

# Introduction

*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.*

Colossians 2:6

God has called every Christian to walk the "Highway of Holiness" (Isa. 35:8). To guide us along the way, He has provided "signposts." Each one is important and precipitates a crisis of decision if we would move on in God's purpose of progressive sanctification.

Perhaps the best verse in the New Testament to illustrate this principle is found in Colossians 2:6. It reads, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk* in Him." The connective "therefore" looks back to the apostle Paul's previous statement about the stable faith of the Colossian believers (v. 5). He then states that the crisis that initially brought them to the acceptance of the Gospel is to *be a pattern* of their continuing faithfulness. Three crises are implied in this verse and set the pattern of our Christian life—until we see Jesus face to face.

## The Crisis Of Decision

"As you therefore have *received* Christ Jesus the Lord" (v. 6). There came a point in time when these Colossians decided to follow Jesus. Drawn by the prevenient workings of the Spirit, they accepted Christ. In a very real sense, we reaffirm that initial decision every day of our lives.

## The Crisis Of Devotion

"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the *Lord*" (v. 6). Vincent, in his *Word Studies in the New Testament*,<sup>[1]</sup> points out that the Greek emphasizes here the saving *lordship* of Christ. The text reads, "As you have received *the* Christ, even Jesus, the Lord." There was no "easy believism" in Paul's presentation of the Gospel. *Decision* was to be accompanied and followed by *devotion*. Jesus Christ is Lord and, therefore, *must* be Lord in our lives.

## The Crisis Of Direction

"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk in Him*" (v. 6). The Colossians were to walk in dependence on Christ and by the direction of Christ. Walking speaks of the normal pattern of living. It suggests the steady progress of the one who patiently, but persistently, goes on in the face of temptation and opposition, giving heed to every biblical signpost along the Highway of Holiness.

So there are crises in the Christian life, and each one is to be faced with a step of decision, a stride of devotion, and a sense of direction. We shall consider some of these signposts that the Christian must face as he walks the pathway to glory. John Sammis (1846-1919) must have had this "walk" in mind when he wrote:

*When we walk with the Lord  
In the light of His Word,  
What a glory He sheds on our way!*



## Chapter 1: The Signpost of Sinfulness

*Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

James 4:13-17

*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

Galatians 5:16-23

One of the misleading half-truths that preachers can convey to babes in Christ is the notion that after conversion there are no more temptations, testings, or failings. It therefore comes as a great shock when a young believer discovers that it is still possible for him or her to sin. It is the crisis of failure in the Christian's walk. Of course, "there's victory in Jesus"; but there can also be defeat when we cease to abide in Him. John the apostle reminds us that "if we say that we have not sinned, we make Him [God] a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10).

This signpost of sin is highlighted in the passages quoted at the beginning of the chapter, and I want to deal with the subject from a threefold aspect: the mystery of sin, the misery of sin, and the mastery of sin in the believer's life.

### **The Mystery Of Sin In The Believer's Life**

"To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Although this verse can be applied to the unregenerate, its primary message is to believers. James has referred already to believers as "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22)—those who have received "the implanted word" (James 1:21).

At the same time, there is a mysterious "moral dualism" in our text. Here we have "good" and "sin" in the same person. When we search for the explanation, we find it in the Word of God. In the fifth chapter of Galatians, verses 16-18, Paul writes, "I say then:

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." Here is the mystery of moral dualism.

### *A Moral Dualism That Polarizes the Believer's Life*

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another" (Gal. 5:17). Have you ever experienced that tug-of-war in your life—a desire to please God and yet a desire to please self? Here Paul contrasts the self-centered life with the Spirit-centered life and shows that these are contrary to one another. "To will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find" (Rom. 7:18). Therefore, "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Look first at:

#### **The Self-Centered Life**

"The works of the flesh are evident" (Gal. 5:19). Although those who commit such sins are not worthy to inherit the kingdom of God, we all know that each of us has the potential to commit these sins.

1. *There Are the Sexual Sins.* "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness" (Gal. 5:19). Charles Colson, in his book *The Body*, states that "the divorce rate among the clergy is increasing faster than in any other profession. Numbers show that one in ten have had an affair with a member of their congregation, and 25 percent have had illicit sexual contact."<sup>[1]</sup> Our country is in the grip of sexual sins, and if the illustrious historian Arnold Toynbee is right, this is one of the evidences of a degenerate society and a decadent church.
2. *There Are the Spiritual Sins.* "Idolatry, sorcery" (Gal. 5:20). Idolatry means anything or anyone who comes between God and yourself, thereby becoming the center of your affection and attention. God has condemned it! Sorcery or witchcraft literally means drug-taking—the very situation we're in today—and this "drug-taking" is invading the church of Jesus Christ. What Aldous Huxley and others predicted has come to pass. People are seeking religious experiences through "kicks" of all kinds, and this is wrapped up in the occultism we see around us. Through the New Age movement and other devices, Satan is on his last rampage before Jesus Christ comes back again. I don't remember any time in my life when I've sensed such demonic oppression!  
And we could go on. We see "hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies" (or parties into which divisions crystallize) (Gal. 5:20; 1 Cor. 11:19), and all this within the realm of our religious life.
3. *There Are the Social Sins.* "Envy...drunkenness, revelries" (Gal. 5:21). All these sins can be found in my heart and in your heart, unless we know what it is to be protected by the blood of Christ and by the power of the Spirit. Paul is not talking about an *act* of sin, but the *habit* of sin. The fact that the believer is not under law but under grace is no excuse for sin. If anything, it is an encouragement to live in victory. Our text still applies: "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

But then there is: