

A Practical and Biblical Explanation of “Walking with God”

Sermon Excerpt from George Whitefield

Genesis 5:24 “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

“First walking with God implies, that the prevailing power of enmity of a person’s heart be taken away by the blessed Spirit of God. Perhaps it may seem a hard saying to some, but our own experience daily proves what the scriptures in many places assert, that the carnal mind, the mind of the unconverted natural man, nay, the mind of the regenerate, so far as any part of him remains unrenewed, is enmity, not only an enemy, but enmity itself, against God; so that it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be.”

“But Secondly, walking with God not only implies, that the prevailing power of the enmity of a man's heart be taken away, but also that a person is actually reconciled to God the Father, in and through the all-sufficient righteousness and atonement of his dear Son. “Can two walk together,” (says Solomon, [actually Amos 3:3]) “unless they are agreed?” Jesus is our peace as well as our peace-maker. When we are justified by faith in Christ, then, but not till then, we have peace with God; and consequently, cannot be said till then to walk with him, walking with a person being a sign and token that we are friends to that person, or at least, though we have been at variance, yet that now we are reconciled and become friends again.”

“Further, Thirdly, walking with God implies a settled abiding communion and fellowship with God, or what in scripture is called, “The Holy Ghost dwelling in us”. This is what our Lord promised when he told his disciples that “the Holy Spirit would be in and with them”; not to be like wayfaring man, to say only for a night, but to reside and make his abode in their hearts. This, I am apt to believe, is what the apostle John would have us understand, when he talks of a person “abiding in him, in Christ, and walking as he himself also walked”. And this is what is particularly meant in the words of our text. “And Enoch walked with God”, that is, he kept up and maintained a holy, settled, habitual, though undoubtedly not altogether uninterrupted communion and fellowship with God, in and through Christ Jesus.”

“Fourthly, walking with God implies our making progress or advances in the divine life. Walking, in the very first idea of the word, seems to suppose a progressive motion. A person that walks, though he move slowly, yet he goes forward, and does not continue in one place. And so it is with those that walk with God. They go on, as the Psalmist says, “from strength to strength”; or, in the language of the apostle Paul, “they pass from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord”. Indeed, in one sense, the divine life admits of neither increase nor decrease. When a soul is born of God, to all intents and purposes

he is a child of God; and though he should live to the age of Methuselah, yet he would then be only a child of God after all. But in another sense, the divine life admits of decays and additions. Hence it is, that we find the people of God charged with backslidings and losing their first love. And hence it is that we hear of babes, young men, and fathers in Christ."

How to keep up and maintain your walk with God

"And, First, believers keep up and maintain their walk with God by reading of his holy word. "Search the scriptures", says our blessed Lord, "for these are they that testify of me". And the royal Psalmist tells us "that God's word was a light unto his feet, and a lantern unto his paths"; and he makes it one property of a good man, "that his delight is in the law of the Lord, and that he exercises himself therein day and night". "Give thyself to reading," (says Paul to Timothy); "And this book of the law," (says God to Joshua) "shall not go out of thy mouth." For whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning. And the word of God is profitable for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, and every way sufficient to make every true child of God thoroughly furnished unto every good work. If we once get above our Bibles, and cease making the written word of God our sole rule both as to faith and practice, we shall soon lie open to all manner of delusion, and be in great danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience."

Secondly, believers keep up and maintain their walk with God by secret prayer. The spirit of grace is always accompanied with the spirit of supplication. It is the very breath of the new creature, the fan of the divine life, whereby the spark of holy fire, kindled in the soul by God, is not only kept in, but raised into a flame. A neglect of secret prayer has been frequently an inlet to many spiritual diseases, and has been attended with fatal consequences. Origen observed, "that the day he offered incense to an idol, he went out of his closet without making use of secret prayer". It is one of the most noble parts of the believers' spiritual armor. "Praying always", says the apostle, "with all manner of supplication." "Watch and pray", says our Lord, "that ye enter not into temptation."

Thirdly, holy and frequent meditation is another blessed means of keeping up a believer's walk with God. "Prayer, reading, temptation, and meditation," says Luther, "make a minister." And they also make and perfect a Christian. Meditation to the soul, is the same as digestion to the body. Holy David found it so, and therefore he was frequently employed in meditation, even in the night season. We read also of Isaac's going out into the fields to meditate in the evening; or, as it is in the margin, to pray. For meditation is a kind of silent prayer, whereby the soul is frequently as it were carried

out of itself to God, and in a degree made like unto those blessed spirits, who by a kind of immediate intuition always behold the face of our heavenly Father.

Fourthly, believers keep up their walk with God, by watching and noting his providential dealings with them. If we believe the scriptures, we must believe what our Lord hath declared therein, “That the very hairs of his disciples' heads are all numbered; and that a sparrow does not fall to the ground,” (either to pick up a grain of corn, or when shot by a fowler) “without the knowledge of our heavenly Father.” Every cross has a call in it, and every particular dispensation of divine providence has some particular end to answer in those to whom it is sent.

Fifthly, in order to walk closely with God, his children must not only watch the motions of God's providence without them, but the motions also of his blessed Spirit in their hearts. “As many as are the sons of God, are led by the Spirit of God”, and give up themselves to be guided by the Holy Ghost, as a little child gives its hand to be led by a nurse or parent. It is no doubt in this sense that we are to be converted, and become like little children. And though it is the quintessence of enthusiasm, to pretend to be guided by the Spirit without the written word; yet it is every Christian's bounden duty to be guided by the Spirit in conjunction with the written word of God.

Sixthly, they that would maintain a holy walk with God, must walk with him in ordinances as well as providences, etc. It is therefore recorded of Zachary and Elizabeth, that “they walked in all God's ordinances, as well as commandments, blameless”. And all rightly informed Christians, will look upon ordinances, not as beggarly elements, but as so many conduit-pipes, whereby the infinitely condescending Jehovah conveys his grace to their souls. They will look upon them as children's bread, and as their highest privileges. Consequently they will be glad when they hear others say, “Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord”. They will delight to visit the place where God's honor dwelleth, and be very eager to embrace all opportunities to show forth the Lord Christ's death till he come.

Seventhly and lastly, If you would walk with God, you will associate and keep company with those that do walk with him. “My delight”, says holy David, “is in them that do excel” in virtue. They were, in his sight, the excellent ones of the earth. And the primitive Christians, no doubt, kept up their vigor and first love, by continuing in fellowship one with another. The apostle Paul knew this full well, and therefore exhorts the Christians to see to it, that they did not forsake the assembling of themselves together. For how can one be warm alone? And has not the wisest of men told us, that “As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend?”