

To walk with God

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SO OFTEN when we read the Word of God we notice allusions that direct our attention back to the early chapters of Genesis. The underlying bases of nearly all our major first principles of belief are found in the book of Genesis. For example, we read in 1 Kings 9:4,5: "And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep My statutes and My judgments: then . . .". The idea of walking before God in uprightness of heart can be traced right back to the Garden in Eden. We have the same responsibility and calling to walk in the godly way as all who have gone before us.

In the Garden

Genesis 3, although well known by all readers, is a chapter to which we can constantly return to be exhorted and encouraged in what not to do and what we should do.

Shortly after Adam and Eve's encounter with sin they were walking in the Garden in the cool of the day and they hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh's Elohim (v. 8), or, as Rotherham in *The Emphasised Bible* translates verses 8 and 9: "Then heard they the sound of Yahweh God, walking to and fro in the garden, at the breeze of the day,—so he hid himself—the man with his wife, from the face of Yahweh God, amid the trees of the garden. And Yahweh God called unto the man,—and said to him, Where art thou?"

Adam and Eve, prior to this occasion, walked with Yahweh Elohim in the Garden with no sense of fear or guilt. Now both of them, after their fall into sin, are never recorded again as walking with God. Yet ever since that time it has been the desire of the godly to walk with their Creator again, and only the godly in this life approach any semblance of what it was like for Adam and Eve when they were first created.

We must walk together

In Amos 3 the prophet declares: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (v. 3); or, as the *Emphasised Bible* translates the verse: "Can two walk together,—except they meet?"¹

Prior to the fall, it would seem that Adam met with the Elohim by appointment. As we have read in Genesis 3, sin interfered with their fellowship and their opportunity to meet together. This consequence must have been the last thing that was on their mind when they partook of the fruit. Fellowship must have been an enjoyment that both Adam and Eve intensely missed. The bond of mutual walking together in fellowship and friendship had been severed.

A loving God

Yahweh, as a righteous God, has, from the time that sin destroyed mankind's relationship with Himself, initiated the process of seeking out mankind. This was first initiated with Adam and Eve by walking in the Garden looking for both of them.

This has to be also allegorical of our own need to be found of God. If Yahweh did not search for us, how would we find Him? As the Apostle Peter so aptly describes our circumstance: "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

Reconciliation

The process of reconciliation or religion has been the lot of all who wish to regain fellowship with their God. Our daily reading and prayer indicate that the process of reconciliation with Yahweh is an ongoing one for all. Reading and prayer are vital ingredients if we intend to continue our walking with God.

The term 'reconciliation' is quite an appropriate word to use for our own circumstance. It has the dictionary meaning of, 'to make friendly after estrangement, to harmonise and to show compatibility'. Reconciliation is the purpose of religion. This is the process that we are involved in through the means of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, provided by the Father.

1. See "Walking with God", T. C. Wilson, *The Testimony*, June 1994, p. 178.

The foundation principle of Adam walking with God and then needing reconciliation is a most interesting parallel to our own probation. The Bible does not often refer to individuals walking with their God, yet all should do it. Walking with God is an epitaph that is applied to only a very few in the Scriptures.

Walking with God

The first notable occurrence of walking with God is in Genesis 5:22: "and Enoch walked with God"; and again in verse 24: "and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him". As the *Emphasised Bible* marginal note says: "'Walked to and fro' = lived in fellowship with". Enoch's God-centred life was reminiscent of that of Adam before the fall. Enoch lived as if Yahweh was right by his side every moment of his life.

This was not without personal cost for Enoch. Jude records the following intention of Yahweh, with Enoch as the context: "to execute judgement upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (v. 15, NASB).

The emphasis in this verse is placed upon the ungodly. Enoch, in walking with God, obviously stood against and apart from the ungodly. Enoch must have endured severe and hostile ridicule over a long period of time—not a pleasant experience for anyone. Even a man of Enoch's godly stature had to endure the curses of the ungodly. Surely at times we likewise have to brace ourselves against such onslaughts.

The second notable example is Noah. Genesis 6:9 records that "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God". At the height of evil and indifference, when the whole of the creation was to be judged, Noah maintained his walk with his God, like Enoch, over a long period of time. Often there is nothing like time to test a character, and a resolve to do what is right. How many brethren and sisters, over a period of time, have given up the walk? We are saddened to see those who have begun the race so well return to their former ways.

Like Enoch, Noah maintained his walk because it was done in faith. We have evidence for this in Hebrews 11:7: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house". Noah's walk in faith condemned the

world, as his righteous walk was a witness against all that is ungodly. We do not find Adam mentioned in Hebrews, as he failed to walk by faith. Adam can be a type of all who start their walk, but fail due to a lack of faith.

To be a friend of God

Abraham is an excellent demonstration of walking with God in faith. Imagine being so close to God that God refers to you as a friend, for in James 2:23 Abraham is referred to as "the Friend of God". You cannot be someone's friend unless you are closely connected to them. A friend is someone that you share your thoughts with; someone you are happy to walk with and keep company with. Abraham achieved this by constantly communicating with God and doing what was asked of him. Abraham's faith was therefore a living faith.

You may work with someone for years, but they do not usually have the title of friend. Instead we call them a colleague. Likewise you may know someone well in your local community. Quite possibly you would refer to that person as an acquaintance. On the other hand, to be a friend is indeed very special. Therefore to be called a friend of God is a rare privilege and honour. The examples of Enoch, Noah and Abraham are recorded in Scripture to inspire us to develop the same God-centred friendships while we have the time to do so. Ecclesial life is about our walking with God, part of which is getting to know our brethren and sisters and walking with them in God-centred friendships.

The New Testament

The whole Scripture is for our edification and correction, yet often we feel the New Testament Scriptures are talking to us more personally than the Old. We can feel this with the words of the Lord in John 15:12-15:

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you".

We are seen by the Lord not as slaves, servants, acquaintances or colleagues, but as friends. As our friend, the Lord Jesus Christ has revealed to us God's intentions. This is why we, like no

other group of people, know what God's purpose is with this earth. Only the friends of the Lord Jesus Christ understand God's true purpose. What a very special calling we all have! However, there has to be a cost with friendship. To continue our friendship with the Lord we are required to continue in his commandments. This is not difficult when we love the Lord we serve.

Consistency in the call to walk with God

The constant touching upon the theme of walking with God in the Scriptures adds to the importance of this topic in our own probation. To walk with God is central to our meeting each week to remember the example of our Lord.

Micah 6:8 states: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD [Yahweh] require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"; or, as the margin of some Bibles has: "humble thyself to walk with God". How we struggle to keep ourselves malleable and sensitive to the things of God as daily we see how sin is making the people around us harder and harder and therefore less sensitive to the things of God!

We read in 2 Samuel 7:6,7: "Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel . . .". Yahweh met by appointment at the tabernacle. He was, by this means, walking with the children of Israel. To maintain their walk they had to continue to meet at the tabernacle in the right spirit. It was in relation to the tabernacle that God said: ". . . where I will meet with thee" (Ex. 30:36). 'Meet' is the same word as 'agree' in Amos 3:3. To meet with God is to agree with God over life-saving principles of faith and action.

King David knew what it was like to walk closely with his God. He wrote: "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 139:9,10). Like David, we need to see that walking with God is a personal experience. Our own individual response to God's Word can be helped by organised worship, but never substituted by organised religious services. We each have to respond individually to the calling to become part of God's eternal family. The more we respond individually the more we can help one another.

A personal experience

In Jeremiah 7:1-7 we have a further illustration of how important our own personal walk with our God must be:

"The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD [Yahweh], saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever".

This is not placing an emphasis upon what we know as doctrine, but upon an understanding of doctrine put into practice. Doctrine is always important, as it makes us responsible to God, but it does not, and can never, guarantee us a place in the Kingdom. Knowledge of God's ways is only a first step. A knowledge of God's ways must fire our emotions. Emotion plays a larger part of our walk in the Truth than sometimes we are ready to admit. We often worry about talking about emotion in the Truth in reaction to the way emotion is abused by the churches. We cannot as a community afford to be reactive, otherwise we may stop the Scriptures giving us Yahweh's intended message.

A knowledge of the Truth that does not develop a strong emotional response in a saint can become extremely self-destructive. If we do not have an appropriate emotional response, and a sense of a personal walk and fellowship with God, we leave ourselves open to being motivated by ambition and pride. Something has to fill the vacuum. Knowledge will only partially fill our vessels. We could offer a sum of money per hour for people to come along and listen to an exposition of God's Truth. At the end of the hour we would have people who have a basic knowledge of our doctrines, but only a small minority would emotionally respond to that knowledge. We may all remember how, when

we heard the Word of Truth, there was an overwhelming desire to be baptized and tell others of the wonderful thing we had found. How sad we were when they did not want to listen, and they were not moved emotionally to serve God and accept the salvation being offered!

A love for the Father and the Son

In our walk in Christ we must never lose sight of our personal love for Christ. The message conveyed to the “angel” of the ecclesia at Ephesus was: “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev. 2:2-4).

The Ephesian ecclesia was a very active ecclesia. We imagine it was an exciting ecclesia to be a member of. It was a working, separated, pure, enduring and willing-to-defend-the-faith type of meeting. A walk in Christ, however, requires more than labour; Christ also wanted their love. The Ephesians had lost their original fervent desire and love to serve the Lord. They were losing their personal conviction of walking every day with the Son and the Father. These verses in Revelation are extremely challenging. We need to be like the Ephesians with all their labour, but there must be, at the root of it all, a genuine love and desire to be with the Father and the Son.

Our God has an emotional affinity with His spiritual children. Jeremiah brings this out so beautifully: “Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown” (2:2). The Lord desires people who love Him above everything else.

Our walk will be felt by others

A walk in Christ consisting of knowledge, motivated by faith and love, will be seen in every saint’s behaviour. We must be striving to see change occurring in our life. This is the work of a living faith. This is the great truth of the Truth—it encompasses our whole life. The Truth is a way of life, which affects, influences and directs our behaviour and interests every day, not just on Sundays.

The words of James remind us: “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (1:23-25).

One cannot help but think of Ahithophel, who gave counsel as if one enquired at the Word of God, but who in the end failed David and the Truth so badly. With all Ahithophel’s knowledge, did he ever really walk with his God? At the same crisis the Scriptures refer to “Hushai David’s friend” (2 Sam. 15:37; 16:16). Hushai assisted David in his time of need, he was a friend of God and a friend of David. Hushai had a genuine love of the Truth and of his brother. We see this principle of love in action illustrated in the Epistle of James: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (1:27).

The song of Zacharias

To visit is to go out of one’s way to help. It is a Divine quality to share the adverse experiences and afflictions of those who are disadvantaged or in need of support. Yahweh hates to see the cry of the oppressed and afflicted go unrelieved. The same word for ‘visit’ in James 1:27 is used in Luke 1:68 in the prophecy of Zacharias: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath *visited* and redeemed His people”.² We are not being asked to do any more than what God is prepared to do for us. Yahweh has visited us in our time of need, and likewise expects all His saints to reciprocate this to one another as the need arises, whether it be a spiritual or a natural need.

The whole of the song of Zacharias, from verse 68 to verse 79, is a succinct summary of how our God has walked with His saints from the time of Creation so that His saints may ultimately walk with Him. Christ, through the line of David, has been raised up for us as a horn of salvation. Since the world began there have been prophets made available to show us the way we should walk (v. 70), for the purpose of saving us from our enemies, the greatest enemy being our own desires (v. 71).

2. Brother Gaius King directed me to this connection.

The love of our God causes in us a strong personal desire to “serve Him . . . in holiness and righteousness” (vv. 74,75). Just as in the Garden of Eden, God has “visited us” through His tender mercies (v. 78). God’s visitation provides light to “guide our feet” so that we may walk with Him “into the way of peace” (v. 79).

We have positive and negative requirements in our walk with Yahweh. We have a need to be merciful like our God, and a requirement to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, free from its polluting immoral influences. Maybe the more we are involved in visiting the fatherless and the widows the less problem we will have with being polluted by the world.

An urgency

The message every day is urgent. How could any saint face the words of Matthew 7:22,23 and not be affected?—“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”.

There is little more satisfying than being in a strange place, looking around to find someone that you know and then spotting a familiar face. What a dreadful situation to be in: to be in the Lord’s company, whom you believe you know,

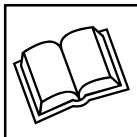
but he openly says, “I never knew you: depart from me”!

To walk with God is to make the Truth live in our lives now, to live as if God is walking by our side as our friend. This is what all believers are striving to do in their limited time of opportunity.

We do not have to be like Adam, who feared the sound of the Elohim in the Garden: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1 Jno. 4:18).

Through the Father’s love we have opportunity to meet each week and renew our walk. As of old we constantly meet with the Father by appointment, but now through the Son:

“And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel” (Ex. 25:20-22).



Exposition

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Lot and Sodom (1)

Russell Ebbs

AT LEAST sixteen times in Scripture the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah is related as an example, and a warning against the abominations practised therein.

The main historical record is of course Genesis 19, but this chapter in fact also implies another destruction—namely that of Lot’s very large ecclesia, which was most likely destroyed spiritually by the “fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness” (Ezek. 16:49) in the cities of the plain.

Certainly, this is the warning to brethren and sisters emphasised by the Lord Jesus in Luke 17:28-30: “Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed”.

Jesus emphasises the unexpected suddenness of Sodom’s destruction as a lesson concerning