

## Chapter One: Walk the Walk

We often hear people say things like “Don’t talk the talk if you can’t walk the walk.” Quite simply, this means we need to be the people we profess to be. If we say we are kind and generous, then we need to be kind and generous. If we talk about donating to charity, then we need to actually do it. If we say we are Christians, then we had better behave like Christians. As Lord Bacon put it, it is “not what we preach but what we practice that makes us Christians” (qtd in Keese 32). What, then, does it mean to behave like a Christian? Spiritually speaking, what does it mean to “walk the walk?”

Many Hebrew and Greek words are translated “walk.” In the Old Testament the most prominently used Hebrews word for “walk” is *hālak* (H: 1980). It “refers literally to the walking of persons or animals, but it can also be used figuratively in the sense of ‘live,’ especially in regard to one’s moral or religious life” (Bromiley 1003). In the New Testament there are several Greek verbs translated “to walk.” Among them we find *peripateō* (G: 4043), which “occurs nearly one hundred times...although it is not always translated ‘walk’; its NT usage is almost evenly divided between literal and figurative meanings” (Bromiley 1005). Figuratively, *peripateō* refers to “one’s conduct or walk of life, i.e., the manner in which one conducts oneself” (Bromiley 1005). The term signifies not what we proclaim or just the aspects we allow others to see, but “the whole round of the activities of the individual life” (Vine 664).

Both Testaments use “walk” in reference to righteous and unrighteous lifestyles (Jeremiah 7:21-28; Romans 8:1). Furthermore, the Bible clearly teaches we must choose to walk in righteousness or unrighteousness as there is no middle ground (Matthew 7:13-14).

In Jeremiah 7:21-28 “walk” is used in reference to both righteous and unrighteous lifestyles. The prophet first rebukes the Israelites for a lack of obedience. Rather than follow God’s Law concerning sacrifices, the Israelites made meals out of their burnt offerings. The Law of Moses demanded burnt offerings be consumed by the fire on the altar, not eaten by the people (Leviticus 6:8-13). Jeremiah then reminds the nation that above all else God desires obedience. Therefore, their sacrifices were useless as long as they continued to live in willful disobedience. Verses twenty-two and twenty-three are a reference to Exodus 19:1-9 where God made a covenant with the Israelites when they left Egypt. It was not a covenant of blood and sacrifice but a covenant of obedience.

For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk

ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. (Jeremiah 7:22-23)

God simply asked for their obedience. He wanted them to walk (*hālak*), or live, according to his commandments. At the time “all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do” (Exodus 19:8). They talked of a righteous walk, but they actually walked in unrighteousness. “But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward” (Jeremiah 7:24). Rather than follow God, they lived according to their own ideas and desires. “They hearkened not to God and to his law; they never heeded that; it was to them as if it had never been given...they would have their own way, would do as they chose, and not as they were bidden” (Henry *Whole* 4:455). God wanted Israel to walk in righteousness by following his voice, but they chose to walk in unrighteousness by following their own thoughts and desires.

Romans 8:1 also refers to walking in righteousness and in unrighteousness. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This verse shows two opposing lifestyles: of the flesh and of the Spirit. Those who walk (*peripateō*) after the flesh are those who live according to worldly priorities while those who walk after the Spirit follow God and seek him above all else. Those who follow God are in Christ and will not suffer condemnation. Condemnation, *katakrima* (G: 2631), is a pronounced sentence “with a suggestion of the punishment following” (Vine 119). Such is reserved for those who walk after the flesh. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:6). Those who are truly in Christ will not live according to the world, but according to God and thereby walk in righteousness.

No matter the various terms different passages use, we have only two options: walk in righteousness or walk in unrighteousness. Furthermore, it is impossible to walk in both. Matthew 7:13-14 uses the illustration of two paths. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” The first path is a broad way marked by a wide gate. Broad and wide have similar meanings. Wide, *platys* (G: 4116), is actually defined as “broad” (Thayer 515) while broad, *eurychōros* (G: 2149), is defined as “spacious” (Vine 81). These terms indicate a path that is “easily entered” and “easily trodden” (Jamieson 911). Though it leads to destruction, many walk this path because it is the easiest route. “They fall into it easily, and without effort, and go without thought” (Barnes 35). They are too at ease to care destruction lies at the end. Destruction, *apōleia* (G: 684), means “loss of well-being” (Vine 165) and is figuratively used in Scripture to indicate the “loss

of eternal life” (Thayer 71). Jesus describes the other path as the exact opposite. It is a narrow way marked by a strait gate. Narrow and strait are also similar terms. Narrow, *thilbō* (G: 2346), means “to press” and refers to a place that is “hemmed in, like a mountain gorge” (Vine 426). Strait, *stenos* (G: 4728), is simply defined as “narrow” (Strong 1644). Though it leads to life there are few who find this path. The opposite of destruction, life refers to eternal life, the heavenly reward. Few find this path because it is a difficult path to enter and to walk. Strait and narrow indicate the path to heaven is “not obviously entered” (Barnes 35). Luke records, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (13:24). Strive, *agōnizomai* (G: 75), means “to fight, struggle” and is often used in reference to an “athletic contest” (Strong 1587). It indicates “to endeavor with strenuous zeal” (Thayer 10). The context indicates many will not be able to enter in because they seek too late. The pathway to heaven is not easily travelled. It can neither be found nor entered by accident. The road to heaven requires effort and determination, thus few there be that find it. No other paths are offered. Just the two, and they never merge nor intersect. We must realize we are currently travelling one of these two paths. We are either walking with God on the strait and narrow toward eternal life or walking with Satan on the wide and broad toward eternal destruction.

Since there is no third gate or middle way, we must choose one or the other for we cannot travel both. Jesus gives another illustration in Matthew 6:24. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Mammon, *mamōnas* (G: 3126), was a “common Aramaic word for riches” (Vine 388). It is here used in contrast to God, thus indicating worldliness. Serve, *douleuō* (G: 1398), properly means “to be a slave” and denotes “to obey, submit to” (Thayer 157). True submission can not be given to more than one master, especially when those masters are at odds. Inevitably, one master will draw more attention, obedience and devotion than the other. We will hold to the one we love and despise the one we hate. Love and hate are opposites, as are hold and despise. In its simplest form to love, *agapaō* (G: 25), is “to be full of good-will and to exhibit the same...When used of love to a master, God or Christ, the word involves the idea of affectionate reverence, prompt obedience, grateful recognition of benefits received” (Thayer 3-4). We hold to, *antechō* (G: 472), or “cleave to” the master we love and give him all of our attention (Thayer 49). Contrary to love is hate, *miseō* (G: 3404). It means to “detest” (Thayer 415) and is characterized by “malicious and unjustifiable feelings toward others” (Vine 292). He who is hated is also despised, *kataphroneō* (G: 2706). This word literally means “to think down upon or against anyone” (Vine 163). The very nature of the servant-master relationship requires full and total subjection, thus the impossibility of properly

serving two masters. “If a man will love the world, and hold to that, it cannot be but he will hate God and despise him...But on the other hand, if a man will love God, and adhere to him, he will comparatively hate the world...and will despise it...So divided are their interests that their services can never be compounded” (Henry *New* 3: 384). “One interferes with the other, and one will be and must be surrendered” (Barnes 31). Therefore, we must consciously choose which path we will follow. Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth” (Luke 11:23). Gathereth, *synagō* (G: 4863), and scattereth, *skorpizō* (G: 4650), are opposites. The former means “to gather or bring together” (Vine 261) while the latter means “to scatter, disperse” (Strong 1643). We are either actively working with God or we are working against him. We can not choose not to choose. Choosing to do nothing is the same as actively working against God. “The absence of positive attachment to Christ involves hostility to Him” (Jamieson 1006). There is no grey area. There is neither a middle path nor a way to combine the two paths set before us. We can not “ride the fence” through indecision. Our only choices are righteousness and unrighteousness; the strait gate and the wide gate; the narrow way and the broad way; God and mammon; gathering and scattering. We must decide which life we will lead, which walk we will walk.

The Scriptures frequently use the word “Walk” to indicate a way of life. No matter the terms or phrases used, they all refer to a lifestyle of righteousness or of unrighteousness. “There are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven, and the way to hell; in the one of which we are all of us walking” (Henry *New* 1:144). There is no middle ground. We must walk the walk of righteousness or of unrighteousness. A decision must be made for a choice of indecision is a choice against God. Therefore, “choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

### Questions:

1. In the Scriptures, what does “walk” frequently indicate?

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2. Why did Jeremiah rebuke the Israelites (7:21-28)?

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a. What did God desire from them?

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b. What type of covenant did God make with the Israelites when they left Egypt?

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c. How did God want them to live?

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3. What are the opposing lifestyles Paul addresses in Romans 8:1? \_\_\_\_\_

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a. Briefly describe each of the two walks.

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b. What awaits those of each walk?

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4. What illustration does Jesus use to describe our possible walks (Matthew 7:13-14)? \_\_\_\_\_

a. What do strait and narrow indicate?

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b. What do wide and broad indicate?

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c. Why are so many on the pathway to destruction?

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d. Why are so few on the pathway to eternal life?

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5. Why must we choose which path to walk?

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a. What relationship does Jesus use to illustrate this point (Matthew 6:24)?

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b. What happens when we choose not to choose?

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6. In your own words describe what it means to walk the walk.

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