

Walkabout, Love

✠ **Travel light** (vv.30-32)

✠ **Live godlike** (vv.1-2)

In the name of Jesus, who sacrificed Himself in our place, dearly loved children of God:

It's obvious. Americans are enamored by anything Australian, or is it British? We can't always tell the accent. But "Chocolate Thunder Down Under" and "Bloomin' Onion" make your mouth water whether you're thinking Outback with your mates or your mother on her special day.

One of my all-time favorites is the Geico-Gecko whose working class British accent sounds Australian to me. He stands demurely on a chair in his bright green body suit being interviewed by an unseen info-babe. After a few questions she suggests some customers might want to talk directly to him. Blushing as only a green lizard could, he replies, "As a bit too personal. Is na-about me, Love."

In my lifetime the Aussie attraction seems to have started about 1986 with Paul Hogan as *Crocodile Dundee*. One of his Australian expressions describes an Aboriginal journey through the bush in hopes of returning to a traditional way of life and traditional beliefs. It's called a "walkabout," which almost literally translates the New Testament Greek *peripateo* – "live a life of love." (NIV) Let's put the Geico-Gecko together with *Crocodile Dundee* to discover the Holy Spirit's: **Walkabout, Love.**

✠ **Travel light** (vv.30-32)

One reason most Americans would have trouble on a "walkabout" is we don't know how to **Travel light**. This may be why Pastor Janisch and I could not get our luggage for last week's Mission Board Conference in Chicago. Forty or fifty teenage girls from a camp in northern Minnesota boarded the plane ahead of us. We watched for over an hour in O'Hare Airport while one after another retrieved her humungous duffel bag which could easily exaggerate into an entire planeload. Add scores of young musicians with horns and cellos right behind them, and there just didn't seem to be room for the overnight bags we used to take as "carry-on" until the terrorist threat with gels and liquids.

Such "hardships"! But at least the airline has emergency overnight kits and the baggage generally isn't far behind. Yet on God's **Walkabout, Love**, not to **Travel light** can surely mean death in the Outback. Ever since our first parents insisted on eating that forbidden fruit, rebellion has made walking with God impossible for their descendents. It feels so good inside if you've lost in love to stay angry and make up winning strategies for unseen battles. But bitterness only rots the vessel in which it is stored. If your roots are in southern Europe, you may pride yourself for getting angry fast, but over it even faster. If your roots are in northern Europe, your boast may be a long fuse, without realizing that once you're angry, you never get over it. Grudges are supposed to dissipate if we just "talk it out," but instead we find that shouting matches and angry words leave behind leeches on our hearts that suck the love and life right out of our relationships. How do we pick them off and throw them away when we're spiritually blind and the cool, polluted water feels so refreshing in the heat of the wilderness? Sin weighs us down with burdens we can't find or remove. In us there is no **Love** to **Walkabout** with God or each other.

But this is what I love so much about God's Word and the Beautiful Savior who walked into our world to bring us back to God's side. With Jesus we plunge under the waterfall of God's grace that leaves no leeches and washes away every trace of bitterness and resentment. In this flood the dear Holy Spirit quenches angry fires long or short. Every kind of evil is washed away without a trace in our Baptism when Father, Son and Holy Spirit put the Name of God on us. So "**do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**" To **Travel light** in God's **Walkabout, Love**, you'll need some very useful items: "**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,**

just as in Christ God forgave you.” God’s kindness doesn’t just feel pity, it helps the pitiful as we cannot help ourselves. I often have issues I can’t figure out. But God’s kindness in Christ delivers wisdom and knowledge to size up the situation and to act with courage that wells up from true compassion for others.

You know how easy it is to look down on those in need or consider their problems not worth our time. Sadly, it’s ground into our sinful nature like dirt on the desert floor. One ironic example is Sun City, Arizona, where a paraplegic resident had to fight for several years to get ramp style curbs installed on the street corners. Who could believe that in an American city with arguably more wheelchairs per capita than any other, there could be such vehement opposition to handicapped accessible sidewalks? It’s easy to nod in agreement that we should care for the less fortunate and help the needy. Our head converts quickly as we pat ourselves on the back for being compassionate. But the heart takes longer whenever a wheelchair gets in our way or we can’t use a handicapped parking space. As Luther so aptly pointed out, man is converted first in the head, then in the heart, last in the wallet. We prove it whenever we encounter the price of tenderhearted compassion. Only God can free us to **Walkabout, Love and Travel light**.

✠ **Live godlike (vv.1-2)**

Walkabout, Love also means **Live godlike**. Or as the Lord’s Apostle Paul puts it, *“Be imitators of God.”* In our English Bibles we can’t quite see what the Holy Spirit means by that. But in His words it’s obvious from the Greek original. He just inspired Paul to write more literally, “Give undeserved love to each other just as God in the sphere of Christ has given undeserved love to you.” Be like God and instead of requiring someone to pay back what he owes, give him the goodness he does not deserve. *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”* (Romans 12:21) “Grace” the undeserving!

But not one of us is able to live or love like God because we’ve lost His likeness as sinful mortals. Our parents could not provide the role models we needed, and we keep passing on our selfishness to the next generation. Age just seems to make us more stubborn until we’re finally so sick we need care just as helpless infants when we were dependent on our diapers. **Walkabout, Love?**

I’m so glad God did not wait for me! I’m so grateful Jesus is still not willing to let me go. I’m so thankful that what He did for me, He did for you and for all. Even more, God in Christ works His loving grace so personally, one-by-one as if there were only one of us to love. Remember Jesus doing this as He walked about this earth? He could have healed entire crowds or the whole nation all at once. Instead, He healed them one-by-one, putting His hands on the sick, the sad, the dying, the dead and even the lepers who were totally unclean and disgusting to everyone else.

God the Father had a reason for sending Jesus down to walk and talk with us. God the Holy Spirit skillfully recorded Christ’s three-year ministry in colorful detail by four witnesses in the holy Gospels. Clearly the Triune God wants us to know without a doubt that we are His *“dearly loved children.”* Then restored to walk with God, we can *“live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”* God’s love gives us courage to **Live godlike**.

That may not mean much to Gentiles of today unfamiliar with the temple sacrifices God commanded for the ancient Jews through Moses. But maybe we can get a feel for this if we just imagine that we’re very, very hungry. It been a hard and dusty “walkabout” without food for days. Then out of the bush wafts the aroma of steaks on the barbie. It makes you start to run. And then you see it’s better than beef. There on the table are the tallest margaritas you’ve ever seen sparkling on ice. Best of all, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit keep calling and waving you to come on over and enjoy. Do you have to be called twice? Don’t you find that your tired feet just can’t stand still? There’s plenty here for everyone. The more, the merrier! Eager, joyful eating is the spirit of the ancient Fellowship Offering for the Israelites. And that’s the way God wants us to offer ourselves to Him fully and freely in holy, joyful gratitude. No Geico Gecko here; Christ is all the insurance we need. And this **godlike** love is ours to share for all eternity starting today especially with those who have hurt us most. **Walkabout, Love – Travel light, Live godlike.** Take a holy vacation in Christ. Amen.