

Walking With God

“As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossian 2:6).

In the O.T., one can walk on a path toward a certain destination, and there’s a verb that’s used in the Hebrew Scriptures for that movement. But there’s another kind of walking in Scripture, and a different verb is used for that. This second kind of “walk” is really a metaphor, and it refers to our spiritual life. This kind of “walk” appears over a thousand times in the O.T. Its first use is in Genesis 5:22 and 24, **“Enoch walked with God”** (twice!). Enoch lived the way the Lord had prescribed. Walking with God refers to how spiritual we are, how obedient we are to God’s will, how much we fellowship with Him. And all these references to walking are for this life. How we live this life matters deeply to God.

We were made to honor our Creator. We honor Him by trusting Him, loving Him, obeying Him, being loyal to Him, and by serving Him as He has instructed. We honor God by fearing Him. We honor Him by being like Him, by doing righteousness and by eschewing sinful deeds. Our life expresses how we honor God. An all that is summed up by the term, “walk.” It’s why we’re here, it’s why we have life.

The idea of walking in Scripture can also refer to the path one takes. That is also a metaphor, referring to following God’s will, that is, what He has designated is the kind of life we’re to pursue. Thus, **“And you shall teach them ordinances and laws, and shall show them the way wherein they must walk”** (Exodus 18:20). Moses was to show Israel that the “path” on which they were to walk is God’s will.

Many English translations (the NIV, for example) translate the Hebrew “walk” as “well pleasing” or simply, “live.” That’s OK, but it misses what “walking” with God connotes, which is that walking with God, in Scripture, is relational. It’s a manner of life *within a relationship*. Thus, In Leviticus 26:12, God is walking with His people. He’s present with them, in their midst, and they in turn are to live appropriately to His presence. **“And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul”** (Deuteronomy 10:12). At Sinai, God had taken the Nation of Israel as His adopted son. The covenant ceremony at Sinai was like a marriage supper, as if God had taken Israel as His bride. The God of the Bible and the people of Israel were in intimate, personal relationship. So “walk” is how an Israelite was to live in relationship (fellowship) with his God. But let’s be clear: obeying God’s laws were not to be “saved,” but to honor and please the God who had saved them.

The idea of walking with God isn’t just for the Israelites in the O.T. era, but for believers in Jesus as well. The N.T. authors use the Greek word, *peripateo*, almost a hundred times to refer to our manner of life, and it’s translated into English as “walk” (except in the NIV). Thus, Paul writes to the Galatian believers, **“This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh”** (5:16). And to the Ephesian church, Paul wrote, **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has ordained in the past that we should walk in them”** (2:10). And, **“Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God”** (5:2). And this, **“Walk worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in the knowledge of God”** (Colossian 1:10). And not just Paul, but John too: **“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, purifies us from all sin”** (1 John 1:7). And John writes, **“This is how we know we are in him: whoever claims to walk in him must also walk as Jesus did”** (1 John 2:6). **“And this is love, that we walk in obedience to his commands . . . his command is that you walk in love”** (2 John 6). All these were written to believers in Jesus, but not so that they might be saved; they already were! They were written to instruct believers that they had a responsibility to live in the way that God had prescribed. They were not free to live as they pleased.

Why is this important? Christians today are so averse to anything that sounds like “works salvation,” or to anything that might be legalistic, that we ignore if not outright reject any concept that we must *do* something. We’ve made Christianity into a bizarre “faith-plus-nothing” religion. We today are certain that if we simply believe in Jesus, we have forgiveness of sins and the assurance of being in heaven, and that’s it! Nothing further is needed. The concept of the “walk” is lost. That we live to please God, according to His will and His Word, is lost. That we live to honor God, not to get to heaven but because He’s God and He’s brought us into an intimate personal relationship with Himself, is lost. This is tragic. Dear reader: May we look afresh into the Word of God, prayerfully, so that it grips us and changes us, while there’s still time. In this era, we’re here to honor God by exalting the Son, which means walking as He walked.