

“WALKING WITH GOD”

Last week, we learned about the rapid and tragic spread of sin in the human family, as Cain murdered his brother Abel and then fathered a line of descendants that wandered even further away from God. At the same time, we also saw how the Lord remained faithful to his promise to provide mankind with a Savior, as he gave Adam and Eve another son, Seth, and maintained a line of promise through him.

This week’s passage contains the genealogy of Seth up until the birth of Noah. It stands in contrast to Cain’s genealogy in that the emphasis is not upon the spread of sin, but upon the hope of salvation. While the story of Cain’s family was one of spiritual decline, the story of Seth’s family is one in which God is bringing people back into fellowship with himself. The message of this chapter is that, despite man’s fall and his resulting expulsion from the garden, some people are being made to walk with God.

Our passage begins with the phrase “the book of the generations of Adam.” The phrase “the generations of” occurs ten times in Genesis, serving to mark out various sections of the book. Here, it introduces the account of mankind up until the time of the flood.

The first three verses of chapter five summarize what we have been told in the previous chapters: God created man in his likeness; he created them male and female; he blessed them; and he gave Adam and Eve their son Seth after Abel was killed. Notice that Adam is described as having been made in God’s likeness, but that Seth is described as being born after Adam’s likeness. Adam could only produce offspring who were like

himself. Though he was created in the divine image, he fell from his original estate. The divine image in man is not what it was at creation, but has been greatly distorted by the fall. And this fallen human nature is the only human nature that Adam can pass on to his descendants. This is the reason why we all inherit a sinful nature at birth.

As we read through the list of these ten generations from Adam to Noah, we are aware of a high degree of repetition. In fact, the wording is exactly the same for each generation with the exception of the first, seventh, and last two names of the list. We might expect to see some differences at the beginning and end of a list like this, but the seventh generation stands out. We will return to the significance of this in just a moment.

First, though, we should take a moment to consider the overall effect that is created by the repetition in this chapter. With one exception, the last phrase in the entry for each name on the list is “and he died.” Now, it is true that Noah’s death is not mentioned in this chapter, but in 9:29 we read the same words about him: “and he died.” There is a very clear emphasis here upon the reign of death in human experience. These men lived a very long time, but all of them, except one, died. God’s warning about the consequences of eating the fruit has taken place: death is now the experience of all mankind. There is no sentimentalism here; no attempt to deny the reality of what awaits each and every one of us when we reach the end of our days. Here we are hit square in the face with the fact that all men die.

We need to reflect upon the reality of death, even though we are living in a culture that tries with all of its might to avoid being confronted with death. We need to keep

before our minds the fact that we are all hastening towards the grave. It is not morbid to think this way; it is simply the truth. And we need to face up to this truth. As Calvin writes, “to nothing are we more prone than to dream of immortality on earth, unless death is frequently brought before our eyes.” Modern man likes to go through his life under the illusion that he will live forever, because that mindset allows him to avoid having to think about what awaits him when he dies.

Death is the universal human experience. But in our passage there is one man who does not die: Enoch, the seventh generation of mankind, traced through Seth’s line of descent. Enoch stands in sharp contrast to the seventh generation traced through Cain’s line: that was Lamech, whom we met last week. If Lamech serves as the paradigm for fallen humanity, Enoch serves as the paradigm for redeemed humanity. Whereas the others in Seth’s line are said to have lived and died, Enoch is said to have walked with God and then to have been taken by God. His life stands as a pledge of death’s defeat. [Kidner, 79-80] Though the fall resulted in man being expelled from God’s presence, Enoch lives a life of communion with God. And his life demonstrates that where communion with God is restored, deliverance from death follows. [Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 47] Enoch was spared from death because he walked with God.

This is the heart of biblical piety: walking with God. But what does it mean to walk with God? How can you and I walk with God? The Bible has much to say about this, for it is essentially what the Bible is all about. It is the story of how God has made it possible for fallen man to walk with him once again. There are many biblical passages

that employ the language of walking with God to describe different aspects of the Christian life. In the remainder of this sermon, I want to briefly describe seven of the main insights that we can draw from those passages.

The first of these is this: the only thing that makes it possible for us to walk with God is God's own gracious initiative. The Lord speaks of this in Ezekiel 36:27, where he says, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." God causes his people to walk with him. In the words of J.I. Packer, "*We do not make friends with God; God makes friends with us, bringing us to know him by making his love known to us.*" [Knowing God, 41] We can see God's gracious initiative in these early chapters of Genesis. Seth inherited the same sinful nature that Cain inherited, but God only extended his saving grace to Seth and his descendants. God takes the initiative in causing his people to walk with him.

Second, to walk with God is to live a life of faith. 2 Cor. 5:7 says that "we walk by faith, not by sight." This is one of the great principles of the Christian life. It is a life that must be lived by trust. We cannot walk with God by sight, because there are many times in this life when God seems hidden to us. Nor can we walk with God by our feelings, because feelings ebb and flow. The Christian life must be a walk of faith.

Third, walking with God means keeping his commandments and living a righteous life. Romans 6:4 says, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Our lives are bound together with Christ's life. We have

put off the old nature and put on Christ. In him, we are new men and women. And as such, we are to make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. While it is true that we can only be declared righteous through faith in Christ, it is equally true that every Christian is called to live a holy life. As Paul writes in Eph. 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” We are *God’s* workmanship. God is the one who saves us. But he saves us so that we might walk in his ways. This is the predominant way in which the Bible uses the language of walking with God: to describe a life lived in obedience to God’s commands. God said to Abraham: “walk before me, and be blameless.” [Gen. 17:1] He warned the Israelites not to walk in the ways of the Canaanites, but to walk in the statutes that he gave them. [Lev. 18] This is not about legalism; it is not about earning God’s favor by doing good works. It is about gratitude for the favor that God has already lavished upon us. As J. Gresham Machen writes,

“We are restrained from doing evil things...by the unspeakable love which Christ manifested when He died for us on the cross...Once [Christians] are convinced that Christ’s death was a death for them, their gratitude to the one who died hems them in, restrains them from evil, more effectively than they could have been restrained by prison bars.” [*God Transcendent*, 142]

To walk with God is to walk in gratitude, and that gratitude is expressed by keeping God's commandments, trusting in the power of his Spirit to enable us to do so. [see Gal. 5:16]

Fourth, walking with God means living in the fear of the Lord. Psalm 128:1 says, "Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!" To fear God is to have a holy dread of offending him. The fear of God also functions as a deterrent against sin. Jonathan Edwards explains this well when he writes,

"Now, if a man truly fears to offend God, and if he habitually dreads the thought of sinning against Him, this will surely tend to his avoiding sin against Him. That which men are afraid of they will shun. If a man professes that he is afraid and has a dread of a poisonous serpent, for example, but at the same time is seen to take no care to shun it, but is very bold to keep near it, who will believe his profession?" [*Charity and Its Fruits*, 209]

Those who walk with God fear God, and that fear manifests itself in a life that takes great care not to offend God.

Fifth, the person who walks with God is guided by God's revealed truth. Jesus spoke of this in John 12:35 when he said, "The light is with you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the

darkness does not know where he is going.” Christians do not walk in the darkness of this fallen world but in the light of God’s truth. God’s Word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path. The person who walks with God is a person who is guided by the Bible.

Sixth, walking with God means cultivating a life of fellowship and communion with God. As the Lord says in Lev. 26:12, “And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” God walks with us. God himself is our reward.

Communion with God is not a means to another end. It is not primarily about personal improvement or societal improvement. Communion with God is an end in itself. It is the ultimate goal of human life. Being a Christian is not about fulfilling a set of duties and obligations. It is about enjoying God’s presence and seeking after an ever-deepening communion with him.

And seventh, walking with God means living a life of love towards God. It means seeing God as our greatest good. Joshua 22:5 says, “Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.” Loving God means seeing him as more valuable than anything else in this world. Samuel Rutherford expressed this well when he wrote, “I am so in love with His love that if His love were not in heaven, I should be unwilling to go [there].” [*Letters*, 215] Loving God means

loving him for who he is. It is the recognition that it is only God's loving presence that makes heaven heaven.

Enoch walked with God, and God took him. This is a picture of salvation. The only way to be rescued from sin and death is to be united to the One who possesses life in himself. There is nothing of greater importance in this life than cultivating a close walk with God.

*O for a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame,
A light to shine upon the road that leads me to the Lamb!*

*The dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be,
help me to tear it from thy throne, and worship only thee.*

*So shall my walk be close with God, calm and secure my frame;
so purer light shall mark the road that leads me to the Lamb.*