much Self-Denying Effort: But It Is A Jewel Worth All The Trouble And Sacrifice: (Bite Your Tongue)

Pr. 20:3 *“It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.”* (Mind your own business.)

II. Through Self-Control: (“And to do your own business.”)

A. Personal Duties Have First Claim Upon Your Efforts: (Attend first to your personal concerns.)

Illus.: Jesus and Peter about John: **Jn. 21:21,22** *“Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.”*

1. To Do One’s Own Business Is The Best Safeguard Against Idleness and Meddling Curiosity:

2. Interference In The Business Of Others Creates Discord.

Pr. 6: *“...six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: he that soweth discord among the brethren.”*

NOTE: “They that love to hear all that may be told them, do also love to blab all that they hear.”

III. Through Staying Busy: *“...and to work with your own hands.”*

A. Our Personal Duties Demand Genuine Hard Work: I Tim. 5:8 *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”*

1. There Is Not A Greater Foe To Holiness Than Idleness:

NOTE: An idle man is always something worse. His brain is the workshop of the devil, where he forges the most debasing family and plots the most pernicious schemes, many take more pain to go to hell than what many do to go to heaven.

Eph. 4:28 *“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”*

II Thess. 3:11 *“For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”*

IV. Through Scriptural Obedience: “As we commanded you”

A. Paul Lead By Example: II Thess. 3:7,8

“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you...”

V. Through A Spiritual Testimony: (“That ye walk honestly toward them that are without.” - A lazy man can never be an honest one.

I Th. 4:9-10

Let's Reach Out And Touch Our Brother

In these verses we see Paul's exhortation of brotherly love. It is introduced not with a compliment, but a commendation, because this church was already very remarkable in the exercise of this divine virtue. It was not a mere human virtue, but rather God's grace working in them.

The mutual exercise of love towards the brethren is an undisputable evidence of spiritual regeneration. **Jn. 13:35** Brotherly love was also set forth as an example for us, in the life of Christ. **Jn. 13:34** *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."* **Eph. 5:2** *"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."*

Love should be practically manifested in supplying, as far as means and opportunity will allow, each others needs, in bearing one another's burdens, in forgiving one another, and if necessary, in kindly reproving one another.

1. Love Can't Be Bought: S.O.S. 8:7 *"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."*

2. Love Is Divinely Wrought: Jer. 31:33 *"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, said the LORD, I will put my law in their inwards parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."*

3. Love Is Divinely Taught: v. 9 *"For ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."*

a. The teaching of the Spirit exceeds the teaching of man.

b. Those who God teaches first are then easily taught by men:

c. Christ's teaching: **Mt. 5:41,42** *"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."*

4. Love Should Be Divinely Sought: v. 10 *“But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.”* **I Cor. 13:1-3 (Read)**

How To Touch Your Brother

I. By Prayerful Supplications: (Illus. – Paul)

A. Pray For Help: II Cor. 1:11 *“Ye also helping together by prayer for us.”*

Col. 4:12 *“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”*

I Thess. 1:2 *“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.”*

B. Pray For Healing: Ja. 5:16 *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.”*

C. Pray For The Herald: (Messenger) Col. 4:3 *“Withal praying for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ.”*

D. Pray For Your Helpmeet: I Pet. 3:7 *Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”*

II. By A Friendly Spirit: (Illus. – Jesus)

A. A Friendship Must Be Sought: Pr. 18:24 *“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”*

B. Friends Are To Salute One Another: III Jn. 14 *“But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.”* (To enfold in arms, to embrace)

C. In Friendship There Is Sacrifice And Selflessness: Pr. 17:17 *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”*

III. By Being Supportive: I Cor. 12:26 *“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”*

Rom. 12:15 *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”*

I Thess. 4:18

Comforting Thoughts About His Coming

In the closing verses of this chapter, Paul changes his train of thought and focuses on the second coming of the Lord. Apparently these believers had some misgivings about their loved ones who had died in Christ, or perhaps some even believed the rapture had already occurred. Or some could have grown weary while waiting on the Lord and grown somewhat impatient. But let us not grow weary, **Heb. 10:37** *“For yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”*

Time has sped _____ along; events of vast magnitude have rapidly succeeded one another, and left their lessons for the ages to ponder; nations have passed through the throes of suffering and revolution; generation after generation has gone down to the grave: for nearly two thousand years the church has been strained with profound, intense, and anxious expectancy; but still the promise remains unfulfilled. Will He come? Oh, yes He is coming! And the church of the living God shall rise triumphant. But until that day arrives, we are to find comfort in these words. Have you thought on them enough to find comfort?

I. They Provide Us With A Precious Hope: v. 13-18 Tit. 2:13 *“Looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

A. Concerning The Dead In Christ: vs. 13, 14 *“That he sorrow not, even as others which have not hope.”*

NOTE: He did not say that we are not to sorrow, but that we sorrow not as others which have no hope.

NOTE: Sorrow is nowhere forbidden. It may be an infirmity, but at the same time it is a solace. The soul oppressed and stricken by the weight of a great calamity finds relief in tears.

“O ye tears! O ye tears! Till I felt you on my cheek, I was selfish in my sorrow, I was stubborn, I was weak, Ye have given me strength to conquer, and I stand erect and Free, and I know that I am Human, by the light of sympathy.”

1. There is a Return: v. 14
2. There is a Resurrection: v. 16
3. There is a Reunion: v. 17

1. Clarify Sleep: v. 14

- a. Sleep is expressive of rest
- b. Sleep is expressive of refreshment
- c. Sleep implies the expectation of awakening

II. They Provide Us With Peace For The Soul: v. 14

A. Peace In The Storms: (“Let me penetrate into thy heart of God,” said the afflicted saint, “and read the love that is there. Let me penetrate into thy mind, and read the wisdom that is there; then shall I be satisfied. The storm shall be turned into calm. A vital knowledge of Christ silences every murmur and prepares for every emergency.”)

B. Peace To Wait Silently: v. 15 *“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord,”*

NOTE: Paul had a special revelation from Heaven, and spoke under the direct and immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

NOTE: Long waiting should sharpen our longing, brighten our hope and clarify our vision.

C. Peace To Renew Our Strength: Is. 40:31 *“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”* (Are you waiting?)

III. They Provide Us With A Promise To Stand On: v. 16

A. Promise Of A Shout: (The shout of Jesus at His coming will be like the loud, clear, joyous battle cry of a great conqueror. This shout will break the silence of the ages, will startle the universe into attention, will raise the dead and will summon all the saved into the presence of the Messiah. In Him first He did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. “But now is His revelation of His

_____.”
NOTE: This shout shall be heard by all the living and the dead in Christ. But the lost will hear nothing as yet.

B. The Promise Of A Voice: v. 16 (In response to the shout of the descending Lord, the archangel lifts up his voice, like the loud cry of a herald announcing the glorious advent and the sound is caught up and prolonged by the vast host of celestial attendants.)

C. The Promise Of A Trump: (In Old Testament days, the trumpet was used to gather together the people of God.)

I Cor. 15:51: *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep but we shall be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

1. Perfection

2. Perpetuity

3. Immutability

NOTE: There are three things which imminently distinguish the Heavenly life of the soul.

IV. Provides Us With A Power To Ascend With: v. 17

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds."