

Chapter Eleven: Walk Honestly

The phrase “walk honestly” appears in two passages of Scripture (Romans 13:13-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12). A first glance one would think the verses deal with integrity—telling the truth and not being deceitful. While it is true “all liars” are listed among those who “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Revelation 21:8), the above passages speak of something else entirely. As we discuss what it means to walk honestly, we will first get a better understanding of how the New Testament uses the word honest and then discover the what the phrase “walk honestly” represents in the above passages.

The New Testament typically uses honest in a different way from how we use it today. To us honest means “truthfulness and integrity” and stands in opposition to that which is “deceptive and fraudulent” (Berube 531). Truth and honesty go hand in hand. In Romans 13:13 and 1 Thessalonians 4:12 honestly is translated from *euschēmonōs* (G: 2156). It means “decently, fittingly, becomingly, properly” (Strong 1613). It denotes “in a seemingly manner” (Vine 151). The New King James translation uses “properly” in both passages. The only other New Testament usage of *euschēmonōs* is 1 Corinthians 14:40 where it is translated “decently” in both the King James and the New King James. We see, then, the difference between today’s English usage and the New Testament usage. Though truthfulness and integrity are a part of what is fitting and proper, honestly involves much more. Keep this in mind as we study these passages.

Though Romans 13:13-14 and 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 both describe a proper walk, the specifics of that walk differ. In both passages walk, *peripateō* (G: 4043), refers to our conduct—how we live our lives (Thayer 504). The difference comes in relation to what aspect of our lives the passages take into consideration. For the Romans Paul used walk honestly “in contrast to the shamefulness of the Gentile social life” while for the Thessalonians “the contrast is to idleness” (Vine 151). Generally speaking, to walk honestly is to live every aspect of life in a way that is proper and fitting for the Christian to live. All instructions to daily Christian living fall into the category of walking honestly. These passages describe specific areas of proper life but in no means stand as the sum of such a walk.

In Paul’s letter to the Romans he first describes what an honest walk does NOT include and then simply states how we walk honestly. “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:13-14). Paul gives three categories

of sins to describe an improper lifestyle. The first is “varied forms of intemperance” (Jamieson 1177), namely rioting, *kōmos* (G: 2970) and drunkenness, *methē* (G: 3178). Rioting means “orgy, revelry, carousing” (Strong 1623) and is used of “feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry” (Thayer 367). In the biblical sense, rioting includes more than the typical chaotic riots of destruction we see from time to time on the news. It can also refer to private or public parties with or without alcohol. Riotings are any loud and boisterous gatherings of excess, most of which are designed to gratify the flesh. Often associated with rioting, but not dependent upon it, is drunkenness, which is “intoxication” (Thayer 395). Second, proper Christian living does not include sexual impurity. Chambering, *koitē* (G: 2845), and wantonness, *aselgeia* (G: 766), both speak of sexual immorality. Wantonness is a general term meaning “unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence” (Thayer 79). Chambering is more specific. It refers to the “marriage bed” and denotes “illicit intercourse” (Vine 95). These two words encompass the broad scope of sexual immorality in all its varied forms. The third category cites contention as improper for the Christian life. Strife, *eris* (G: 2054), means “quarrel, strife, dissension, discord” (Strong 1612). It “is the expression of ‘enmity’” (Vine 604). Related to and usually a cause of such enmity is envying, *zēlos* (G: 2205). This word refers to “an envious and contentious rivalry, jealousy” (Thayer 271). All of these sins stand in opposition to the Christian lifestyle. Throughout the Scriptures such evils are condemned. In the first chapter of Romans Paul describes the corruption of the Gentiles with a catalogue of sins. Included in that list are various forms of sexual immorality, intemperance and contention. Paul concludes the list with these words: “they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (verse 32). Pleasure, *syneudokeō* (G: 4909), means “to approve of, give approval” (Strong 1646) and even “to applaud” (Vine 604). God condemns not only those who engage in such vile activities but also anyone who approves of them or who take delight in others performing them. The Christian walk should have nothing to do with these evils. Instead, God expects us to be temperate, pure and peaceable. Galatians 5:19-23 cites the “works of the flesh” and the “fruit of the Spirit.” Many of the works of the flesh fall into one of the three categories given in Romans 13:13-14. Included in the fruit of the Spirit are virtues which are the exact opposite of these evils. Notice in particular temperance, *enkrateia* (G: 1466), and peace, *eirēnē* (G: 1515). Temperance is “self-control” (Strong 1604). It is “the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites” (Thayer 167). Peace means “peace, harmony, tranquility...often with an emphasis on lack of strife” (Strong 1605). Temperance is the opposite of the riotous wanton lifestyle described by Paul’s first two categories in Romans 13:13-

14. Peace is the opposite of strife and envying, the third category. In a similar passage, Peter cites what we often refer to as the *Christian Graces* (2 Peter 1:5-8). He also praises temperance and adds, among other things, virtue, *aretē* (G: 703). Virtue is “moral goodness” in thought, feeling and action (Thayer 73). It, too, opposes the lust characterized by Paul’s second category of sin (Romans 13:13-14). A proper Christian lifestyle does not include intemperate, immoral and contentious actions. God expects us to lead lives of temperance, peace and sound morals.

After Paul describes an improper walk, he simply states how we walk properly: “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14). The phrase “put on” is translated from the word *endyō* (G: 1746). Literally, it means “to clothe, dress” (Strong 1608). Figuratively, it indicates “to be furnished with anything, adorned with a virtue, as if clothed with a garment” (Vine 214). To put on Christ is “to take him as a pattern and guide, to imitate his example, to obey his precepts, to become like him, etc. In *all* aspects the Lord Jesus was unlike what had been specified in the previous verse. He was temperate, chaste, pure, peaceable, and meek; and to *put him on* was to imitate him in these respects” (Barnes 652). A proper Christian life is one that follows our namesake. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 11:1). According to Peter, Christ left us an example and we “should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus said, “If any man serve me, let him follow me” (John 12:26). In his letter to the Philippians Paul writes, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (2:5). God expects us to transform our lives and be like Christ. We are “to become so possessed of the mind of Christ as in thought, feeling, and action to resemble him and, as it were, reproduce the life he lived” (Thayer 214). If we truly put on Christ, then we will walk honestly; we will live a proper life that is fitting of the name of Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 Paul contrasts an honest walk with idleness:

But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

To fully appreciate the meaning of these verses we need to understand the context in which they are framed. A major theme of 1 and 2 Thessalonians is the second coming of Christ. In both epistles Paul corrects misconceptions the people had gathered about this great event. One of those misconceptions deals with the

time of Christ's return. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2). Apparently, the Thessalonians had received letters thought to be from Paul that taught the Lord would return soon. As a consequence, it seems some of the Thessalonians had stopped working. Therefore, Paul gives his exhortation to walk honestly (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12). As with Romans 13:13-14, the phrase "walk honestly" refers to living a life befitting the Christian name. In order to do that we must: 1) Increase brotherly love; 2) Study to be quiet; 3) Do our own business; and 4) Work with our own hands.

In order to walk honestly, we must have brotherly love. Paul commended the Thessalonians on their love (verses 9-10), yet still called for it to "increase more and more." To increase, *perisseuō* (G: 4052), is "to have abundance, more than enough, over flow" (Strong 1636). No matter how much care and concern we have for our brethren we can always improve upon it. Such a love for others is often referred to as the Christian badge of discipleship. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). That love is exemplified in our honest walk. It is not possible to walk properly if we do not have love in our hearts—love for God and love for our brethren. Therefore, let us love one another even as Christ loved us and was willing to die for us (John 13:34).

To walk honestly, we must "study to be quiet" (1 Thessalonians 4:11). Study, *philotimeomai* (G: 5389), means "to strive to bring something to pass; hence, 'to be ambitious, to make it one's aim'" (Vince 21). Quiet, *hēsychazō* (G: 2270), means "to lead a quiet life" (Strong 1615). It is "living in the practice of the calm virtues of life" (Barnes 1096). The quiet are those who obey the law and avoid disorder. The riotous lifestyle of debauchery Paul described to the Romans (13:13-14) does not constitute a quiet life. Peace and temperance, the fruit of the Spirit, are characteristic of the Christian life, a quiet life. Such should always be our goal and we should do all that we can to achieve that goal.

To walk honestly is "to do your own business" (verse 11). The phrase "your own" is translated from *idios* (G: 2398), which means "one's own; private" (Strong 1616). "The noun is not expressed in the original but is supplied in the English versions by 'business'" (Vine 85). The idea is that we are to mind the affairs of our own lives and "not intermeddle with the affairs of others" (Thayer 296). The New King James actually reads: "Mind your own business," which is exactly what the phrase means. Paul later warned the Thessalonians about "busybodies" among

them and commanded these individuals to work with quietness (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12). Busybodies, *periergazomai* (G: 4020), and quietness, *hēsychia* (G: 2271), are here seen as opposites. Busybody means “to bustle about uselessly, to busy one’s self about trifling, needless, useless matters” (Thayer 520). The indication is they are so preoccupied running here and there to meddle in everyone else’s lives they neglect their own affairs (Vine 85). Quietness is the noun form of the verb quiet, *hēsychazō* (G: 2270), used in 1 Thessalonians 4:11. It means “quietness, silence; settling down, lack of disturbance” (Strong 1615). The Christian walk is one of tranquility, not the hustle and bustle of the meddling gossip-monger.

To walk honestly is “to work with your own hands” (1 Thessalonians 4:11). Work, *ergazomai* (G: 2038), means “to work, be active, accomplish (something)” (Strong 1612). It is the opposite of “inactivity or idleness” (Thayer 247). Paul’s message to the Thessalonians was to resume their work for the time of the Lord’s return is unknown. The Christian life is not one of sloth, but activity; not of begging or stealing, but of giving. “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Ephesians 4:28). If we do not provide for the needs of our families and loved ones, then we are worse than infidels (1 Timothy 5:8). God expects his children to work.

Paul gives two results of an honest walk. “That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (1 Thessalonians 4:12). The first is their example to unbelievers. To those on the outside looking in some of the Thessalonians showed Christianity to be a cause of sloth and poverty. With their belief Christ was coming soon, they saw no need to work. As a result, they became idle, and from idleness comes “tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not” (1 Timothy 5:13). Additionally, without working they could not support themselves and their families. This, Pauls’ seconds result of walking honestly, would keep them from begging from their Christian brethren who did not stop working and from their non-Christian neighbors, to whom they were setting a poor example. What a pretty picture the Thessalonians painted for the Christian life! They became poverty stricken, slothful beggars. Paul, however, commanded otherwise. “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). These verses encouraged them, and us, to live as becometh the Christian profession, “not bringing discredit on it in the eyes of the outer world, as if Christianity led to sloth and poverty” (Jamieson 1336). If they would work, as Christians ought, they would not be idle and thus turned into busybodies. Rather,

they would live quiet lives and thus be able to provide for their own. Thereby, the name Christian would not be a bad name but one that glorified Christ.

Though he took two different approaches dealing with very different areas of misstep, Paul used his letters to the Romans and the Thessalonians to describe separate aspects of a proper Christian lifestyle. To the Romans an honest walk is not part of the base party life of the heathen, but is filled with temperance, purity and peace. To the Thessalonians an honest walk is one of love, serenity and work, not sloth and poverty. These, however, do not encompass the whole of an honest walk. Rather, they stand as the encouragement and chastisement the Romans and the Thessalonians needed at the time. To these verses we can add any and all Scriptures that describe Christian character in all its virtues and traits. May we all live our lives in a way that is fit for the Christian name—in a way that brings glory to God.

Questions:

1. What is the difference between how we typically use the word honest and how the New Testament uses the word? _____

2. In what general ways did Paul use “walk honestly” in Romans 13 and 1 Thessalonians 4? _____

3. What three categories of sins does Paul give in Romans 13 to describe an improper walk? _____

 - a. What is the opposite of these sins that are a part of our proper walk? _____

 - b. How do we put on Christ? _____

4. Why did the Thessalonians revert to idleness? _____

5. What four things did Paul use to describe a proper walk and how do they relate to the Thessalonians' problems? _____

6. Use your own words to describe how we walk honestly. _____
