

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
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AMOS 3 v 3

"Can two walk together except they be agreed"

The question is put by the prophet. Amos was inspired to write: "Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof". (Amos 2 v 4) "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Can God and any man walk together unless there be a foundation of agreement? I will put this matter before you as God may help me. Can you walk with God unless you are agreed with regard to His holy, glorious Being and majesty? If what God is does not please you, can you walk with Him? If His holy nature, if ever you think of it, stirs up enmity, if His religion appears hard, harsh, cruel, can you walk with Him? Think of the first question, His nature. We know by revelation what His nature is. The essence of Jehovah is eternal, uncaused, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises. We read of the carnal mind that it is enmity against God, that the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. Therefore an unregenerate person cannot walk with God. God cannot walk with Him. They are strangers to each other. Can anything be more terrible with regard to you who do not fear God than this, that He must be your enemy as you are His? That He must punish sin because He is God. But this question is put in regard of people who have known Him, who have professed the knowledge of Him, whose fathers said, all that the Lord speaks we will do, and who received His holy commandments, His ordinances, and who were led by Him according to His promise to their fathers, into the goodly land, the land of promise; who received the ordinances and for a time walked in them but who now tired of Him and of His ways, departed from Him. Of His service, they said, what a weariness is it. Of His table, they said, it is contemptible.

Can you walk with Him with regard to the revelation He has made

of His mercies, His holy gospel? Not unless you know it in power. So I will put before you first of all this. Can you walk with God according to the holy, infallible revelation He has been pleased to make of Himself to sinners of mankind? Naturally, because we are fallen, He must be a forbidding God and by profession, though people may make mention of Him, He can only be that to them, unless they are agreed. Now how can this agreement come to pass? You must have a nature not unlike, but like, His own. Peter speaks of the Lord's people being partakers of the divine nature and unless we are partakers of the divine nature we can never agree with Him. We cannot agree with His condemnation of us, for He does condemn us in this revelation, but if we are partakers of the divine nature we agree with His condemnation of us. We see it is righteous for we are sinners and every one convinced by the Holy Spirit of sin agrees with God's condemnation of him. Your consciences and my conscience have agreed with God's condemnation of us. We have said in our hearts, O how often, "Thou art righteous" "We are before Thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before Thee because of this." (Ezra 9 v 15)

We are agreed with God, if we have the divine nature in us, in the gospel revelation which He has made of Himself. O, everybody, you would think, would agree there. No. The pharisee could not agree with free forgiveness for he did not need it. "The whole need not a physician but they that are sick". Before you can agree with God's revelation of forgiveness you must first need it. Then see it by faith as that which is attainable and hunger and thirst after it, then see the beauty and glory of it - this honours God and is acceptable to my heart. No believer would ever receive a gospel in which God was not honoured. I affirm that without fear of contradiction that if God were not honoured in the salvation which He has provided, His people would not care for it. His honour is made the first to them. But free forgiveness; buy without money; a sinner to come boldly unto the throne of grace; an importunate beggar to be most welcome; to be able to say by the Spirit's grace: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me"; to come to God's terms and say these terms please me; wealth given to a beggar, holiness to a sinner, justification to a guilty person, life for the dead, heaven in place of hell; O how welcome. And yet some people, there may be some here who prefer sin before holiness, self before God. And if they die in that state of

mind they, not only will know they could never walk with God, but they will never be with Him where He is.

Can two walk together except they be agreed as to the conditions of the walking? What say some of you, conditions? Yes, conditions. But the gospel knows nothing about conditions. You are mistaken. When you come to justification there are no conditions but one, and that one is given you, a sense of guilt. When you come to holiness, which is acceptable to God, you come to this point. Christ is made sanctification. When you come to peace with God, this is the point. This Man shall be the peace. Christ made peace by the cross. When you come to communion with God you have got this - call it a condition if you like, or some other name you can give to it if you like - but you come to this, a sensible sinner coming to a gracious Saviour, a weak soul desiring the strength of God, who is Christ. A blind sinner asking for sight, a poor sinner asking for the wealth of divine grace and that is what I mean when I say, a condition. A condition of mind, not of merit, a condition of soul experience and feeling which God Himself gives. Can you walk with God in communion if your mind is different from His in that particular?

Can you walk together with God in holy fellowship? What is this? "If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another" Fellowship with whom? With God who is the light; Christ, who is the light; and you will have holy fellowship with Him. Are you agreed with Him in these things? Do your hearts say, O sweet gospel, O precious Person, Jesus Christ. O glorious Redeemer, O eternal Rock, Rock of Ages.

Can you agree with God in regard of precepts. Precepts are wonderful things; they are divine. They tell us what to avoid, what to do, how to walk, with whom to walk, how we are to esteem each other, and how we are to esteem others. What to give up, what to cleave to, what to forsake, and what to follow. Gospel precepts. I know the hardness of some, of dead Calvinists, and the mention of precepts is offensive to them as if they were legality. But not so the child of God. O sometimes, some of your hearts have said, sweet precepts. O for grace to walk in them. Now you must be agreed with God in these things or you cannot walk with Him, and I would have you, who profess

His holy Name to think of these things. What is the attitude of your hearts to the holy precepts of God? If your hearts are right in regard to them I will tell you what you are thinking and feeling sometimes. Grief that you are not more conformed to them, grieved that you can say - it was that that grieved the Apostle Paul in his own case - "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." O wretched man that he was, he was not living in wilful, persistent sin. Mark the difference if you can. between living in known, persistent sin and slipping and defiling your conscience in a moment, being grieved that you have done it. The difference is great and vital. Do you love the precepts? "O how love I Thy law" said the Psalmist. He took the Word of God and hid it in his heart that he might not sin against God. If you are in the world and love it you are God's enemy, but if you are called by grace you often feel that you have enmity but you are not an enemy. There is a word in Isaiah that I have loved. ".....All they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed" (Isaiah 41 v 11). When I was a young man that made me glad one day beyond expression and I said Lord I am not incensed against Thee. No, I can say it today I believe. Precepts? They tell me what to do and what I am to do is what I desire to do. So a precept and desire fit in well together.

How can two walk together if they be not agreed in these things and in other things? For instance, if the service of God is a weariness, how can you agree with God who ordains the service? What is the service? Twofold. First, secret, a secret religion. What is that? When thou prayest enter into thy closet and shut thy doors about thee. Pray to thy Father which seeth in secret and Himself shall reward thee openly. True service that. Dr Goodwin has a word like this. Jesus Christ is most glorified in secret. But where are good works? These are good works, first secret prayer, the motions of life arising from the well of water in you. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life". Something not forced, naturally springing up, welling in your heart, reaching God in exercises of faith and hope and love and all this in secret. Do you agree with it? This is God's service. Public prayer, the corner of streets, public worship, that men may be seeing you. O said Christ, get into your closet. There is no substitute for secret prayer. Do you believe that? "When thou prayest enter into thy

closet". I am needy; this is God's way in order to supply you. "Ask and it shall be given you". Ask in secret and your Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. Did you ever get an answer? O some poor people of God can occasionally walk about their houses and say, I got this in answer to prayer; look at past mercies and say, I got that deliverance in answer to prayer. Nobody knew of my want but God and He supplied it. I called upon His holy Name and He heard me. Do you agree with that service, a secret religion? Food from the fountain of life, the Lord Jesus; new supplies by the Holy Spirit again and again. And then public worship. God has ordained that there should be churches in the world while the world stands. The church of God is the centre of all his interests; the world stands for the church. "Let no man glory in men," says the Apostle to the Corinthians, "for all things are your's; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." "Let no man glory in men", but glory in God. "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things do I delight saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 9 v 24). Public worship? There is an atmosphere where there is a living people, a spiritual atmosphere. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" Can that be, and there be no atmosphere? God has been pleased to make this known to many of us here from time to time and it has often made me glad to hear visitors say what they felt; there has been an atmosphere. Public worship. Promiscuous congregations cannot interfere with this atmosphere, for God regards His children, meets with His children. Very solemn when you come to consider what the Lord says of two. Two women grinding at the mill, one taken and the other left. Two men working in the field, one taken, the other left, but it does not interfere with the truth of public worship. Singing of God's praises. If nobody sang in the service but the people of God, very often there would be little or no singing, because some hymns, which belong to them, they can hardly think of singing. But there is such a thing, a proper thing, as public worship. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is". Do you agree with this? O how tiresome it is to some, but the worst of that kind of thing is this, when the

people of God are tired of it. Surely not? I wish it could not be but it has been and it no doubt is. Malachi, inspired, charges Israel with this wickedness. Of the service of God they said, what a weariness it is. I believe a child of God can get so far from God in a way of backsliding, as to enter into that expression. Shall I tell you why. I believe it, because it is in the Scripture first. I believe it because many years ago I got into such a backsliding state, not open wickedness, but I did know the meaning of that word of the service, what a weariness is it, and, shame on me, I entered into the other word: Of His table they said it is contemptible. I could not agree with God then. I did not walk with Him then. But He caused me to walk with Him later, when He revived me. If any of you, of His people here, are in a backsliding state, you cannot walk with God in that state. No. You may talk about Him, but you cannot walk with Him. You may sing with the people of God but you are not walking with Him then. You may join in public worship but you are not walking with God for you are not agreed with Him. Can two walk together in regard of their conduct in the world except they be agreed? If God says, come out from among them, be separate, and you are among them and not separate, you are not walking with God. If you will be a friend of the world you are the enemy of God openly though you may be His in secret. Come out from among them. Do you agree with Christ's prayer? "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" Are you free of the evil? A good man may have to go to the market, but I will tell you what probably he will do. He will do, with regard to the market, as a man does when a shower of rain overtakes him, the man gets out of the shower as quickly as he can. If a good man must be in the market when he has done his business he gets out of it. If you are at home in the world you are not walking with God, though you may be His people, and you cannot agree with Him when He says, come out of it. You cannot agree with Christ when He prays thus, keep them from the evil, for, for the time being, you are in the evil and there is a rod for you. To walk with God is to have communion with Him. 'Tis to understand the secret promptings of the Holy Ghost to prayer. 'Tis to have the Holy Spirit again and again moving you, drawing you, showing you Christ and your heart agreeing and longing and hungering and thirsting. 'Tis to understand that the more grace you have, the more hungry you are for grace; that the more of God you know, the more you want to know of Him, and in such a state of mind you

are agreed. But if it be otherwise, woe to you.

Can you agree with God in another point, with which I will close, this namely. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord". O say some, put off the day as long as you can and think about it later. Ah the people of God say: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom". I have been at that business for many years, particularly of late when I have longed to go. Did you ever see a blessedness in the death of a child of God? "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord". The Apostle Paul, speaking of the second coming of Christ, said if we are awake it will make no difference, for all who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. What is your mind about a dying bed? Perhaps some child of God says mentally and frequently may have said it, I am afraid that my poor unprofitable walk will provide thorns for my dying pillow. God only knows how often I have feared that but in my recent illness it was just the opposite. I had a peace in my conscience that I could only wonder at. That God could smile on me was wonderful and He did. O how happy He did make me and then my one desire was to die and when I began to recover I was disappointed. I am agreed with God in that that I saw a singular blessedness in the death of a believer. They also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. Think of it. Die we must. There are two ways of dying in one word of Solomon's Proverbs - let me give them. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness". O let me stay, let me stay. No. He is driven away. He would fain live, but must not. What is the other? "The righteous has hope in his death", hope of going to be where he has long wished to be, "Absent from the body present with the Lord". Do you agree with this? If you do it is because you have a divine life in your soul but if you do not it is because you are dead in trespasses and sins.

Inadequately I have dealt with this word, but what I have said I would ask you to consider. Can you walk with God? Have you ever walked with Him? Do you desire to walk with Him? You must have this foundation, an agreement. O to agree with God, who can express the wonder of it, that one who was born in sin should have a nature to agree with God, agree with His nature, and would not have Him other than He is; with His revelation and would not have it tarnished by modernism. Agree with His word, His holy gospel, His divine precepts

and would not have them other than they are. It is a great, great thing. The Lord give us honesty to face this question, face it, stare at it, as Rutherford would say, stare it in the face seven times. Do I agree with God? Do I agree with His nature? The Lord give us honesty of conscience.

AMEN.