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A Walk with the Unmoved Mover

Genesis 5-6

May 10, 2009

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Along about the 5th Century B.C., a Greek fellow named Parmenides said, “What is is, and what is not is not. So what is cannot be divided and cannot move.”

“What is” cannot be divided. For imagine if “what is” could be divided, what would separate “what is?” Either: A piece of “what is,” or a piece of “what is not.”

If it is “what is” that separates “what is,” then “what is” is not divided.

If it is “what is not” that separates “what is,” then “what is not” is separating “what is.” Which is to say “what is not” is.

But we’ve already agreed, “What is is, and what is not is not.” Then “what is” is undivided. It is one, and cannot move. For what if “what is” could move? Where would “what is” move to? To “what is not?” Well then, we’d be saying “what is not” is the place to which “what is” moves. Yet “what is not” cannot be a place that is, for as we agreed, “what is is, and what is not is not.” So logically, what is cannot move...

Heraclitus, a contemporary of Parmenides said, “Cut it out, Parmenides, you’re giving me the willies. It’s obvious that the only thing that doesn’t change is the truth everything else changes – divides and moves.”

Socrates suggested that neither Parmenides nor Heraclitus were completely insane. He argues there is a realm of undivided, unmoving necessary beings, but we live in change and “what is not” (With a vague memory of what truly is). With a vague idea of “what is: from the shadows of “what is.” A shadow is “what is not,” produced by “what is.” A shadow is what is not light.

You might say “What is” is God, and “what is not” is this world, and we’re part of this world.”

There’s something rather attractive about that Greek God. I mean: If God is “what is” – undivided and unable to move, he might leave me alone. Something attractive, but something terrifying. He might leave me alone. I mean, this God has no heart, no compassion – a heart that moves, changes and emotes.

Herman Melville wrote: “The reason the mass of men dislike God and at the bottom fear him is because they imagine him all brain - like a watch.” All brain, all reason... The Greeks would say: all logic, all logos.

Well, all f that would’ve stayed in Greece, except 100 years later, a Greek guy named Alexander conquered the known world, including a small nation of wild-eyed fanatic who worshiped a God who was one. “*Hear, oh Israel, Yahweh your God is One Yahweh,*” who’s name meant “I am that I am” or “what is.” Yahweh.

Yahweh is: omniscient – all knowing, omnipotent – all-powerful, and omni-present – all present, everywhere. The Hebrew God was and is “what is.” And yet he seems awfully passionate about “what is not.” In fact, He created it (so to speak) – remember Genesis 1? Somehow he makes a void: “What is not,” in the midst of “what is.” Like a womb in a woman. And then He speaks logos (word, seed) into the womb of “what is not,” creating “what is.” I mean Yahweh has heart, the Hebrew God is passionate. The Old Testament is written in Hebrew, but the New Testament is Greek. And the church grew in an ocean of Greek philosophy.

The church’s greatest theologian was also a scholar in Greek philosophy: Thomas Aquinas. He proved that God was necessary beingness... the uncreated creator... the unmoved mover.

Well, how would you get to know an unmoved mover? I suppose the same way you’d get to know a mountain, or the Pythagorean Theorem, you’d study it, you wouldn’t sing to it. And in Western society, that’s how we’ve gotten to know God. You think your way there: so faith means “I understand the idea; I’m now a Christian; I believe God exists.”

I declared to Susan, “I’ve thought it through, and good news: I believe you exist.” I expected her to be thrilled, but she seemed to want more. I declared to God “I’ve examined the evidence, I’ve thought it through, Good news God: I believe that you exist!” But He seemed to want more – more!”

What could He want? He’s omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent... What could he want? Necessary beingness, uncreated creator, unmoved mover, and what does He want? The unmoved mover wants to go for a walk. “Come on... take a little walk with me, child, and tell me, who do you love?”

Genesis 5:1 *“This is the book of the generations of Adam. When (on the day) God created man (we know that’s the 6th day), he made them in the likeness of God.”*

v5 *“Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years and he died.”*

v8 *“Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years and he died.”*

v11 *“Thus all the days of Enoch were 905 years and he died.”*

v14 *“Thus all the days of Kenan were 910 years and he died.”*

v17 *“Thus all the days of Mahalalel were 895 years and he died.”*

v20 *“Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years and he died.”*

That’s six generations. Seven is the number of perfection or completion. Enoch is the 7th generation, or the 7th Day.

v23 *“Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years.”*

There are 365 days in a year – his years are days and days are years.

v24 *“Enoch walked with God, and He was not.”*

In other words: “What is not” walked with “what is”, and “what is not” was not, which is “what is.” That is – “what is not” somehow became “what is,” for “*God took Him.*” It appears that death had no dominion over Enoch. Why? All it says is: “*Enoch walked with God.*” It doesn’t say where; doesn’t say why; doesn’t say God asked him to carry something, learn something, produce something... just walk with Him. Well, Enoch’s great grandson (3 generations, like the 3rd day) is a fellow named Noah.

Genesis 6:5 “*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry (“what is” was sorry – like he was divided) that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart (Yahweh has a heart, and it is moved with grief and sorrow). So the Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation (Whatever that means!). Noah walked with God.*”

Enoch walked with God, and God “took him.” Noah walked with God, and was “saved.”

“*Noah walked with God.*” It doesn’t say where.

“*Noah walked with God.*” Like really with Him.

God instructs Noah in building the Ark.

God even shuts the door once Noah is inside.

God remembers Noah in the boat and saves him.

Noah offers a sacrifice – God smells it and likes it.

Noah (Mr. Blameless) then gets drunk, passes out naked, then naked and ashamed (like Adam and Eve), he curses his descendents, and the whole sin thing starts over.

Parmenides and the Greeks might wonder, “Couldn’t God see that one coming?” And we wonder, “What’s with Yahweh being sorry He made man?”

Numbers 23:19 “*God is not a man or a son of man, that he should change his mind.*”

Has He said and will He not do it? Or has He spoken and will He not fulfill it? But here He’s walking around changing and divided (it would seem).

He says, “The day you eat, you shall surely die”... kind of.

“I’ll kill ‘em all – drown ‘em... well except Noah.”

“I’ll curse ‘em and crucify them... well no, I’ll curse and crucify myself.”

He’s acting like a spurned lover or distraught father or mother: so angry and so compassionate; so offended yet so hopeful all at once. It’s the divided, confused pain of being stood up at the altar or stood up for a date... which reminds us Yahweh was stood up for a date (just 3 chapters ago). He went walking in the garden in the cool of the day and called For Adam, mankind, “Where are you?” What did God want? Well, it seems He wanted to go for a walk – doesn’t say where (they’re already in paradise) and it

doesn't say why. But He wanted to go for a walk with Adam. But Adam hid – they hid – for they were ashamed. Maybe God is not divided; we're divided, so he seems divided to us. Maybe God does not change; we change.

Hey, it's Mother's Day. Did your mom ever seem mean? Seem like she didn't love you? Well, maybe she was mean, but more than likely, she wasn't mean. You were bad, and so her love felt mean. "Young man, there's no dessert for you tonight!" Maybe what you thought was mean, was the very best for her unchanging love could take in that changing moment with her changing child.

Well, God doesn't change. He's always perfect love. Sometimes it burns us like fire, like judgment and discipline. Sometimes it fills us with ecstasy like at Pentecost. But God doesn't change; we do. And if He's sorry, perhaps it's the best form His unchanging love could take in our changing world in that particular moment. And if He's sorry, He chose to be sorry. You know, anyone that chooses to be a mother chooses to be "sorry." You know that there will be days that you will be "sorry." It's part of the journey, part of shaping a child to your image... part of the walk.

Well, God seems to change, chooses to be sorry, and He certainly moves. The trinity is movement. He moves relative to us; I mean we move God. You know nothing can move a mother or father like their child. God moves for us. Now, Mom might understand, but philosophically, that's a brain teaser.

"Perhaps we don't realize the problem," writes C.S. Lewis. He understood Parmenides. "...the problem of enabling free wills to co-exist (walk) with omnipotence." It seems to involve at almost every moment a sort of "divine abdication." That is, "what is" somehow choosing to be "what is not." How could Yahweh walk with us, move with us, cry with us, laugh with us? How could He feel the pain of rejection, the sting of a whip, the sensation of nails driven into his warm flesh? And how could He know our deepest pain – the pain of hiding, and the pain of sin? How could Yahweh walk with us in the land of "what is not?"

Paul writes, *"Though he was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing (what is not), taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

Enoch and Noah are the last people said to have "walked with God" in Scripture. Well... at least until a carpenter named Joseph walks next to his pregnant wife riding a donkey until "what is" somehow becomes "what is not," until *logos* became carnal; until Word become flesh; until God "empties himself" in Jesus, and walks with us in Jesus. Then Jesus just gets some average guys and taken 'em for a walk. They just walk around a lot – that's His strategy for global domination... the just walk around a lot until they walk to Jerusalem where Jesus is nailed to the tree of law. He puts Himself in our place, and God the Father turns His own wrath on Himself in Jesus. Jesus is the heart of God, broken and nailed to a cross for all to see.

A good mother – good father – bears his own wrath for his or her children, and allows the children to see, and nothing is more powerful. It's called grace or favor. The children see because they've walked to that place (the hill of the skull) together.

Do you see? God is so much more than omni-everything. For you, it's like He even makes Himself omni-nothing... He dies on your cross and descends into your Hell.

“Let the atheists themselves choose a god,” writes Chesterton. “They will find only one divinity that ever uttered their isolations, only one religion in which God seemed for an instant to be an atheist.”

God cried, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” ... In order to walk with you absolutely everywhere, even if that somewhere is nowhere. The last thing the Resurrected Christ says in the Gospel of Matthew is “*Behold, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” You see: He wants to go for a walk... with you.

When someone (like your Mom, for instance) says, “Hey, let's take a walk...in the garden, in creation. Let's just go for a walk.” What do they want, really?

When someone says: “Let's go for a walk.”

1. It doesn't matter *where* you're going, so much as *who* you're going with.

No matter what I was doing, my Dad used to always want to do it with me... drove me a bit crazy. Then I became a dad and it didn't matter what they were doing, I wanted to do it too...

“Hey Coleman, you're playing trains – can I play too?”

“Hey Becky, you're playing dolls – can I play too?”

I'd get small... and now that they're teenagers, I have to really get small.

“You feel shame? Well, I feel shame too. Don't hide or hide in me. I want to walk with you. I miss you. I want you, wherever you are.”

It's why you get married: to take a long walk (called a life) together. It doesn't matter where you're going, just that your covenant partner will always go with you. Jesus is your Covenant partner. He called Himself the *parakletes*. It means “the called alongside.” He said He's send another *parakletes*, His very Spirit. He didn't say exactly where we'd be walking, but that He'd always walk with us.

I think last year was the hardest year of my life – so far. I've never gone on so many walks in all my life. I'd just go walking. I usually didn't know where I was walking to, but I've never been as conscious of who I was walking with. He's been telling me “It's not where you're going, Peter, so much as who you're going with...”

We so often say we want to know God's will, and we think that means knowing where we are supposed to walk: Cleveland or Detroit? Get the Ford or the Dodge? Should I be a missionary or a dentist? We want direction. Where is the road I am to walk?

Kierkegaard wrote: “The road is how it is walked.” It’s who you’re walking with. Thomas said to Jesus, “We don’t know the way.” And Jesus said, “I am the way.” We say, “We don’t know the way, we don’t know the path.”

Proverbs 3:6 “*In all your ways (whatever way), acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight.*”

The one you’re walking with is the way, and He speaks all things into existence. Trust Him; He will move the path under your feet. That’s not hard for Him, but getting you to trust Him, acknowledge Him, walk with Him is... hard as a cross.

So when you go for a walk, it doesn’t matter *where* you’re going, so much as *who* you’re going with....

2. Because you go for “the walk,” not to get to a *place*, but to get to a *person*.

Brennan Manning tells about a priest from Detroit named Ed Farrell. He took a 2-week summer vacation to Ireland. His one living uncle was about to celebrate his eightieth birthday. On the great day, the priest and his uncle got up before dawn and dressed in silence. They took a walk along the shores of Lake Killarney and stopped to watch the sunrise. Standing side by side with not a word exchanged and staring straight at the rising sun. Suddenly the uncle turned and went skipping down the road. He was radiant, beaming, smiling from ear to ear.

His nephew said, “Uncle Seamus, you really look happy.”

“I am, lad.”

“Want to tell me why?”

His eighty-year-old uncle replied, “The father of Jesus is very fond of me.”

Just so He could go walking there with you, what does God want? YOU. God walks with you, because He’s so fond of you, and He’s using all creation to get through to you. You go for a walk to get to a person (not a place or thing).

He’s walking with you... Do you walk with Him? Or just “go to church” and have devotions? When I was younger, we used to always compete and judge each other by asking, “How are your devotions?” “What did you get out of your quiet time?” But Jesus is not simply a topic to be studied. He’s my covenant partner, who feels every pain, weeps every tear. “He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own.” I’m not to have “devotions;” I am to be “devoted.” My whole life is to be a walk with Him. The name “Enoch” means “devoted.”

Like John Oostburg says, “God is not concerned with your spiritual life; He’s concerned with your life.” And don’t get me wrong, it’s really good to make regular time for focused Bible

study, meditation and prayer – really good. Just like it’s good to make time for dates with your wife. But unless you walk your life with your wife, the dates are a mockery. And if you were to ask me, “What did you get out of your date last night?” I’d probably be a little offended. For Susan isn’t a thing to be used, but a person to be known.

You go for “the walk” not to get to a *place*, but to get to a *person*, and...

3. The things you encounter on your walk are the raw material of relationship ... your shared experience.

Have you ever sat down to study and pray, and think deep thought about God, and it just feels dead and dry? I have, thousands of times... especially trying to write sermons. Then I give up, go work out, ride my bike, go for a drive, go for a walk, and I think about Him almost by accident. I just acknowledge Him, and I can’t shut up, or He won’t shut up in me... ideas and thoughts and images.

He’s no longer my spiritual project, He’s my traveling companion:

He speaks to me through the mountains and trees.

He weeps in me as I feel my wounds; now they’re *our* wounds.

He calls me to battle, as I lift weights and listen to Led Zeppelin.

He sings to me over the stereo as I drive in my car... sings through U2, Johnny Cash, even George Thorogood. “Come on, take a little walk with me, child, and tell me: Who do you love?”

Well, things you encounter are the raw material of building a relationship. In other words, *“All things work together for the good of them that walk with Him.”*

4. All things... even snakes – especially snakes → Eve and Adam.

I mean, it’s in the setbacks and trials that God shows you His favor. It’s there that you see “Jesus Christ and Him Crucified for you.” It’s there that God demonstrates His love as grace – that is His favor. It’s there you see that you are His favorite.

Erma Bonbeck writes;

Every mother has a favorite. I have mine – the child for whom I feel a special closeness, with whom I share a love that no one else could possibly understand. My favorite child is the one who was too sick to eat ice cream at his birthday party...

My favorite child is the one who messed up the piano recital, misspelled committee in a spelling bee, ran the wrong way with the football, and had his bike stolen because he was careless.

My favorite child is the one I punished for lying, grounded for insensitivity to other people’s feelings, and informed he was a royal pain to the entire family.

My favorite child slammed doors in frustration, cried when she didn't think I saw her, withdrew and said she could not talk to me...

My favorite child was selfish, immature, bad-tempered and self-centered. He was vulnerable, lonely, unsure of what he was doing in this world – and quite wonderful.

All mothers have their favorite child. It is always the same one: the one who needs you at the moment. Who needs you for whatever reason – to cling to, to shout at, to hurt, to hug, to flatter, to reverse charges to, to unload on – but mostly just to be there.

Even when you're snake bit... Even when you're plagued with sin, guilt and shame, so much that you cry out, "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?" He's there to show you His favor. You're His favorite.

5. No two walks are just the same.

We each walk with the same Jesus, yet we each walk a different path. I mean, we're each His favorite, for God has a unique relationship with each of us. He's with you *where* you walk, and *where* you walk is His gift to you. As soon as you "acknowledge Him," call to Him. Then even the worst nowhere becomes the best somewhere. The best possible form His love could take.

You know, the unmoved mover was moved all the way to a cross to walk with you. And the worst place becomes the best place – Good Friday becomes Easter. So acknowledge Him wherever you are.

6. Who you walk with changes the way you walk. So acknowledge Him in all your ways.

When you're bored, thrilled, terrified, ashamed or guilty – acknowledge Him. When your children rebel, when your wife is unfaithful, when the last and least ask for change – acknowledge Him. When the bartender says, "Would you like another?" acknowledge Jesus. *"As often as you eat or drink this cup, do it in remembrance of me."* It will change the way you walk, and the way you drink.

"Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He will make straight your path." You see, He moves mountains; He raises valleys; He upholds all things by His Word, and His Word is Jesus. Jesus is with you and Jesus is the path.

So set your watch to beep every 5 minutes, and just acknowledge Jesus. Say, "Hey, Jesus!" "Love you, Jesus!" "You're with me, Jesus." Even better, I Thes. 5:17 *"Pray constantly."*

A friend tells about visiting a jam-packed church in the slums of Santo Domingo, D.R. The community was slated for demolition in order to make room for an upscale Marina. The priest had fought tirelessly for the rights of those poor squatters living in shacks, and now he gave a report concluding that his talks had failed.

One young man stood and cried, “What will we do when the bulldozers come?”

Another man stood and yelled, “We will fight them! We will fight them to the death! Are you with me? Are you with me?”

The congregation began to chant and yell, “Yes! Yes! We are with you!”

Then all at once, the priest raised his arms and yelled over the crowd, “SILENCE!” He went to the altar and lifted the wine and the bread, and turning to his people, he said, “When they come with the bulldozers to destroy our homes and we go out to fight them, He will be with us too!”

You see? That changes the way you suffer, and it changes the way you fight. That changes the way you walk. *“Acknowledge Him and He will make straight your path.”*

So people: tomorrow when you go to work, He will be with you. Tonight, when you discipline the kids, He will be with you. When you purchase the car, when you visit the lawyer, when you give her a call... He will be with you. And who you’re walking with changes the way you walk.

Coming to this table is so much more than getting your ticket punched. It is so much more than “having devotions.” It is being devoted to Him, as He is devoted to you. Two become one flesh as “what is” fills “what is not.”

We don’t only walk with Him, we become His Body walking. Scribes and Pharisees walk to get to a place called Heaven, Christians walk to get to a person... to commune with a person, an become His garden, His Heaven.

Paradise is a walk with Jesus in His garden and His garden is you.

7. The one you’re walking with is your destination... and you are His.

So God is your destination, and you are God’s destination. You think you’re walking home to him, and yet, all this time, He’s walking home to you. You are His Body, His Bride, His Garden, His House, His Temple, and His Sanctuary.

And so, “What is” became like “what is not,” that “what is not” might be filled with “what is”... Filled with the fullness of God... Made in the image and likeness of God.

There’s a story about an old man. He didn’t know theology; he didn’t know philosophy. He couldn’t read Advines, Socrates, Parmenides or Heraclites... but every day He would take a long walk with the Lord. On these walks, he and the Lord God would talk about all kinds of things – all the events in the man’s life – when he met his wife, the birth of his children, and God would speak his word into every event, every moment. One day, while they were out walking for an especially long time, the Lord looked at the old man and said, “We are closer

to my house than we are to yours.” The man looked, and everything and everywhere was home. Home is where God’s heart is... and He was God’s home.

Communion

So on the night He was delivered up – Jesus from the bosom of the Father, Heart of God, Word of God, *logos* in cargos – took bread and broke it, saying, “This is my body which is for you. Take and eat.” And in the same way, He took the cup, “Saying this is the New Covenant in my blood. Take and drink.”

Come to the table. Confess “what is not:” your darkness, your lies, your sin, and receive “what is:” The Heart of God. Then go walking.