

## The Godly Man Walks with God

by Thomas Watson

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'Noah walked with God' (Gen. 6:9). The age in which Noah lived was very corrupt: 'the wickedness of man was great in the earth' (v. 5). But the iniquity of the times could not put Noah off his walk: 'Noah walked with God'. Noah is called a 'preacher of righteousness' (2 Peter 2:5):

### I. *Noah preached by doctrine*

His preaching (say some of the rabbis) was in this vein: 'Turn from your evil ways, so that the waters of the flood will not come upon you and cut off the whole of Adam's race.'

### 2. *Noah preached by his life*

He preached by his humility, patience, sanctity: 'Noah walked with God'.

**Question:** What is it to walk with God?

**Answer:** Walking with God imports five things:

1. *Walking as under God's eye.* Noah revered a deity. A godly man sets himself as in God's presence, knowing that his judge is looking on: 'I have set the Lord always before me' (Psa. 16:8). David's eyes were here.

2. *The familiarity and intimacy that the soul has with God.* Friends walk together and console themselves one with another. The godly make known their requests to God and he makes known his love to them. There is a sweet intercourse between God and his people: 'Our communion (koinonia) is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:3).

3. *Walking above the earth.* A godly man is elevated above all sublunary objects. The person who walks with God must ascend very high. A dwarf cannot walk among the stars, nor can a dwarfish, earthly soul walk with God.

4. *Visible piety.* Walking is a visible posture. Grace must be conspicuous to the onlookers. He who reveals something of God in his behavior walks with God. He shines forth in biblical conduct.

5. *Continued progress in grace.* It is not only a step but a walk. There is a going on towards perfection. A godly man does not sit down in the middle of his way but goes on till he comes to the 'end of his faith' (1 Pet. 1:9). Though a good man may be out of the path, he is not out of the way. He may through infirmity step aside (as Peter did), but he recovers by repentance and goes on in progressive holiness: 'The righteous also shall hold on his way' (Job 17:9)

**Use 1:** See from this how improper it is to describe as godly those who do not walk with God. They want to have Noah's crown, but they do not love Noah's walk. Most are found in the devil's black walk: 'Many walk, of whom I tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ' (Phil. 3:18).

1. Some will commend walking with God, and say it is the rarest life in the world, but will not set one foot on the way. All who commend wine do not pay the price. Many a father commends virtue to his child but does not set him a pattern.

2. Others walk a few steps in the good old ways, but they retreat back again (Jer. 6:16). If the ways of God were not good, why did they enter them? If they were good, why did they forsake them? 'For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment' (2 Pet. 2:21).

3. Others slander walking with God as a melancholy walk, and describe such as are less zealous as more prosperous. This God accounts blasphemy: 'the way of truth shall be evil spoken of' (2 Pet. 2:2). In the Greek it is 'it shall be blasphemed'.

4. Others deride walking with God as if it were a way of foolish scrupulosity: 'What? Do you want to join the "holy tribe"? Do you want to be wiser than others?' There are some people who, if it were in their power, would jeer holiness out of the world. The chair of the scornful stands at the mouth of hell (Prov. 19:29).

5. Others, instead of walking with God, walk according to the flesh (2 Pet. 2:10).

i.                    They                    walk                    by                    fleshly                    opinions  
ii.                    They                    walk                    according                    to                    fleshly                    lusts

i. *They walk by fleshly opinions.* There are six of these:

(a) That it is best to do what most do, to steer after the course of the world – to be in the mode, not to get a new heart, but to get into a new fashion.

(b) That reason is the highest judge and umpire in matters of religion. We must believe no further than we can see. For a man to become a fool that he may be wise, to be saved purely by the righteousness of another, to keep all by losing all – this the natural man will by no means put in his creed.

(c) That a little religion will serve the turn. The lifeless form may in policy be kept up, but zeal is madness. The world thinks that religion to be best which, like gold-leaf, is spread very thin.

(d) That the way which is exposed to affliction is not good. A stick, though it is straight, seems crooked under water. So religion, if it is under affliction, appears crooked to a carnal eye.

(e) That all a man's concern should be for the present. As that profane cardinal said, he would leave his part in paradise to keep his cardinalship in Paris.

(f) That sinning is better than suffering. It is greater discretion to keep the skin whole than the conscience pure. These are such rules as the crooked serpent has found out – and whoever walks by them 'shall not know peace'.

ii. *They walk according to fleshly lusts.* They make provision (turn caterers) for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). Such a person was the Emperor Heliogabalus. He so indulged the flesh that he never sat except among sweet flowers, mixed with amber and musk. He attired himself in purple, set with precious stones. He did not burn oil in his lamps, but a costly balsam brought from Arabia, very odoriferous. He bathed himself in perfumed water; he put his body to not other use, but to be a strainer for meat and drink to run through.

Thus sinners walk according to the flesh. If a drunken or unclean lust calls, they gratify it. They brand as cowards all who dare not sin at the same rate as they do. These, instead of walking

with God, walk contrary to him. Lust is the compass they sail by. Satan is their pilot and hell is the port they are bound for.

**Use 2:** Let us test whether we have this characteristic of the godly: Do we walk with God? That may be known:

1. *By the way we walk in.* It is a private, secluded way, in which only some few holy ones walk. Therefore it is called a 'pathway' to distinguish it from the common road: 'in the pathway thereof is no death' (Prov. 12:28)

2. *By a walk in the fear of God:* 'Enoch walked with God' (Gen 5:22). The Chaldean version renders it, 'he walked in the fear of the Lord'. The godly are fearful of that which may displease God: 'how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' (Gen 39:9). This is not a base, servile fear, but:

(i) A fear springing from affection (Hos. 3:5). A child fears to offend his father out of the tender affection he has for him. This made holy Anselm say, 'If sin were on one side and hell on the other, I would rather leap into hell than willingly offend my God.'

(ii) A fear joined with faith: 'By faith Noah, moved with fear' (Heb 11:7). Faith and fear go hand in hand. When the soul looks at God's holiness, he fears. When he looks at God's promises, he believes. A godly man trembles, yet trusts. Fear preserves reverence, faith preserves cheerfulness; fear keeps the soul from lightness, faith keeps it from overmuch sadness. By this we may know whether we walk with God, if we walk 'in the fear of God'. We are fearful of infringing his laws, and forfeiting his love. It is a brand set upon sinners: 'There is no fear of God before their eyes' (Rom. 3:18). The godly fear and do not offend (Psa. 4:4). The wicked offend and do not fear (Jer. 5:23,24). Careless and dissolute walking will soon estrange God from us and make him weary of our company: 'what communion hath light with darkness?' (2 Cor. 6:14).

**Use 3:** Let me persuade all who wish to be accounted godly to get into Noah's walk. Though the truth of grace is in the heart, yet its beauty is seen in the walk:

1. *Walking with God is very pleasing to God.* He who walks with God declares to the world which company he loves most: 'His fellowship is with the Father' (1 John 1:3). He counts those the sweetest hours which are spent with God. This is very pleasing and acceptable to God: 'Enoch walked with God' (Gen. 5:24). And see how kindly God took this at Enoch's hand: 'he had this testimony, that he pleased God' (Heb. 11:5).

2. *Close walking with God will be a good means to entice and allure others to walk with him.* The apostle exhorts wives so to walk that the husbands might be won by their conduct (1 Pet. 3:1). Justin Martyr confessed that he became a Christian by observing the holy and innocent lives of the early saints.

3. *Close walking with God would put to silence the adversaries of the truth (1 Pet. 2:15).* Careless behavior puts a sword into wicked men's hands to wound religion. What a sad thing it is when it is said of professing Christians that they are as proud, as covetous and as unjust as others. Will this not expose the ways of God to contempt? But holy and close walking would stop the mouths of sinners, so that they should not be able to speak against God's people without giving themselves the life. Satan came to Christ and 'found nothing in him' (John 14:30). What a confounding thing it will be to the wicked when holiness is the only thing they have to fasten on the godly as a crime. 'We shall not find any occasion against Daniel, unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God' (Dan. 6:5).

4. *Walking with God is a pleasant walk.* The ways of wisdom are called pleasantness (Prov. 3:17). Is the light not pleasant? 'They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance' (Psa. 89:15). Walking with God is like walking among beds of spices which send forth a fragrant perfume. This is what brings peace: 'walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost' (Acts 9:31). While we walk with God, what sweet music the birds of conscience makes in our breast! 'They shall sing in the ways of the Lord' (Psa. 138:5).

5. *Walking with God is honourable.* It is a credit for one of an inferior rank to walk with a king. What greater dignity can be put upon a mortal man than to converse with his Maker and to walk with God every day?

6. *Walking with God leads to rest:* 'There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God' (Heb. 4:9). The philosopher Aristotle says, 'Motion tends to rest.' Indeed, there is a motion which does not tend to rest. They who walk with their sins shall never have rest: 'they rest not day and night' (Rev. 4:8). But they that walk with God shall sit down in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:29); just as a weary traveler, when he comes home, sits down and rests. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne' (Rev. 3:21). A throne denotes honour and sitting denotes rest.

7. *Walking with God is the safest walking.* Walking in the ways of sin is like walking on the banks of a river. The sinner treads on the banks of a bottomless pit, and if death gives him a jog, he tumbles in. But it is safe going in God's way: 'Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely' (Prov. 3:23). He who walks with a guard walks safely. He who walks with God shall have God's Spirit to guard him from sin and God's angels to guard him from danger (Psa. 91:11).

8. *Walking with God will make death sweet.* It was Augustus' wish that he might have a *euthanasia*, a quiet, easy death without much pain. If anything makes our pillow easy at death it will be this, that we have walked with God in our generation. Do we think walking with God can do us any hurt? Did we ever hear any cry out on their deathbed that they have been too holy, that they have prayed too much, or walked with God too much? No, that which has cut them to the heart has been this, that they have not walked more closely with God; they have wrung their hands and torn their hair to think that they have been so bewitched with the pleasures of the world. Close walking with God will make our enemy (death) be at peace with us. When King Ahasuerus could not sleep, he called for the book of records, and read it (Esther 6:1). So when the violence of sickness causes sleep to depart from our eyes and we can call for conscience (that book of records) and find written in it, 'On such a day we humbled our souls by fasting; on such a day our hearts melted in prayer; on such a day we had sweet communion with God' – what a reviving this will be! How we may look death in the face with comfort and say, 'Lord, now take us up to thee in heaven. Where we have so often been by affection let us now be by fruition.'

9. *Walking with God is the best way to know the mind of God.* Friends who walk together impart their secrets one to another: 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him' (Psa. 25:14). Noah walked with God and the Lord revealed a great secret to him – destroying the old world and saving him in the ark. Abraham walked with God, and God made him one of his privy council (Gen. 24:40): 'Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?' (Gen. 18:17). God sometimes sweetly unbosoms himself to the soul in prayer and in the holy supper, as Christ made himself known to the disciples in the breaking of bread (Luke 24:35).

10. *They who walk with God shall never be wholly left by God.* The Lord may withdraw for a time, to make his people cry after him the more, but he will not leave them altogether: 'I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee' (Isa. 54:8). God will not cast off any of his old acquaintance; he will not part with one that has kept him company. 'Enoch

walked with God: and he was not; for God took him' (Gen. 5:24). He took him up to heaven. As the Arabic renders it, 'Enoch was lodged in the bosom of divine love.'

**Question:** What may we do to walk with God?

**Answer 1:** Get off the old road of sin. He that would walk in a pleasant meadow must turn off the road. The way of sin is full of travelers. There are so many travelers on this road that hell, though it is of a great circumference, would gladly enlarge itself and make room for them (Isa. 5:14). This way of sin seems pleasant but the end is damnable. 'I have', says the harlot, 'perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon' (Prov. 7:17). See how with one sweet (the cinnamon) there were two bitters (myrrh and aloes). For that little sweet in sin at present there will be a far greater proportion of bitterness afterwards. There get out of these briars. You cannot walk with God and sin: 'what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?' (2 Cor. 6:14).

**Answer 2:** If you wish to walk with God, get acquainted with him: 'Acquaint now thyself with him' (Job 22:21). Know God in his attributes and promises. Strangers do not walk together.

**Answer 3:** Get all differences removed. 'Can two walk together, except they are agreed?' (Amos 3:3). This agreement and reconciliation is made by faith: 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood' (Rom. 3:25). When once we are friends, then we shall be called up the mount like Moses, and have this dignity conferred upon us, to be the favourites of heaven and to walk with God.

**Answer 4:** If you desire to walk with God, get a liking for the ways of God. They are adorned with beauty (Prov. 4:18); they are sweetened with pleasure (Prov. 3:17); they are fenced with truth (Rev. 15:3); they are accompanied with life (Acts 2:28); they are lengthened with eternity (Hab. 3:6). Be enamoured with the way of religion and you will soon walk in it.

**Answer 5:** If you desire to walk with God, take hold of his arm. Those who walk in their own strength will soon grow weary and tire. 'I will go in the strength of the Lord God' (Psa. 71:16). We cannot walk with God without God. Let us press him with his promise: 'I will cause you to walk in my statutes' (Ezek. 36:27). If God takes us by the hand, then we shall 'walk, and not faint' (Isa. 40:31).

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