

SIT
*W*ALK
STAND

The Process of Christian Maturity

WATCHMAN NEE



Fort Washington, PA 19034

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Preface
to the
Fourth Edition

COMPILED from the spoken ministry of Mr. Watchman Nee (Nee To-sheng) of Foochow and first published in Bombay, *Sit, Walk, Stand* continues to stir the hearts of readers with its arousing message. Although through successive editions the book has been slightly expanded, all the source material dates from a single period—the spacious days of evangelistic witness in China just prior to the Japanese war, when the author and his fellow Christians enjoyed a liberty in the service of God that is rare today. A message which expresses at once their triumphant assurance in the finished work of Christ and their humble sense of the high qualities called for in His servants has a fresh relevance for us now, when Christian work everywhere is on trial. May God give us grace not only to heed its challenge, but to find ways, while there is time, of applying its lessons in our own sphere of opportunity.

Angus I. Kinnear
London, 1962

Introduction

If the life of a Christian is to be pleasing to God, it must be properly adjusted to Him in all things. Too often we place the emphasis in our own lives upon the application of this principle to some single detail of our behavior or of our work for Him. Often we fail therefore to appreciate either the extent of the adjustment called for or, at times even, the point from which it should begin.

But God measures everything, from start to finish, by the perfections of His Son. Scripture clearly affirms that it is God's good pleasure "to sum up all things in Christ, . . . in whom also we were made a heritage" (Eph. 1:9–11). It is my earnest prayer that, in the discussion that follows, our eyes may be opened afresh to see that it is only by placing our entire emphasis *there* that we can hope to realize the divine purpose for us, which is that "we should be unto the praise of his glory" (1:12).

We shall take as a background to our thoughts the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians.

Like so many of the apostle's letters, this epistle falls naturally into two sections: a doctrinal and a practical. The

doctrinal section (Eph. 1–3) is concerned mainly with the great facts of the redemption which God has wrought for us in Christ. The practical section (Eph. 4–6) then goes on to present us with the demands, in terms of Christian conduct and zeal, that God is making upon us in the light of that redemption. The two halves are closely related, but it will be seen that the emphasis in each is different.

Then, further, the second and more obviously practical half of the letter may again conveniently be subdivided according to its subject matter into a first long section from verses 4:1 to 6:9 and a second, much shorter section from verse 6:10 to the end. The first part deals with our life in the midst of the world; the second with our conflict with the devil.

Thus, we have, in all, three subdivisions of the epistle to the Ephesians, setting forth the believer's position in Christ (1:1–3:21), his life in the world (4:1–6:9) and his attitude to the Enemy (6:10–24). We may summarize as follows:

EPHESIANS

- A. Doctrinal (Chapters 1 to 3)
 - 1. Our Position in Christ (1:1–3:21)
- B. Practical (Chapters 4 to 6)
 - 2. Our Life in the World (4:1–6:9)
 - 3. Our Attitude to the Enemy (6:10–24)

Of all Paul's epistles, it is in Ephesians that we find the highest spiritual truths concerning the Christian life. The letter abounds with spiritual riches, and yet at the same time it is intensely practical. The first half of the letter reveals our life in Christ to be one of union with Him in the highest heavens. The second half shows us in very practical terms

how such a heavenly life is to be lived by us down here on the earth. We do not here propose to study the letter in detail. We shall, however, touch on a few principles lying at its heart. For this purpose we shall select one keyword in each of the above three sections to express what we believe to be its central or governing idea.

In the first section of the letter, we note the word “sit” (2:6), which is the key to that section and the secret of a true Christian experience. God has made us to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, and every Christian must begin his spiritual life from that place of rest. In the second part we select the word “walk” (4:1) as expressive of our life in the world, which is its subject. We are challenged there to display in our Christian walk conduct that is in keeping with our high calling. And finally, in the third part we find the key to our attitude toward the Enemy contained in the one word “stand” (6:11), expressive of our place of triumph at the end. Thus, we have:

KEY WORDS IN EPHESIANS

1. Our Position in Christ—“SIT” (2:6)
2. Our Life in the World—“WALK” (4:1)
3. Our Attitude to the Enemy—“STAND” (6:11)

The life of the believer always presents these three aspects—to God, to man and to the Satanic powers. To be useful in God’s hand, a man must be properly adjusted with respect to all three: his position, his life and his warfare. He falls short of God’s requirements if he underestimates the importance of any one of them, for each is a sphere in which God would express “the glory of his grace, which he freely

bestowed on us in the Beloved” (1:6).

We will take, then, these three words—“Sit,” “Walk,” “Stand”—as guides to the teaching of the epistle and as the text for its present message to our hearts. We shall find it most instructive to note both the order and the connection in which they come.

Sit

THE GOD of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:17–21).

“And raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: . . . for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory” (2:6–9).

God . . . made him to sit . . . and made us to sit with him.” Let us first consider the implications of this word “sit.” As we have said, it reveals the secret of a heavenly life. Christianity does not begin with walking; it begins with sitting. The Christian era began with Christ, of whom we are told that, when He had made purification of sins, He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3). With equal truth we can say that the individual Christian life begins with a man “in Christ”—that is to say, when by faith

we see ourselves seated together with Him in the heavens.

Most Christians make the mistake of trying to walk in order to be able to sit, but that is a reversal of the true order. Our natural reason says, If we do not walk, how can we ever reach the goal? What can we attain without effort? How can we ever get anywhere if we do not move?

But Christianity is a queer business! If at the outset we try to do anything, we get nothing; if we seek to attain something, we miss everything. For Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE. Thus, Ephesians opens with the statement that God *has* “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (1:3), and we are invited at the very outset to sit down and enjoy what God has done for us—not to set out to try and attain it for ourselves.

Walking implies effort, whereas God says that we are saved, not by works, but “by grace . . . through faith” (2:8). We constantly speak of being “saved through faith,” but what do we mean by it? We mean this: that we are saved by reposing in the Lord Jesus. We did nothing whatever to save ourselves; we simply laid upon Him the burden of our sin-sick souls. We began our Christian life by depending not upon our own doing, but upon what He had done. Until a man does this, he is no Christian. For to say, “I can do nothing to save myself; but by His grace God *has done* everything for me in Christ,” is to take the first step in the life of faith.

The Christian life from start to finish is based upon this principle of utter dependence upon the Lord Jesus. There is no limit to the grace God is willing to bestow upon us. He will give us everything, but we can receive none of it except as we rest in Him. “Sitting” is an attitude of rest. Something has been finished, work stops and we sit. It is paradoxical,

but true, that we only advance in the Christian life as we learn first of all to sit down.

What does it really mean to sit down? When we walk or stand, we bear on our legs all the weight of our own body; but when we sit down, our entire weight rests upon the chair or couch on which we sit. We grow weary when we walk or stand, but we feel rested when we have sat down for awhile. In walking or standing we expend a great deal of energy, but when we are seated we relax at once, because the strain no longer falls upon our muscles and nerves, but upon something outside of ourselves. So also in the spiritual realm, to sit down is simply to rest our whole weight—our load, ourselves, our future, everything—upon the Lord. We let Him bear the responsibility and cease to carry it ourselves.

This was God's principle from the beginning. In the creation God worked from the first to the sixth day and rested on the seventh. We may truthfully say that for those first six days, He was very busy. Then, the task He had set Himself completed, He ceased to work. The seventh day became the sabbath of God; it was God's rest.

But what of Adam? Where did he stand in relation to that rest of God? Adam, we are told, was created on the sixth day. Clearly, then, he had no part in those first six days of work, for he came into being only at their end. God's seventh day was, in fact, Adam's first. Whereas God worked six days and then enjoyed His sabbath rest, Adam began his life with the sabbath; for God works before He rests, while man must first enter into God's rest, and then alone can he work.

Moreover, it was because God's work of creation was truly complete that Adam's life could begin with rest. And here is the gospel: that God has gone one stage further and

has completed also the work of redemption, and that we need do nothing whatever to merit it, but can enter by faith directly into the values of His finished work.

Of course, we know that between these two historic facts— between God’s rest in creation and God’s rest in redemption— there lies the whole tragic story of Adam’s sin and judgment, of man’s unceasing, unprofitable labor and of the coming of the Son of God to toil and to give Himself until the lost position was recovered. “My Father worketh even until now, and I work” (John 5:17), He explained as He pursued His way. Only with the atoning price paid could He cry, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

But because of that triumphant cry, the analogy we have drawn is a true one. Christianity indeed means that God has done everything in Christ, and that we simply step by faith into the enjoyment of that fact. Our keyword here is not of course, in its context, a command to “sit down,” but to see ourselves as “seated” in Christ. Paul prays that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened (Eph. 1:18) to understand all that is contained for us in this double fact, that God has first by mighty power “made him to sit” and then by grace “made us to sit with him.”

And the first lesson we must learn is this: that the work is not initially ours at all, but His. It is not that we work for God, but that He works for us. God *gives* us our position of rest. He brings His Son’s finished work and presents it to us, and then He says to us, “Please sit” (*ch’eng tso*). His offer to us cannot, I think, be better expressed than in the words of the invitation to the great banquet: “Come; for all things are now ready” (Luke 14:17). Our Christian life begins with the discovery of what God has provided.

The Range of His Finished Work

From this point onward Christian experience proceeds as it began, not on the basis of our own work, but always on that of the finished work of Another. Every new spiritual experience begins with an acceptance by faith of what God has done—with a new “sitting down,” if you like. This is a principle of life, and one which God Himself has appointed; and from beginning to end, each successive stage of the Christian life follows on the same divinely determined principle.

How can I receive the power of the Spirit for service? Must I labor for it? Must I plead with God for it? Must I afflict my soul by fastings and self-denials to merit it? Never! That is not the teaching of Scripture. Think again: How did we receive the forgiveness of our sins? Paul tells us that it was “according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7), and that this was “freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (1:6). We did nothing to merit it. We have our redemption through His blood, that is, on the ground of what *He* has done.

What then is God’s basis for the outpouring of the Spirit? It is the exaltation of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:33). Because Jesus died on the cross, my sins are forgiven; because He is exalted to the throne, I am endued with power from on high. The one gift is no more dependent than the other upon what I am or what I do. I did not merit forgiveness, and neither do I merit the gift of the Spirit. I receive everything not by walking, but by sitting down; not by doing, but by resting in the Lord.

Hence, just as there is no need to wait for the initial experience of salvation, so there is no need to wait for the Spirit’s outpouring. Let me assure you that you need not plead with God for this gift, nor agonize, nor hold “tarrying

meetings.” It is yours not because of your doing, but because of the exaltation of Christ, “in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” This, no less than the forgiveness of sins, is contained in “the gospel of your salvation” (Eph. 1:13).

Or consider another subject, one that is a special theme of Ephesians. How do we become members of Christ? What fits us to be parts of that body which Paul speaks of as “the fullness of him”(1:23)? Certainly we never arrive there by walking. I am not joined to Him by effort of my own. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling” (4:4). Ephesians sets forth what *is*. It starts with Jesus Christ and with the fact that God chose us “*in him* before the foundation of the world” (1:4). When the Holy Spirit shows us Christ, and we believe on Him, then at once, with no further act on our part, there begins for us a life in union with Him.

But if all these things become ours by faith alone, what then of the now very urgent and practical matter of our sanctification? How can we know present deliverance from sin’s reign? How is our “old man,” who has followed us and troubled us for years, to be “crucified” and put away? Once again the secret is not in walking, but in sitting; not in doing, but in resting in something done. We “*died* to sin.” We “*were baptized . . . into his death.*” “We *were buried . . . with him.*” God “*made us alive* together with Christ.” (Rom. 6:2–4; Eph. 2:5).

All these statements are in the past (*aorist*) tense. Why is this? Because the Lord Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem nearly two thousand years ago, and *I was crucified with Him*. This is the great historic fact. By it His experience has now

become my spiritual history, and God can speak of me as already having everything “with him.” All that I now have I have “with Christ.” In the Scriptures we never find these things spoken of as in the future, nor even to be desired in the present. They are historic facts of Christ into which all we who have believed have entered.

“With Christ”—crucified, quickened, raised, set in the heavenlies. To the human mind these ideas are no less puzzling than were the words of Jesus to Nicodemus in John 3:3. There it was a question of how to be born again. Here it is something even more improbable—something not only to be effected in us, as new birth, but to be seen and accepted as ours because it *has already been effected* long ago in Someone else. How could such a thing be? We cannot explain. We must receive it from God as something He has done. We were not born with Christ, but we were crucified with Him (Gal. 2:20). Our union with Him began therefore with His death. God included us in Him there. We were “with him” because we were “in him.”

But how can I be sure that I am “in Christ”? I can be sure because the Bible affirms that it is so, and that it was God who put me there. “Of him [God] are ye in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:30). “He that establisheth us with you in Christ . . . is God” (2 Cor. 1:21). It is something accomplished by Him in His sovereign wisdom to be seen, believed, accepted and rejoiced in by us.

If I put a dollar bill between the pages of a magazine and then burn the magazine, where is the dollar bill? It has gone the same way as the magazine—to ashes. Where the one goes, the other goes too. Their history has become one. But just as effectively God has put us in Christ. What happened

to Him happened also to us. All the experiences He met, we too have met *in Him*. “Our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin” (Rom. 6:6).

That is not an exhortation to struggle. That is history—our history, written in Christ before we were born. Do you believe that? It is true! Our crucifixion with Christ is a glorious historic fact. Our deliverance from sin is based not on what we can do, nor even on what God is going to do for us, but on what He has already done for us in Christ. When that fact dawns upon us, and we rest back upon it (Rom. 6:11), then we have found the secret of a holy life.

But it is true that we know all too little of this in experience. Consider an example. If someone makes a very unkind remark about you in your presence, how do you meet the situation? You compress your lips, clench your teeth, swallow hard and take a firm grip upon yourself. And if with a great effort you manage to suppress all sign of resentment and be reasonably polite in return, you feel you have gained a great victory. But the resentment is still there; it has merely been covered up. And at times you do not even succeed in covering it.

What is the trouble? The trouble is that you are trying to walk before you have sat down, and in that way lies sure defeat. Let me repeat: No Christian experience begins with walking, but always with a definite sitting down. The secret of deliverance from sin is not to *do* something, but to rest on what God has done.

An engineer living in a large city in the West left his homeland for the Far East. He was away for two or three years, and during his absence his wife was unfaithful to him and went off with one of his best friends. On his return

home he found he had lost his wife, his two children and his best friend. At the close of a meeting which I was addressing, this grief-stricken man unburdened himself to me. "Day and night for two solid years my heart has been full of hatred," he said. "I am a Christian, and I know I ought to forgive my wife and my friend, but though I try and try to forgive them, I simply cannot. Every day I resolve to love them, and every day I fail. What can I do about it?"

"Do nothing at all," I replied.

"What do you mean?" he asked, startled. "Am I to continue to hate them?"

So I explained, "The solution of your problem lies here, that when the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He not only bore your sins away, but He bore *you* away too. When He was crucified, your old man was crucified in Him, so that that unforgiving 'you,' who simply cannot love those who have wronged you, has been taken right out of the way in His death. God has dealt with the whole situation in the cross, and there is nothing left for you to deal with. Just say to Him, 'Lord, I cannot love, and I give up trying, but I count on Thy perfect love. I cannot forgive, but I trust Thee to forgive instead of me, and to do so henceforth in me.'"

The man sat there amazed and said, "That's all so new, I feel I must *do* something about it." Then a moment later he added again, "But what can I *do*?"

"God is waiting till you cease to do," I said. "When you cease doing, then God will begin. Have you ever tried to save a drowning man? The trouble is that his fear prevents him trusting himself to you. When that is so, there are just two ways of going about it. Either you must knock him unconscious and then drag him to the shore, or else you must leave

him to struggle and shout until his strength gives way before you go to his rescue. If you try to save him while he has any strength left, he will clutch at you in his terror and drag you under, and both he and you will be lost. God is waiting for your store of strength to be utterly exhausted before He can deliver you. Once you have ceased to struggle, He will do everything. God is waiting for you to despair.”

My engineer friend jumped up. “Brother,” he said, “I’ve seen it. Praise God, it’s all right now with me! There’s nothing for me to do. *He* has done it all!” And with radiant face he went off rejoicing.

God the Giver

Of all the parables in the Gospels, that of the prodigal son affords, I think, the supreme illustration of the way to please God. The father says, “It was meet to make merry and be glad” (Luke 15:32), and in these words Jesus reveals what it is that, in the sphere of redemption, supremely rejoices His Father’s heart. It is not an elder brother who toils incessantly for the father, but a younger brother who lets the father do everything for him. It is not an elder brother who always wants to be the giver, but a younger brother who is always willing to be the receiver. When the prodigal returned home, having wasted his substance in riotous living, the father had not a word of rebuke for the waste nor a word of inquiry regarding the substance. He did not sorrow over all that was spent; he only rejoiced over the opportunity the son’s return afforded him for spending more.

God is so wealthy that His chief delight is to give. His treasure stores are so full that it is painful to Him when we

refuse Him an opportunity of lavishing those treasures upon us. It was the father's joy that he could find in the prodigal an applicant for the robe, the ring, the shoes and the feast; it was his sorrow that in the elder son he found no such applicant.

It is a grief to the heart of God when we try to provide things for Him. He is so very, very rich. It gives Him true joy when we just let Him give and give and give again to us. It is a grief to Him, too, when we try to *do* things for Him, for He is so very, very able. He longs that we will just let Him do and do and do. He wants to be the Giver eternally, and He wants to be the Doer eternally. If only we saw how rich and how great He is, we would leave all the giving and all the doing to Him.

Do you think that if you cease trying to please God, your good behavior will cease? If you leave all the giving and all the working to God, do you think the result will be less satisfactory than if you do some of it? It is when we seek to do it ourselves that we place ourselves back again under the Law. But the works of the Law, even our best efforts, are "dead works," hateful to God because ineffectual.

In the parable both sons were equally far removed from the joys of the father's house. True, the elder son was not in the far country, yet he was only at home in theory. "These many years do I serve thee, and yet . . ." (Luke 15:29)—his heart had not found rest. His theoretical position could never, as did the prodigal's, come to be enjoyed by him while he still clung to his own good works.

Just you stop "giving," and you will prove what a Giver God is! Stop "working," and you will discover what a Worker He is! The younger son was all wrong, but he came home, and he found rest—and that is where Christian life begins.

“God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us . . . made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4, 6). “It was meet to make merry and be glad!” (Luke 15:32).