The Christian Walk

The Bible often describes the Christian life in terms of walking or running. The Christian walk begins with a step of faith (salvation) and continues in the daily, practical walk of faith. Living as a Christian is something like a walk in that the believer should be making progress, moving forward, not standing still spiritually. The Christian life is a road or a path the believer travels, and Christians should seek to walk this path in the way that God intends.

This series of lessons seeks to explore what the Bible says about the Christian walk and to apply those principles to practical daily living. We will seek to distill principles from both the OT and the NT as we describe how God's people ought to live.

Theme Verse: Colossians 2:6–7 *As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.*

O FOR A CLOSER WALK WITH GOD

William Cowper, 1731–1800

O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame,
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

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.

Note: While the Bible contains many synonyms for "walk" (e.g., go, run, live, step, follow), this material mostly focuses on passages that use the word "walk."

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Part 2: How to Walk

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The Christian Walk: Lesson 1: Definitions

What Does "Walk" Mean?

I. Your walk describes your conduct.

A. When Bible writers tell believers how to "walk," they are telling us how to live or conduct our behavior (thoughts, words, and deeds). The Christian walk is the Christian life or lifestyle, the believer's direction or orientation in life. Behavior stems from belief, and the NT writers repeatedly tell us that correct belief ought to produce correct behavior.

B. The word "walk" suggests continuation and persistence. The believer is not standing or sitting; he's walking. The verb translated "walk" is often used in the present tense in the original language of the NT, suggesting a continued mode of conduct or behavior. The Christian walk describes an ongoing, normal pattern of life.

C. The Christian walk is an aspect of sanctification, that is, growth in godliness (cf. 2 Pet 3:18). The growing, faithful Christian will strive to walk (live) in a way that is pleasing to God. Believers should desire to "walk humbly with [their] God" (Mic 6:8).

Note the Quote: God has ever been interested in the walk of His saints, desiring that His own character might be reflected in them, and that they might in this way be for His pleasure and glory while passing through the world. To Abraham God said, "I am the Almighty God: walk before my face, and be perfect" (Gen. 17: 1). … Abraham's life was to be in accord with the revelation that God was pleased to make of Himself to him, and nothing was to be seen in his walk that would be inconsistent with this revelation.[1]

II. Your walk describes the quality of your spiritual life, your "walk with the Lord."

A. To walk with God describes salvation. Those who walk in close communion with the Lord experience wonderful blessings. Examples:

1. Enoch walked with God and "God took him" (Gen 5:24). The implication is that Enoch knew the Lord very closely, walking with Him in fellowship and obedience, and God translated him directly into heaven. Enoch's remarkable experience was both a testimony of his deep faith in God (see Heb. 11:5, 6) and a strong reminder at the beginning of biblical history that there is life in God's presence after death for the people of God.[2]

2. Moses describes Noah as just and perfect among his generation. Summing up Noah's spiritual condition, the author says, "Noah walked with God" (Gen 6:9). In other words, to walk with God amounts to knowing God or

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[1] *Outline of Sound Words*, "The Christians' Walk." http://stempublishing.com/magazines/OSW/41-50/osw42d.html

[2] Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen and H. Wayne House, *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), Ge 5:21–24.

being rightly related to God and enjoying close harmony and fellowship with Him.

3. When God appeared to Abraham, He said, "I am Almighty God; walk before me[3], and be thou perfect" (Gen 17:1). Later, Abraham described himself in the following terms: "The Lord, before whom I walk…" (Gen 24:40). Jacob stated that Abraham and Isaac walked before God (Gen 48:15). David walked before the Lord by observing (walking in) God's law (2 Chron 6:16). The psalmist's desire was to "walk before the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps 116:9). To walk "before the Lord" implies living in God's presence, under his guidance, and with his approval.

4. Christians should strive to walk "after" the Lord and to walk "in" his ways.

   Deuteronomy 13:4 *You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.*

   Joshua 22:5 *But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

   Jeremiah 7:23 *But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.'*

5. God sometimes describes himself as walking with or among his people (e.g., Lev 26:12; Deut 23;14; 2 Sam 7:7). God's desire is to dwell among his people and "walk in them" (2 Cor 6:16). Christ promises to walk with his worthy people "in white" (Rev 3:4), referring to fellowship in heaven.

6. So it seems to follow that God's people walk with God. To walk with God implies a saved (regenerate) spiritual condition. To walk with God amounts to fearing him, obeying him, serving him, and holding fast to him.

B. To walk with God describes the quality of your relationship with God.

1. The prophet Amos asked, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Of course, the answer is "no, they can't." Walking together implies agreement, fellowship, and relationship. Cf. Prov 13:20.

2. We might describe the quality of our spiritual condition in terms of how closely we are walking with God. Our walk with God may be very close and personal, or it may be quite cold and distant. The believer may be walking closely by the Lord's side, as it were, or far behind or ahead of him. Every genuine believer walks with God, but experience varies regarding how close to God we are walking.

[3] The Hebrew literally says "before my face."

C. Behavior and spiritual condition are closely related; thus, the Christian "walk" describes both spiritual life and daily conduct.

III. Your walk should be consistent.

A. Biblical writers frequently contrast the walk of the individual before coming to faith and after.

1. OT: God expected the Jews to live differently from their pagan past and from their pagan neighbors. Cf. Deut 8:19; 2 Kings 17:8

2. NT: The walk of the "old man" is significantly different from that of the "new man" (Eph 4:22-24; 1 Pet 4:3-4). Regeneration is the decisive factor in how one walks in this world. It's only after the experience of salvation that one begins to walk with the Lord. Those crucified and raised with Christ by faith must "walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). See Col 3:5-10.

B. Unfortunately, some who claim to hold Christian belief deny it by their unchristian behavior—their ungodly walk (cf. Titus 1:15-16; 1 John 3:17, 4:20). One's walk may contradict his talk. When that is the case, one's profession of faith either comes into question or proves to be invalid.

The Christian Walk: Lesson 2

Part 1: How *Not* to Walk

We'll begin our study of the Christian walk with an examination of how not to walk. The Bible tells us both how to live and how not to live. We'll start with the negative first—how not to walk as a Christian. The Bible presents many examples and admonitions to avoid walking in certain ways.

I. Do Not Walk in the Way of the Ungodly

A. Texts: Lev 18:3, 20:23; 1 Kings 16:31; 2 Chron 28:2; Ps 1:1; Prov 1:10-15; Isa 8:11; Ezek 11:12

B. Principles

1. A significant difference should exist between the walk of the Christian and the walk of the surrounding pagans. Christians are not supposed to imitate the lifestyle of the wicked. Believers must not adopt or adapt to the "statutes" or rules of living the heathen follow. God abhors the corrupt behavior of the wicked, and we should, too.

   Jer 10:2 *Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way* [lit. "path, road; i.e., manner of life] *of the heathen* ...

2. It is not a trivial thing to live like the pagans. God hates idolatry, which is what Jeroboam promoted in Israel. The idols of the heathen should hold no attraction for us. Cf. 2 Cor 6:14-18

3. The person who wants God's blessing must reject the lifestyle of the wicked. He does not go to them for advice, participate with them in their sinful activities, or become like them in their attitude. Those who accept the counsel of the wicked eventually start living like them and end up being one of them. This is the danger of trying to adapt secular thinking into a biblical/Christian worldview (cf. how evolutionary and psychological ideas slowly creep into Christian thinking). Conformity to the wicked world leads to corruption (cf. 1 Cor 15:33).

4. Christians must not yield to the enticements that the wicked use to entrap the unwary. Wickedness may look appealing, but the Christian must keep his foot from that path. Those who follow the wicked into their sin will find that "the way of transgressors is hard" (Prov 13:15).

5. The ungodly world seeks to conform everyone to its own viewpoint and lifestyle. As our society becomes increasingly pagan/heathen, we must progressively distance ourselves from its evil influence and refuse to be

forced into its mold (cf. Rom 12:2). Our delight should be in the law of the Lord (Ps 1:2), not in the lifestyles of the rich and famous (and wicked).

Question: Are we advocating Christian isolationism or a fortress mentality where we separate ourselves completely from unbelievers? *No, we are to be separate from sin yet still be salt and light, in the world but not of the world. We have to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, holding forth the word of life (Phil 2:15-16). Jesus never shied away from contact with sinners and neither should we. However, we must not allow them to influence us for evil.*

II. Do Not Walk in Darkness

A. Texts: Ps 82:5; Prov 2:13; Ecc 2:14; John 8:12, 11:10; 1 John 1:6; 2:11

B. Principles

1. Darkness in the Bible is a metaphor representing sin, corruption, and falsehood. Light, of course, signifies truth, godliness, and the presence of spiritual life. Darkness is the absence of light and the opposite of light.

2. To "walk in the light" implies living in fellowship with God (i.e., spiritual life [regeneration]), leading a godly life, seeking to follow Christ, and living righteously.

3. To "walk in darkness/night" implies living in sin and/or believing error (i.e., failure to walk in light and truth). Rejecting the truth leads to accepting falsehood. Those walking in darkness do not understand; their eyes are blind and they fail to see reality. Walking in darkness results in "stumbling" (John 11:10), i.e., error, falsehood, and destruction. Essentially, walking in darkness implies spiritual death ("no light") because of rejecting the light of the world, Jesus Christ (cf. John 3:19-20).

4. Paul affirms that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor 4:4). "Our adversary, the devil" (1 Pet 5:8) is doing everything he can to keep unbelievers shrouded in the darkness of sin and enslaved to sin (Rom 6:16). Unbelievers walk in darkness because they are ignorant and deceived.

5. Those professing faith in Christ, yet habitually walking in darkness, are deceived and do not possess genuine salvation. The biblical expectation for believers is that they walk in the light (1 John 1:5f) and produce good fruit (Mt 7:17). If one continues to live like an unbeliever (i.e., in darkness), he is not converted, no matter what he may profess about Jesus.

6. Those professing Christ must not live like unbelievers. The darkness of sin, ignorance, and error must not characterize the life of a Christian. John mentions the particular sin of hating one's brother (1 John 2:11) as an evidence of walking in darkness (i.e., spiritual death). Hatred for others is incompatible with genuine Christianity. A lifestyle of unrepentant, habitual sin denies "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ" (2 Cor 4:4).

III. Do Not Walk After The Flesh

A. Texts: Deut 29:19; Job 31:7; Ps 81:12; Isa 65:2; Jer 7:24, 13:10, 18:12; Rom. 8:1, 4; 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 5:7; 2 Pet 2:10, 3:3; Jude 16, 18

B. Principles

1. Do not walk according to the sinful inclinations of the flesh.

a) The "flesh" in the Bible can signify the natural human body, but in many cases, the reference is to the sinful human nature, i.e., "unredeemed humanness."[4] The flesh is the nature of humankind, apart from the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit.[5] Walking according to the flesh, then, means allowing one's corrupt, selfish, unredeemed human appetites to control his behavior. Living according to the flesh signifies an immoral lifestyle (often with connotations of sexual sin).

b) Paul lists the "works of the flesh" in Gal 5:19-21 and describes what it means to live according to the flesh in Rom 8:4-6, 12-13. No one habitually living according to these descriptions is saved.

c) Is it possible for a Christian to live according to the flesh? In certain ways, yes, at least temporarily. Scriptural admonitions not to live according to the flesh would be meaningless otherwise. Anytime we behave according to the lusts of the "old man" instead of the godly inclinations of the "new man" (Eph 4:22-24), we are walking according to the flesh. If we persist in living according to the flesh, it proves that our salvation is invalid (cf. Rom 8:7-9).

Note: Some conceive of three categories of human existence:[6] 1) Unbelievers are "natural," i.e., without spiritual life; 2) New believers or immature believers are "carnal"; 3) Mature believers are "spiritual." Those living in carnality have never matured as Christians and should not be held to the same standards as those who have become "spiritual." They continue to live much like the surrounding pagan world, yet they should be thought of as genuine believers.

In reality, only two divisions exist among people. Men are saved or lost, sheep or goats, wheat or tares, light or darkness, etc. The true division is between spiritual man (saved) and natural man (unsaved). To describe a group of bickering, bitter Christians as "carnal" is not to establish a new sub-category of Christian existence. Christians may behave like unbelievers in certain cases, and for that they deserve sharp rebuke. But we should not see "carnal" as a label excusing Christians from biblical standards. Paul is using strong language to force his readers to face up to the

[4] *The MacArthur Topical Bible*
[5] Wesley L. Gerig
[6] Popularized by Lewis Sperry Chafer's book *He That Is Spiritual*, 1918.

inherent inconsistency of their position. They have the Spirit, but at this junction they are neither thinking nor acting as if they do.[7]

We certainly acknowledge that among believers, some are "babes" while others are spiritually mature in the faith. We expect to see different degrees of progress in believers' Christian experience (i.e., their walk). But those living a habitually ungodly lifestyle must not excuse themselves with the thought that they are merely carnal Christians. If someone exhibits no evidence of regeneration, his condition is not "carnal," it is "natural," i.e., unsaved.

d) Walking "after the flesh" is contrasted in the Bible with walking "in/after the Spirit" (cf. Rom 8:4). You can't do both. You either follow your own depraved heart or follow the Holy Spirit. Christians strive to bring greater areas of their lives under the Spirit's control and to give in less frequently to the lust of the flesh.

2. Do not follow your corrupt heart.

a) The biblical writers describe this error as walking after the imagination of your own heart, walking in your own counsels, walking in your own thoughts, and walking after your own devices. In each case, the error is following the counsels of your own mind (rationalism) without considering God's instructions.

b) What's wrong with following your own heart? Jeremiah tells us that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (i.e., terminally ill, Jer 17:9). The psalmist concludes, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Pr 28:26). One sign of a lost spiritual condition is the determination to go one's own way like a dim-witted sheep (cf. Isa 53:6).

c) When one refuses to "retain God" in his knowledge, God in response gives him over to a reprobate mind (Rom 1:28). The natural inclination of a mind darkened by sin is to reject the Gospel as foolishness (1 Cor 1:18-21).

d) Following your own way amounts to rejecting the way of the Lord. One listens either to God or to the counsels of one's own heart. One's own way is the wide road that leads to destruction (Mt 7:13f). Believers are those who have left their own way, entered the narrow gate, and now walk along the narrow way that leads to life. Cf. Prov 3:5-6.

e) The Christian's duty is to bring every thought under submission to the Lordship of Christ (2 Cor 10:5). The corrupt human heart will lead us astray. Our primary source of truth and wisdom is God's Word.

3. Do not walk by sight.

[7] D. A. Carson 1—*WTJ 54* (Spring 1992) 1-29

a) Don't judge by external human senses alone. Our senses may give us an accurate picture of the physical world, but they cannot perceive spiritual things. Spiritual things are "spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). Our physical senses/feelings give us little insight into the invisible and eternal realm. Instead of trusting in our own senses or powers of discernment, we are to submit ourselves to Christ and his word.

b) Don't judge by outward appearances. Man naturally looks at the outward appearance (cf. 1 Sam 16:7; 2 Cor 10:7), but looks can be deceiving. Satan himself may appear as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). External appearance (grace, beauty) is far less important than inner character (cf. Prov 31:30).

c) Don't be materialistic. Walking by sight amounts to following the "lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16). Many things appeal to our sight, and many people pursue such things. The objects we can see often deceive us and provide no lasting satisfaction.

d) Don't focus on the things of this world. Instead of loving the world and the things of it, we must focus on eternal realities, the "things above" (Col 3:1-3).

The Christian Walk: Lesson 3

Part 1: How *Not* to Walk

Continued

IV. Do Not Walk Contrary to God

A. Texts: Lev 26:21, 23, 27, 40; Ps 78:10; Ezek 20:16; Gal 2:14; Phil 3:17-19

B. Principles

1. Walking contrary to God amounts to flagrant disobedience to God's commands as found in his word. The term "contrary" implies not merely passive neglect of God and his word, but active opposition, resistance, and refusal. One walking contrary to God is hostile to the things of God; he's an active opponent of God. Walking contrary to God implies a stubborn refusal to obey God's law.

2. Even believers can be guilty of failure to walk "uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (Gal 2:14). Paul had to rebuke Peter over his hypocrisy in this case. The words "walk uprightly" (KJV) is a single word in the original language (used only once in the NT) which means "walk in a straight course; metaph. to act uprightly." Paul discerned that Peter's conduct was not proper or honest. It contradicted "the truth of the gospel" and thus opposed it. Christian behavior must be consistent with the gospel and sound doctrine (cf. Titus 2:1).

3. Paul describes "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil 3:18-19) with the following expressions.

a) "whose end is destruction" – They are on the highway to hell.

b) "whose god is their belly" – Their highest desire is to satisfy their own corrupt, evil desires.

c) "whose glory is their shame" – Instead of being ashamed of their wicked behavior, they glory in it (much like today's media stars; cf. Rom 1:32).

d) "who mind earthly things" – Their focus and attention is on the physical instead of the spiritual. Many are secularists or even atheists.

Obviously, these descriptions fit the unsaved crowd, those who are on the broad road leading to destruction. The Christian walk contains none of these anti-Christian lifestyle choices.

4. Any professing Christian who walks in opposition to God brings his spiritual state into question. Christians ought to be obedient to God and strive to promote God's cause in the world, not stand in opposition to it.

V. Do Not Walk According to the Course of This World

A. Text: Eph 2:2

B. Principles

1. Prior to salvation, unbelievers live in harmony with the unsaved world in its opposition to God. Unbelievers feel perfectly comfortable in an environment of alienation from and opposition to God (cf. Rom 1:22f).

2. The word "course" (KJV) is literally "age," and describes the world viewed from the standpoint of time and change.[8] The "course" of this world is the spirit or sensibilities of this corrupt world. Paul asserts that "God has made foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor 1:20).

3. The "world" is that evil system of secular society set up in opposition to God, i.e., the wicked, ungodly world under satanic control. The world represents all that is opposed to God and his children. The world, the flesh, and the devil are our sworn enemies. They seek to entrap us, tempt us, and divert us from the right path.

4. Pagans behave in accordance with the spirit of this wicked world because they are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1), children of wrath, and without God. This is perfectly reasonable; unsaved people behave like unsaved people. They walk "in" trespasses and sin.

5. Clearly, walking according to the course of this world describes the lifestyles of spiritually dead, hopeless, Godless, lust-filled pagans. Those walking this way fully embrace the spirit of the wicked world in its opposition to God. For Christians to walk in this way would amount to treason against their Lord and repudiation of the Gospel.

6. Unfortunately, many professing Christians today seem to find the course of this world very attractive. Instead of rebuking the world for its "unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph 5:11), worldly Christians adopt many of the practices their pagan neighbors enjoy. They may even attempt to bring elements of this evil world into the church and into their families, much to their shame and eternal regret.

VI. Do Not Walk According to the Prince of the Power of the Air

A. Texts: Deut 8:19; 1 Kings 11:33; Jer 7:6, 9, 8:2, 13:10; Ezek 11:21, 20:16; Eph 2:1-2

B. Principles

1. Forsake satanic false gods.

[8] William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, vol. 7, *Exposition of Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001).

a) To "walk after other gods" is to recognize them as legitimate, to serve them, love them, seek them, or worship them. The Israelites were constantly tempted to "forget the Lord [their] God" (Deut 8:19) and walk after the local pagan deities—Baal, Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Milcom/Moloch, etc. Besides the local false gods, some of the Israelites took up worship of the sun, moon, and stars. People who turn from the true God to serve idols are evil and good for nothing (cf. Ps 135:15-18).

b) Walking after false gods is <u>incompatible</u> with serving the true and living God (Ex 20:3-5). You must forsake the true God to walk after false gods. God will not share his glory with anyone else (Isa 42:8).

c) Walking after other gods always results in "hurt" (Jer 7:6). God will recompense idolaters for their evil deeds. The history of Israel testifies to this fact.

d) Walking after other gods is often mentioned in conjunction with other heinous <u>sins</u> like theft, murder, adultery, and lying. The false religions of the heathen permitted all manner of wicked behavior for their adherents.

e) Can a Christian forsake the true God and worship false Gods? Strictly speaking, <u>no</u>, he cannot. To apostatize in this way indicates that one was never genuinely saved in the first place. However, Christians may walk after false "gods" like money, popularity, career, sports, recreation, and the like. Anything that usurps the place of God in one's life may be considered an "idol of the heart" (cf. Ezek 14:3-4; 1 John 5:21). We must be very careful that our hearts are not drawn away toward idols, whatever they may be (cf. Ezek 20:16).

2. Forsake Satan, "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2).

a) Ultimately, those walking after false gods are following Satan (cf. 1 Cor 10:20-21). Prior to salvation, those dead in trespasses and sin live according their <u>father</u>, the devil (cf. John 8:44). All those disobedient to the Gospel are <u>ensnared</u> in the trap of the devil and are held captive by him to do his will (2 Tim 2:26).

b) The only means of rescue from Satan and his way is <u>regeneration</u>, the quickening wrought by the Holy Spirit upon believers in Christ. Once a person is saved, he can no longer walk according to the spirit of the world or according to the world's "prince."

c) Christians must "put on the whole armor of God" to withstand the wiles of the devil and his associates (Eph 6:11f). We must "wrestle" against such spiritual opponents and employ all the resources of the Christian life to overcome them.

The Christian Walk: Lesson 4

Part 1: How *Not* to Walk

Continued

VII. Do not Walk in Vanity/Foolishness

A. Texts: Job 31:5; Ps 39:6; Jer 2:5, 8; Eph 4:17, 5:15

B. Principles:

1. Avoid the emptiness and futility of the false religion.

People who walk after vanity become vain (Jer 2:5). Vanity in this case is literally "breath, vapor," but figuratively refers to anything empty or useless. Jeremiah records God's thoughts about the vain, profitless idols and false gods of the heathen. The people had "gone far" from the Lord by adopting the idolatrous worship practices of the heathen. Those worshipping false gods become like them—useless and stupid (cf. Ps 135:15-18). Christianity has nothing in common with the falsehood and error of counterfeit religion, and Christians must "come out from among them" and separate from such unclean things (2 Cor 6:14-17).

2. Avoid the foolishness of secular human thought.

a) The word "vanity" in the NT means "emptiness, futility." Paul is referring to emptiness and futility of thought so common among the "Gentiles," i.e., the unsaved. Whatever unbelievers think and do ultimately ends in futility and disappointment. From God's point of view, whatever the unbeliever's mind/intellect conceives is worthless. Peter uses the same word when describing false teachers who speak "great swelling words of emptiness" (2 Pet 2:18). Unbelieving Gentiles failed to attain the true purpose of the mind, namely, to receive God's revelation which would guide them in their conduct.[9] Instead of thinking God's thoughts after Him, unbelievers fill their minds with worthless, meaningless, foolish thoughts.

b) Paul describes what the futility of the unbelieving mind looks like (Eph 4:18-19):

(1) *Having their understanding darkened*—both intellect and emotions are corrupted by sin.

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[9] John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), Eph 4:17–18.

(2) *Being alienated from the life of God*—they have no spiritual life due to their separation from God.

(3) *Ignorance and blindness of heart*—they do not know and do not see (cf. 1 Cor 1:18f).

(4) *Hardening of heart*—a medical term signifying callous hardening (cf. John 12:40; 1 Tim 4:2)

(5) *Given over to lewdness, uncleanness, and greed*—voluntarily yielded themselves up to the power of their own sensuality and lasciviousness, so as to be commanded by it, without resisting it.[10]

Quote: Indulgence in vice destroys the intellect as well as the body, and unfits a man to appreciate the truth of a proposition in morals, or in mathematics, or the beauty of a poem, as well as the truth and beauty of religion.[11]

c) The unwise are those who, having no <u>insight</u> into things that pertain to God and salvation, are not aiming to reach the highest goal and therefore do not know and do not even care to know what are the best means to reach it. They regard as very important what is in reality of minor value or may even be harmful, and they do not appreciate what is indispensable. They conduct themselves accordingly.[12]

d) The NT repeatedly <u>warns</u> believers not to adopt the philosophies and vain traditions of unbelievers (cf. Rom 1:21-22; 1 Cor 1:19-20; Eph 5:6; Col 2:8, 18). The wisdom of unsaved man is empty foolishness compared to the wisdom of God. Believers must reject any man-made philosophy or rule that contradicts God's word (cf. Acts 5:29; 1 Cor 1:20, 3:19).

Note: Christians are frequently guilty of seeking <u>approval</u> from the unsaved crowd. They strive for recognition and respect from mainstream society (i.e., media, politicians, entertainers, educators). They try to merge Christian thought with secular philosophies. This is exceedingly <u>dangerous</u> and unbiblical. Gaining approval and recognition from the unsaved world is not a biblical value; far from it. We should have no interest in gaining appreciation or support from those who hate God. In fact, when a professing Christian gains worldly approval, he has made himself an enemy of God (James 4:4). Beware of following any Christian leader who gains approval or respect from the unsaved world.

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[10] Poole

[11] Barnes Notes

[12] William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, vol. 7, *Exposition of Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 237.

e) Theologians refer to the negative consequence sin has upon the mind as the noetic effects of sin (based on the Greek word for mind, *nous*). The carnal (fleshly, i.e., unsaved) mind is hostile to God and refuses to subject itself to the law of God (Rom 8:5-8). The result is blindness to the truth and foolishness of thought. Regeneration reduces some of the noetic effects of sin, yet the believer still must strive to bring his thoughts under the Lordship of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 10:5).

3. Avoid the externalism and superficiality characteristic of the unsaved world.

a) To "walk in a vain show" (Ps 39:6 KJV) likely refers to living according to external appearances. The Hebrew word for "vain show" is literally "image or shadow" and suggests something imaginary instead of real. Such people "make an uproar for nothing" (Ps 39:6b NASB). That is, they make much of what is essentially trivial, inconsequential, and insignificant.

b) Unsaved people often emphasize appearance/image over substance, costume over content. Outward show becomes important while the content of one's character has little value. What they are so proud about is worthless and empty from God's perspective. Examples: TV/movies/video games, sports fanatics, celebrities.

c) Christians must be careful not to adopt this heathen characteristic of valuing what is essentially worthless (cf. Isa 44:14-20). Our thoughts should be focused on "things above," not vain, earthly concerns (Col 3:1-3). Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart (1 Sam 16:7). The "hidden man of the heart" (1 Pet 3:4) is of true value; that is where our focus should be.

Good quote: "There is nothing wrong with frivolous activity for one whose life is not committed to frivolity. There is no harm in superficial pleasures for one who also has a knowledge of the tragic and of the transcendent. The subjectivism of popular culture is impotent for someone whose life is characterized by rootedness in objective reality. Christians should not fear the idols and myths of our day, as long as they have no reverence for them."[13]

VIII. Do Not Walk in Craftiness

A. Text: 2 Cor 4:2

B. Principles:

1. "Craftiness" in this case is not a positive attribute. The word connotes the trickery or cunning treachery necessary to deceive others. Satan deceived Eve by employing craftiness (2 Cor 11:3), and he continues to use this

[13] Kenneth Myers, *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes*, 87.

strategy. God promises to catch the "wise" (i.e., fools) "in their own craftiness" (1 Cor 3:19). So the idea seems to be cunning deception.

2. Craftiness is in the same category as "hidden things of dishonesty." Paul refused to deal with people dishonestly or deceptively. He was honest and full of integrity. This should be particularly true of Christian ministry (2 Cor 4:1). One need not use underhanded or deceitful means of convincing unbelievers to be saved or of exhorting believers to be holy. Simply preach the Gospel and trust God for the results (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 3:6-7; 1 Thes 2:3-5).

   Quote: Trickery is an attribute of the devil, not of the apostles and their helpers.[14]

   Much ministry these days is tainted by man-pleasing flattery rather than God-honoring truth. The church marketing and seeker-sensitive models are guilty of pandering to the sensibilities of the unsaved mind.

3. Those guilty of craftiness may also be guilty of "handling the word of God deceitfully." Some have falsified God's word to suit their own agenda. They "lie in wait to deceive" through their "cunning craftiness" (Eph 4:14). We must not be among those who "corrupt the word of God" (2 Cor 2:17). Genuine Christians must retain their commitment to "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15) by speaking sincerely and honestly.

IX. Do Not Walk in Sin

A. Texts: 1 Kings 15:3, 26, 34; Col. 3:5–7; Jer 6:28, 9:4, 23:14; Mic 2:11; Rom 13:13; 1 Pet 4:3; Dan 4:37; 2 Thes 3:6, 11

B. Principles:

1. Avoid the sins of your ancestors or predecessors. The fact that your family behaved in a certain way does not guarantee that such behavior was right or proper. The Christian rule of life must come from the Bible, and especially from the NT. We can learn much from our forebears, but we must be careful to avoid their errors and sins.

2. Avoid lies, slanders, speaking evil, false stories, gossip, etc.

3. Avoid rioting, drunkenness, lewdness, lust, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness, strife, envy, etc.

4. Avoid pride (an over-inflated estimation of oneself). See Rom 12:3.

5. Avoid disorder.

   a. Disorder is forsaking the apostolic tradition taught to the churches. Christians are to behave themselves properly in God's house, the church, "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). The

[14] Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, vol. 19, *Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 137.

church in particular should be characterized by good order—"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor 14:40).

b. Disorder is departing from the rule of life as given in the Bible. The apostles and their contemporaries exemplified a pattern of Christian living that we should emulate (Phil 3:17). Paul specifically mentions idleness and gossip as evidence of a disorderly lifestyle.

The Christian Walk: Lesson 5

Part 2: How To Walk

Walk Rooted and Built Up (Col 2:6-7)

The theme passage for this series of lessons gives us some important directives for how we are to live the Christian life. Paul exhorts (i.e., commands; the Greek verb translated "walk" is in the imperative mood) the Colossians to continue ("walk" is in the present tense) living in a manner consistent with this truth.

I. Walk as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord.

A. When the Colossians received Christ at the moment of their conversion (the Greek verb translated "received" indicates a past, point-in-time event), they received Him for who He really is, "Christ Jesus the Lord."

1. "Christ" – the anointed one of God promised in the OT
2. "Jesus" – the Savior from sin ("he shall save his people from their sin" Mt 1:21)
3. "Lord"—the supreme authority, owner, master

Paul wants their present and continuous conduct to conform to the doctrine taught them at the beginning, the doctrine they had committed themselves to at conversion.[15]

B. How does one receive Christ Jesus the Lord? By faith. This is also how we must live the Christian life—by faith, "not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7).

C. Paul's concern is that we persevere in the faith we originally received and not become enamored with the philosophies and "vain deceit" (Col 2:8) so prevalent in the world around us. Believers are "complete" in Christ (Col 2:10) and need not partake of worldly foolishness.

D. A faith that does not recognize the Lordship of Christ is a dubious faith indeed. Some today assert that accepting Christ as Lord is a secondary, optional step one should take at some point after salvation. To be saved, one must simply trust Christ as savior from sin without any concern about his claims as Lord, they say. But Paul's words here strongly assert that genuine salvation requires one to recognize that Jesus Christ is Lord at the point of salvation. Salvation entails one receiving "Christ Jesus the Lord." One's "walk," that is, his behavior or conduct, must reflect the fact that Jesus is his Master.

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[15] *Expositor's Bible Commentary*

II. Walk "in him."

A. To "walk" in Christ speaks of maintaining the Christian faith, living and acting under the teachings of Christ as taught by the Savior and his apostles.

B. Paul's frequent assertion that believers are "in" Christ reflects the fact that Christians are united with Christ in his life, death, and resurrection (cf. Rom 6:4-6). We are dependent on our union with Christ to maintain the Christian walk.

Note the Quote: We were in Him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4); we are in Him as we were in Adam (Romans 5:12, 21; 1 Cor. 15:22); we are in Him as the members of the body are in the head (Eph. 1:23, 16; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27, and often); we are in Him as the branches are in the vine (John 15:1–12). We are in Him in such a sense that his death is our death, we were crucified with Him (Gal. 2:20; Romans 6:1–8); we are so united with Him that we rose with Him, and sit with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:1–6). In virtue of this union, we are (in our measure) what He is. We are the sons of God in Him. And what He did, we did. His righteousness is our righteousness. His life is our life. His exaltation is our exaltation.[16]

C. Jesus taught that genuine believers are like branches connected to a vine (John 15). Those who "abide" in this connection bear fruit and prove themselves to be genuine disciples. Those who fail to abide in the vine wither, are cast off, and eventually are burned, thus proving themselves to be false brethren.

D. Walking "in" Christ suggests a life that is directly and permanently connected to Jesus, a life that abides in Christ and is nourished and strengthened by this connection.

III. Walk "rooted."

A. The Greek participle here could be translated "having been firmly rooted." The form of the word suggests an action which took place at a point-in-time in the past with ongoing effects. The moment a believer is converted, he is, so to speak, planted in the soil of salvation (cf. Ps 1:3; Jer 17:8), remaining permanently rooted therein and growing as a result. Our object is to remain "grounded and settled" in the faith, "not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col 1:23). "Having been firmly rooted" is a good way to describe the permanency of salvation and the stability of the Christian life.

B. The word is in the passive voice, implying that someone else (God) has done the planting. This reflects the fact that God is the active participant in salvation. God provides for salvation; man merely receives God's provision.

C. It might sound a bit odd to "walk" while "rooted" securely in the ground, but Paul's intent is clear. We live the Christian life from a position of firmness and solidity. Faith in Christ gives us secure ground for living the Christian life.

[16] Charles Hodge, vol. 3, *Systematic Theology* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 127.

IV. Walk "built up"

A. Paul switches from an agricultural metaphor (a plant) to an architectural one (a building). Just as a plant grows higher and stronger, and as a building grows as it is being built, so the believer should be growing and developing in his faith. A growing Christian life (sanctification) is built upon a proper relationship with Christ (salvation). Jesus is the foundation (1 Cor 3:11) and chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6) upon which believers build their lives.

B. Again, the Greek participle is in the passive voice, suggesting the fact that God is the one who is ultimately doing the building. This is a present tense verb, describing ongoing action—"being built up." This should be the common experience of all Christians. Further, we should note that the process of being built up—what the NT called "edification"—is most commonly related to participation in the local church. Building up occurs in the context of church life.

C. The building/edification process is reciprocal—we "edify one another" in the context of the church (1 Thes 5:11). How does this occur?

1. Love one another (1 Cor 8:1).

2. Admonish, encourage, warn, and support each other (1 Cor 14:3 and 1 Thes 5:14).

3. Follow spiritual leaders as they follow Christ (2 Cor 10:8; Eph 4:12)

4. Use the resources God supplies—the Bible, prayer, the church, etc. (Acts 20:32).

V. Walk "established in the faith"

The word "established" means, "made firm, confirmed, strengthened." As the believer grows in the faith, his roots go down deeper and become stronger and more stable (cf. Ps 1:2-3 and Jas 1:21). Again, the participle is in the passive voice, suggesting that God is the one who establishes the believer in the faith—"being established" is the idea. Paul wanted the Colossians to be well-anchored, lest the winds of heresy uproot them and blow them around like waves of the sea (cf. Eph 4:14).

These three ideas—being rooted, built up and established—strongly imply that believers should be firmly grounded and secure in the faith. The whole book of Colossians is an exhortation for believers to persevere in the faith and in good works, even when confronted by false teaching and worldly philosophy (cf. Col 2:8).

These passive verbs (showing that God is doing the action) do not imply that the believer is careless in his approach to sanctification (e.g., "let go and let God."). But they do teach that God ultimately initiates and motivates the process. God is the one who works in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). Believers are still responsible to "labor and strive" (1 Tim 4:10), to make their best efforts (2 Tim 2:15), and to work out their salvation in fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). We must cooperate in the sanctification process.

VI. Walk "as you have been taught."

A. We must strive to hold fast the traditions the apostles taught (Acts 2:42; 2 Thes 3:6). Churches face the constant temptation to adopt the latest fads and innovation

in doctrine or practice in an effort to stay "relevant." We must staunchly retain our commitment to the fundamentals of the faith without modification. Christianity is a received faith, not one subject to haphazard change. Any significant movement away from the fundamentals is likely a corruption, not an improvement.

B. Teaching must be a significant element of a church's ministry. Christ himself commissioned the church to teach (Mt 28:20), and Paul urged Timothy to teach those who could in turn teach others (2 Tim 2:2). Every believer should be committed to learning and spiritual growth.

C. Teachers are an important part of the growth and stability process. Teachers both convey the content of the faith and provide an example for the congregation to follow (cf. 1 Cor 11:1; Phil 4:9). Thus, congregations must insure that their leaders fulfill the biblical qualifications given for them (1 Tim 3; Titus 1). Too often, churches focus on a preacher's communication or personal skills and neglect evaluating his moral character.

D. Those working hard in teaching the Word deserve the respect that accompanies the position (1 Tim 5:17).

VII. Walk "abounding therein with thanksgiving."

A. The Greek word translated "thanksgiving" is *eucharistia*, the root of which is *charis*, which means, "grace." Any recipient of grace should be grateful because he has received something good he does not deserve. Gratitude is an attitude Paul commends several times in Colossians (1:12, 3:15, 16, 17, and 4:2).

B. In light of God's work of rooting, building and establishing us, gratitude to God should be abundant in our souls to the point of overflowing.[17] And the present tense of this verb indicates that this attitude of thanks should be a continuing experience in every believer's life. Those lacking such gratitude may be susceptible to doubt and spiritual delusion (of which Paul warns us in Col 2:8).[18]

[17] The word "abounding" often pictures a river overflowing its banks.
[18] *Expositor's Bible Commentary*

The Christian Walk: Lesson 6

Walk in obedience

The biblical authors use a variety of expressions to describe the same idea: obedience. All the below expressions are essentially equal in meaning. God clearly expects his people to obey him.

I. Expressions

A. Walk after the Lord (Deut 13:4; 2 Kings 23:3)

B. Walk in his way/in all his ways (Deut 5:33, 10:12, 11:22, 28:9; Josh 22:5; 1 Kings 2:3, 3:14, 8:36; Ps 119:3; Jer 7:23; Hos 14:9)

C. Walk in/after/according to the law/statutes/judgments/ordinances/commandments (Exod 16:4; Lev 18:4; Deut 13:4; Ps 119:1; 1 Kings 6:12; 2 Kings 10:31; 2 Chron 6:16; Neh 10:29; Ps 89:30; Jer 26:4; Ezek 37:24; 2 John 6)

D. Walk as taught by him (1 Kings 8:36; Isa 2:3; 30:21)

E. Walk according to this rule (Gal 6:16; Phil 3:16)

II. Definitions

A. Law (*torah*) – direction, instruction, code, custom, manner, body of teaching. Law may be defined as "the revealed will of God with respect to human conduct."[19] The vast majority of the occurrences of the word 'torah' in the Bible refer to God's instructions to Moses at Sinai that were transmitted to Israel. These instructions or commandments became Israelite law and the stipulations of the covenant. They were all-important, since they were the specific manifestations of God's will. Since they were God-given, they were obviously good, and obedience would result in long life, prosperity, health, and happiness. Disobedience would be punished with harm, barrenness, exile, destruction, and death.[20]

B. Ordinance (*chuqqah*) – statute, limit, something prescribed

C. Commandment

1. *mitsvah* – law, ordinance, precept

2. *peh* – lit. "mouth," signifying the source of the command

D. Statute (*choq*) – appointment, allotment, ordinance, limit, something prescribed, due, conditions, decrees

E. Judgment (*mishpat*) – decree, justice, ordinance, verdict, decision, privilege, right

F. Rule (*kanon*) – lit, a rod or straight piece of wood to which anything is attached to keep it straight; a measuring rod, carpenter's line, measuring tape; any rule or standard, limit, boundary line, fixed area of influence

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[19] *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 646.

[20] Paul J. Achtemeier and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 1084.

III. Principles

A. Obedience is very important to God. The sheer number of admonitions to obey and the variety of expressions calling for obedience shows us how vital obedience is to God. Thus, the Christian walk must entail strict obedience to God's revealed will. Sincerity or good intentions do not justify disobedience. Biblical examples show us this truth repeatedly—e.g., Saul (1 Sam 15), Uzzah (2 Sam 6:6-7), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

B. To walk in/after/according to the law/statutes/judgments/ordinances/ commandments signifies doing/keeping/executing/performing/observing/ hearkening to God's commandments. Just as there are many synonyms for "law," so there are many synonyms for "obey."

C. To "walk after the Lord" seems to refer to the totality of a right relationship with God—reverence, obedience, service, and commitment. The phrase indicates mature, committed faith and the resulting performance of covenant obligations.

D. Believers are obligated to obey God's direct commands/laws/statutes/ ordinances—the "thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots" contained in Scripture. Such directives leave little flexibility; one either obeys them or does not. God presents a particular "way" in which he wants his followers to walk. The Christian walk demands that we follow the direct commands that pertain to us.

E. Obedience, especially in the OT, was directly related to physical prosperity and success (cf. Deut 28:1-14; 1 Kings 8:36). Failure to obey resulted in cursing and removal from the land (cf. Deut 28:15f; Jer 6:19).

F. The repeated admonition to "walk in *all* his ways" implies obedience to all God's commands. However, the "ways" of God would seem to extend beyond the commands and encompass any behavior that would be pleasing to God. Mere obedience is not enough; we should be striving to do that which is well-pleasing to God in every area of life (2 Cor 5:9).

G. Are NT Christians obligated to obey all the OT commandments? No, Christ "abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Eph 2:15). Paul repeatedly affirms "…you are not under law but under grace" (Rom 6:14). The author of Hebrews explains how the levitical priesthood and its ordinances were temporary and have been superseded by the work of Jesus.[21]

This does not imply that the OT has no continuing value for the NT believer. The OT contains much we can learn from (cf. 1 Cor 10:11; 1 Tim 3:16). However, NT Christians are not obligated to obey the particular stipulations prescribed for OT Israel. Further, the fact that NT Christians are "not under the law" does not mean that they are lawless. In fact, John defines sin as "lawlessness" (1 Jn 3:4). Some mistakenly teach that, as long as they love others, they are not required to "keep the rules." They misrepresent any such admonition to obey biblical commands as

[21] Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker reference library; Logos Library System (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996).

legalism. The desire to obey is not legalism as long as we recognize that obedience adds nothing to our salvation.

H. Are NT Christians obligated to obey NT commands? Yes. We are to walk according to the rules and traditions (2 Thes 2:15) established by Jesus and the apostles. The "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2), which is essentially the teachings of the NT, becomes the guidebook for the Christian life. Failure to obey Christ's commands amounts to repudiation of Christianity (1 John 2:3-4). Failure to obey the apostles' teachings and traditions likewise verges on apostasy (Rom 16:17; 2 Thes 2:15, 3:6). Thus, obedience to the commands of Christ and the apostles is what we expect of Christians. Habitual, unrepentant disobedience marks one as an unbeliever in spite of whatever claims he may make to the contrary.

I. OT commands are still part of the Bible and reveal much about God and his will. We may discover great insights by meditating on God's ordinances, statutes, and judgments from the OT. But the NT supersedes the OT and becomes the standard for the Christian walk.

Note: We must guard against imposing OT regulations on NT Christians. Some (e.g., Bill Gothard) insist that we must continue to follow the OT as much as possible. That means attempting to apply OT regulations in our current situation as best we can. Such an attitude burdens believers with a "yoke" that the apostles specifically refused to apply (Acts 15:10-19).

J. The "rules" that Paul mentions

1. Gal 6:16—Circumcision is insignificant for the Christian life; what's most important is being a new creature (6:15). To "walk" according to this rule means that Christians do not make circumcision a spiritual issue (cf. 1 Cor 7:19). This was an important distinction to make given the fact that the Jews typically invested that ritual with great significance. Under NT Christianity, circumcision is a matter of indifference (*adiaphora*).

2. Phil 3:16—Live in accordance with apostolic teaching (i.e., that which has already been recognized and accepted). Such an attitude develops like-mindedness and unity among mature Christians. Minor differences among believers should not hinder harmony and love in a church when everyone is affirming the same doctrine (cf. Rom 14). Nothing outside of the apostolic tradition ("sound doctrine") should be integrated into church teaching.

K. John defines love as walking after/in his commandments (2 John 6). Love for God and obedience to him cannot be separated. Lack of one means lack of the other. Love for God always results in obedience to his word (cf. John 14:15). Justification results in sanctification; the two always go together.

A Final Note: An ongoing discussion among conservative Christians centers on what place personal effort has in sanctification. Everyone agrees that justification is by grace through faith without obedience to the law (i.e., works). Both sides also agree that sanctification requires effort by the believer but not *merely* human effort. Both recognize the danger of imposing extra-biblical man-made rules (cf. Col 2:20-23) and agree that grace does not sanction

disobedience (Rom 6; Titus 2). But questions remain regarding whether obedience to laws/rules furthers one's sanctification/growth.

- One side asserts that sanctification occurs almost automatically as we focus on God's love for us in salvation. As we increasingly appreciate Jesus' work, the Gospel, and justification, we will inevitably grow in our sanctification (2 Pet 3:18). We simply need to remember that we've been qualified, delivered, redeemed, and forgiven (Col 1:9-14). Christian growth in this model is not measured by behavior but by a deeper grasp of God's unconditional love for us. Our position "in Christ" means that we can cease striving to please God (Rom 3:24). God is pleased with us because of our union with Christ; we cannot be more pleasing to God by keeping rules. Sanctification occurs as we receive Christ's work and rest in our justification. Confident that we are not condemned (Rom 8:1), we go on to live in holiness. Thus, an emphasis on obedience to rules verges on legalism. Our emphasis should not be on rule keeping but on the fact that Christ kept the rules for us. Self-effort ("moralistic activism") amounts to a denial of God's grace.

  Summary of model #1: Don't worry so much about obeying rules; just love God, remember your salvation, and rest your perfect position in Christ. This will naturally result in holiness.

- The other side argues that believers must "make every effort" (2 Tim 2:15) to "work out" their salvation "with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). Simply remembering and appreciating our justification will not automatically result in growth or holiness. We must expend effort; we must obey; we must "put off" the old man and "put on" the new (Eph 4:22f). Growth in godliness is like a fight (1 Tim 6:12), a wrestling match (Eph 6:12), and a race (1 Cor 9:24f; Heb 12:1). We must trust, but we must also obey. We must, by God's grace and with the Holy Spirit's enablement, put the flesh to death (Col 3:5). Christian growth occurs as we work hard to stop sinning and start living righteously. Regenerated people do not automatically know what God requires of them. Thus, exhortations to obey biblical commands, rules, and standards of behavior help believers grow in godliness (e.g., 1 Cor 6:18). We glory in the cross, in salvation, and in our union with Christ, but that's not all we do.

  Summary of model #2: Obedience and effort are necessary elements of Christian growth. Sanctification comes through Spirit-enabled obedience to God's revealed will as expressed in commands, principles, and rules.

The first model, although having much to commend it, often results in an anti-rule sentiment that sees exhortations to obedience as legalism. On this view, laws and rules become virtually hostile to the Christian experience. Grace cannot function with law; the two are mutually exclusive. Further, the first model may lead to a passive view of sanctification in which effort plays a diminished role. Model #1 is the more popular/prevalent among evangelicals today.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 7: **Walk in Truth and Sincerity**

Pilate famously said to Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). This attitude still prevails among many in our culture today. Without a firm commitment to Scripture, we have no sure word of truth. But if we "walk in truth" with Scripture as our infallible authority, we'll retain a firm foundation for all of life.

I. Texts: 1 Kings 2:4, 3:6, 8:23, 9:4; 2 Kings 20:3; 2 Chron 6:14; Ps 26:3; Ps 86:11; Isa 38:3; Gal 2:14; 3 John 3, 4

II. Principles

A. The word "truth" as used in the OT means "firmness, faithfulness, assuredness" and suggests virtues like reliability, stability, and continuance.

1. Truth is anything that conforms to <u>reality</u>; the actual state of a matter; conformity with <u>fact</u>.

2. Truth is an attribute of God (Ex 34:6; Deut 32:4; John 3:33; Heb 6:18).

a) God is <u>real</u>; his existence has actuality.

b) God is the true God or <u>genuine</u> God in that He alone in His being, attributes, activities, etc., conforms to all that God ought to be. He alone fully answers the idea of God. He alone is veritably and authentically God. He actually is what He appears and claims to be. To say that God is true is to say that "He is consistent with Himself, that He is all that He should be, and that He has revealed Himself as He really is, and that He and His revelation are completely reliable" (Ryrie, *Basic Theology*).

c) All God's actions <u>conform</u> to reality. He does not lie (Titus 1:2—lit. "the unlying (*apseudes*) God…" God is truthful in that the knowledge, declarations, and representations of God eternally conform to His being. He is the veracious God. He represents things as they actually are.

d) God is the <u>source</u> of truth in that all truth has its foundation in His being and nature. Ultimately speaking, God does not conform to reality; reality conforms to <u>God</u>. God is the basis of reality; God's existence gives rise to all other reality.

B. "Truth" in many biblical contexts is virtually synonymous with God's revealed will (i.e., <u>Scripture</u>). Truth is not limited to Scripture, but truth is an attribute of Scripture.

1. Lead me in thy [God's] truth (Ps 25:5)

2. The truth of the Lord endures forever (Ps 117:2)

3. The truth of God (Rom 1:25)

4. The truth of the gospel (Gal 2:5, 14; Col 1:5)

C. To "walk in truth" amounts to obedience to God's commands as revealed in Scripture. God's way and his truth are virtually identical.

Walking in truth means having an authentic relationship with God. Our walk with the Lord if genuine must be based upon His Word.[22]

Note: The fact that God revealed the truth about himself in words is profound. People may sense God in various ways and have a range of religious experiences, but God's communication to man comes through words. "In the spiritual realm God addresses His message to the hearing ear. In fact, it is only by withdrawing our physical eyes from looking at visible things that we learn to fasten the eyes of our heart upon God, while we reverently listen to His spoken Word."[23]

D. Virtues like righteousness and uprightness of heart often are associated with walking in truth.

E. Another concept associated with walking in truth is walking before God "with all [your] heart" or walking "in integrity of heart." The concepts of truth and sincerity go together (2 Kings 20:3—read).

1. The word for "perfect" (*shalem*) or "loyal" means "complete, safe, peaceful, whole, full."

2. To be whole-hearted implies sincerity. Walking in truth and sincerity describes a life of genuine faith that produces godly behavior.

F. Those who walk before the Lord in truth and sincerity can expect to receive God's blessing.

G. We expect genuine disciples of Christ to persevere in the truth. Doing so produces great joy in spiritual leaders.

III. Associated concepts

A. Biblical writers describe failure to walk in truth in various ways.

1. Satan "abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (John 8:44).

2. Unbelievers "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness" (Rom 2:8; cf. Gal 3:1, 5:7).

3. Some walk in craftiness and deceit, mishandling the word of God (2 Cor 4:2).

4. Some fail to walk uprightly according to the truth of the gospel (Gal 2:14).

5. The unsaved "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thes 2:10).

6. The unsaved "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thes 2:12).

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[22] Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen and H. Wayne House, *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), 2 Jn 4.

[23] Cornelis Pronk,"Postmodernism's Impact on Popular Culture," *The Messenger*, Nov 2006.

7. Some "turn from the truth" and accept fables (Titus 1:14).
8. Those with bitter envying and strife in their hearts "lie against the truth" (James 3:14).
9. Those walking in darkness "do not the truth" (1 John 1:6).
10. Those claiming to have no sin or who fail to keep Jesus' commandments do not have the truth in them (1 John 1:8, 2:4).

B. Biblical writers describe lack of sincerity in various ways.

1. Hypocrisy (lit. "play acting")—pretending to be something you are not. Hypocrites make an outward show of faith without internal sincerity. Cf. Isa 29:13; Hos 6:4-6; Mt 6:2, 5, 16, 15:7-9; Eph 6:6; Col 3:22
2. Hardness of heart (Mt 16:14)
3. Double-mindedness (James 1:8, 4:8)
4. Believing in vain (1 Cor 15:2)

C. The challenge of post-modernism: truth does not exist.[24]

Isa 59:14 *And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.*

1. Post-modernism is a reaction against modernism, the assertion that humans know facts objectively. Post-modernists are skeptical that people really know anything for sure. All we have is our personal perceptions and experiences, not genuine knowledge of what is.
   a) Premodernism: God, creation, the Bible, the spiritual realm, truth, faith, obedience, norms, ethics/morality, certainty, conformity. E.g., Father Knows Best, Leave it to Beaver, "classic" art and literature
   b) Modernism/modernity: truth, education, science, mathematics, facts, rationalism, reason, deduction, argument, persuasion, meaning, optimism, certainty, progress, perfection. E.g., Star Trek, modern art, science fiction literature
   c) Post-modernism: lack of the above; in fact, the annihilation of the above. No universal/absolute truth (esp. Christianity), no authority, no ethical/moral rules, total freedom, irrationality, absurdity. E.g., The Matrix, MTV, Harry Potter (?)
2. Post-modernism asserts that there is no truth, only biased opinion. Since each of us perceives things differently, none of us has access to "truth." We see things only according to our biases and through our personal lenses. What we think and perceive is different from what actually exists.

[24] Some of this material from T.J. Klapperich, "Christianity and Post-Modernism." For a good overview of the topic, see http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/article_detail.php?1183

3. Post-modernists hold that "truth" is a weapon used by capitalistic, imperialistic nations to oppress the masses. Likewise, logic is a patriarchal, Christian, Caucasian tool of oppression, which forces women, non-Christians, and minorities into a sexist, bigoted, and racist system contrary to their natural thought patterns. Western culture, as the primary supporter of truth and logic, must be destroyed and be replaced by cultures that do not claim objective truth.

4. Results of post-modern thought

   a) Radical individualism: One cannot genuinely know anything or anyone beyond himself. Life dissolves into a constant struggle to satisfy oneself.

   b) Radical relativism and pluralism: One cannot know the truth, so all he has is opinion. Every opinion is of equal value, so one should not try to persuade anyone else to change his opinion. No one has access to absolute truth, so any exclusive claims to truth (like those of Christianity) must be rejected. The primary factor in deciding what group to join is personal benefit—what's in it for me?

   c) Radical freedom: One cannot know true from false or bad from good, so one's primary concern becomes "Do your own thing." Ethic and moral considerations have very limited influence.

5. The Christian response to post-modernism

   a) Some Christians advocate adopting a more post-modern theology where we downplay the absolute claims of the Bible and focus on meeting individual needs. The church facilitates personal experiences of religion rather than providing doctrinal instruction. The churches offering the most personally meaningful religious experiences in an inclusive, non-judgmental, non-doctrinal atmosphere will capture the attention of post-modernists (thus, the "emerging/emergent" church movement). Obviously, we reject this model as contrary to the tenor of the Bible.

   b) The proper Christian response to post-modernism is the same response it has to all cultures: preach the Gospel, exhort people to repent and trust Christ, and train converts in the truth of the Bible. The Gospel message "is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16). We need not adopt every shift in culture that occurs. We "preach the word" (2 Tim 4:2), exhort people to accept it, and leave the results with God.

   c) Part of the apologetic task of Christianity is to provide an answer and refutation of those philosophies hostile to Christian claims. One of the primary fallacies of post-modernism is that, by its own definition, it cannot be "true." It is internally inconsistent and irrational.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 8: Walk in the Old Paths/the Way of Good Men

I. Texts: Ps 119:63; Prov 2:20, 13:20, 22:28; 1 Kings 8:36; Jer. 6:16, 18:15; 1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17, 4:9; 2 Thes 2:15, 3:6; Heb 6:12

II. Principles

A. Walk in the "old paths" and respect valuable historical traditions.

1. Our culture values what is new, "improved," and modern, while at the same time paying little attention to the "old paths" of the previous generations. So-called "progress" demands that we constantly question the former, conventional ways and pursue new ways of doing things. God's advice to us through the writers of the Bible is that we "ask for the old paths" and the "good way" that previous generations have discovered. The fact that something is old does not necessarily mean that it is obsolete. We must avoid any custom or pattern that departs from the good and right path no matter whether it's new or old.

2. We must admit that in the history of Israel, good people walking the right path were rare. More often than not, flawed, inconsistent, and downright wicked people followed a bad "path" and set a poor example. Nevertheless, at various stages in the history of the nation, godly people followed the right path and left a good example (e.g., Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Ruth, Samuel). They walked in the "good way" and established the "ancient paths" of faithfulness and obedience to God's commands. Yet the succeeding generations stubbornly refused to "walk therein" (cf. Judges 2:7-13). They stumbled along a path "not built up" (Jer 18:15), i.e., without direction or destination. The result of God's people forsaking the old, good ways was always discipline—God delivered them into the hands of their enemies (cf. Jud 2:14; Jer 6:21-23). We should expect the same results whenever we depart from the good ways established by former generations.

3. Proverbs admonishes us not to remove the "ancient landmark" set up by the "fathers" (Prov 22:28).

a) In the literal sense, the ancient landmark was a stone marker establishing the border of one's land. Removing landmarks would be a way of encroaching upon someone else's property, a form of theft that God prohibited (Deut 19:14).

b) In the figurative sense, a landmark is a tradition or custom held by a person or group. Although the Bible does not use the word figuratively, we might still affirm the idea that the "ancient landmarks" have value and should be respected (within reason). Although some traditions/customs deserve to be put to rest, others warrant continuing recognition.

4. The word "tradition" as used in the NT means, "that which is handed over or delivered."

   a) "Tradition" often carries negative overtones in the NT (e.g., Mk 7:8-9, 13; Col 2:8). Human traditions often run contrary to God's commands. Holding human traditions may make the word of God "of none effect" (Mk 7:13). Jesus criticized the scribes and Pharisees for neglecting divine commands and substituting their own man-made traditions. Human traditions and philosophies are dangerous in that they may "capture" (KJV "spoil") unwary believers. Thus, the wise believer remains skeptical regarding man-made religious traditions.

      A common criticism of churches is that they tend to retain long-standing tradition well past the time of their effectiveness. The oft-heard expressions, "We haven't done it that way before," or "We always do it this way" may reflect the fact that a church has not evaluated the merits of its traditions. Churches should value and continue those traditions that serve their purposes, but be willing to discard traditions or modify them when necessary. Being tradition-bound is not a good thing (unless the tradition is biblical).

      Note: The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) has historically held that church tradition is as authoritative as the Bible. They have been guilty of adding various traditions to their form of Christianity to the extent that the RCC is no longer a legitimate expression of the faith. We must beware of exalting unbiblical tradition to a point where it becomes authoritative.

   b) However, "tradition" is used in a positive sense in the NT as well (cf. 2 Thes 2:15, 3:6). Paul exhorts us to "hold the traditions" which the apostles taught and to withdraw from professing believers who "walk disorderly," i.e., disregarding those traditions. "Tradition" in this sense amounts to "the faith," i.e., authoritative apostolic teaching (cf. Acts 2:42). Any tradition that squares with biblical teaching is legitimate and should be respected. Any failure to walk consistently with apostolic teaching amounts to disorderly living.

   c) A few other thoughts regarding traditions

      (1) Young people often fail to appreciate family or cultural traditions, but as we get older, we tend to attach sentimental value to the "old ways." We fondly recall how the previous generation did things and look with skepticism on some of the newer ways. Of course, the "new" ways eventually become well-established traditions that succeeding generations in turn look upon skeptically.

(2) Families should maintain historical connections with the previous generations. Respect for one's elders ought to be strongly engrained in the new generations as they arise. Long-standing family and cultural traditions give a sense of stability and of belonging, and are thus valuable.

(3) Families should establish their own set of traditions, especially those associated with worship and the Christian life. E.g., family devotions.

(4) A church must evaluate its traditions to see if they are helping or hindering the work of the ministry. Traditional ways of doing things may in fact be the most effective, productive, and sensible; but not necessarily. A church need not continue a practice simply because it's "traditional." On the other hand, a church need not retire a practice merely because it's "traditional." Traditions are valuable to the degree that they aid a church in accomplishing its goals.

B. Walk in the way of good men, i.e., follow their example; emulate their pattern of life.

1. One of the values of OT stories is that they provide examples for us to learn from (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11). We can follow the examples of those who obediently followed the Lord (e.g., Joseph, Daniel, Ruth), and we can avoid the pitfalls and problems resulting from disobedience (e.g., Samson, David). Children in particular learn valuable lessons from the lives of OT saints and sinners.

2. The Bible presents very few individuals who are not beset with common human weaknesses, failures, and faults. Almost all of the main characters in the Bible disappoint us in various ways, yet God chose to use them, warts and all. "Good" people are not necessarily perfect people.

3. How do we walk in the way of good men? We walk with those who are wise (Prov 13:20) and with those who fear God (Ps 119:63). We keep to the paths of the righteous (Prov 2:20). This entails observing how people are living, evaluating whether their walk is good and righteous, and following the example of those whose walk is upright.

   Note: Even the most scrupulous Christian occasionally fails to be a consistently good example. This is why our ultimate allegiance is to Christ, not to human leaders or examples (cf. Heb 12:2).

4. Biblical models to follow

   a) Spiritual leaders

Paul repeatedly urges his readers to follow his example and that of others that "walk" in the same manner (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17, 4:9). Paul urged Timothy to set a good example in every aspect of life—"in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12). The author of Hebrews exhorts believers to imitate "those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12) and to follow the faith of their teachers (Heb 13:7). Every pastor and teacher should recognize his responsibility to set a good example for others. Example often communicates more effectively than speech. Every believer ought to be looking for good examples to follow. Set a good example and follow good examples.

b) The virtuous <u>woman</u> of Proverbs 31 is an ideal that the writer holds up as a model to which every godly woman should aspire.

c) <u>Wisdom</u> personified (Prov 1:20, 8:14, 9:1)

d) <u>Animals</u>

(1) "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise" (Prov 6:6). Characteristic to emulate: wise foresight in planning for the future.

(2) Conies (Syrian hyrax, "cliff badger," a rabbit-sized animal) (Prov 30:26). Characteristic to emulate: living successfully in inhospitable places; making a living on little (?)

(3) Locust (Prov 30:27). Characteristic to emulate: cooperation, initiative

(4) Lizard/Gecko (Prov 30:28 "spider" KJV). Characteristic to emulate: skill, initiative/industry (?)

5. Models to avoid ("he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them" Prov 22:5)

a) The <u>simple</u>: the Heb. word literally means "open." In a positive sense, one might be "open-minded." But more often, the sense is that of open to influence, i.e., easily influenced, morally weak. Cf. Prov 14:15, 18, 22:3.

b) The <u>fool</u>: the Bible describes many varieties of fools. Foolishness implies wickedness, immorality, corruption, and/or stupidity. Cf. Prov 17:21, 18:7, 23:9.

c) The "<u>froward</u>" (KJV): the word means "evil, perverse, crooked." Cf. Prov 2:15, 3:32

d) The <u>strange</u> woman: the word means "foreign, alien" and often describes a prostitute or loose woman. Cf. Prov 2:6, 5:20.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 9: Walk Uprightly/Righteously/With Integrity

I. Texts: Ps 15:2; 26:1, 11, 84:11; Prov 2:7, 10:9; 14:2, 15:21; Isa 33:15; Mal 2:6

II. Definitions

A. The word "upright" literally means, "without blemish, perfect, complete, entire, sound, whole, healthy; unimpaired, innocent."

B. The word "righteous" refers to what is right, just, or normal.

C. The word "integrity" describes completeness, fullness, innocence, or perfection.

D. Each of these words requires a standard of measurement. The only way to evaluate whether something is upright or righteous is to measure it with reference to a standard. Rightness is the quality of a person or thing that reaches the standard. Unrighteousness fails to do so.

1. The ultimate reference point or standard is the person of God himself. Everything is measured with reference to God's person and nature. God sets the standard of what is right/upright. The character of God is the ultimate expression of integrity and righteousness. God is not righteous because he conforms to an external standard of righteousness; God sets the standard.

2. The revelation of God as expressed in Scripture is a further reference point for judging the value of anything. Because God's Word is a revelation of God's person/character, it also sets the standard of what is right.

3. Note, however, that Scripture contains the record of many people and things that are far from righteous/upright. The fact that the Bible records a certain event does not imply that what happened was right or that anyone should do the same (e.g., events in Judges). The record of such events is "right" in the sense that the records are accurate and true, but not in the sense that what happened was morally righteous. Further, the fact that God allows an event to occur does not imply that the event was righteous (e.g., Acts 2:23). God may use the wicked actions of evil men for his own purposes without becoming the author of sin or excusing the sin.

III. Principles/applications

A. To walk in righteousness, uprightness, and integrity must refer to living in a way that meets God's intended standard. This kind of righteous lifestyle is consistent with both God's character and God's commands.

B. Can any human genuinely claim to walk in righteousness and integrity? No. As Solomon asserts, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecc 7:20). Since all people are sinners, it is impossible for them to keep the absolute standard of God's holy character and word. Sin by definition is failure to keep the law, and all humans fail to do so.

C. Fortunately, God has made provision for humans to be sinners and still live in a way that is acceptable to God.

1. In the OT, before the giving of the Mosaic Law, people could walk uprightly by living in obedience to the revelation they had and by making regular sacrifices to God to atone for their sins (e.g., Gen 8:20, 12:8; Job 1:5). God-fearing individuals did this as necessary.

2. With the giving of the Law to Moses, God established many more stipulations for properly approaching him to receive atonement from sin. The sinner would bring a suitable sacrificial animal to a priest, who would slaughter the animal, burn parts or all of it, sprinkle the blood, and thus make atonement for the sinner.

a) Since no separation existed between religion and state under the Levitical sacrificial system, the sacrifice maintained one's relationship within both the community and with God. This means that one could perform his sacrificial duties in a way that maintained his place in the community without actually dealing with his sin (cf. Isa 1:11-15).

b) However, when offered with genuine repentance and faith, the sacrificial system effectively atoned for the sin of the offerer and maintained his status within the community.

3. The final sacrifice of Christ on the cross ended the OT sacrificial system and initiated a change in the way people could experience forgiveness of sin. Since Jesus was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), those who look to him for salvation receive complete forgiveness (John 3:14-15; 2 Cor 5:21). Christ is the "end of the law for righteousness" for believers (Rom 10:4). Righteousness now comes "by faith" (Rom 5:1) and not through the "works of the law" (Rom 3:28).

4. Walking uprightly/righteously/with integrity means living in obedience and applying the means that God established to deal with sin when it occurs.

a) The goal is still holiness (1 Pet 1:15-16; 1 John 2:1). God is holy, and he calls believers to live holily. Every believer ought to strive to "walk worthy of the Lord" (Col 1:10; 1 Thes 2:12) by living "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

b) The standards for Christian behavior are found in the NT, not the OT. While the OT contains many valuable principles and examples, the church is currently God's primary program on earth, and the NT is the guidebook for Christian living. Walking righteously/uprightly is a matter of obeying NT principles, i.e., living according to the standards that apply to us.

c) However, we must acknowledge that no matter how hard we strive to be pure and holy, we always fall short (cf. Rom 7:14f). As James admits, "we all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2).

d) The imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer's account gives him a perfect/righteous standing before God (Rom 5:1; 2 Cor 5:21). Christ fulfilled the stipulations of the Law for us, and in our union with Christ, we are counted as righteous.

e) The fact that Christians are absolutely righteous in their standing or position before God does not reduce the necessity for Christian to live a righteous life. Walking righteously/uprightly describes one's behavior, not his spiritual standing. A righteous status with God should result in righteous living (Col 2:6; Titus 2:11-14). A good tree (via regeneration) brings forth good fruit (sanctification). Failure to do so casts one's faith into question (1 John 2:3-5).

f) Thus, a righteous/upright walk is one in which the believer is striving after holiness, living obediently, and dealing with his sin appropriately. Walking righteously does not imply sinless perfection but working out what God has already worked in (Phil 2:13).

5. What is the proper NT means of dealing with sin?

a) Quit sinning; stop the sinful behavior. Christians must intentionally put off pre-conversion patterns (the "old man") and put on godly post-conversion patterns (the "new man") (Eph 4:22-24).

b) Confess your sin to God (Prov 28:13; 1 John 1:8-10).

(1) The word "confess" means to admit, acknowledge, or agree with. The Greek word literally means "to say the same thing." When you confess your sin, you admit to God that you have sinned, acknowledge that you are guilty and ask for forgiveness.

(2) Note that the texts imply that believers still sin. In fact, if someone thinks he is sinless, he is deceiving himself and denying God's word.

(3) The fact that God forgives sin should not produce within us a presumptuous attitude regarding sin, as if we can freely sin because God always forgives anyway (cf. Rom 6:1). God's grace should lead us to live holy, righteous lives (Titus 2:11-12), not encourage us to sin.

From the Westminster Confession: "God continues to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and, although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance."

c) Forsake your sin (Prov 28:13). "Renounce" or "forsake" means to leave behind or to turn your back on. After confessing your sin, you must determine not to sin in that way again. This doesn't guarantee that you won't, but this should be your attitude.

d) Make amends for your sin.

(1) Your sin often affects others. Therefore, you must make things right with those touched by your sin. Don't pretend the sin never happened. Ask others to forgive you if necessary.

(2) Repair, replace, or repay for what you did. Make restitution.

e) Be sensitive about sin (Ps 19:12, 139:23-24).

(1) Sin grieves God; it should grieve believing sinners, too. We should be asking God to show us our sin so we can confess it and forsake it.

(2) Those who are sensitive to sin are concerned about sin in the lives of others. They don't talk or joke about sinful behavior or enjoy it when others sin.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 10: Walk in the Fear of God

I. Texts: Deut 8:6, 13:4; Neh 5:9; Acts 9:31

II. Definitions

A. The fear of God is "an inward attitude of humble reverence toward God, in light of His self-revelation, that results in outward expression of Christlikeness."[25]

B. The fear of God entails [submission] to God's purposes through both adversity and prosperity. The one who fears God comes forth with both the wisdom and the righteousness needed to exploit wisdom's advantage and bring success as a chosen steward of God's purposes.[26]

C. The word "fear" can express emotions like dread, terror, or panic. This is not the usual sense in which the phrase "the fear of the Lord" is meant. However, we should recognize that a certain amount of dread or even terror may be associated with a personal encounter with God. Cf. Isa 6:5; Mt 27:54. See also 1 Sam 11:7

D. Usually, "the fear of the Lord/God" indicates awe or reverence. Reverence is that sacred respect for God based on his majesty, power, and glory.

1. The inward attitude: humble submission. God alone is worthy of honor and devotion. We fear God's displeasure and seek to avoid chastisement and discipline. God is the righteous Judge, and we tremble before him.

2. The outward attitude: obedience to God's word and a desire to please him.

Note the Quote: Today, when there is so much emphasis on God's love, grace, and mercy, is it possible that we have forgotten that God is to be feared? He takes our sin very seriously; therefore we need to take His holiness very seriously. We need not cringe in horror, as though God were a tyrant who delights in punishing us. But neither should we wink at sin as though He were a kindly grandfather who laughs at a little mischief.[27]

E. Walking in the fear of God obviously implies living in a way that is appropriate for one who claims to fear God. It suggests a regular lifestyle reflecting attitudes and behaviors that could be described as God-fearing.

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[25] Session 7: The Fear of the Lord. Center for Christian Leardership. http://bible.org/seriespage/session-7-fear-lord.
[26] James S. Reitman, "Ecclesiastes, Book of" In , in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry and Lazarus Wentz (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012).
[27] *What Does the Bible Say About... The Ultimate A to Z Resource Fully Illustrated*, Nelson's A to Z series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 155.

III. Principles[28]

A. Reverence/fear is a response to God's holiness (Ex 3:5–6; Ps 111:9; Isa 8:13).

The term "reverend" (Ps 111:9; KJV often renders it as "terrible," newer versions have "awesome") translates a word meaning, "to fear." The fear of God is also related to God's greatness (Ex 20:18-20; Psa 99:3); people fear God because of His mighty deeds (Ex 15:11). For example, the Israelites respond to God's saving power in bringing them out of Egypt by fearing Him (Ex 14:30–31).

B. Reverence/fear results in obedience, righteous living, and service.

God intends that the revelation of who he is and what he does elicit within us a desire to obey him. In Gen 22:12, God recognizes Abraham's obedience to sacrifice Isaac as fear of Him. Fearing God and keeping His commandments are closely linked (Deut 5:29; 8:6; 10:12–13). In the OT, people demonstrate fear of God by obeying the Law (Deut 6:2). Likewise, obedience to the Law teaches people to fear God (Deut 4:10; 14:23; 17:19; 31:12–13). The author of Hebrews asserts that we should serve God "with reverence and godly fear" (Heb 12:28-29). Cf. also Neh 5:9, Acts 10:34-35; 2 Cor 7:1.

Isa 66:2 *... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

C. Reverence/fear results in concern for others.

Leviticus states that, instead of wronging others (Lev 25:17) by doing things like cursing the deaf and blind (Lev 19:14), people should fear God. The Bible often associates the fear of God with honoring the elderly (Lev 19:32), forgoing the charging of interest (Lev 25:36), and treating servants kindly (Lev 25:43).

D. Reverence/fear leads to loyalty and faithfulness (Gen 20:11; 1 Kings 8:43).

The Hebrew midwives were willing to defy Pharaoh's orders because of their loyalty to God (Ex 1:21). After the people of Israel conquered the land of Canaan, Joshua charged them to faithfully fear God by serving Him alone and putting away other gods (Josh 24:14–15). In 2 Kgs 17:35–39, the fear of God describes loyalty to Him in contrast to worshipping other gods. Essentially, having the fear of God means that one recognizes and serves the true and living God (Isa 8:13) and obeys His commands (Isa 50:10). Genuinely fearing God is virtually equivalent with being saved (Ps 85:9). The designation of "those who fear God" is used to refer to the community of those faithful to Him (Ps 22:25; 66:16). Failure to fear God amounts to being a pagan idol worshipper (Jer 2:19).

E. Reverence/fear results in trust.

Fearing God is often likened to trusting God (Ps 115:11). Those who fear God enjoy a close relationship with him (Ps 25:14; 33:18). The Psalms likewise equate worship and praise with the fear of God (Ps 5:7; 22:23; 135:20).

F. Reverence/fear results in wisdom.

[28]Much of this material from John D. Barry, Michael R. Grigoni, Michael S. Heiser et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012).

The fear of God refers to the beginning of wisdom or knowledge (Job 28:28; Psa 111:10; Prov 1:7; 9:10), and receiving wisdom helps people understand the fear of God (Prov 2:1–5).Those who lack a fear of God hate knowledge (Prov 1:29). Fearing God also leads to blessing and long life (Prov 10:27; 14:26–27; 19:23; 28:14). The book of Ecclesiastes concludes with an exhortation to "fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecc 12:13). It also notes that God acts in order that people may fear Him (Ecc 3:14).

G. Other results of the fear of God[29]

1. God will instruct the one who fears him (Ps 25:12).
2. The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him (Ps 25:14).
3. The eye of the Lord is on those who fear him (Ps 33:18).
4. The angel of the Lord camps round those who fear him (Ps 34:7).
5. The Lord has compassion on those who fear him (Ps 103:13).
6. God's lovingkindness is from everlasting to everlasting to those who fear him (Ps 103:17).
7. The Lord gives food to those who fear him (Ps 111:5).
8. God will bless those who fear him (Ps 115:13).
9. God fulfils the desire of all who fear him (Ps 145:19).
10. The Lord takes pleasure in all who fear him (Ps 147:11).
11. A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised (Prov 31:30).
12. The fear fell on all and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified (Acts 19:17).
13. "We persuade men" out of the fear of God (2 Cor 5:11).

H. Characteristics of those who do not fear God

1. Pagan, false <u>religion</u> (Gen. 20:11, 25:18)
2. <u>Wickedness</u> (Ps 36:1; Jer 2:19; Mal 3:5)
3. <u>Shortened</u> length of life (Ecc. 8:13; Prov 10:27)
4. Evil language, violence, unhappiness, lack of peace (Ps 13:3-5; Rom 3:10f-18).

IV. Growing in the fear of the Lord

Four suggestions:[30]

[29] Colin A. Day, *Collins Thesaurus of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009).
[30] Session 7

A. Immerse yourself in God's Word (cf. Ps 119:38, 120). The fear of the Lord grows with revelation of how magnificent He is. As we see His character and authority through the events and teaching of Scripture, our hearts will be drawn to have a proper reverence toward God.

B. Ask the Lord regularly to unite our hearts to fear His name (Psalm 86:11). God desires to reveal Himself to us and to align us with His character.

C. Live moment by moment in the reality of God's presence (Psalm 139:7-12). When we forget about God in our daily schedule, we are not living in reality. We must cultivate a mindset that is ever aware of God's presence.

D. Model your life on Christ, the ultimate revelation of God to us. Jesus is the best example of how the fear of God should influence our lives.

V. Other comments regarding the fear of God

A. Parents must be careful to instill the fear of God in their children (read Deut 4:10, 31:13; Ps 34:11; Prov 1:7).

Note the Quote: Children need to know, even from the earliest age, that God is angry with the wicked, and He *will* punish evildoers (Psalm 7:11–13). Material designed for young children too often presents only the gentle, meek, and mild attributes of God. He is portrayed as an always-benign grandfatherly being—an insipid, man-made god, more like Santa than the God of Scripture. This is a very serious mistake, and I believe it accounts for the careless attitude so many in our society have toward God. They mistakenly assume that whatever God's nature, He will ultimately be harmless and kindly, even toward those who have disobeyed Him. That is the impression many children take away from the typical Sunday school lesson. But it is not the God of Scripture. Take care not to teach your children such a wrong perspective of God.[31]

B. Christian worship should reflect an attitude of reverential respect for God's awesome power, holiness, and glory. This attitude protects the congregation from an overly-familiar, disorderly, man-centered approach to God so common in churches today. The author of Hebrews urges us to "serve God acceptably with reverence (modesty, respect) and godly fear" (caution, discretion) (Heb 12:28). Carefulness, conscientiousness, and circumspection ought to describe Christian worship. A healthy fear of God's displeasure tends to keep a church on the right path.

C. The fear of God should temper our language. Too often, Christians indulge in slang and humor that comes uncomfortably close to using God's name in vain. Respect for God, an appreciation for God' majesty and holiness, and careful discretion should cause us to speak of God only in reverential, cautious ways.

[31] John F. MacArthur, Jr., *What the Bible Says About Parenting: Biblical Principles for Raising Godly Children* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 78-79.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 11: Walk in the Name of the Lord

I. Text: Micah 4:5; Zech 10:12 (cf. 1 Sam 17:45; Ezra 5;1; Prov 18:10; Col 3:17)

II. Definition

A. As we've already discovered (see Lesson 1), when Bible writers tell us how to "walk," they are telling us how to live or conduct our behavior (thoughts, words, and deeds). What does it mean to walk "in the name of the Lord"?

B. The "name" of a person in the ancient world represented the person himself and therefore all of his character. God's name represents his entire being, all of what God is and stands for.

C. Acting "in the name" of someone implies

1. doing something under his authority, power, or right (1 Sam 17:45)

2. living in a way that corresponds to God's character and reputation (cf. Prov 22:1; Ecc 7:1)

D. The "name of the Lord"

1. "LORD" (in all capital letters) usually represents God's personal, covenant name, *Yahweh* (*YHWH*). This is the name God revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:14-15).

a) The Hebrew people would pronounce the four letters (tetragrammaton) of God's name (*YHWH*) with the vowels of *Adhonay*, transliterated as *Yehowah*, but read aloud as *Adhonay*. This accounts for the hybrid name *Jehovah* which uses the consonants of *YHWH* with the vowels of *Adonay*. The Jews did this to protect the divine Name so that it would not be used "in vain" (Ex 20:7). Actually, the Bible does not forbid the use of God's name; the biblical writers use it hundreds of times. One must, however, be careful to use God's name properly.

b) God's name is very similar to the Hebrew word for "to be" or "to become" or "to live." Hence, the word implies the self-existent, independent nature of God, the one who exists eternally of his own nature.

c) Characteristic of the OT is its insistence on the possible knowledge of God as a person; and Yahweh is His name as a person.

d) The name implies the covenant promise of the Divine presence, both at the immediate time and in the Messianic age of the future. And thus it became bound up with the Messianic hope, as in the phrase, "the Day of Yahweh," and consequently both it and the

Septuagint translation *Kurios* were applied by the NT as titles of Christ.[32]

2. Other names for God[33]

a) Elohim: This word is the first form of the Divine name in the Bible, ordinarily translated "God" (Genesis 1:1). This is the most frequently used name in the OT, as its equivalent *theos*, is in the NT, occurring in Genesis alone approximately 200 times.

The meaning of the word is "might" or "power." The "…im" ending indicates plurality in Hebrew, which probably expresses majesty or "all-mightiness." It is a generic, rather than a specific, personal name for Deity, as is indicated by its application to any claimed god, true or false.

b) Adhon, Adhonay: "my Lord." This name for God emphasizes His sovereignty (Psalms 2:4; Isaiah 7:7), and corresponds closely to *Kurios* (owner, master) of the NT. It is frequently combined with *Yahweh* (Genesis 15:8; Isaiah 7:7, etc.) and with *Elohim* (Psalms 86:12).

E. In Micah 4:5, the prophet contrasts those who walk "in the name of his god" with those who "walk in the name of the Lord our God." The faithful should be more committed to the true God than the wicked are to their false gods. Unfortunately, idolaters were often far more faithful to their false gods than the Israelites were to the true God. The same is true today.

F. Thus, to "walk in the name of the Lord" indicates living under the authority of God and in a way in keeping with the character of God, upholding God's good reputation. It further implies faithful obedience and loyalty to the almighty, self-existent, true and living God of Israel, and to no other.

III. Principles

Since "walk" covers a wide variety of behaviors, it may be beneficial to examine the various categories of behavior that biblical writers admonish us to carry out "in the name of the Lord." To "walk" in the name of the Lord may include any or all of these behaviors. To do any of these things "in the name of the Lord" implies doing them in a way that is consistent with God's character and purposes.

A. Minister in the name of the Lord (Deut 18:5).

1. "Minister" simply means "to serve." All service for God ought to be conducted in a way that preserves God's great reputation. We must serve God in loyalty and in obedience to his revealed will.

2. Ministry must be conducted as God's representative, doing things as we believe God would have us do them. Ministers are not merely doing whatever they want; they work for God.

[32] ISBE, "God, names of."
[33] ISBE

3. Our ultimate allegiance is to God, not to people. We serve God by serving God's people. Successful ministry is accomplishing God's will and leaving the results with God.

4. Human opinion must always be secondary. How people respond to ministry is not the proper gauge of success or legitimacy. We must remember that "the fear of man brings a snare" (Prov 29:25).

B. Speak/prophesy in the name of the Lord (Deut 18:22; Jer 26:16, 20; Acts 9:29)

1. One speaking "in the name of the Lord" is claiming divine inspiration for his words; he is speaking for God, communicating God's word. The prophets and apostles spoke and wrote under direct inspiration as the Holy Spirit "moved" them (2 Pet 1:21).

2. Since the canon of Scripture is closed, and since no authorized prophets or apostles remain, we should not expect anyone to be speaking under the direct inspiration of God today (contrary to what Pentecostals claim).

3. Speakers today must "preach the word" (2 Tim 4:2). They should not claim divine inspiration for their own words. Only to the degree that one's message comports with the Bible can anyone's speech be considered "in the name of the Lord." All unbiblical speech must be rejected. Cf. Acts 17:11.

1Pe 4:11 *If anyone speaks, let him speak as the utterances of God … so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.*

C. Bless in the name of the Lord (Deut 21:5)

1. The OT priests, as God's representatives, blessed the people in the Lord's name (cf. Num 6:23-27). Since God had chosen the priests to serve in the temple and to convey his word to the people, they also had authority to judge controversies and set appropriate punishments.

2. Today, since every believer is a priest (1 Pet 2:5, 9), the blessings that we convey are more in the terms of encouragement, exhortation, and even warning. We bless one another by fulfilling all the "one another" expectations of the NT—edify, comfort, encourage, warn, teach, etc.

D. Fight/conquer in the name of the Lord (1 Sam 17:45)

1. The nation of Israel, as God's chosen people, had a relationship with the true God that no other nation could claim. God's will for Israel often included physical warfare against God's enemies.

2. Goliath entered the battle against Israel with sword, spear, and shield; but David confronted the giant "in the name of the Lord, the God of the armies of Israel." David claimed to be fighting under God's authority or command. God used David and the armies of Israel to defeat the Philistines.

3. The NT tells us that "the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds" (2 Cor 10:4).

Christian warfare has no physical dimensions. Our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil. We fight these enemies using spiritual warfare; our weapons are truth, faith, salvation, the Word of God, prayer (Eph 6:10f) along with all the other resources available to the child of God.

E. Make oaths in the name of the Lord (1 Sam 20:42; 2 Kings 2:24)

1. David and Jonathan swore an oath of allegiance to one another "in the name of the Lord." To swear an oath in God's name is to call God as a witness to the agreement and to call down his wrath on anyone breaking the stipulations of the vow.

2. Elisha invoked the Lord's name as a curse against some scornful young people, resulting in "two she bears" wreaking havoc on forty-two of them.

3. The Pharisees corrupted the practice of making oaths/vows in God's name (cf. Mt 23:16-22). Jesus advises us to tell the truth without taking an oath (Mt 5:37). We should not need an oath to guarantee the veracity of our words.

F. Worship in the name of the Lord (1 Kings 18:32)

1. Elijah built an altar "in the name of the Lord." That is, the altar was dedicated to the true and living God of Israel, not some other foreign god or idol.

2. Worship conducted under the name of the Lord must conform to God's revealed word and be consistent with God's character and purpose. Worship must uphold God's great reputation—his majesty, glory, and honor. Hence it must be reverent, decent, and orderly (cf. 1 Cor 14:40).

G. Trust in the name of the Lord (Ps 124:8; Prov 18:10; Isa 50:10)

Trusting in God's name is to trust in God's person, which results in fearing and obeying him.

H. Baptize in the name of the Lord (Acts 8:16, 10:48, 19:5)

On three occasions, the writer of Acts mentions people who were baptized "in the name of the Lord (Jesus)." We know from the commission recorded in Matthew 28:19-20 that baptisms were to be done in the "name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Did the early church disregard the Trinitarian formula and baptize in Jesus' name only? That seems unlikely. All Christians ought to be baptized as a public testimony to their faith in Christ.

I. Anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord (James 5:14).

J. Do all in the name of the Lord (Col 3:17).

Every action a Christian does should conform to biblical principles and to the character of God (as much as is humanly possible). Acting as God's representatives in the world, we should seek to uphold God's great reputation in our perverted culture by living in a way that brings honor and glory to God.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 12: Walk by Faith

I. Texts: 2 Cor. 5:7

II. Definitions

A. To walk is to live, behave, conduct ourselves.

B. Faith, of course, is belief or trust. The biblical words convey the idea of firmness, surety, establishment, belief, or faithfulness.

1. OT: the basic demand is for a right attitude to God, i.e. for faith (read Ps 37:3-5). For example, "[Abraham] believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). Sometimes men are urged to trust the Word of God (Ps 119:42), but more usually it is faith in God himself that is advocated (Ps 22:5-6; Pr 3:5).[34] The Lord is the only worthy object of wholehearted confidence.

2. NT: the concept of faith is exceedingly common in the NT, with the words for "faith" being used about 300 times. Faith means primarily confident trust based on God's promise as understood through his Word (Luke 24:25).[35] The NT affirms the OT definition of faith and further extends the need for faith to converge on the proper object—Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

C. When Paul tells us to walk by faith, he is advocating a life committed to God and his Word. This kind of faith has a profound effect on the believer's life. Walking by faith is believing what God has said and living in the way God has commanded in spite of any obstacles. We look to the eternal things of God, not the temporal things of the world (Col 3:1-3), and allow eternal values to govern our lives. E.g., Caleb and Joshua believed God's promises in spite of the apparent obstacles and were ready to obey God's commands (Num 13).

D. "not by sight" – Paul contrasts walking by faith and walking by sight. Walking "by sight" implies living according to appearances and trusting in one's own powers instead of in God (cf. Pr 28:26; Jer 17:5; Ezek 33:13; Hos 10:13). E.g., the other ten spies sent into Canaan brought back an "evil" report and did not believe that they could conquer the Promised Land in spite of what God had promised.

Note: Christianity does not advocate "blind" faith or a "leap of faith." Both of these expressions imply belief in something that has little or no evidence, or even in something that is not true or does not exist. Faith, for Christianity, is rational, based on facts, evidence, historical events, eye-witness testimony, and good reason. Living by faith is not being closed-minded or ignorant.

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[34] D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 357.

[35] Walter A. Elwell *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker reference library; Logos Library System (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996).

III. Principles/implications/related ideas

A. Hebrews 11, the "Hall of Fame of Faith," is perhaps the most extensive discussion of living "by faith" in the entire Bible. The author of Hebrews defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). What does that mean?

1. "Substance" (KJV) means "ground or confidence; basis, foundation, or support." It may refer to something real as opposed to something imaginary or false.

2. "Hope" in the biblical sense is not an irrational leap in the dark, but steadfast confidence in God's word and plan.

3. "Evidence" means "proof" or "means of proving." Evidence demonstrates the reality of something under evaluation. Evidence convinces the mind that something is true or worthy of faith.

   Note: To a depraved, corrupted, blind, unregenerate sinner, no amount of proof or evidence supporting Christian claims will produce conversion/ salvation. The problem is not lack of evidence; it's sin. The only means of producing conversions is applying the message of the Gospel, "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16).

4. Faith resides in "things not seen." (cf. "not by sight")

   a) God is unseen (Jn 1:18).

   b) The entire spiritual realm is (usually) unseen.

   c) God's sovereign plan is unseen (Deut 29:29) and often "unsearchable" (Rom 11:33; cf. Isa 55:9).

   d) God's promises are often unseen (until they are fulfilled). We hope for them confidently, but "see" them only with the eyes of faith.

   Note the Quote (Barnes): "We do not see the things of eternity. We do not see God, or heaven, or the angels, or the redeemed in glory, or the crowns of victory, or the harps of praise; but we have faith in them, and this leads us to act as if we saw them."

5. Without faith "it is impossible to please him" (Heb 11:6). Faith is required to believe in God and to believe that he rewards those who seek him. We affirm that Christian belief is rational and based on evidence, yet also insist that Christianity is a matter of faith. In many cases, we cannot prove conclusively that biblical claims are true; we believe it by faith.

   Note: Virtually every worldview requires an element of faith, even rank atheism. All people hold some of their beliefs "by faith."

6. All the patriarchs (e.g., Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, etc.) exercised faith in various ways, yet "received not the promise" (Heb 11:39). Like Abraham, they "looked for a city … whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11:10). They saw the promises "afar off,

and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb 11:13). The patriarchs lived by faith, trusting God's word and acting on God's promises (to greater or lesser degrees). These faithful saints serve as models of steadfast endurance for us to follow.

B. "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3)

1. "The faith" is that body of truth comprising Christianity; i.e., the "deposit" entrusted to the church. Cf. Rom 10:8; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14.

2. "The faith" has limits or boundaries which we might call the fundamentals of the faith, i.e., the most basic and essential teachings of the faith, without which[36] Christianity would not exist. If you deny an essential of the faith, you've denied the faith altogether. The fundamentals of the faith include such concepts as the existence of God as revealed in the Bible, the person and work of Christ, salvation by grace through faith, the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Wrong belief regarding one of the fundamentals places one outside the boundaries.

C. Saving faith: "The just shall live by faith." (Hab 2:4; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38)[37]

1. Saving faith is the attitude whereby a man abandons all reliance in his own efforts to obtain salvation, be they deeds of piety, of ethical goodness or anything else. It is the attitude of complete trust in Christ, of reliance on him alone for all that salvation means.[38]

2. Genuine saving faith is a personal attachment to Christ, best thought of as a combination of two ideas—reliance on Christ and commitment to Him. Saving faith involves personally depending on the finished work of Christ's sacrifice as the only basis for forgiveness of sin and entrance into heaven. But saving faith is also a personal commitment of one's life to following Christ in obedience to His commands.[39]

   Note: We obviously do not affirm "easy believism."

3. Saving faith is the act of the sinner. God certainly draws the sinner to faith and enables him to believe (John 6:44), but the individual must exercise faith himself. Further, it is Christ who saves (not faith itself); faith is the means by which His finished work of redemption is applied to the sinner.

4. The elements of saving faith

   a) Knowledge: one must know certain facts about God, Christ, sin, faith and repentance. This is the content of faith, the facts one must believe in or understand. See John 20:30-31.

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[36] Sine Qua Non – "without which not." The fundamentals comprise the *sine qua non* of Christian faith.
[37] Much of this material from Rolland McCune, Systematic Theology III notes, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen Park, MI.
[38] *New Bible Dictionary*, 358.
[39] *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, R. K. Harrison and Thomas Nelson Publishers (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

b) Assent/affirmation: one must personally accept the facts as true, understanding that they apply to oneself, and agree to or approve them. This occurs when one hears and understands the Gospel (Matt 13:23). This is comprehension and application.

c) Trust: one must rely upon, affirm, and accept the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the basis of forgiveness and salvation. Jesus Christ is the object of saving faith. Acts 16:31.

5. The origin of saving faith

a) Saving faith is different than ordinary faith which all people possess and routinely exercise. Saving faith is not the ordinary human trust simply turned to Jesus Christ. I.e., saving faith is not merely a change of objects, from something else to Christ.

b) Saving faith does not originate in sense experience or historical investigation. Faith is not simply "resting in the sufficiency of the evidences." Mt 16:17; 1 Peter 1:23

c) Saving faith does not originate in human reason. 1 Cor 1:21, 2:4-5

d) Saving faith is the result of an operation of the Holy Spirit on the will of the sinner by which he freely and voluntarily responds to the gospel message.[40] Under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, the sinner understands the Gospel message, accepts it personally as true, and rests his faith on the person and work of Christ to be saved from sin and condemnation. While it is the sinner who believes, the capacity and ability to believe come from God. 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 1:29

6. Synonyms for saving faith: receive (John 1:12), drink (John 4:14), come (John 6:37), eat (John 6:53), take up (Mt 11:28-30), obey (Gal 5:7; Heb 5:9; 1 Pet 1:22).

7. Is there a difference is saving faith between the OT and NT? Were OT saints saved by works and NT saints saved by faith? No. Salvation has always been based on God's grace and received by faith. The NT reveals that faith in Jesus Christ as Savior is required, which OT saints did not know specifically (although they were expecting their Messiah). So there is some difference in the content of faith, but not in the means of salvation.

D. Degrees of faith

1. The Bible shows us various quantities or degrees of faith. Faith is not an all-or-nothing proposition. Further, faith may wax and wane over time.

2. Examples: Gen 17:17, 18:12; Jud 6:37; Mt 7:21-23, 17:20; Mk 9:24; Rom 4:20, 14:1; 1 Cor 13:2; James 2:19-20

[40] Theologians sometimes call this operation "effectual calling" or even "regeneration."

The Christian Walk

Lesson 13: Walk in Newness of Life

I. Texts: Rom 6:4

II. Background and context

A. In Romans chapter six, Paul is arguing against the idea that believers should "continue in sin that grace may abound" (Rom 6:1). This antinomian[41] doctrine was leading people astray. One should not conclude that, since grace abounds to cover our sins (cf. 5:20), believers are free to sin so they can experience more grace. Paul's response to such an argument is, "God forbid!!" Paul asserts that believers have "died to sin" (a point-in-time experience, at salvation, 6:2) and cannot therefore live in habitual, unrepentant sin any more. The availability of God's super-abundant grace should in no way encourage ongoing sin in the life of one who has experienced such grace.

B. Paul goes on to argue that believers were "baptized into [Christ's] death" (6:3), probably referring to the union that believers have with Christ in his death. Christians "die" to their former way of living and cannot remain in that lifestyle.

C. The spiritual reality Paul spoke of is that by faith believers are "baptized (placed) into Christ" and thereby are united and identified with Him. This spiritual reality is then graphically witnessed to and pictured by believers' baptism in water. The one baptism (by water) is the visible picture of the spiritual truth of the other baptism (identification with Christ; cf. Gal. 3:27, "baptized into Christ … clothed with Christ").[42]

D. Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the majestic power of the Father, so every believer has experienced a spiritual resurrection from the old life to the new by that same power.

E. To "walk in newness of life" means that one has made a complete break from his former sinful lifestyle and is living as a spiritually resurrected individual. New life is a radical and instantaneous transformation … from one life context to another.[43] No genuine believer could affirm the idea that a continuation of the sinful, pre-conversion lifestyle is appropriate after one's experience of salvation (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). Continuation in sin does not cause grace to abound; it merely verifies that one is still spiritually dead and has not been freed from sin's tyranny (Eph 2:1).

F. The word "newness" in this case has nothing to do with time. The emphasis is on the quality of life, not the length of it. The Christian life is "new" in its contrast

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[41] Literally "against law"; the idea that believers in Christ are not under law and thus are free to do whatever they want, including sin with abandon.

[42] John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), Ro 6:3–4.

[43] John MacArthur, F., Jr, Wayne A. Mack and Master's College, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling: Basic Guide to the Principles and Practice of Counseling*, Electronic ed. (Dallas, TX: Word Pub., 1997), 125.

with the old, pre-conversion lifestyle. The new life is one dedicated no longer to sin but to the glory of God.[44] Sin no longer has dominion over the believer (6:14).

G. Just as Christ was raised from the dead (physically), so believers are raised from the dead (spiritually) and now enjoy a new quality of life. Believers must conduct themselves (walk) in a way that is consistent with their new spiritual status.

H. Thus, anyone who continues in sin (6:1) and lives in it (6:2) was apparently not baptized into Christ's death (i.e., saved, 6:3) and raised to spiritual life (6:4). Believers have died to sin and have risen with Christ (cf. Col 3:1). They must now "walk in newness of life" as evidence that this spiritual transformation has occurred.

I. This "newness of life" suggests

1. New spirit (or Spirit) as opposed to the "oldness of the letter" (Rom 7:6)
2. New principles are defining one's life; new goals guide one's behavior (Col 3:10).
3. New power enables us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13, cf. Phil 3:10).
4. New fruit becomes evident in one's life (Gal 5:22).

Quote (Barnes): We should rise with Christ to a new life; and having been made dead to sin, as he was dead in the grave, so should we rise to a holy life, as he rose from the grave. … By our very baptism, by our very profession, we have become dead to sin, as Christ became dead; and being devoted to him by that baptism, we are bound to rise as he did to a new life.

III. Related issues

A. Conversion is the beginning of "new" life.

1. A multitude of biblical passages bears witness to the fact that conversion marks the beginning of a new life. Read Ezek 36:26–27; John 3:7; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 4:22–24; 1 Pet 1:23
2. The old, pre-conversion lifestyle is not appropriate for one who has experienced conversion to Christ. Read Rom 6:6, 15, 17-18; Gal 5:13; Col 3:9-10
3. This "newness of life" will be marked by practical evidence (as found in 1 John)
   a) Walking in the light (1:6-7). They display Christ-like behaviors and attitudes.
   b) Sensitivity toward sin. They confess and forsake it (1:8-10).

[44] William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, vol. 12-13, *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 196.

c) Obedience to Christ's commands (2:3-5, 29). The general trend or pattern in a genuine believer's life is obedience, not rebellion and unrighteousness.

d) Affection for the things of God rather than the things of the world (2:15-17).

e) Love other believers (3:10-15, 5:1-2). Genuine believers find true fellowship with other believers rather than with the unsaved crowd.

f) Commitment to a doctrinally-sound church (2:19). True believers maintain unity with a group of orthodox believers in a church.

g) Affirmation of sound doctrine (2:20-23). They are orthodox in belief and behavior.

h) Holiness of life (2:29, 3:6-9). They are not sinless, but they are striving to cease from sin and follow the Lord.

4. If old things are not passed away and if all things have not become new, then questions arise regarding the legitimacy of one's faith.

B. Antinomianism

1. The NT tells us repeatedly that Christians are not under the OT law (read Rom 6:14, 7:6, 8:2, 10:4; Gal 5:1; Col 2:14). The OT stipulations ended with the death and resurrection of Christ and with the establishment of the NT church. We live under the "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2; cf. 1 Cor 9:21), not the Law of Moses.

2. Some today misunderstand and/or misapply this truth. By equating the OT law with "rules" in general, they conclude that Christians need not concern themselves with rules. They argued that, since the OT law was a list of rules, and since we are not under the OT law, then rule-keeping of any kind must not be a part of NT Christianity. They allege that freedom from the law as a way of salvation brings with it freedom from God's moral law as a guide to conduct.[45]

3. Antinomian statements[46]

a) Salvation affects the soul only; thus, bodily behavior is irrelevant both to God's interest and to the soul's health.

b) The Holy Spirit's inward promptings deny any need to be taught by the law how to live.

c) God sees no sin in believers because they are in Christ, who kept the law for them, and therefore what they actually do makes no difference (as long as they keep believing in Jesus).

d) Keeping the moral law is no longer necessary because we live in the age of grace, not of law.

[45] J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993).
[46] Packer

e) The Bible is little more than one of many channels of God's revelation to us and has no authority until an existential experience verifies it to us personally.

f) Love is all that God now requires of Christians, and the commands of the Scripture are mere rules of thumb for loving, rules that love may at any time disregard.

4. Obviously, antinomian thinking is dangerous for a number of reasons.

a) It wrongly equates the OT law with rule-keeping and implies that the termination of the one demands the termination of the other.

b) It fails to apply "the law of Christ," which is essentially the teachings (including commands) of the NT. Rule-keeping (i.e., obedience) is still required of the Christian even though the OT rules no longer apply (unless affirmed in the NT). Cf. 1 John 2:3-4.

c) It fails to recognize the difference between the eternal, unchanging moral law of God and the specific stipulations of the OT Mosaic code.

(1) In contrast to the Mosaic code, which emphasized rituals and works, the law of Christ emphasizes grace and love (cf. John 1:17, 13:34; 1 Jn 4:10-11). We serve "in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom 7:6). The law of Christ covers all areas of the believer's life just as the Mosaic code did for the OT believer. It has much in common with the OT law.

(2) Rule-keeping does not save. However, we demonstrate our love for Christ by obeying his commandments (cf. 1 John 2:3-4). Obedience is the result, not the cause, of salvation.

(3) Christianity is much more than a list of rules, but we cannot deny that Christianity contains rules and standards of behavior.

5. Antinomianism ultimately excuses sinful, rebellious, worldly living. It completely undermines the moral imperatives of the Christian life.[47] The only reason anyone would affirm antinomianism would be that he wants to "continue in sin." Yet Paul argues fervently against this kind of thing: "Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (Gal 5:13). Freedom from the OT law is not a license to sin.

[47] Carl R. Trueman, "Reformed Orthodoxy in Britain" in vol. 14, *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology Volume 14*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum, 4 (Lousville, KY: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 10.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 14: Walk in the Spirit

I. Texts: Rom 8:4; Gal 5:16-26

II. Background and Definitions

A. The early church quickly came under the influence of the Judaizers, who sought to impose the restrictions of the OT law on NT believers (cf. Acts 15). The entire book of Galatians was written to counter this threat.

B. Paul teaches very clearly that if one seeks to be justified by the law, he has "fallen from grace" (Gal 5:4). This is the true, biblical definition of legalism: seeking to be saved by obedience to the OT law, or adding works to faith as a requirement for salvation.

C. Instead of retreating to the OT law, Paul urges believers to "walk in the Spirit."

1. God's Holy Spirit who indwells the Christian will give divine energy to every step that is taken with the eye on Christ, and will give character to our walk if we are led by Him.[48]

2. To walk in the Spirit is to walk in connection with the Spirit, to live a life energized by the Spirit.[49]

D. The NT contrasts walking in the Spirit with walking "after/according to the flesh" (Rom 8:4) or fulfilling "the lust of the flesh" (Gal 5:16).

1. To walk in/after/according to the flesh is to depend upon your own powers instead of living in dependence upon God. The "flesh" refers to the whole of our human nature … under the power of sin. In our flesh dwells no good: the mind of the flesh is at enmity against God.[50]

2. To walk in/after/according to the flesh implies an unsaved condition. The works of the flesh characterize the person who "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (read Gal 5:19-21) and who is hostile toward God (read Rom 8:8). Practicing this kind of lifestyle is an indication that one is not under the Spirit's control.

3. Genuine Christians may temporarily live according to the flesh as well.

a) Living this way implies a retreat to the OT law (cf. Gal 5:18)

b) Living in the way implies a sinful self-reliance and dependence on one's own will power for making spiritual progress. Read Gal 3:3.

c) Living this way implies dominion by the lust of the flesh.

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[48] *Outline of Sound Words. "The Christians' Walk." http://stempublishing.com/magazines/OSW/41-50/osw42d.html*
[49] Roy E. Gingrich, *The Walk of a Christian* (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2004), 5.
[50] Andrew Murray, "The Flesh," in *Heritage of Great Evangelical Teaching* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

d) Living in this way habitually and unrepentantly undermines one's profession of faith and ultimately demonstrates that one is unsaved.

Christians may *produce* any or all of the works of the flesh but they do not *practice* them.[51] Every time we yield to temptation or live sinfully, we are in effect walking according to the flesh, at least in that instant.

Note the Quote: Our greatest danger in religion, the cause of our feebleness and failure, is our having confidence in the flesh, its wisdom and its work. To be pleasing to God, this flesh, with its self-will and self-effort, must entirely be dispossessed, to make way for the willing and the working of the Spirit of God.[52]

4. The flesh and the Spirit are in a constant state of conflict against one another (Gal 5:17). The result is "you cannot do the things you want to do" (cf. Rom 7). The solution to this problem is to be "led by the Spirit" (Gal 5:18) and to "yield yourselves unto God … and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom 6:13).

5. When we are yielded to, and filled with, the Spirit, we are not doing the things that we would, that is, we are not fulfilling the desires of the flesh.[53] Thus, an evidence of walking in the Spirit is that the works of the flesh are not prominent or dominant our lives.

6. The ideal of complete, sustained submission to the Spirit in every respect is not a realistic expectation. That is, we should not expect to achieve prolonged sinlessness or perfection this side of Glory. All Christians will continue to experience the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit in this life. Reaching a "higher plane" where we no longer yield to temptation is unrealistic. This does not provide an excuse for sin; it's merely reality.

E. Walking in/after/by the Spirit is essentially the same as being "led by the Spirit," being "filled" with the Spirit, or being spiritual.

1. Some suggest that the Spirit leads the Christian in a mysterious, mystical way, i.e., through still, small voices, promptings, gut feelings, "peace" or lack thereof, open or closed doors, signs, and the like. The Christian then has to decipher what God is trying to tell him and hopes that he has not misinterpreted these feelings and hints.

2. A more practical and objective way to think of the filling/leading of the Spirit is to define it as yielding control of one's life to the Spirit, which amounts to submitting to the Scripture (cf. Eph 5:18). The will of God is revealed in the Bible, which is inspired by the Spirit of God. The

[51] Gingrich, 6.
[52] Murray
[53] Gingrich, 5.

Christian's responsibility is to apply the Bible with wisdom to his particular circumstances, trusting God to guide his steps (cf. Ps 37:23; Prov 16:9).

III. Walking in the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26).[54]

A. The fruits listed in the NT are representative rather than exhaustive. But any fruit will be in keeping with the others and consistent with NT teaching.

B. These fruits are a cluster; "fruit" and not "fruits." All of them should be present, at least to some degree, in every believer's life.

C. These fruits proceed from the Spirit. As a Christian is submitted to the Spirit (through the Word), the Spirit produces them in our lives.

D. A list of the fruit

1. Love (*agape*): unselfish, divine love that seeks the good of the one loved. Love should extend to everyone and to fellow believers in particular.

2. Joy: the soul's satisfaction in its union with God, as the greatest and highest good; with an actual rejoicing in Christ, and in what is for his honour and glory, called a rejoicing in the truth (1 Cor 13:6); and in the good of our brethren (Rom 12:15).[55]

3. Peace:

a) "Peace with God" (Rom 5:1) has to do with positional, external, permanent peace, describing the believer's unchangeable relationship to God.

b) "The peace of God" (Phil 4:7) has to do with experiential, internal feelings of peace, based on the believer's current relationship to God. This peace refers to the believer's freedom from disquieting fears, agitating emotions, and distressful anxieties, and to the believer's feeling of tranquility (quietness, calmness, stillness, and composure).

4. Longsuffering: patience, perseverance; the ability to bear up under pressure without resorting to sinful reactions

5. Gentleness: the quality of being quiet, tame, docile, pliable, mild, kind, and tender

6. Goodness: the quality, not only of wishing others good, but also of doing others good. It is the virtue of bestowing upon others that which builds them up and not tears them down. It is the opposite of doing harm, or evil, to others.

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[54] Most of this material from Gingrich, *The Walk of a Christian* (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2004), 9–10.
[55] Matthew Poole

7. Faith: The Greek word may be translated faith or faithfulness. In Galatians 5:22, the sense seems to be that of "faithfulness" (fidelity, trustworthiness, steadfastness). Faithfulness is the quality of being faithful to God (in believing His truths and in keeping His commandments) and of being faithful to men (in fulfilling our duties toward them and in keeping our promises to them).
8. Meekness: the quality of accepting our place in life without complaint, of receiving discipline without resentment, of accepting injustice without retaliation, of being willing to yield in non-essential things to prevent strife and division, and of being willing to give up our Christian liberties to win sinners and edify saints. Needless to say, meekness is not weakness.
9. Temperance: The Greek word means self-control, having mastery over the desires (appetites, passions) of the mind and the body. Temperance includes the dominion over all evil propensities; and may denote continence, chastity, self-government, moderation in regard to all indulgences. The influences of the Holy Spirit on the heart make a person moderate in all indulgences; teaches him to restrain his passions, and to govern himself; to control his evil propensities, and to subdue all inordinate affection.[56]

E. "against such there is no law" (Gal 5:23). Paul is commending these virtues; they are universally recognized as positive and valuable; no law was ever written condemning them. Those who live in this way have nothing to fear from any law or judicial institution.

F. Results of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:24-26)
1. Christians are no longer held captive by their passions and lusts. The lusts of the flesh no longer dominate one's life.
2. Christians "walk by the Spirit," i.e., their conduct conforms to the Spirit's direction as given through the Word.
3. Christians get along with one another because they are not conceited, envious, or divisive.

Note: Another aspect of walking in the Spirit concerns the exercise of spiritual gifts. We'll consider this topic in part 2 of this lesson next week.

[56] Barnes Notes

The Christian Walk

Lesson 14: Walk in the Spirit, part 2—the Gifts of the Spirit

A study of what it means to walk in the Spirit would hardly be complete without considering what the Bible says about spiritual gifts. The evidence of the Spirit-filled, sanctified life is the presence of the fruit of the Spirit. The evidence is not, as some claim, the gifts of the Spirit. The fruit is shared by and expected from all Christians alike, while the gifts are parceled out to various members of the body of Christ as the Holy Spirit wills (1 Cor 12:8–11). No matter what gift a person has, his exercise of that gift should be in keeping with the fruit. In other words, the Christian should use whatever gift or gifts he may have been given lovingly, joyfully, peacefully, patiently, kindly, and in keeping with the other fruit of the Spirit.[57]

With this in mind, let's look at some facts about the gifts of the Spirit. Read 1 Cor 12:4-11.

I. Words associated with spiritual gifts

There are several NT words used to denote the gifts of the Spirit. Each may emphasize some aspect of the gift or the Spirit's work. They all refer to essentially the same thing—the gifts.

A. "spiritual" (l Cor 12:1): This word means literally "a spiritual thing" and describes the gift as proceeding from the Holy Spirit and to be exercised in the realm and power of the Spirit.

B. "gifts" (l Cor 12:4; l Pet 4:10): This term (*charismata*) means "a grace gift" and refers to an unmerited, gracious endowment from God. This word denotes extraordinary powers distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit.

C. "service" (KJV "ministries" l Cor 12:5; 1 Pet 4:10): This word emphasizes the usefulness of the gifts. The gifts are employed in serving one another.

D. "energy/activity" (KJV "operations" l Cor 12:6): This word emphasizes the power operating in the gifts; the power, activity, and energy of God and the Holy Spirit.

II. Definition: A spiritual gift is a visible, God-given, Holy Spirit-energized ability, whether naturally inherited or miraculously endowed, whether temporary or permanent, given to each believer for the edification of one's local church for the glory of God.

A. A spiritual gift is an ability, a capacity for service. In the case of the non-miraculous gifts, they need training, development, and nurture. E.g., the gift of teaching required that one learn and develop communication skills.

B. A spiritual gift may be natural or supernatural, i.e., miraculous or non-miraculous in bestowal and function. In some sense, any gift must be supernaturally energized for its function, but this does not make it miraculous.

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[57] Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

1. A natural spiritual gift is one that is inherited naturally but made useful for spiritual service in the local church at salvation.

2. A miraculous or supernatural spiritual gift is one that is imparted in a direct manner from God and it produces an ability that the person never possessed before. Its function is a special work of the Holy Spirit and cannot be explained in a natural or ordinary manner. The ability to speak in a language you never studied (e.g., tongues) was such a gift.

C. The distribution of spiritual gifts

1. Spiritual gifts are sovereignly distributed (l Cor 12:11, 18, 23; Rom 12:6; Heb 2:4). One may desire a gift (1 Cor 12:31), but God determines who receives which gift(s).

2. Every Christian has one or more spiritual gifts (l Cor 12:7; l Pet 4:10). There are no useless members in the Body of Christ. Each believer has a function to serve in the local church, and God has gifted him accordingly. Your gift "finds you" as you serve in the local church. Failure to use your gift for the benefit of the church is a simple violation of NT commands (cf. 1 Pet 4:10).

3. No believer has all the gifts, and the gifts vary among the believers (l Cor 12:8 ff). Everyone contributes something to the body. Ideally, if everyone serves, all the gifts will be present. However, certain local churches may not have all the available gifts due to such factors as the maturity of its people, its state of growth, its spiritual condition, its population, etc.

4. Gifts also differ in value, although all gifts are important and necessary for the healthy function of the local church. See l Cor 12:28 ("first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then ...") and 12:31 ("the greater gifts"), and l Cor 14:5, 19 (prophecy is greater than tongues).

III. The gifts

Gifts can be categorized as sign, service, revelatory, leadership, and proclamation gifts. Gifts probably overlap to some degree. Further, a precise definition of each gift is almost impossible to give because the NT often does not define the gifts or explain how they were used. The lists of the NT gifts are probably to be considered exhaustive in the sense that all the gifts are either so named or would be subsets of some of the named gifts.

A. Teaching (Rom 12:6-8; l Cor 12:7-11, 28; Eph 4:11-12): the ability to explain clearly the meaning of the Word of God. Teachers are individuals that God gives to His church, and teaching is an ability that these people have. Teachers help believers mature by instructing them in the faith.

B. Ministry (Rom 12:7 "serving"; 1 Cor 12:28 "helps"): aid, especially to the weak and needy.

C. Administration (Rom 12:8 "to lead, rule"; 1 Cor 12:28 "governments"): an ability to organize and administer with efficiency and harmony; the ability to give leadership and direction. One with this gift can probably see issues, discern the real factors involved, and provide direction.

D. Evangelist (Eph 4:11): an itinerant announcer of the gospel's good news who often also worked to organize local churches (much like a missionary does today). All pastors are to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:5).

E. Pastor (Eph 4:11): both a responsibility and an office. It requires shepherding abilities (including ruling, administering, exhorting, etc.) and a place or office in which to act as shepherd. A pastor must meet the qualifications (1 Tim 3; Titus 1) and be duly elected and authorized by the local church to function in that capacity.

F. Exhortation (Rom 12:8 "exhort, comfort, encourage"): The word has two senses:

1. to comfort, strengthen, or encourage
2. to exhort or appeal to action

G. Giving (Rom 12:8 "to give, share"): the ability to give to the work of the Lord consistently, liberally, sacrificially, with wisdom and cheer.

H. Mercy (Rom 12:8): to give aid to those in misery of some kind, including the sick and afflicted.

I. Faith (1 Cor 12:9): the ability to believe and trust God beyond the ordinary.

J. Apostle (Eph 4:11; l Cor 12:28): a position of authority in the early churches. The basic idea of apostle is a representative, a "sent one." An apostle had a special ministry of preaching the gospel, founding local churches, and writing Scripture.

K. Prophecy (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10, 28; 14:1-40; Eph 4:11): the ability to receive revelation from God and proclaim it to others (cf. 1 Cor 14:29-32). A prophet had a part in founding local churches (Eph 2:20) and in bringing revelation when needed, especially before the NT was finished.

L. Miracles (1 Cor 12:28): signs to certify a messenger with a divine message.

M. Healing (1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30): the miraculous ability to heal diseases and deformities as a sign to authorize a messenger with a divine message.

N. Tongues (1 Cor 12:10): the miraculous ability to speak a language not previously known to the speaker. It was a sign gift primarily, although an element of revelation may have been involved in the content of the tongues-speaking. The content of tongues was praise, giving of thanks, extolling God, etc. (Acts 2:11; 10:46; 1 Cor 14:16).

O. Interpretation of Tongues (1 Cor 12:10): the miraculous ability to interpret or translate a language not previously known to the interpreter.

P. Discerning of Spirits (1 Cor 12:10): the supernatural ability to discern a true prophecy from a false one, when direct revelation was being employed (cf. 1 Thess 5:20-21).

Q. Wisdom (1 Cor 12:8): the capability of receiving revealed truth and presenting it to others. The wisdom of God is the whole system of revealed truth (1 Cor 2:6-12).

R. Knowledge (1 Cor 12:8): receiving and communicating divine revelation; the ability to understand and exhibit clearly the wisdom of God.

IV. The purpose of the spiritual gifts

A spiritual gift is to be exercised within the ministry and outreach of one's local church. While the larger Body of Christ may benefit from the gifts, the exercise of spiritual gifts is properly to be done under the ministry of one's local church. Spiritual gifts are always for the benefit of others. For one to have a gift and not use it within the church is a great shame.

In the third part of this lesson, we'll consider the permanency of the spiritual gifts.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 14: Walk in the Spirit, part 3 – The Permanence of Spiritual Gifts

Theologians and Christians of all stripes differ in their opinions on the permanence of the sign gifts. Without doubt, the sign gifts were miraculous by their very purpose (cf. Heb 2:4, "gifts" is literally "powerful deeds, works of power." These are classed with miracles, signs, and wonders.). We cannot deny that these miraculous gifts existed among the apostles and within the early church. But were the miraculous gifts were designed to be permanent?

I. Viewpoints[58]

A. Essentially, there are only <u>two</u> sides of the debate: either the miraculous sign gifts persist into the present as practiced in the early church or they do not. A "cessationist" says that the sign gifts have ceased or are no longer practiced as the NT describes them. A "continuationist" asserts that the miraculous gifts have persisted and will continue throughout the church age. There is no middle ground.

B. Most of the argument revolves around whether God is still <u>directly</u> communicating with man today outside of Scripture. Are the miraculous revelatory gifts still operational? Either God is speaking today apart from His Word or He is not.

1. If so, then the <u>Scriptures</u> are not a sufficient guide for Christian life, and the church must <u>comply</u> with additional prophecy as it's revealed.

2. If not, then the church must <u>reject</u> and expose the fraudulent claims of modern so-called prophets, especially when they contradict Scripture.

C. Various views

1. Pentecostal/Charismatic/Thirdwave: <u>All</u> miraculous gifts exist today, including the gift of prophecy (and possibly the office of apostle). God speaks through prophets and to His people both <u>audibly</u> (through dreams, visions, words of knowledge), and <u>inwardly</u> (inaudibly in the mind or heart). Anything is possible; one should not "put God in a box." E.g., Jack Deere, John Wimber, the Kansas City Prophets, the Assemblies of God and the Word of Faith movement.

2. Mysticism/Spiritual Formation: By employing various disciplines and spiritual exercises, God will speak to us both audibly and inaudibly. The maturing Christian should <u>expect</u> to hear the voice of God on a regular basis, independent from Scripture, and that voice will reveal God's individual, specific will for his life. E.g., Henry Blackaby, Beth Moore, John Piper, Wayne Grudem, Mark Driscoll and C. J. Mahaney. Some of these might be considered "open but cautious."

3. Cessationist: All miraculous gifts, including prophecy and tongues, have ceased by God's intentional design. The sign gifts were given specifically to the <u>apostles</u> (and some associates) for the founding of the NT church

[58] See Gary Gilley, "A Case for Cessationism," IFCA *Voice*, Nov-Dec 2012.

but did not persist after the apostolic era. E.g., Jonathan Edwards, BB Warfield, John MacArthur, Charles Ryrie, RC Sproul.

Charismatic influence permeates most of the evangelical world today, as well as most of the main line denominations. Estimates suggests that almost 600 million professing Christians endorse charismatic practices[59] (i.e., they are continuationists to some degree). By comparison, only about 285 million believers identify themselves as Evangelical (and many of these would be charismatic). About 35% of Americans claim to be either Pentecostal or charismatic. Although just 8% of the population is evangelical, half of evangelical adults (49%) fit the charismatic definition. A slight majority of all "born again" Christians (51%) is charismatic. Nearly half of all adults who attend a Protestant church (46%) are charismatic. One out of every four Protestant churches in the United States (23%) is a charismatic congregation. Four out of every ten non-denominational churches are charismatic.[60] So the continuationist perspective is much more common today than the cessationist position is. However, numbers do not necessarily indicate faithfulness to truth (e.g., the RCC has about 1B members, more are Muslims).

II. Biblical rationale for cessationism

A. Revelatory gifts (prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc.) were necessary during the founding of the church. Once the apostolic era ended, those gifts were no longer needed. The principle that determined which gifts remained in the church and which ones ceased is that of <u>miracle</u>. Once the transition from Law to Grace was made (John 1:17) and the NT was completed, the miraculous gifts were no longer necessary.

B. Apostles and prophets were <u>foundational</u> in the church (Eph 2:20); they served at the beginning of the church. Once the foundation was laid, there was no longer any need for miracles to validate the message of the apostles.

C. The word "apostle" refers to a particular set of people who had abilities to perform miracles (2 Cor 12:12). The only NT apostles were the Twelve, Paul, and perhaps Barnabas and James. The sign and revelatory gifts are mostly associated with the apostles or with the apostolic age (Acts 2:43; 5:12).

D. The <u>office</u> of apostle has not continued; it did not pass to the next generation. Paul claims that he was the last of the class of those who had seen Jesus, a requirement for apostles (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor 15:8). In fact, Paul's apostleship did not fit the pattern in some ways (e.g., he was not a companion with Jesus during His earthly ministry).

E. In the years following the founding of the church, miracle-working power did not seem to be associated with particular <u>individuals</u>. For example, Paul, who had done miracles, did not exercise that power all the time (see Phil 2:26-27; 1 Tim 5:23; 2 Tim 4:20). In James 5:14, the instruction is to call the elders of the church

[59] According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (Dec 2011).
[60] According to Barna in 2007, http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/18-congregations/52-is-american-christianity-turning-charismatic

to pray for healing, not to call a miracle-working apostle. This suggests that miracle-working ability slowly ceased.

F. As the NT canon nears its close, the divinely inspired authors unite in pointing their readers to the apostles as the inspired human source of truth. They did not point their readers to new or fresh revelation but to the words spoken previously by the prophets and apostles. See 2 Tim 4:1-5; 2 Pet 3:2; Jude 17; Rev 22:18-19.

III. The nature of miracles

A. A miracle is an event in nature, so extraordinary in itself, and so coinciding with a prophecy or a command of a religious teacher or leader, as to convince those who witness it that God has done it, thereby certifying that this teacher or leader has been commissioned by Him.[61] A sign points to something or certifies something, namely, that a teacher is speaking for God. Miraculous sign gifts authenticated the apostles as official spokesmen for Jesus Christ. See 1 Kings 17:20-24; John 3:2, 20:30; Acts 2:22; 14:3; Heb 2:2-4.

B. God can certainly still do miracles (Mt 19:26). But most claims of the miraculous today don't fit the biblical pattern. Jesus and the Apostles instantly and completely healed people who were blind, paralyzed, deformed, or dead. Biblical miracles are usually immediate and permanent, unlike much of what passes for "signs and wonders" today.[62]

C. Most miracles happened in one of three relatively brief periods of biblical history: in the days of Moses and Joshua, during the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, and in the time of Christ and the Apostles. None of those periods lasted much more than a hundred years. But even during those three eras, miracles were not normal occurrences that happened to average people. Miracles were uncommon and isolated events; that's what made them special.

D. Miracles are usually associated with giving of revelation. Since the Bible is complete and the apostles are gone, God's revelation is finished. Through many signs and wonders, God has authenticated the truth of the Bible. Do we need ongoing miracles to substantiate the Bible? No. The Scripture has been attested; the foundation has been adequately laid. The need for such miracles no longer exists.

Note the Quote: There are no miracle-workers performing miraculous signs to attest the redemptive revelation they bring from God…. The progress of redemptive revelation attested by miraculous signs done by miracle-workers has been brought to a conclusion in the revelation embodied in our New Testaments.[63]

IV. Other Considerations

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[61] John MacArthur, "Does God Do Miracles Today?" http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/CHAOS5.HTM. Some of the material in this lesson directly from MacArthur.

[62] In fact, Charismatics freely admit that what they consider "signs and wonders" differ significantly from those seen in the NT.

[63] Sam Waldron, *To Be Continued? Are the Miraculous Gifts for Today?* Quoted in Les Lofquist, "Cessationism and IFCA International," *Voice* (Nov/Dec 2012), 8.

A. The key theological epistles of the NT (Romans, Galatians, Ephesians), along with the Pastoral Epistles (Timothy and Titus) mention nothing about employing miraculous sign gifts. If these gifts persisted and were normal, one would think the epistles would say something about their use.

B. If genuine, biblically legitimate miracles were continuing today as a normal pattern among God's people, no believer would deny it. But such is manifestly not happening. We do not see the same kind of sign-gift activities in the church after the death of the apostles. The contemporary experience of continuationists is clearly not the same as we find in the NT.

C. An emphasis on the miraculous often leads to an obsession with sensational experiences, which in turn almost inevitably lead to fraud and abuse. Sign gifts can be and often are faked or used by false prophets (just as Jesus warned in Mt 7:22). They are a means by which confusion, disorder, and heresy can enter into the church. False prophecies undermine confidence in the truth of God and in His declarations to His people in Scripture. We see many evidences of such fraud and abuse within the charismatic movement. Many practices in that movement fail to pass the "decent and in order" test (1 Cor 14:40).

D. Signs and wonders are not the true test of God's presence or power. The only true test of whether a person or a movement is from God is teaching and behavior that conforms to the Word of God. The highest expression of God's power in the world today is not some spectacular, unusual sign or wonder but the transformation of a soul from darkness to light, from death to life. Regeneration, sanctification, and the presences of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) mark genuine believers, not miraculous signs.

E. Historically speaking, the signs ceased soon after the close of the apostolic era. Other than a few fringe groups, Christians did not practice or expect the sign gifts between the time of the apostles and the rise of Pentecostalism in the early 20th century.[64]

F. God is perfectly capable of doing anything, including miracles, according to his purpose and will. God can work sovereignly and supernaturally in any way he chooses. But God's intent and purpose for the miraculous sign gifts seems to have been limited to the founding of the church and not the entire church age.

Note the Quote: Scripture contains everything that the Christian needs in order to be "complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:17). Therefore, let us not be shaken by the claims of those who state we must experience the miraculous sign-gifts in order for our Christianity to be whole, our Gospel to be full, or our lives to be God-honoring.[65]

[64] Pentecostals typically argue that the resurgence of the sign gifts marks the end of the church age and prepares the world for the Second Coming of Christ.
[65] Andrew Webb, "The Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit: Continuation, Restoration, or Cessation?"

The Christian Walk

Lesson 15: Walk According to Your Calling

I. Text: 1 Corinthians 7:17 *But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.*

II. Background/Context

A. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is answering questions posed to him by the members of the church. He deals with marriage, divorce, singleness, and whether it was appropriate to get married at all given the "present distress" (7:26).

B. Paul repeatedly advises his readers to "remain in the same calling in which [you were] called" (7:20, cf. 24, 26, 37, 40); i.e., <u>stay put</u>. If one was married or single, slave or free, circumcised or not, the best course of action is to remain in one's present condition. The world is passing away (7:31) and it is best not to unnecessarily burden oneself with extraneous cares and distresses.

The call to conversion radically altered an individual's spiritual relationship but need effect no changes at all in physical relationships that were not immoral.[66]

C. In this context, Paul tells his readers to walk/live according to their calling.

1. God has "distributed" this calling. The word literally means, "to divide" and suggests "to bestow, to impart." God has <u>assigned</u> each person a place in life (cf. Acts 17:26).

2. This distribution is a <u>calling</u>. The Lord "has called" believers into a certain place or status of life. A believer should remain in the place or status he was in when he got saved. Almost any social position is compatible with Christianity (with some obvious exceptions).

3. God has given a calling "to each one" (used twice). <u>Everyone</u> has a certain place in life that God has ordained.

4. Remaining in one's place is not an <u>absolute</u> requirement but a wise choice in times of distress, pressure, or persecution.

a) A <u>single</u> person may find life easier without a spouse; however, if a couple is burning with passion and finds it hard to control themselves, they should get married (7:9).

b) If an <u>unbeliever</u> refuses to remain married to a believer, the believer should allow the unbeliever to leave (7:15). Life continues even after such a marriage has been dissolved.

c) The <u>slave</u> should not be concerned about the fact that he is enslaved. If he can gain his freedom, he should certainly do so (7:21). But if not, he should not let his slavery prevent him from fulfilling his calling. Slavery per se is not incompatible with faith in Christ.

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[66] John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, vol. 2, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 519.

5. The Gospel may impose many changes on the believer, but it need not necessarily require a change of social condition (e.g., marriage), employment, or residence. The Lord calls people of all walks of life, and believers should witness of Christ in all their occupations and circumstances. The believer should live/walk according to the place God has put him and not concern himself with changing his status in life.

III. Christian calling

A. Christians are called to salvation.

1. 1 Cor 7:21 (read; cf. 1:9) shows that calling is virtually synonymous with conversion. Rom 8:30 reveals that those who are called will eventually be justified. God calls the believer "out of darkness and into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9). God issues this call through the Gospel (2 Thes 2:14). Every believer is a "partaker of the heavenly calling" (Heb 3:1) and called a child of God (1 Jn 3:1). God calls according to his purpose and will; the call is effective—sinners heed the call and come to Christ in faith.

   This call is a direct work of the Holy Spirit that brings the elect sinner to faith and repentance, from darkness to light, from bondage to liberty, from sin into fellowship with Jesus Christ.[67]

2. It is true that Christ extends a general call to all—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28; cf. John 7:37-38). All who hear the Gospel are invited to come and be saved. Yet Jesus states, "many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt 22:14). Jesus' sheep always respond positively to his call (Mt 10:27). But non-sheep cannot (are not able to) hear his word; they will always turn down the invitation to be saved (John 8:43; cf. Rom 8:7). The only obstacle to accepting the call is the sinner's own evil will. Those who hear the call and reject it are personally responsible for their refusal.

B. Christians are called to vocation.

1. The term vocation comes from the Latin word for calling. The doctrine of vocation is thoroughly biblical, but it surfaced and was developed with its greatest rigor during the Reformation. The doctrine of vocation is a theological way of thinking about work, society, and culture. Vocation is also a theology of ordinary life (as opposed to "ministry").

2. We can fall into the trap of thinking that those involved in "full-time Christian service" are the only ones really serving God with their lives. All believers (should) serve God in the place that God has put them. They use their conditions of life as the means of service. All legitimate vocations are equal before God.

[67] Rolland McCune, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Systematic Theology III notes.

3. God's calling to a particular vocation/occupation is not absolute. We can ignore it, go a different way, compromise, etc. When we follow his calling, we become what God intended for us to be. When we don't follow that calling, we fall short of God's best for us. Only when we respond to Christ and follow his call do we experience the joy of being what we were made to be.

4. We should accept our callings as having been assigned to us from the Lord. We recognize what God has called us to be and to do. But this does not mean that God may not call us to something else.

5. Calling also gives us a reason to pursue excellence in the field into which we are called. God's call challenges us to rise to our full potential as human beings. We desire to achieve the most in the place God has set out for us. We want to please God in our calling. God is our ultimate reason and audience. If you know that God has called you to something, how can you be slack or casual about it?

6. The doctrine of vocation encourages us to appreciate each individual's uniqueness, talents, and personality. These are valued as gifts of God, who creates and equips each person in a different way for the calling He has in mind for that person's life. The doctrine of vocation undermines conformity, recognizes the unique value of every person, and celebrates human differences.

7. Thinking about vocation helps us prioritize our lives. Our primary vocations (e.g., spouse, parent, church member, employee/employer) must come first. We dare not neglect our areas of calling. All other pastimes must be secondary in importance.

8. The purpose of vocations

   a) The ultimate purpose for us is to glorify, honor, and love God (1 Cor 10:31; 1 Pet 4:11). We use our place in life as a platform to show forth the praises of our Creator.

   b) The second greatest commandment is to "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mt 22:39). Thus, another purpose of vocation is to love and serve one's neighbor. This is the test, the criterion, and the guide for how to live out each vocation anyone can be called to: how does my vocation serve my neighbor? Who are my neighbors in my particular vocation, and how can I serve them with the love of God?

   c) Each person is to love his or her neighbors and to serve them with the gifts appropriate to each vocation. This means that I serve you with my talents, and you serve me with your talents.

9. Finding your vocation

a) The basic vocations are fairly standard—family, church, work/career, and citizenship. We are placed in a family, choose a church, get hired into a career (or make one up), and function as a citizen. In some of these cases, we have little choice.

b) In other cases, we do have choices to make—Whom to marry? What church to join, and where to serve? What career to pursue? What level of participation as a citizen? How do we make such choices?

c) The question is not "what do I want to do," but "what is God calling me to do?" Our vocation is not something we choose for ourselves but something to which we are called. God distributes or imparts our calling to us; he assigns our place.

d) In a sense, we can't choose to do just anything we want (e.g., choose to be a big league baseball star). Vocation has to do with your divinely-created makeup, your wiring, talents, gifts, interests, inclinations, skills, what you're good at. You don't really control these. Try to do something you can't do, you'll probably fail.

e) Another part of choosing our vocation is recognizing opportunities, external circumstances, open/shut doors—all help us understand and accept our calling. We should see choices as part of God's call. Our callings are not completely under our control; rather, they come from the Lord's hand. Cf. 1 Sam 2:7-8

f) Vocation pertains to the present circumstance. Vocation is now, not just the future. You have a calling right now. What is it? Focus on the present relationships. As for the future, glorify God, love people, and God will "distribute" to you your intended vocation.

Note the Quote: God calls a person first into the fellowship of Jesus Christ (1:9) and then to a role of fulfilling the Christian life in the setting in which the Lord has placed him. He must live worthily in that environment as one who demonstrates the love of the Lord Jesus.[68]

[68] Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, vol. 18, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 230.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 16: Walk Decently/Properly

I. Texts: Rom 13:13; 1 Thes 4:12 (KJV "honestly") (cf. 1 Cor 14:40)

A. The word "honestly" or "decently" literally means, "well formed," and denotes something done in a seemly, decent, fitting, or proper way.

B. Related words refer to attractiveness/beauty, decorum/dignity, seemliness/ propriety, honor/high standing, and modesty. Cf. 1 Cor 12:23 ("comeliness" KJV; "modesty" NKJV).

C. The admonition to walk in a proper, decent, or honest way implies that a Christian should be able to discern what that is. How does one walk decently? By applying the principles of God's Word to one's own personal conduct. A proper/decent lifestyle conforms to God's will for the believer. In those areas where God has not stated his particular will, believers are responsible to apply general biblical principles. Unfortunately, Christians today seem not to be able to agree on what proper/decent behavior is. Many do not seem to be concerned about following such admonitions.

Note the Quote: Paul is exhorting the saints to give an honest impression of themselves to the world. They should conduct themselves in a manner befitting their high station in life, as saints of the Most High God. Their outward expression should conform to their inner regenerated being.[69]

II. Implications from the texts

A. Romans 13:12-14—In order to walk "properly" in our personal lives, we must

1. walk "as in the day"

a) To "walk…as in the day" implies an open, honest, legal, moral way of living. We must "put on the armor of light" (Rom 13:12). God is light, and those in fellowship with God will adopt God's holy character (1 John 1:5-7). We should have nothing to hide and should not be embarrassed by what we allow ourselves to do.

[69] Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), Ro 13:13.

b) The "day," of course, stands in stark contrast to the "night." Criminal and immoral activities ("works of darkness" Rom 13:12) often occur at night (1 Thes 5:7). Men love darkness rather than light because their works are evil (John 3:19). Satan leads the "rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph 6:12). Believers must have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph 5:21). Following Jesus means not walking in darkness (John 8:12) or abiding in darkness (John 12:46).

2. Walk by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (clothe yourself with Christ)

a) This occurs initially at salvation. The conversion experience places the believer "in/into Christ" (Gal 3:27). Unity with Christ means that the believer has "put on" Christ.

b) This occurs repeatedly as the believer conforms more closely to the image of Christ in his daily behavior (sanctification). As the believer "puts off" the old, pre-conversion way of living, he also "puts on" the new man/self who is "is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col 3:10; cf. Eph 4:22-24).

c) Paul seems to be saying, "Having laid aside the garment of sin, now deck yourselves more and more with the robe of Christ's righteousness, so that whenever Satan reminds you of your sinfulness, you immediately remind him and yourselves of your new standing with God." Believers must not rest on their laurels, but should continue to do in practice what they have already done in principle (Gal. 3:27).[70]

3. Do not walk

a) in revelry/rioting—carousing, drinking parties; drunken parades or late night celebrations usually including alcohol-infused feasting, raucous music, and loud, rude behavior

b) in drunkenness—intoxication leading to loss of control and "excess" (Eph 5:18—dissipation, prodigality, wildness, disorder, waste)

c) in lewdness ("chambering" KJV)—sexual immorality

d) lust ("wantonness" KJV)—moral license, debauchery, shameless sexual excess; the "filthy conduct" of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Pet 2:7)

[70] William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, vol. 12-13, *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 443-44.

e) in strife—debate, contention, wrangling over words

f) in envy—the word can mean zeal (boldness, fervor, passion) or jealousy and selfishness; i.e., envious and contentious rivalry.

g) providing for the lusts of the flesh—a list of the lusts of the flesh (Gal 5:19-20) show us that such behaviors contradict faith in Christ. We should not even "make provision" for fulfilling these lusts.

(1) Provision—literally, "to see in advance, to note beforehand." The term usually implies "to care for, to have regard for, to be concerned about." Provision is interest in an object and forethought to attain it.

(2) Thus, we ought not regard the flesh (the body) to the extent that we indulge in "its lusts." We should not be thinking about or making plans to indulge our sinful fleshly desires. Thus, we must not indulge in materials (e.g., magazines, books, music, movies, TV, video games, etc.) that would excite fleshly lusts.

(3) "lusts"—desire, craving, longing; the word can be used positively, neutrally, or negatively. Obviously, "lusts of the flesh" is used negatively. Human, physical desires are normal, not sinful. But when we fulfill our physical appetites sinfully, outside of God's will—or make plans (provisions) to do so—these natural desires become "lusts of the flesh."

A list of lusts:

(a) Lust for pleasure—craving to satisfy physical appetites; hedonism (pleasure is the greatest good)

(b) Lust for possessions—yearning for material things and/or the prestige that accompanies ownership; materialism

(c) Lust for power—pride, the desire to be noticed and appreciated; desire to control others

B. 1 Cor 14:40—Our walk/behavior in the church must be

1. Decent—according to a well-formed plan; fitting, proper.

2. Orderly—arranged, orderly; not haphazard, by chance, careless, offhanded.

3. Implications: The worship services of the church should be characterized by order, solemnity, good arrangement, and planning. A certain degree of spontaneity may be appropriate, but not disorder or chaos. Being led by the Spirit does not require abandoning decorum. Churches that promote or tolerate wild disorder are in plain violation of this principle.

C. 1 Thes 4:9-12—In order to walk "properly" toward outsiders, we must

1. Love one another

a) Love for others is a basic requirement for Christians that gives evidence of true salvation (John 13:34-35; 1 Thes 1:3; 1 John 4:7).

b) Failure to love others amounts to a failure to love God (1 John 4:20).

2. Lead a quiet life

a) "study to be quiet"—make it your ambition (lit. "consider it an honor") to lead a calm, quiet life. Paul is advocating orderly, peaceful living. Christians should avoid tumult and disorder when possible (Rom 12:18; Heb 2:14). A quiet, subdued life is much to be preferred to busy, quarrelsome, public conflict. Christians should not cause disorder in the community.

b) "do your own business"—attend to your own affairs (lit. "do your own things"); don't be a meddlesome busybody (read 2 Thes 3:11). Calmly pursue your own interests. This does not rule out concern for others (see Phil 2:4), but it does prohibit a nosey preoccupation with what others are doing. Cf. John 21:22.

3. Labor with our own hands

a) In the Roman world of Paul's day, many considered manual labor as something only slaves, craftsmen, and the poor had to do. Upper class people avoided labor as much as possible and looked down on those who worked with their hands.

b) It seems likely that some in the church at Thessalonica were living disorderly, idle lives of dependence, expecting others to provide for them (see 2 Thes 3:6-10).

c) Paul advises his readers to avoid dependence on others and to labor to provide for their own needs (2 Thes 3:10). One who refuses to provide for his own family "has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel" (1 Thes 5:8).

The Christian Walk

Lesson 17: Walk Humbly with God

I. Text: Micah 6:8

A. "Humbly" in this passage comes from a rare root meaning "modest, cautious, careful, reasonable, or clear." The word "humbly" could be literally understood as "to humble oneself, to cause oneself to be humble." The only other place this word appears in the Bible is in Proverbs 11:2—"When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom."

B. Humility requires modest dependence on God and prohibits arrogant self-promotion. Modesty, as used here, is a sense of lowliness or selflessness, an attitude that recognizes one's dependence on God.

C. The requirement for a humble walk is used in conjunction with two other exhortations:

1. Do justly—practice justice rather than unfairness or partiality.

2. Love mercy—practice kindness and loyal love (*hesed*).

3. These three virtues—justice, loving kindness, and humility—summarize God's moral requirements for his children. They are signs of genuine religion and are absent among hypocrites and unbelievers.

4. The context (read Micah 6:6-8) shows us that, although the rituals of formal worship are important, God is primarily interested in one's heart attitude. The true believer will be marked by these three attitudes—justice, mercy, and humility/modesty. Without such pure motives, worship has no value (cf. 1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:10-18).

D. To "walk humbly with your God" implies not only selfless modesty but also active obedience. God has told us what he requires, and walking humbly with God would include obeying his commands. The prophet is calling believers to humble submission to God and his Word.

E. Cross references: 2 Chron 7:14; Isa 57:15, 66:2; Mt 11:29; Rom 12:3; 1 Pet 5:5-6

II. Definition of humility

A. Humility is the habitual frame of mind of a child of God who feels not only that he owes all his natural gifts, etc., to God, but also that he has been the object of undeserved redeeming love, and who regards himself as being not his own, but God's in Christ. He cannot exalt himself, for he knows that he has nothing of himself. The humble mind is thus at the root of all other graces and virtues. Self-exaltation spoils everything. There can be no real love without humility. "Love," said Paul, "does not boast, it is not proud" (1 Cor 13:4). As Augustine said, humility is first, second and third in Christianity. [71]

[71] ISBE

B. Like every Christian virtue, humility is rooted in the character of God. God humbles himself, stooping down to behold the things done on earth (Ps 113:4-6). Since God is the "high and lofty one," those who come to God must approach him with a "contrite and humble spirit" (Isa 57:15). Pride simply cannot be tolerated; God hates it (Prov 6:16-17). Worship is often expressed by bowing down or bowing low before God. This is the right attitude when coming into God's presence—humble and contrite (Isa 66:2b).

C. Humility is an essential characteristic of the man who is right with God. God humbles men in order to bring them to Himself (Dt 8:2-3), and it is when men humble themselves before Him that they are accepted (1 Ki 21:29; 2 Ch 7:14); to "walk humbly with thy God" completes the Divine requirements (Mic 6:8).

D. One author said, "Humility is simply man's acknowledging the truth of his position as man and yielding to God His place."[72]

III. Truths about humility

A. Humility is one of the chief Christian character traits. Believers are repeatedly commanded to humble. As a sign of genuine religion, humility is necessary to enter God's kingdom or be great in it (Mt 5:3; 20:26-27). One must become humble like a little child in order to be a follower of Christ (Mt 18:1-4).

Numbers 12:3 *Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.*

1 Cor 13:4-5 *Love ... does not boast, it is not proud ... it is not self-seeking.*

Galatians 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . gentleness . . . meekness.*

Humility is a character trait that all believers should strive to develop within their lives. Humility is not weakness. Humble people often do great things. They just don't boast about their accomplishments.

How do people show that they are humble? *By being thoughtful and considerate; by asking others about themselves; by not boasting about themselves or talking about themselves; by letting others go first;*

B. Humility was a primary characteristic of Jesus.

Matthew 11:29 *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

The dual usage of "meek" and "lowly (humble) in heart" in this verse emphasizes Christ's humility before humankind, whom he came to serve (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27) and his submission before God. Humility and meekness are often inseparable (2 Cor. 10:1; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12).[73] Jesus humbled himself as a servant, even to the point of death.

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[72] Andrew Murray, *Humility*.

[73] Walter A. Elwell *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker reference library; Logos Library System (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996).

Phil 2:5-8 *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

C. Paul's humility serves as another example for Christians to emulate.

1. He confessed that he was the "chiefest of sinners" (1 Tim 1:15), least of all saints (Eph 3:8) and not worthy to be an apostle (1 Cor 15:9). He gloried in the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10; cf. 2 Cor. 12:9–10) and in the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14; cf. 1 Cor. 1:18–2:5) rather than self-righteousness (Phil. 3:3–9).[74]

2. He served with humility and tears (Acts 20:18-21).

3. If Paul, perhaps the greatest Christian to ever live, exhibited such humility, how much more should we strive to follow his example (cf. 1 Cor 11:1).

D. Humility is the path to exaltation. The way up is down. The way to get is to give. Those who desire to lead must serve. This is the Christian way.

Prov 15:33 … *before honour is humility.*

Prov 29:23 *A man's pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.*

Matt 20:26-28 *Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Luke 14:11 *For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

E. Humility is expressed in various ways.

1. Submission to God, i.e., obedience (Ps 25:9, 12–14; Prov 15:33)

2. Prayer (2 Chron 7:14)

3. Fasting (Ezra 8:21)

4. Worship (Dan 6:10)

IV. The Bible condemns pride, the opposite of humility.

Proverbs 27:2 *Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.*

A. Pride could be defined as a refusal to depend on God, be subject to him, or give him the honor he deserves. Instead, a proud person brings glory to himself and

[74] Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

makes himself the center of attention. Pride is self-confidence that leaves God out of the picture. Read Jer 48:29.

B. Pride results in arrogance, insensitivity to others, and presumption. Pride led to Uzziah's downfall (2 Chron. 26:16); it hardened the heart of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5:20); it goes before destruction (Prov. 16:18); it does not seek God (Ps. 10:4); it brings disgrace (Prov. 11:2); it breeds quarrels (Prov. 13:10); it deceives (Jer. 49:16; Obad. 3); it brings low (Prov. 29:23; Isa. 2:11; 23:9); it humbles (Isa. 2:17; Dan. 4:37).The proud will be scattered and the humble exalted (Luk 1:51-53).[75]

C. God resists the proud (James 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5). Pride appears in NT sin lists (Mark 7:22; Rom 1:29-31; Gal 5:19-23).

D. The word "pride" is used in a positive sense only rarely in the Bible to describe the "pride" (i.e., excellence) of Israel (Ps 47:4) or the "pride" (i.e., majesty) of God (Ex 15:7). Obviously, "pride" in these cases does not describe sinful human self-centeredness but pertains to God's lofty status. Otherwise, pride is a vice, not a virtue.

V. How do Develop Humility

A. The key to developing and maintaining a humble spirit is keeping in mind who you are and who God is. God is holy; you are sinful. God is sovereign; you are totally dependent upon Him. God is the judge; you are the one judged. God is the creator; you are the creature. God gives gifts and talents; you are just a steward.

B. Humility is a self-discipline; we must "humble [ourselves] under the mighty hand of God" (1 Pet 5:6; cf. James 4:10).

C. Follow Jesus' example of humble service (John 13:1-17). Do as Jesus did when he washed his disciples' feet.

D. Follow Paul's admonition to avoid selfish ambition. Instead, humbly regard others as better than yourself, be concerned about others, and follow Jesus' example (who humbled himself by taking on the form of a servant) (Phil 2:3-8).

E. Think soberly about yourself, not more highly than you ought (Rom 12:3).As a sinner, the only righteousness that you have comes from God (Rom 5:1; 1 Cor 1:30). As a human, the only value that you have comes from the image of God reflected in you (James 3:9). The only way you can do anything of value is because God is working in you "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). Everything you have comes from God (1 Cor 4:7; James 1:17). Such truths leave no room for boasting or self-promotion. Instead, they lead to an attitude of humble submission and gratitude for God's good gifts.

F. Reject culture's emphasis on self-esteem and self-love, which amounts to proud self-centeredness. Love God and others, and don't focus on yourself too much.

[75] Walter A. Elwell *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 18: Walk in Good Works

I. Text: Eph 2:10

II. Background/context

A. Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Trace the main thought of this passage.

Paul contrasts the former condition of his readers with their current spiritual condition. They had been "dead" in sin and deserving of wrath, but because of God's rich mercy and love, they had been made alive in Christ. He explains that salvation comes by God's grace and through faith, not by works. Genuine faith causes the lives of believers to be full of good works, which God has prepared in advance for them to do.

B. In verse 10, Paul explains why salvation is not based on good works. He describes believers as God's "workmanship" or "handiwork." The word literally means, "something made," and may refer to a work of art or masterpiece. God has "created" believers "in Christ Jesus." This refers to the conversion experience when believers are born again and placed "in the beloved" (Eph 1:6) or "in Christ" (Rom 8:1; Eph 1:1, 3, 10, 12, 2:6, etc.). This is a strong assertion of God's sovereign work in salvation. We cannot create ourselves; God must do it. Further, we must not boast as if we saved ourselves by our works.

C. God has placed believers "in Christ…for good works." This is a statement of purpose; God's intent in bringing us to salvation is that we might do good works. The divine aim for our lives is good works. As God's "work," we are to accomplish "work." Salvation has a broader purpose than mere personal benefit. Others will benefit from the good works believers accomplish.

D. These works are "before ordained" or "prepared beforehand/previously" for believers to "walk in them." The eternal foreordination of God included the practice of good works.

Note the Quote: God has prepared a path of good works for believers which He will perform in and through them as they walk by faith. This does not mean doing a work for God; instead, it is God's performing His work in and through believers.[76]

Note Another Quote: God prearranged a sphere of moral action for us to walk in. Not only are works the necessary outcome of faith, but the character and direction of the works are made ready by God. [77]

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[76] John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, vol. 2, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 624

[77] Vincent, quoted in Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), Eph 2:8.

E. What does Paul mean by walking in good works? See Titus 3:8.

Good works are to be a normal, regular part of the Christian "walk." As new creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), we walk in good works instead of living in transgressions and sins. God's intent is that believers "maintain good works" (Titus 3:8). Our life and behavior ("walk") ought to be conducted within the sphere of good works.

III. Godly wisdom about good works

A. Good works are non-meritorious. God's workmanship is not achieved by good works, but it is to result in good works (cf. Titus 2:14; 3:5, 8).[78] Good works are a result, not a cause, of salvation. Further, since these good works were divinely pre-arranged and divinely energized, we can take no credit for planning or accomplishing them.

B. Good works are both divinely prepared and humanly produced. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility come together in good works. God prepares them ahead of time for us to do. God is working in us so that we may "work out" our salvation (read Phil 2:12-13). Who is really doing the good works? We work because God is working in us. Obviously, we are not mere puppets or robots, but neither would we be inclined to accomplish good works without God's involvement. Producing good works, as an aspect of sanctification, is both the work of God and the work of the believer.

C. Good works are the fruit of faith (Titus 2:14). Salvation by faith is the root, and good works are the fruit. Jesus expects a good tree to produce good fruit (John 15:2, 5, 8). Many may claim to have spiritual life, but only those who bear fruit are genuinely saved (Mt 13:19-23). Bearing fruit and walking in good works is the same thing.

D. Good works are "good" only when

1. They spring from godly (*agape*) love (1 Cor 13:3). The moral character of an act is determined by the moral principle that prompts it. Faith and love in the heart are the essential elements of all true obedience. Hence good works only spring from a believing heart, can only be done by one reconciled to God (Eph 2:10; James 2:18, 22).[79]

2. They have the glory of God as their ultimate object (1 Cor 10:31; 1 Pet 4:11).

3. They are governed by the revealed will of God (Deut 12:32; Rev 22:18, 19).

4. They are "of faith" and done in the name of Christ (Rom 14:23; Col 3:17).

E. Good works characterized Jesus' ministry; he "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38; cf. Mt 4:23-24, 11:5, 15:30; John 13:14-15). We must follow his example.

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[78] *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 624.
[79] M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893).

F. Good works are to be done in public. In some cases (e.g., involvement in a community project), public good works shine the light of the Gospel in a dark world and bring glory to God (Mt 5:16). One cannot be salt and light in a corrupt and dying world without showing good works openly.

G. Good works are to be done in private. In some cases (e.g., charitable giving/alms), good works should be done quietly, "in secret," without fanfare (Mt 6:1-4). Alerting others to your charitable work is the height of hypocrisy and merits no eternal rewards.

H. Good works are an evidence of living faith, for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). Faith without works is not saving faith; non-working faith does not save. However, we should not conclude that, since good works do not save, they are not necessary. The biblical expectation is that we "trust in the Lord and do good" (Ps 37:3). Both faith and works exist in the believer's life.

I. Good works, done for the right reasons and with the right attitude, earn eternal rewards. Even though God pre-arranged our good works and empowers us to do them, when we do good works, we "lay up treasure in heaven" (Mt 6:19). At the Judgment Seat of Christ, good works done properly will earn "gold, silver, and precious stones" (1 Cor 3:11f). God will not forget the believer's "labor of love" (Heb 6:10—serving the saints). Steadfast, unmovable, abundant work for the Lord is not "in vain" (1 Cor 15:58). It's not the work itself that is rewardable, but the fact that it was done for Christ with the right intent and attitude. No doubt the best works of the most sincere believer are imperfect in many ways, yet God accepts them through the mediation and merits of Christ.

J. Good works require perseverance (2 Thes 3:13). Paul encourages us not to "lose heart" or "grow wearing in doing good" (Gal 6:9), with the promise that "in due season we shall reap." God will reward our good works at the right time, according to the divine time table. One may well become discouraged if he expects to be rewarded for his good works immediately. Read Eph 6:8.

Note the Quote: Well-doing requires *continued* effort, *constant* toil; but human nature, being fond of ease, lacks staying-power, is easily discouraged. This is especially true when results are not always apparent at once, when those who should help refuse to cooperate, and when no reward seems ever to be coming our way.[80]

K. Good works should be expressed "to all men, especially unto them of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10). We have an obligation to help our needy neighbors whenever we have an opportunity (cf. the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37). We must even do good to those who hate us (Luke 6:27-31). But we have a higher obligation to help fellow believers in need. Read 1 Pet 3:8-13.

L. Good works cannot be added to faith as a means of salvation (Rom 11:6; cf. Gal 2:21). Any work added to faith as a means of salvation (e.g., the sacraments) annuls God's grace, which cannot be earned.

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[80] William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, vol. 8, *Exposition of Galatians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 238.

M. The good works of the heathen are useless as a means of salvation, since the man himself relies on the flesh and not on the grace of God (Rom 8:7–8).[81] We do not deny that unsaved people do good things. Theologically speaking, common grace allows anyone to do beneficial works. Even the most wicked people occasionally do good things (e.g., Hitler treated his dogs and servants very well). However, good works accomplished by unsaved people do not earn God's favor.

Common grace is an operation of the Holy Spirit, based on the atonement of Christ and God's merciful and benevolent attitude toward all people, by which He immediately or through secondary causation restrains the effects of sin and enables the positive accomplishment and performance of civic righteousness and good among all men.[82]

Common grace is a non-redemptive enabling in the civic area and not in the spiritual or salvific realm. Common grace is not an enablement to do spiritual good. Spiritual good (or the truly good) is the product of regeneration. God, in common grace, by an operation of the Holy Spirit, accomplishes this civic righteousness (e.g., honesty, advances in science and technology, benevolent skills, genuine art, etc.) through the unrenewed natures of men even though this good is unrewardable in terms of His eternal holiness and self-glory. In those terms it is actually punishable (Rom 14:23 "whatever is not of faith is sin").

N. The absence of good works and/or the habitual practice of wicked works demonstrates lack of saving faith (Jn 3:19; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Col 1:21; Eph 5:11; 2 Pet 2:8). Saving faith does not exist in the absence of good works. Likewise, saving faith does not exist where evil works habitually dominate one's life. Thus, the presence or absence of good works in one's life is an indicator of his spiritual condition (cf. Mt 7:17).

[81] J. C. Connell, "Works" in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard et al., 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1249.
[82] Rolland McCune, Systematic Theology notes, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 19: Walk Worthy

I. Texts: Eph. 4:1; Col 1:10; 1 Thes 2:12

II. Definitions

A. The word "worthy" has the basic sense of "equivalent, corresponding, of equal weight." A worthy thing is suitable or proper in relationship to a standard. God is the standard (1 Pet 1:15) and provides the standards. Our desire ought to be to live in a way that fulfills the Lord's expectations of us, to equal the Lord's standards. Believers must conduct themselves in harmony with the responsibilities which their new relationship to God imposes and with the blessings which this new relationship brings.[83]

B. Consult other passages using "worthy": Rom 16:2; Phil 1:27; 3 Jn 6

III. Explanations

A. Eph 4:1-3

1. Walk worthy of your calling/vocation. The believer's conduct should be in keeping with his calling.

a) Believers are called to salvation (Rom 1:5-6; 1 Cor 1:9). This is probably Paul's main emphasis—live in a way that "becometh saints" (Rom 16:2). Our lifestyle must measure up to our profession of faith in Christ. Our practice must reflect our position. Believers are to "walk" or live in a manner befitting their high standing. Those who are saved have been "called out" from the world unto God. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, which literally means "called out ones." Likewise, we must avoid denying with our lifestyle what we profess with our mouths (cf. Titus 1:16).

b) Believers are called to a vocation—a place of service (Eph 4:7) (see Lesson 15, which dealt with this subject in detail).

(1) Vocation includes service in your church.

(2) Vocation includes service in your home.

(3) Vocation includes service in your job/career.

(4) Vocation includes service in your community.

2. Walk in lowliness and meekness/gentleness. Lowliness describes someone who does not think of himself more highly than he ought to. Gentleness refers to that which is mild-spirited and self-controlled.

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[83] William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, vol. 6, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 57.

3. Walk with longsuffering. This word literally means "long-tempered," and refers to a resolved patience that can tolerate annoyance without breaking.

4. Walk forbearing one another in love. Christlike attitudes like humility, gentleness, and longsuffering help believers "bear with" one another. Forbearing the weaknesses and faults of others (and others bearing with ours) requires deep-seated Christian virtues like those mentioned above.

5. Walk endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Believers must take pains or make every effort to retain unity within the local church. Such unity depends on the work of the Holy Spirit. When believers are yielded to and controlled by the Holy Spirit, unity will be the result. When the church is united, it will be at peace. A "bond of peace" will develop among those who are pursuing it (cf. 1 Pet 3:11).

B. Col 1:10-14

1. Walk worthy of the Lord.

a) Paul is not suggesting that any activity on our part can make us worthy of a relationship with Christ. Justification confers a righteous status/standing on the believer, and it is only in this sense that anyone is worthy of following Christ. Paul's point here is that we should live in a way that is commensurate with our high standing and our esteemed Master.

b) Those who profess faith in Christ must live in a way that is proper and fitting for the Lord's people. A genuine knowledge of Christ reveals itself in transformed character.[84] Certain ways of life are suitable for believers, and other ways of life are not suitable. Mature Christians should be able to discern what kind of behavior is "worthy of the Lord." The Christian standard of behavior should be significantly higher than those who don't follow the Lord.

c) Those who profess faith in Christ must seek to emulate the Lord in suitable ways. Christians should be working to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13:14) and to add Christian virtues to their faith (2 Pet 1:5-7). Jesus is our primary example (1 Pet 2:21; 1 John 2:6). Jesus' love, holiness, humility, compassion, service, and zeal serve as a standard toward which to strive.

2. Walk unto all pleasing (cf. 1 Thes 4:1). The phrase "unto all pleasing" suggests the willingness to yield oneself to the will of another person for his happiness. The highest goal is to please God. This must be a conscious, willing commitment and determination.

[84] Norman L. Geisler, "Colossians" in vol. 2, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 671.

A life pleasing to the Lord is concerned with obedience in all areas of life (cf. 2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:10). But even more important than external obedience is a right heart attitude. We must do the right things in the right way for the right reasons. Even Christians can displease the Lord by their actions and attitudes. Pleasing God is far more important than pleasing anyone else (1 Thes 2:4).

Note the Quote: Pleasing God means much more than [simple obedience]. It is possible to obey God and yet not please Him. Jonah is a case in point. He obeyed God and did what he was commanded, but his heart was not in it. … Our obedience should be "not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6). How do we know what pleases God? How do we know what pleases an earthly father? By listening to him and living with him. As we read the Word, and as we fellowship in worship and service, we get to know the heart of God; and this opens us up to the will of God.[85]

3. Walk being fruitful in every good work. Fruitfulness is a sign of genuine faith (Mt 7:18-19, 13:23). Paul instructs us to "maintain good works," which are "good and profitable" (Titus 3:8, 14). Failure to produce fruit results in being cast off, withered, and burnt up (John 15:2, 6). "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:17, 20, 26).

4. Walk increasing in the knowledge of God. One way to please God is to learn more about him. Understanding and knowing God is a worthwhile pursuit (Jer 9:23). The Christian ought always to be seeking a deeper and more personal understanding of God and of Christian theology. We find a deeper knowledge of God in personal Bible study, in serving God, and in personal experience with God. Cf. Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 3:18.

5. Walk by being strengthened with all might according to his glorious power. Walking worthy of the Lord is impossible without God's enablement. God gives the believer the strength he needs to accomplish his will. As we yield ourselves as instruments unto God (Rom 6:13), we are able to please God in our behavior.

6. Walk by giving thanks unto the Father. Paul repeatedly exhorts believers to be thankful even in the midst of tribulations and trials (Col 3:15-17, 4:2; Phil 4:6; 1 Thes 5:18).

    a) Be thankful for your inheritance. Salvation confers a status of joint heir on believers (Rom 8:17; Gal 4:7). This inheritance has nothing to do with human merit; God himself "qualifies us" ("made us meet" KJV) to partake in this inheritance. Believers will inherit everything that Jesus promised—the kingdom, eternal rewards, an eternal home, etc.

[85] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 1 Th 4:1.

b) Be thankful that God delivered you from the power of darkness and translated us into his kingdom. Although the full extent of Christ's kingdom has not yet come to earth, believers hold the status/standing of citizens in the kingdom (1 Thes 2:12).

c) Be thankful for the redemption we have through Jesus death. Redemption is to release something through the payment of a ransom. The verb "redeem" implies both the utterly hopeless darkness and misery in which, apart from God's mercy, "we" (the Colossians, Paul, etc.) had been groping about, and the glorious but arduous redemptive work that was necessary to emancipate us from our wretched state.[86] Christ's payment for our sin was his bloody, sacrificial death on the cross. That payment was sufficient to satisfy (propitiate) God's wrath against us and to set us free from the power of darkness.

C. 1 Thes 2:12 (see Col 1:10-14 above)

1. Walk worthy of God.

2. Walk as one who is called into his kingdom and glory.

Note the Quote: Walk consistent with the dignity that He has conferred upon us. … We are to be like Himself, manifesting in our every step down here the features of beauty that were manifested for the glory and the pleasure of the Father in His well-beloved Son. Nothing less than this is worthy of the calling wherewith we are called; nothing else can be accepted by God as walking in love as becometh His children.[87]

[86] William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, vol. 6, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 62.
[87] *Outline of Sound Words*, "The Christians' Walk." http://stempublishing.com/magazines/OSW/41-50/osw42d.html

The Christian Walk

Lesson 20: Walk In the Light/As Children of Light

I. Texts: Ps 89:15; Isa 2:5; Eph. 5:8; 1 John 1:7; cf. John 8:12, 12:35

II. Definitions

A. We've seen previously (in Lesson 2) that walking in the light implies living in fellowship with God (i.e., having spiritual life [regeneration]), leading a godly life, seeking to follow Christ, and living righteously.

B. The Bible often contrasts walking in the light with walking in darkness, which implies living in sin and/or believing error (i.e., failure to walk in light and truth). Those walking in darkness do not understand; their eyes are blind and they fail to see reality. Walking in darkness results in "stumbling" (John 11:10), i.e., error, falsehood, and destruction. Essentially, walking in darkness implies spiritual death ("no light") because of rejecting the light of the world, Jesus Christ (cf. John 3:19-20).

III. Explanations

A. Psalm 89:15 *Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.*

1. The "joyful sound" the psalmist refers to here is the message from the previous verses, namely, that God is the sovereign Creator, the owner of all things, the God of righteousness, justice, mercy and truth (Ps 89:11-14).

2. Those who know that message "walk in the light of [God's] countenance."

a) The people who know that message would be "the assembly of the saints" (Ps 89:7), i.e., believers. Those who have this knowledge are responsible to live in a certain way. Knowledge brings responsibility.

b) The "light" in view here comes from "[God's] countenance," or literally "face." God's "face" often refers to his presence (since God has no physical face). "Light" here is obviously not light rays (or photons), but the benefits associated with God's presence. Read Num 6:26; Ps 21:6, 34:16, 44:3; 2 Cor 4:6.

c) The light of God's countenance also suggests God's favor toward someone (Ps 44:3) or God's knowledge of certain facts (Ps 90:8).

d) Thus, walking in the light of God's face/presence would seem to imply welcoming God's involvement in one's life and seeking fellowship with him. Those living in that light enjoy God's favor and welcome God's knowledgeable gaze upon them.

3. The Reformers used a Latin expression *coram Deo*, to describe living before God/in God's presence.

> **Note the quote**: To live *coram Deo* is to live one's entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God. To live *coram Deo* is to live one's entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God. To live in the presence of God is to understand that whatever we are doing and wherever we are doing it, we are acting under the gaze of God. God is omnipresent. There is no place so remote that we can escape His penetrating gaze. To be aware of the presence of God is also to be acutely aware of His sovereignty …, recognizing that there is no higher goal than offering honor to God. … To live all of life *coram Deo* is to live a life of integrity [and] of wholeness that finds its unity and coherency in the majesty of God. … It is a life that is open before God. It is a life in which all that is done is done as to the Lord. It is a life lived by principle, not expediency; by humility before God, not defiance. It is a life lived under the [guidance] of conscience that is held captive by the Word of God.[88]

B. Isaiah 2:5 *O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the LORD.*

1. The context before this passage has to do with the future <u>blessings</u> of the Millennium (Isa 2:2-4). Many people will desire to learn "his ways" and "his paths." The "word" of the Lord and his "law" will go forth from Jerusalem, and the Messiah will "judge between the nations."
2. The context following this passage is a <u>rebuke</u> to the people of Israel for turning their backs on God and accepting foreign, pagan idolatry (Isa 2:6-9).
3. Walking "in the light of the LORD" would seem to indicate <u>obedience</u> to God's word and <u>trust</u> in the coming Messiah. The prophet is exhorting Israel (the "house of Jacob") to forsake its paganism and return to the right path—obedience to the OT law and faithfulness to the true and living God of Israel. History shows us that the people rejected the prophet's admonition and suffered the consequences—destruction and captivity.
4. Christians today live in a similar environment. We may be enticed by the amusements of the pagan, secular world around us. The false religions and philosophies so common in our society may draw the attention of some. We need the reminder to "walk in the light of the Lord" and to forsake the pagan darkness of the unsaved world. God's light comes from the <u>Word</u> of God and shines forth from the <u>house</u> of God (the church) and from the <u>people</u> of God (cf. Mt 5:16). Commit yourself to follow God's light no matter what the obstacles or costs. The Messiah has come ("I am the light of the world" [John 8:12]) and we must "rejoice in his light" (John 5:35). If we fail to walk in God's light, dire consequences await us.

C. Ephesians 5:8 *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*

[88] RC Sproul, "What Does Coram Deo Mean?" http://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-does-coram-deo-mean/

1. Context: Paul exhorts us to imitate God (5:1), walk in love (5:2), and avoid sin (5:3-5). We must reject "empty words" (5:6) and refuse to cooperate with false teachers (5:7).

2. Paul contrasts the believers' former "darkness" with their present "light in the Lord." The former, pre-conversion lifestyle is no longer suitable. Believers must live in a way that is keeping with their spiritual status.

   a) Light symbolizes holiness, righteousness, purity, etc.

   b) Light is conferred on believers through their union with Christ. This is not personal holiness but imputed righteousness.

3. Since believers "are light," they must walk/live "as children of light." Their status/standing must impact their lifestyle/walk. The sense of the expression "children of light" is "people who are characterized by light." In the Hebrew way of thinking, a "child of" (something) is characterized by (that something). E.g., Noah was a "son of 500 years," i.e., he was 500 years old. Barnabas is called "the son of consolation/ encouragement" (Acts 4:36), i.e., he was an encouraging person. Thus, since believers are justified/righteous/holy in God's sight, they must live in a righteous/holy way. Children of light must walk in the light (cf. 1 John 1:5-7).

4. How do believers walk as children of light? The remainder of Ephesians tells us.

   a) Produce the fruit of the Spirit, namely, "goodness, righteousness, and truth" (5:9).

   b) Find out what is acceptable to the Lord (5:10). "Acceptable" means literally "well pleasing, satisfying." The sense is not that which is tolerable, but that which delights or brings pleasure. Our task is to do what honors and pleases God, not find out what God will tolerate or live in the margins and gray areas.

   c) Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (5:11). The word "fellowship" (*koinonia*) comes from the root word "common," and thus describes common ground or partnership with others. The command to "have no fellowship" requires the practice of separation from the unfruitful works of darkness and from those who practice them. This does not require total isolation from sinners (1 Cor 5:10), but it may entail rebuke of their sins. Cf. 2 Cor 6:14-17.

   d) Expose the unfruitful works of darkness (5:11)

      (1) "Expose" could be translated "reprove, convict; i.e., tell one's faults; bring to light; correct, admonish, reprove." We should not be afraid to rebuke others for their sins, as long as are not being hypocritical (Mt 7:3; Gal 6:1).

(2) The unfruitful works of darkness are so shameful as to be off limits for polite conversation (5:12). One can "expose/rebuke" sin without describing it in detail or conversing about it.

(3) Light naturally exposes error and sin (5:13). When the light shines, problems are exposed.

(4) Wake up and follow the light that Christ gives (5:14). The Bible repeatedly commands us to be alert, on guard, and watchful lest we are tempted and overtaken (Gal 6:1).

e) Walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise (5:15). "Circumspectly" means "accurately, diligently, exactly." I.e., pay close attention to your way of living; be careful about it.

f) Redeem the time, i.e., make use of the opportunities God gives you (5:16), especially in light of the "evil" days in which we live. Our life is short, like a vapor (James 4:14). We must invest the time that we have wisely.

g) Understand (and do) the will of the Lord (5:17). Etc.

D. 1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

1. John contrasts "walking in the light as [God] is in the light" with a mere claim ("if we say…") to have fellowship with God (.6). Living in darkness (i.e., habitual, unrepentant sin) invalidates any profession of faith (cf. Titus 1:15-16). You can't walk in the light and in the darkness at the same time.

2. "Fellowship" in John is synonymous with salvation. It does not describe the quality of one's Christian experience (e.g., "Joe is saved but out of fellowship with God."). One can be sure that he has been cleansed by the blood of Christ only when he walks in the light. Failure to walk in the light proves that one's profession of faith is false.

E. John 8:12 *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

John 12:35 *Jesus said to them, … "Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going."*

1. Believers have "the light of life," i.e., regeneration and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

2. Following Christ requires/assumes not walking in darkness (i.e., error, sin).

3. Those walking in darkness are ignorant of the danger of the path they are on and may be surprised of their destination.

The Christian Walk

Lesson 21: Walk in Love

I. Text: Ephesians 5:2 *And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

II. Definitions

A. The love that Paul advocates is *agape* love, that variety of godly love that sacrifices itself for the benefit of the one loved.

Agape describes a strong, non-sexual affection and regard for a person and his good as understood by God's moral character; especially characterized by a willing forfeiture of rights or privileges in another person's behalf.[89]

Contrary to popular understanding, the significance of *agape* is not that it is an unconditional love, but that it is primarily a love of the will rather than the emotions. The New Testament never speaks of God loving unbelieving human beings with emotional love or a love that expects something in return. But He loves with His will (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). The reason for this is that God can find nothing enjoyable about a sinner on whom His wrath still abides. So He loves by His will; it is His nature to love.[90]

B. The Greek language contained other words for *love*.

1. *Philos*—friendliness, compassion, virtuous love, loyalty; this word is sometimes used synonymously with *agape* in the NT and should not be understood as significantly different in meaning.[91]

2. *Eros*—passionate, emotional, instinctive attraction; this word is not used in the NT. Much of what passes for "love" in our culture is of this variety. An error common among Christians is that our love for God and/or our love for others is of this romantic, emotional, feeling-centered variety.

3. *Storge'*—natural affection, as that within a family; not used in the NT, although this type of love is evident in many places throughout the Bible.

III. Further explanations

A. The context of Ephesians 5:2 informs us about the kind of love that should characterize the life and behavior of the Christian.

1. Christians love because they are imitating God (Eph 5:1). Children of God share this characteristic with their Creator. Love is an attribute of God's goodness that should naturally surface in the life of every Christian.

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[89] From Logos Bible study materials.

[90] *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, R. K. Harrison and Thomas Nelson Publishers (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

[91] Building an entire sermon around the differences between *agape* and *philos* (as many do from John 21:15-17) is certainly questionable at best.

2. Christian love ought to be a lifestyle; the believer's "walk" is characterized by love. Christian love ought to infuse every thought, word, and deed. Everything ought to be done with love (1 Cor 16:14).

3. Christians walk in love "as Christ also has loved us." Christ's love for his people ("us") is the standard that should characterize our love for one another. Cf. 1 John 4:10-11.

4. Christ's love for his people was sacrificial, costing Jesus untold suffering and eventually his life. Jesus' love for us compelled him to give himself as "an offering and a sacrifice to God." Willingness to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of another is a key component of Christian love.

5. By way of contrast, Paul strictly forbids lust as a suitable expression of Christian love (Eph 5:3, 5). Christian love forbids fornication, uncleanness, covetousness (named twice here), filthiness, idolatry, and even foolish talk and course jesting. Essentially, the opposite of Christian love would be self-centered indulgence. Those who "walk" in such ways indicate by their behavior that they have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. The wrath of God resides on such "sons of disobedience" (Eph 5:6). Clearly, Christian love is a different thing entirely from what the world typically thinks of as "love."

6. God's love in Christ extends to all (John 3:16), yet it does not provide an excuse for sinful living (cf. Titus 2:11-14). God's love does not compel him to ignore or justify sin. "Sons of disobedience" (i.e., disobedient people) refuse to walk in godly love (because they are unsaved) and are doomed to eternal punishment under God's wrath.

7. Note what other passages in Ephesians say about love.

   a) 1:4 *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love* [92]

   b) 1:15 *Because of this I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints*

   c) 2:4 *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*

   d) 3:17 *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love*

   e) 3:19 *to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge*

   f) 4:2 *with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love*

   g) 4:15 *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ*

[92] The words "in love" could be placed at the end of verse 4 or at the beginning of verse 5.

h) 6:23 Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Perhaps the fullest definition of Christian love is found in 1 Corinthians 13, the "love chapter" of the NT. The command to "walk in love" means that believers must seek to live in a way that conforms to the biblical definition of the concept.

1. The attitudes of love (1 Cor 13:4)

a) suffers long—long tempered, patient; slow to become resentful, slow to take revenge; to be forbearing about personal offenses; tolerant of others' weaknesses and faults

b) is kind—to be useful to others, to serve, to be generous

c) is not jealous; does not envy. A jealous person wants what someone else has or wishes that someone else did not have something good. Christian love rejoices with those who rejoice (Rom 12:15) and is not bitter over the success or wealth of another.

d) does not "vaunt" itself—does not boast/brag. The word refers to a braggart or windbag. Such a person loves recognition, the praise of men (cf. Jn 12:42).

e) "is not puffed up" – to be arrogant, prideful; to have an inflated view of oneself; the opposite of humility

2. The behaviors of love (1 Cor 13:5)

a) Not "unseemly" – unbecomingly, rude, indecently; speaks of improper, inappropriate activity; behavior beyond the norms of decency.

Love demonstrates itself in proper decorum; it's one of the reasons we try to be polite. Even mundane things like proper dress, appearance, and manners stem from the desire to show love for one's neighbor.

b) Seeks not her own—not selfish, does not insist on having its own way; interested in the welfare of others, not self. This stands in stark contrast with lust, which is thoroughly self-centered.

c) Is not easily provoked—not irritable, not easily offended; controls one's emotions.

d) Thinks no evil. The word "think" normally refers to counting or reckoning; to take into account; to consider or number. Thus, Christian love "does not take account of evil; does not count up the wrongs done."

Quote: Here is a verbal portrait of a bookkeeper who flips the pages of his ledger to reveal what has been received and spent. He is able to give an exact account and provide an itemized list. Some people are keeping a similar list of wrongs that they have

experienced. But love is extremely forgetful when it comes to remembering injury and injustice. When wrongs have been forgiven, they ought to be forgotten and never be mentioned again.[93]

Christian love is a potent prescription for purging oneself of bitterness.

3. The values of love (1 Cor 13:6)

a) Rejoices not in iniquity.

(1) Many people support, endorse, and encourage all manner of wicked behavior (cf. Rom 1:32 "not only do [such things], but also approve of those who practice them"). E.g., those who support/defend abortion, pornography, blasphemy, drunkenness, humanism, communism, etc.

(2) Love never takes satisfaction in sin, either our own sin or the sins of others. "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). Love never drags out others' "dirty laundry."

(3) Genuine Christian love compels one to grieve over the sinful, chaotic, and fruitless lives so often evident among the unsaved.

b) Rejoices in the truth. Paul elsewhere tells us to speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15). You might think that love would allow us to fudge the truth a little. After all, "the truth hurts." Love may compel us to tell a "little white lie." Not so. Real love does not compromise truth. On the other hand, love teaches us to use diplomacy and tact when interacting with others.

4. The endurance of love (1 Cor 13:7)

a) Christian love bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things. In spite of all the evil and problems in the world, love remains optimistic.

b) Love covers the faults of others rather than delighting in them. It is trusting, optimistic, and willing to endure persecution (cf. Rom 5:3, 4). In short, it perseveres.[94]

C. The second greatest commandment (after "love the Lord your God with all your heart") is "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:37-39).

1. Jesus' disciples distinguish themselves by their love for one another (Jn 13:35).

2. Self-sacrifice is the greatest expression of Christian love (Jn 15:13; Rom 5:8; 1 Jn 3:16).

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[93]Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, vol. 18, *New Testament Commentary*

[94] *Expositor's Bible Commentary*

3. Practically displayed, Christian love results in kind affection for others (Rom 12:10).
   a) Demonstrate hospitality—a "love of strangers" (1 Pet 4:9).
   b) Extend appreciation to the unlovely. Sometimes, one must "stretch out" (the literal meaning of "fervently" in 1 Pet 1:22) love to those who are prickly or eccentric.
   c) Help the needy. Sharing our possessions with brothers in need is a fitting way of showing the reality of God's love in us (1 Jn 3:17).
4. Brotherly love (*philadelphia*) must extend to all those united to Christ by genuine faith.
5. Christian love even extends to one's enemies—those who curse you, hate you, abuse you, and persecute you (Mt 5:43-48).
6. Love is the first of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).
7. Love ought to be natural among Christians (1 Thes 4:9), but also increasing (1 Thes 4:10), lasting (Heb 13:1), and genuine (Rom 12:9; 1 Pet 1:22).
8. Love for the brethren is a proof of genuine salvation (1 Jn 3:14). It's notable that most of the admonitions to love apply to fellow believers; Christians must love one another. Failure to love the brethren indicates an unsaved condition (1 Jn 4:8).
9. Love is entirely compatible with discipline (cf. Heb 12:6-8). Just as parental discipline is an evidence of love for a son or daughter, so divine discipline is an evidence of membership in God's family.
10. Love for God and Christ results in obedience to divine commands (Jn 14:15, 15:10; 1 Jn 5:3; 2 Jn 6).
11. Love does no harm to a neighbor and thus fulfills the law (Rom 13:10).
12. Love builds up (1 Cor 8:1).
13. Without love, all achievements, talents, and sacrifices are worthless (1 Cor 13:1-4).
14. Our love should "abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment" (Phil 1:9).
15. Christian love is the "bond of perfection," and clothing ourselves with it should be a high priority (Col 3:14).

The Christian Walk

Lesson 22: Walk Circumspectly

I. Text: Ephesians 5:15 *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise.*

II. Definitions

A. As we noted in Lesson 20, walking circumspectly is part of the broader exhortation to "walk in the light" (Eph 5:8). A circumspect life is required for those who would walk in the light.

B. The word "circumspectly" means "carefully, accurately, diligently, perfectly, fully, or exactly." The opposite of this would be taking a casual, flippant, or indifferent approach to one's behavior.

III. Implications/explanations

A. A circumspect life is one that is careful or diligent about applying biblical principles and allowing the Bible to guide one's behavior. This would surely include cautious, practical applications of the Bible to one's own "walk." Believers ought to exercise diligent care to ensure that they are "walking" properly with respect to the direct commands and the reasonable implications of Scripture. It prohibits a neglectful, indifferent attitude about lifestyle issues.

B. Paul further emphasizes the importance of this by commanding believers to "see" to this, i.e., "take care, take heed." Likewise, the apostle directs us to "make every effort" (KJV "study") to live in a way that God approves of so that we remain "unashamed" of the behaviors we allow (2 Tim 2:15). We should be careful not to condemn ourselves by the things we approve (Rom 14:22). We don't want to face chastisement for allowing ourselves to live in a sinful or compromising way. Clearly, allowing or approving of improper behavior is a constant danger. That's why we must be "circumspect" – careful, diligent, and exact. If an activity cannot be done "in faith," then it is sin (Rom 14:23). There is no shame in pursuing high standards of behavior/decorum as we carefully and accurately seek to apply biblical principles in practical ways.

C. Certain areas in our lives require special care, diligence, and attentiveness. In our culture, media (e.g., TV, movies, Internet, music, magazines, books) provide an instantaneous and constant stream of content, much of it unacceptable, and some of it good. Christians must be "circumspect"—thoughtful, careful, scrupulous —when determining what forms of media they will access.

D. Paul further defines what he means by a circumspect walk with the words "not as fools."

1. Definition of fools: fools lack true wisdom. A fool in the Bible is a person who lives as if God and God's will were of no consequence. A fool is one who, either by ignorance or by deliberate and calculated premeditation, follows a lifestyle or commits specific acts that are detrimental for the person or for society. These characteristics stem from the lack of a proper

relationship with God.[95] Don't confuse foolishness with stupidity. Some fools are very well educated and intellectually advanced, yet possess little or no true wisdom.

2. Characteristics of fools.

a) Fools are <u>unteachable</u>.

Pr 1:7 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Pr 1:22 . . . *fools hate knowledge.*

Pr 18:2 *A fool has no delight in understanding*

b) Fools are <u>self-centered</u>

Pr 12:15 *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise.*

Pr 28:26 *He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.*

Why is self is a bad reference point to start from? Why can't the fool see his own folly? Jer 17:9.

We live in a culture that promotes self-centeredness, self-love, and self-confidence. These are foolish attitudes.

c) Fools are practical <u>atheists</u>, living as if there were no God.

Ps 53:1 *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."*

The Bible says that God has revealed himself to all people, so no one has an excuse for rejecting God (Ps 19; Rom 1).

Why would people want to pretend that God does not exist? *No accountability—no rules, no judgment, no eternal punishment.*

d) Fools <u>speak</u> foolishly

Ps 74:18 *a foolish people has blasphemed Your name.*

Ec 10:12-14 *The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up; The words of his mouth begin with foolishness, And the end of his talk is raving madness. A fool also multiplies words.*

Cf. Prov 10:19 *In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.*

e) Fools often participate in <u>immoral</u> behavior. Cf. 2 Sam 13:11-14

Note the Quote: The unwise are those who, having no insight into things that pertain to God and salvation, are not aiming to reach the highest goal and therefore do not know and do not even care to know what are the best

[95] Paul J. Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 317.

means to reach it. They regard as very important what is in reality of minor value or may even be harmful, and they do not appreciate what is indispensable. They conduct themselves accordingly.[96]

E. Paul finishes his admonition in Eph 5:15 by asserting that circumspect believers walk "as wise" (cf. Col 4:5).

1. Definition of wisdom

a) Wisdom is a broad concept in the Bible, ranging from technical skill to good management. Wisdom may denote cleverness, skill, or proper ethical conduct. Wisdom begins with God and is revealed in Scripture.

b) One might sum up the meaning of the term "wisdom" with the words, "know how." Wisdom is based upon knowledge; the two terms are used together frequently in Scripture (see Jer 10:12; 51:15; Luke 1:17; Rom 11:33; 1 Cor 1:24; 2:5; Col 2:3; Rev 5:12; 7:12). Wisdom cannot exist without knowing the facts pertinent to any purpose or plan. Wisdom entails the skillfulness to formulate a plan and to carry it out in the best and most effective manner.[97]

Note the Quote: "Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it. Wisdom is, in fact, the practical side of moral goodness. As such, it is found in its fullness only in God. He alone is naturally and entirely and invariable wise."[98]

c) Wisdom in Paul's NT writings is closely associated with God's revealed will (Scripture) and stands in stark contrast to the "wisdom" of the world, which is folly. Christ is the highest expression of the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24). Thus, true wisdom must be compatible with what Jesus taught.

2. Characteristics of wise people.

a) Wise people fear God.

Job 28:28 *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.*

Pr 9:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

b) Wise people seek wisdom

Pr 4:5–8 *Get wisdom! Get understanding! ... Love her, and she will keep you. ... She will bring you honor, when you embrace her.*

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[96] William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, vol. 7, *Exposition of Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 237.
[97] Robert Deffinbaugh, "The Wisdom of God" at http://bible.org/seriespage/wisdom-god
[98] J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 80.

James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

c) Wise people enjoy strength, stability, and prosperity.

Pr 3:13 *Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding.*

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

Living with Godly wisdom is especially important as we associate with unbelievers, to whom our faith and wise behavior should be evident (Col 4:5).

F. The broader context of our passage gives further information concerning a circumspect walk: it requires that we redeem the time in light of the evil days in which we live (5:16).

1. The word "redeem" suggests buying something out of the marketplace for one's own use or advantage.

2. To "buy" time implies wise use of every opportunity for obedience and well-doing (hence the translations "making the best use of time" [ESV] and "making the most of your time" [NASB]). The context of this purchase and use would be matters of faith (not finances, education, etc.). God wants us to use every opportunity to serve him, to proclaim the Gospel, to make disciples, help others, etc.

3. Paul's remark that "the days are evil" shows the hostility of the culture against the godly use of time. The word "evil" suggests active opposition against that which is good. We see this same antagonism gaining strength in society today. The freedoms we once enjoyed are slowly eroding away. In the midst of such opposition, opportunities for doing good may be limited. So the sense is, "Make the most of the opportunities available while they still exist." We must serve the Lord while we still can—"Work for the night is coming."

The Christian Walk

Lesson 23: Walk As Christ Walked

I. Texts: 1 Pet 2:21; 1 John 2:6

II. Implications

A. 1 Pet 2:19-24 This passage gives us principles to guide our behavior when we experience persecution because of our commitment to Christ. Peter directs our attention to Jesus, the ultimate example of submission to unjust abuse (cf. Heb. 12:2-3).

1. Follow Jesus' example in patiently enduring abuse (.19-21)

a) There is no glory in suffering for one's faults; we should expect punishment befitting the crime. Christians do not get a free pass from the trouble they create for themselves. Patient endurance of punishment for one's faults is hardly praiseworthy (.20).

b) To suffer "wrongfully" (i.e., unjustly) with endurance is "thankworthy" before God (.19-20). God looks with favor on those who patiently endure mistreatment because of their commitment to Christ. In fact, Christians are "called" to such a response (.21). God calls believers to do moral good and take it patiently when suffering for it. Christians must realize both that God knows the injustice which they patiently endure and that he has called them to face injustice.[99] Read John 15:20 and Phil 1:29.

c) God finds a Christ-like response to abuse "acceptable" (*charis*—gracious, favorable, commendable). We demonstrate God's grace when we respectfully submit to mistreatment that comes from following Christ.

d) Is suffering for Christ ever within God's providential will? Doesn't God prevent faithful Christians from experiencing mistreatment? Read Acts 5:41, 1 Pet 4:12 and 2 Tim 3:12.

e) One motivation for bearing up under unjust suffering is that the believer is experiencing what Jesus did. Christ's suffering for us leaves us an example; we are called to "follow his steps" (.21). Our goal when facing mistreatment should be to emulate Jesus' character and conduct as he faced unjust suffering.

f) Note that the instructions here apply to unjust suffering that one may experience because he is a follower of Christ. Is Peter insisting that we must patiently endure abuse of other kinds? Does this passage compel us to keep quiet when others are abused?

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[99] Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, vol. 16, *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 108.

2. Follow Jesus' example by avoiding sinful reactions (.22-24).

The word rendered *an example* (*hypogrammon*, lit., "underwriting"), appearing only here in the NT, refers to a writing or drawing that a student reproduces.[100] As a child traces the pattern of letters on a page, so the Christian suffering for his faith traces out the pattern left by Jesus.

a) He did no sin (.22).

(1) The Bible repeatedly asserts that Jesus never sinned (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Jn 3:5). No matter how sorely provoked, Jesus always responded appropriately, without sin.

(2) Obviously, humans are prone to sinful reactions to abuse, and it is unlikely that even the most mature Christian will consistently avoid sin when responding to unjust suffering. But our goal should be to respond to such situations as Jesus did, with self-control and submission to God's will.

b) Jesus' speech was free of deceit/guile (.22).

(1) Peter is alluding to the prophecy in Isaiah 53:9 (read).

(2) Using deceitful speech is a common strategy for avoiding trouble, but Christians should not sink to that level no matter what the circumstances. Peter has earlier urged his readers to "lay aside … all deceit" (same word, 1 Pet 2:1), so this is clearly an important principle. We should not use underhanded methods to protect ourselves from the negative consequences of following Christ. Honest communication must characterize believers no matter what situations we face.

c) Jesus did not revile (insult, abuse verbally) in return for abuse (.23). Hurling verbal abuse at abusers is sub-Christian behavior.

(1) At his arrest and trial, Jesus was "reviled," i.e., falsely accused of all manner of evil. He was charged with being a deceiver, a seditious rebel, and a blasphemer. Yet he never defended himself against such accusations, nor did he criticize those who made them. He suffered silently. Instead of cursing his enemies, he prayed for them.

(2) Jesus did on occasion use rather stern words to describe his enemies. He called people hypocrites, vipers, white-washed tombs, and blind guides. Righteous indignation is not sin. Severe language in such cases is warranted. His harshest criticisms were reserved for those who should have known better—the scribes, Pharisees, and Jewish leaders.

[100] Roger M. Raymer, "1 Peter" in vol. 2, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 848.

d) Jesus did not threaten those who caused his suffering (.23). He used no harsh language; he showed no anger. He called for no revenge. He prayed that they might be forgiven; he calmly stood and bore it all.[101] Given the fact that he could easily have wreaked vengeance on his enemies in retaliation for their abuse, the fact that he did not do so is remarkable.

e) Jesus committed himself to God, the righteous judge (.23). Instead of calling down God's wrath against his persecutors, Jesus committed his cause to God, knowing that his suffering and death were all part of God's foreordained plan. God's vengeance will fall on those who persecuted Jesus, and it will also fall on those who abuse Jesus' followers.

Note the Quote: When we are reproached and reviled, we should feel that we were called to this by our profession; that it was one of the things which we were taught to expect when we became Christians; that it is what the prophets and apostles endured, and what the Master himself suffered in an eminent degree; and that if we meet with the scorn of the great, … the rich, the powerful, it is no more than the Saviour did, and no more than we have been taught to expect will be our portion.[102]

3. Fulfill Jesus' expectations by dying to sins (.24). By his death, Jesus has set us free from the bondage of sin, so that we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ (cf. Rom 6:2–13; 2 Cor 5:15; Gal 2:20). We appropriate our freedom from sin's tyranny when we come to God in repentance and faith.[103]

4. Fulfill Jesus' expectations by living for righteousness (.24-25).

   a) Those who have died to sin now live righteously. Instead of being servants of sin, we are servants of righteousness. Sin has no more dominion over us. Righteous behavior begins to characterize the Christian's life.

   b) Peter reminds his readers, by referring to Isaiah 53 again, that they have been "healed" because of Jesus' "stripes" (.24). Healing in this case refers to salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation to God through Christ. Given that spiritual reality, they must continue to follow the "Shepherd and Bishop (i.e., overseer)" of their souls (.25).

Note: These instructions apply directly to those suffering unrighteously, merely because of their commitment to Christ. Applied more broadly, the principles given here tell us how to respond to all kinds of adversity. No matter what the

[101] Barnes Notes
[102] Barnes Notes
[103] Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, vol. 16, *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 112.

circumstances, Christians should try to respond as Jesus would, with honesty, integrity, self-control, obedience, and submission to God's will.

B. 1 John 2:6

1. Any claim to abiding in Christ must be accompanied by concrete action, namely, following Jesus' example. Ungodly living contradicts any claim to knowing Christ. Obviously, no mere human can duplicate Jesus' perfectly sinless "walk." Nevertheless, Christians are obligated to follow Jesus' example in ways humanly possible (with the Holy Spirit's enablement).

2. The context (vss. 3-6) clearly defines what John means by knowing Christ and abiding in him—keep his commandments (.3-4) and keep his word (.5). Failure to do so amounts to lying and forsaking the truth (.4).

3. Walking as Jesus walked amounts to emulating his character and conduct. Note several attributes of Jesus that Christians should seek to reproduce in their own lives.

   a) Holiness—consecration, separation from sin and to God; moral purity

   b) Love—to give of oneself for the benefit of the one loved; to seek the highest good and best outcome for others

   c) Faithfulness/Trustworthiness—integrity, reliability; keeping one's word; a steadfast commitment to act according to one's promises

   d) Mercy—compassion, pity, kindness, gentleness, especially exhibited toward those who are unworthy of it; willingness to forgive; not holding one's demerits against him

   e) Truth/Honesty—genuine, authentic; being what one appears to be; agreement to what is represented; consistency; truthful, in the sense of representing things as they are in reality; not lying, not hypocritical

   f) Grace—undeserved, unmerited favor toward the guilty; condescending benevolence toward the ill-deserving

   g) Righteousness—conformity to a right standard; commitment to doing what is right; obedience to God's moral will as stated in Scripture

4. Obviously, each of these attributes must be fleshed out in daily living in order to walk as Jesus walked. Jesus lived the way he did because of his inner personal qualities. Christians must be constantly striving to "put on" such virtues (cf. Eph 4:22-24; 2 Pet 1:5-8). While no Christian possesses these attributes in divine perfection, they should be present to the extent that they profoundly affect our attitudes and behavior.