

WALKING THE TALK_ The Practice

So far we have focused on 1st John chapter 1 as we've considered *the premise* of the theme and *the promise* attached to the premise. I'd like for us to read that text once more before we discuss implementing the principles we've learned in this last lesson in the series that I call: "**The Practice.**"

(pg. 1898) ¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write this to make (y)our joy complete. ⁵ This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives.

So, since it is expected for those who claim to be Christians to actually "**walk the talk**"_ and for those who do there is *incredible joy, loving fellowship, and free flowing forgiveness*_ I'm going to assume that you're prepared to do what it takes to experience an authentic relationship with God and Christ. But how do we do it; that is with any consistency? After all, it's important to **watch where we walk**. And the best way to do this is to **let Jesus lead the way....**

It should not surprise us that God's pace is quite different from ours. In fact, He has often addressed that very issue. "*Be still and know that I am God.*" (Psalm 46:10) "*Do not run ahead of my teachings...*" (2nd John 1:9) "*My ways are not like your ways...*" (Isaiah 55:8) I mentioned last week that Nina and I have been walking together now for almost 40 years. I tend to move at a different pace than she does. For one thing, I have a longer stride. For another, I just seem to walk faster. To keep from running ahead of her, I have to slow down_ sometimes even holding her hand or taking her arm because it helps me to walk with her. And when I walk with her, guess what happens? We talk as we walk. Look with me at **Hebrews 10**. Though the precise wording is not there, I believe it contains some practical ways to take God's hand and walk arm in arm with Jesus.

(pg. 1873) ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let's draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let's hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let's consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵ Let's not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let's encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Vs. 22 says: **Draw near to God**. How? I suggest we take hold of God's hand. In context, it starts with "**a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.**" Catch that? **It takes faith.** Hebrews 11:6 declares that we must believe God exists_ and that He rewards those who seek Him. We have to trust He wants to walk with us. He won't allude or withdraw from us. Trust He'll accept our advances.

Otherwise, why even try? **Romans 10:17** says a primary source of faith is the word of God. The Lord's love letters assure us that He wants us to walk with Him. **James 4:8** says draw near to Him and He'll draw near to you. So, spend time in the word every day. There's no replacement for it. Can't concentrate? Not a reader? Then listen to a Bible app or watch a YouTube video. Listen to some Christian music with a solid Biblical message. Get His song in your soul. Feed your faith and it will grow. Neglect it and it will weaken. That's just a fact.

Next, make sure to **hold on tight**. In vs. **23** we read: **Let's hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.** Satan will try everything he can to separate us from God. Do not let him do it. As a kid, we played a game called "Red Rover." When we knew the opposing team was sending someone to break our bond, we'd hold on tighter. **John 10:27-30** tells me I am in good hands, if I hold onto Jesus_ listening to His voice and following His lead. In fact, if I walk hand in hand with Jesus, Satan cannot snatch me from His grasp. Yet, it's up to me to take hold_ and in some sense even to keep hold of Him. How do I do that? Commit to walk with Him. Pray daily for divine protection. *"Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."* Praise God continually (Hebrews 13:15): *"Thank you Jesus for taking hold of me; For keeping Your promises to me. You are faithful."*

Next, **help others in their walk**. In vs. **24** it says: **Let's consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.** This is too often overlooked. Want to improve our walk? Help someone else with theirs. Earlier I spoke about walking with my wife_ well guess what I've been doing since her knee replacements? Helping her with physical therapy and rehab. I give her pep talks_ cheering her on to take another step, to do one more rep_ and to not give up. Something else I've noticed that helps me is to exercise with her. It's amazing. Maybe you've gone on a diet or started jogging with someone_ not because you needed it, but to encourage them. Spiritually speaking, whenever someone agrees to routinely meet with me to study, I learn more than they do. **When I join hands** in disciplined prayer, I grow closer to God. It works. **(Matthew 18:20)**

Finally_ and this can tie directly to the last thought_ we need to **walk with the right crowd**. Verse **25** of our text says: ²⁵ **Let's not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...and all the more as you see the Day approaching.** Obviously, this is not just to get your ticket punched. It's for mutual encouragement. Show me someone who doesn't regularly attend church services and I'll show you someone whose walk with God isn't what it should be_ or who will loosen their grip in time. That's not to say "coming to church" automatically strengthens your walk. It's not "coming to" an assembly, but what happens to you while you are interacting with those who are assembled that will improve your walk. Too many people look for their motivation from the wrong people. They hang with people who are headed in the wrong direction_ and wonder why they keep straying off into the darkness. Jesus said something about that in **Matthew 15:14**. **"When the blind lead the blind"** they all end up in trouble. This has been one of those series that is hard to bring to a close_ but it seems fitting to come full circle with some familiar words from **the letters of John**: **Whoever claims to live in Him (in a relationship with God) must walk as Jesus did.** (1st John 2:6) **As you have heard from the beginning, God's command is that you walk in love.** (2nd John 1:6)

Now, hear Paul echo that idea in **Ephesians 5:1-2**: **Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.** Look to Jesus_ who drew near to His Father every day and who was always helping others to do the same. That is of you're serious about **"walking the talk."**