

WALKING WITH MY CLOSEST FRIEND

John F. Hall

Katherine Smith Matheney wrote 3 short piece call “I Know Not What The Future Holds.” She wrote a few things that I can relate to. This is what she wrote: “The sunshine of my life is dim and clouds have come my way; I’m trusting God to walk with me and help me through the day. I know not what the future holds or where my journey ends; it’s all within the Master’s hand - He is my trusted Friend. Oh, Father God, I’m asking You, please take the pain away and bring the sunshine back again, and roll the clouds away. And if it be Thy will, clear God, please heal me from within. I put my faith and trust in You, You are my dearest friend.”



I remember back when I was 16 and walking down a deserted road. I felt then, just as I feel now, that Christ was walking with me. It was the same feeling that I had when I was 18. I found myself on the wrong road. The farmer that gave me a ride from Nashville told me that I was on the wrong highway. He stopped at an intersection and he said: “Son, this is as far as I can take you. This is Highway 41. You need to be on Highway 41-A and it is ten miles down that farm road.” I thanked him for his kindness and I got out of his old, dusty pickup truck. I watched as his red tail lights faded from view. I looked over at that deserted, lonely country road. It was a moonless night and nearly total darkness. It had no painted white stripe on either side of the road. My night vision was slowly returning. I began to fast-walk and felt that Christ was by my side.

So many times Christ has been at my side, as family and friends passed away. When all is said and done, Christ has always been at my side. He gives me inspiration to write and mention His name. For He knows I needed to borrow talent from Him so I can write a new chapter every day. Regina Wiencek wrote a piece called “A New Chapter.” These are Regina’s words: “Yesterday is a memory hidden in my heart; with the gentle dawning comes another start. A chapter is written, a story lies untold; today I fill the pages as the hours unfold. Lord, let Your hand direct me, oh, guide me on my way. Help me do deeds of kindness, give me tender words to say. Let Your love flow through me to spread to all I meet a little bit of sunshine, making their cares retreat. And when the light is fading, another day is done; this chapter will be finished, which I have just begun.”

Fast walking on that deserted country road, I could only make out five yards ahead. The stars gave some light on that pitch black night. I began to see my way to run. It was ten miles to Highway 41-A. I had on a military watch and I could see the time. If I could make it to the main highway, I could thumb a ride to Fort Campbell. My legs were starting to cramp. I called on Jesus Christ because he is the best friend to me. As I was running, I would say: “Jesus, I don’t know how long I can keep this up.” I was totally exhausted by the time I reached 41-A. I raised my thumb to hitch a ride. In a matter of seconds, I could hear the screaming of the brakes. The car stopped. The driver was in an Army uniform. “Where are you going be asked?” I said: “I’m in B Company, 327th.” He said: “That is where I am going, I’m across the street in the 5-0-duce.”

In 1772, William Cowper wrote the hymn "Walking with God." These are his lyrics: "O for a closer walk with God, a calm and heav'nly frame, a light to shine upon the road that leads me to the Lamb! Where is the blessedness I knew when I first sought the Lord? Where is the soul refreshing view of Jesus and His Word? What peaceful hours I then enjoyed! How sweet their mem'ry Still! But they have left an aching void the world can never fill. Return, O Holy Dove, return, sweet messenger of rest; I hate the sins that made Thee mourn, and drove Thee from my breast. The dearest idol I have known, whate'ev that idol be, help me tear it from Thy throne and worship only Thee. So shall my walk be close with God, calm and serene my frame; so purer light shall mark the road that leads me to the Lamb."

I do not do justice to how I feel when Christ walks with me. In 1885, Martha Lankton wrote the hymn "Just a Closer Walk With Thee." These are her lyrics: "I am weak but Thou are strong. Jesus keep me from all wrong. I'll be satisfied as long as I walk, let me walk close to Thee. Just a closer walk with Thee. Grant it, Jesus, is my plea. Daily walking close to Thee, let it be Lord, let it be. When my feeble life is o'er, time for me will be no more. Guide me gently, safely o'er to Thy kingdom's shore, to Thy shore. Just a closer walk with Thee. Grant it Jesus, is my plea. Daily walking close to Thee, let it be, Lord, let it be."

One unforgettable fast walk that I had, with Jesus by my side, many, many decades ago, was in the Mohave Desert in California. The dry heat was terrible and the bare mountains made me wish for the green fields of Kentucky. I was sleeping soundly in my sleeping bag, when I was rudely told to get up, to eat morning chow, and get on a truck that took my platoon to the airfield. We were issued parachutes and then we went into a de Havilland Canada DHC-4 Caribou. It's a cargo aircraft with short takeoff and landing capability. It can carry 26 fully-equipped paratroopers.

After parachuting into the desert sands with my 101st "Band of Brothers," I stood on that hot sand and wondered, "What am I doing here?" Shortly thereafter, a Huey helicopter comes over the horizon and kicks up a lot of blinding dust as it lands. Our Platoon Leader greets the full-bird Colonel coming out of the Huey. He gives him some instructions and gets back into the Huey and takes off. The Platoon Leader calls us together and gives us the bad news. He said, "The Colonel wants to know how long it will take us to force march ten miles to the awaiting trucks."

I remember that fast march in the Mohave Desert. The temperature was over 100 degrees that day. That terrible hot temperature was making sweat run down the back of my neck. The 23-pound machine gun on my shoulder, with the barrel too hot to touch, from the unrelenting blistering sun, was taking its toll on me. I was getting light headed and weak. I used up both of my canteens of water. I started to pray, "Jesus, I don't know how much longer I can keep up this march." My legs were aching and starting to cramp. I felt like I was going to pass out from heat exhaustion.

My lips were dry and cracked. The black leather glove that I had on, to keep the barrel from burning my hand, was soaking wet from my sweating hand. I wondered what Jesus was thinking during the 40 days and nights that he spent in the desert? It gets really cold at night in the desert. The hot sand cools down quickly. I wondered if He ever got lonely? He is my best friend. He knows that I am His and He is mine. There is power in the inspiration that He gives me to write stories. I should have run out of things to write about, a long time ago. But Jesus makes me an instrument of His peace. That's the best way that I can explain how I am able to write my stories.

In the distance, I could barely make out the awaiting trucks. I was getting blisters on my feet. I got a burst of adrenaline the closer the trucks came into view. I picked up my pace, but I was spent by the time I found some shade by the side of the truck. I sat down and pulled out a C-Ration can of fruit cocktail that I kept in the lower leg pocket of my BDU uniform. This would be my reward. There is nothing like eating that fruit. I kept a small P-38 pocket can opener on my dog tag chain. I took my dog tags off so I could use the P-38 to open the small steel can of fruit. I had to get some help, from my Brothers in Arms, to climb into the back of the truck.

Most of my stories are a march down memory lane. Christ has sustained me all these years. There is a song called "The Pages of My Mind." It was written by George Hill and Jay Remington Wilde. These are some of their lyrics: "You're the first and only one whose ever had my heart wrapped around your finger. And every time I think of you, I'm surprised that the memories still linger. 'Cause I still have the songs that we sing. Each step I take down memory lane, just takes me further back in time. Those memories are all I see, like photographs of you you and me. As I turn the pages of my mind, the pages of my mind. Sometimes at lonely nights, I close my eyes and feel you there besides me. But deep inside my heart, I know that I have only touched your memory...". The best memory that we can have is when we are walking in harmony with Christ.

Frances Culp Wolfe wrote a short piece called "Seek For True Wisdom." He is a much better writer than me. These are his words: "God's goodness and love can never be bought: It is priceless and free to whomever it has sought. Come into His presence, with faith, hope and love; seek for true wisdom from God up above. Seek for His guidance in all that you do; ask that his His mercy be extended to you. Seek for His comfort to aid you each day; ask for His strength as you go your way. Ask for His grace, freely given to all: Then thank Him with love as you heed His call."

I will end this story with a Bible verse as found in Acts, Chapter 20, Verse 24: "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the good new of God's grace."

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*Read other stories by John F. Hall at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>