

DO YOU WALK WITH GOD?

OR,

DOES HE WALK WITH YOU?

BELoved READER,—As a Christian, I would ask you whose will is actuating you as you walk up and down in this world—actuating you, not in some things, but in everything you do?

It has been asked by the Prophet, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” (Amos iii. 2). Though two may tread the same path, yet if they are not agreed in *purpose*, that is, in will as well as in the path, a difference will presently manifest itself. Since, then, there are two principles actuating men in this world—the will of man (acted upon and energised by Satan) and the will of God, made known to the soul of him who believes by the Holy Ghost—it is most important that we should discern by which of these we are being led, while remembering that we are ever led by the one or the other. Imperfect as we are as to the knowledge of what His will is in many things in our everyday life, yet it is God’s desire that in *all* things we should know His will, and not follow our own. God’s will in His word is made known to me by the Holy Ghost acting

in me, and if yielded to, I walk with God. My will, on the other hand, if active and yielded to, must be broken, ere I can walk with Him. And God accompanies me, not to sanction my will, but to humble and to prove me. Blessed be His holy name, that He who writes, by His Spirit, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you" (Deut. ix. 24), says also that, "He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness, *these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee—thou hast lacked nothing*" (Deut. ii 7) He is with us.

If, then, we study the actions in the lives of the saints which the Spirit has recorded for our instruction in Scripture, we are struck by the fact standing out in prominence wherever we turn, that whatever be their failures, *God never leaves His people*. Now, most believers will readily own that this is true, but will carefully qualify it by the addition, "It is true if the saints are seeking to walk in obedience to Him." But I suggest that it is also true when they are disobedient and self-willed. He may and does often stand apart from our manners, but never apart from *us*. If we will not walk with Him, He will turn aside to walk with *us*, to humble us and to teach us ourselves. It is when the saints are reduced to the greatest extremity through the exercise of will, and when forced to cry aloud to Him, as in Ps. cvii.,

that He comes in for deliverance, proving that He has been watching us all the time. He has been very near, and steps in to make manifest His presence. He comes in when the cry is gone up proving that I prefer God to myself, and at His nod the storm becomes a calm, its winds and waves are lulled to rest, and *self*, on whom God in mercy has brought the storm, *self*, man's prop, Satan's tool, and the ever-antagonistic enemy of God, is withered up, and reduced to the proper silence of death before Him, while His child is taken to a Father's bosom to rest in Him. What a rest! But it is ever thus, for the old nature turns to Him *never*; it must be brought to death. As long as *we* are active, there is no room for Him to lead, and then in mercy to us He keeps the storm up to its height, to bring all that is of the old nature to the silence of death before Him. Yet He is standing by. As the "refiner and purifier of silver," He waits to see His image prominent in us, and not the dross of self. He does not value this, and in mercy to us, for He will have us walk with Him. He does not spare it. He will consume it, that we may fully enjoy Him; nor will He leave the work partially completed. He says, I will never leave thee "until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

I desire to draw the attention of my brethren to an important difference—as it appears to me

—in the two parts of the question at the head of this paper. To me there appears to be an important and most instructive difference in these two paths,—whether am I content to be walking with God, or (what I judge is a lower path) content to know that He is walking with me: in the *first*, I am learning GOD; in the *second*, I am learning what self is, though proving what God is also.

I allude to Enoch and Noah as special examples of saints, of whom the Spirit distinctly records that they “*walked with God*” (Gen. v. 24, and vi. 9). Not but what others have done so also, but Scripture is clear as to them. This characterised their walk. I shall quote Jacob, as much a called saint of God as they, as an example, on the other hand, of a saint with whom *God walked*, looking at his history a little.

It is also to be remembered that as a saint I may be found walking with God at one portion of my history, but not at another. In illustration of this, I draw attention to the fact that Noah lived *after* the flood as well as *before* it, and yet it is only of Noah before the flood that the word says *he walked with God*. It was after the Deluge that he was found drunken and uncovered in his tent. Was this a fitting attitude for one of whom God had said that he was “*perfect in his generations?*” And when the years of his life after the flood are

named, we read only thus, "Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years, and all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died." Yet, though the Spirit does not add the same commendation to his life after the flood as to that before it, I judge that God never left Noah—that He still walked with him.

Jacob was one in whom natural will, taking the shape of prudence, as men speak (this it often did with him), was most strong and characteristic. And it is to Jacob, when fairly started on the path of worldly wisdom or expediency, that God Himself comes and declares to him that His presence shall abide *continuously* with him. By deliberate falsehood and gross deception he had—just prior to this moment—obtained from his father Isaac the blessing of the first-born, which had so provoked the wrath of his brother Esau, that he must flee as an outcast from his family and the land of promise. To him, then, at that moment, and though even when leaving, continuing to deceive his father as to the real cause of his flight, God appears, and gives him this remarkable promise, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. xxviii. 15). Mark the importance and grace

of this promise as coming from God to him at such a moment as this. Now, does this promise sanction the late actions of Jacob, or encourage him to go on in the same? I judge not, for he presently says, "How *dreadful* is this place!" And yet many of us are quite content to quote this passage—Gen. xxviii. 15—as the acme of our blessing! For God as truly says the same to every saint to-day as He did to Jacob in his day, even if natural will and energy are at work in us. Ah, it is a real place we are in, and God will accompany us to bring us to nought. Well may Jacob say, "How *dreadful* is this place!" Dreadful to nature; for God was there.

Now, as to God's path, what is it? Job xxviii. gives us a clue, "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." This is God's path through a dark and sin-stained earth. Would we walk in company with Him to-day? We, too, must tread it. As then, so now, it is ever one and the same path. Let us look at it a moment in detail; we shall see who they are that discern it not.

First—It is a path which no fowl knoweth. Here we have those who, rising highest in natural ability, will discern it if any can. It is a path totally unknown to them. *Second*—It is a path which the vulture's eye hath

not seen. Intelligence and intellect, here portrayed by the piercing eye of the vulture, these cannot discern it. *Third*—The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. Natural force and strength, and all the swiftness and might of nature, are here entirely at fault—they never use this way. Nature, then, whether I look at man in his highest position, in his piercing intellect, or in his natural force and strength, never knows, sees, or takes this path. May we not ask why does he not take it? and answer, It is because it makes nothing of *him*. Was Job walking in this path? At first I should judge Job was conscious that he was not. Earlier than this, in chap. xxiii., he has said of God, "He knoweth the way that I take: when I am tried I shall come forth as gold." This is true. He does know the way that His saints take. But this way was *Job's* path. And the furnace was kindled on him therein. There is a more blessed position even than God knowing our way, precious as this is, and this is, that we know and walk in *His*. And this is far harder to nature than the other. Job had learnt it when he could say, "I abhor *myself*:" this is ever the great hindrance to our walking with God. The question is, are we content merely to know that he knows our way, or are we desirous of knowing and walking in His? He must bring to nought all that which hinders

This day of Job's trial brought him into God's path, to walk with Him—gold "tried in the fire."

In the varied and chequered history of Jacob, God has shown us that for many years he chose and trod his own path. What remarkably characterised him was natural prudence and foresight, coupled with a strong force and energy of natural will. All these are seen in Him, but they do not help us in God's path, much as men are disposed to admire them—they are positive hindrances to us therein. To him, as to Job at first, it was an unknown, unseen, and untrodden path. If it be thought that in saying this we are speaking too strongly of the patriarch, let us listen to his own testimony. A testimony as simple as it is sad. On two remarkable occasions Jacob is called on to record his past experience in the path he has trodden. On the first occasion he does so when he is pursued and overtaken by Laban, at the close of his twenty years' sojourn in Padan-aram. This is his judgment of his past life there (Gen. xxxi. 40-42): "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters and six years for thy cattle, and thou has changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and

the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty." Now it is most clear that Jacob distinctly recognised that God had been with him. But that he had not been with God is equally clear, for he is now on his way to Bethel, the house of God. But Jacob is on the eve of a fresh start in his history, so to speak. And after he leaves Laban, after he has planned and contrived in the best manner, how best, in his judgment, to meet and palliate the wrath of his brother, who, he hears, is coming to meet him, "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." Here Jacob became *crippled*, and went forth another man. No longer Jacob, but Israel. He has received his blessing and his new name when he clings in helpless dependence to his God, and when he measures himself with God in the light of His presence. Surely this was a new path to Jacob, who had hitherto so largely depended on himself? Yet, be it remembered, he was as much a called saint of God when at Padan-aram as he was at Bethel. Padan-aram had seen the establishment of *Jacob's* house, the patriarch is now on his way to *God's* house. Now he is on the road as "Israel," God's new man. This path, untrodden by him for his previous twenty years, involves the imperative, unsparing judgment of self. The character of things allowed at Padan-aram cannot for a

moment be tolerated when at Bethel. But let it be remarked that there is no thorough self-judgment until we have accepted *God's* path. It was so with Jacob, and it is so still. But when he is in God's path mark the consequence. "They journeyed, and *the terror of God* was upon the cities that were round about them" (Gen. xxxv. 5). Notice this; surely it was not that they feared a helpless man with plenty of spoil? No, but there is a power felt by those around us when we are walking with God in His path, which is unknown when God is walking with us to bring to nought self-will in us, in our self-chosen paths? Did they fear him in Padan-aram? Did the power of God so make itself felt around him there that all feared him? Ah, no; there, as we have heard from his own mouth, they had taken every mean advantage possible of him—all permitted of God, but now he who goes forth is a prince, a vanquished will-less Jacob is an Israel with God. Oh, what a lesson is taught us here as to the secret of power with God and with men! It was because God was now leading him that the "terror of God" was upon those who could see nothing outwardly more to fear in Jacob to-day, than when he dwelt in Padan-aram in servitude.

The other occasion when Jacob reviews his life is when he is asked by King Pharaoh

his age. Memory again flies back over the past days and scenes of his earthly pilgrimage, and again, in a most simple and touching way, the old man expresses his judgment of them (Gen. xlvii. 9), "And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years few and evil have the days of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." As to the number of days they were "few," and as to the character of them they had been "evil." Such is the past experience of this saint of God. Is there not a lesson in it? Is it the record of him who has walked with God? Yet in the midst of it all the aged believer is conscious of the unchangeable favour of God resting upon him, and in conscious dignity he can bless Pharaoh, nor would he at that moment have changed positions with him who wore the crown of Egypt; for the apostle declares "the less is blessed of the better." How precious is this moment, enhancing, as it does, the wondrous grace of God, notwithstanding all Jacob's failure.

Besides drawing attention to the language of the Spirit of God, used only of the two saints Enoch and Noah, that they "*walked with God,*" I would ask attention to two remarkable examples of some who, prominent in the history of Israel, at different times

walked with God, and bring in, by way of contrast, contemporary saints with whom, doubtless, God walked. I offer them merely as illustrating this point.

First, Abraham and Lot. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is generally found walking with God through his life, as a pilgrim and stranger in the earth. Of such the Spirit of God declares that "the world was not worthy." But was it thus with Lot? He experiences a most remarkable deliverance for Himself and family, in Gen. xiv., but does He walk in God's way, so clearly pointed out to Him in this merciful interposition? His path leads him again down to Sodom, where he is presently seen, in Gen. xix., "sitting in the gate," the place of honour among the dwellers of earth. Peter, notwithstanding, without any hesitation, calls him a "righteous man," and Psalm xxxiv. declares that "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous." Surely God *is* faithful; yet I judge that there were these two paths clearly taken in the days of Abraham and Lot—the pathway pleasing to God, and that satisfying to nature or self. *Second*, Moses and Israel. On many occasions, may we not say *generally*, Moses walked with God. (See Ps. ciii. 7) "He made known his *ways* unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel." Here Moses is seen in contrast with Israel. Israel had to

receive His acts because they were not in the secret of His ways. So in Judges ii. 22, the Lord does not drive out those nations which Joshua left, "that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep THE WAY OF THE LORD to *walk therein.*"

One more incident in the New Testament occurs to me in connection with this subject, as recorded in Matt. xiv. The Lord having gone away to pray, had given His disciples instructions to cross the sea. In obedience they launch forth, but encounter much trouble,—a frequent attendant on the path of obedience. The ship is in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. Here, doubtless, we should say that their unswerving confidence should have been in Him whose directions they were following. Doubtless it should, for obedience can not only always count on His presence and can trust Him whose heart and whose eye ever survey us, but can also say, "I know that just at the right time He will manifest His presence to me." We can say, "I know not *how* He *will* come in, but I am sure that at the right moment He will come in." And He came. In the fourth watch they saw Him, walking on the sea, and they cried out for fear. Now, why did they cry out for fear? I believe that it was because they did not expect to see Him come and manifest

Himself in that way. And are we not often just the same? Had He come and spoken, and quieted the wind and waves, they would have understood who He was. But to walk thereon as a spirit, to keep the storm up to its height till death apparently stared them in the face, yes, this was His purpose, and then He will make Himself known to them. When the wind and waves are still at their highest, He bids Peter come to Him on the water, to walk with Him in this path apparently of certain *death*. Is Peter able to do it, and are we? Scripture says that he walked on the water, though apparently it was but for a moment. Now, what caused him to sink? It was self, most assuredly. Self cannot walk in this path; but when this is so, the Lord's presence and never-failing care are manifested. Does He leave Peter because he sinks in the path He has called him into? No. He lets him into the waves and gives Him thus to taste *death*, but He never lets him go. He sustains him, and takes Peter's eye off everything of self by referring him to *faith*, which never deals with the seen, but with the unseen. He would have us to walk with Him, but we must refuse self, if we are to take the path here indicated. The storm is kept up in order to sink SELF, not to sink PETER.

Beloved reader, are you a Christian, and does the storm seem but to increase all around you?

Ah, you are in His hand, and the child of His purpose. Trials of all sorts may come; we cling to Him mid them all. He is with us; He is for us.

I believe, then, that to see clearly the difference in these two paths is of immense importance, and that there are at the present moment thousands of God's dear children who do not discern it. Let it be remembered that Jacob could have assured any enquirer that *God was with him* all the while he dwelt in Padan-aram, and none could have denied it. Yet we read of no altar erected by Jacob in Padan-aram, while on the other hand we are sure there was the allowance in his own household of idolatry!

• Gen. xxxv. 2, 4. How often are we met by such remarks as, "What harm is there in this or that?" and this not spoken by the world, or we might not be so surprised to hear such language, but by undoubted children of God. I reply that your question seeks to limit me to sight, seeks to induce me to walk in a certain path, because I cannot see *why not?* This is not faith. But I am told, "God is with us and converts souls, and yet you say *you cannot have fellowship with us in the work,*" &c., &c. I readily own that God does walk with us, notwithstanding all our waywardness, but I do submit the difference between my walking with God and His walking with me to the godly consideration of my brethren. In the *first,*

self is allowed no place, save its own true place of death; in the *second*, I am persuaded self has a place and existence, though it may be an infinitesimal one. And I suggest again that it appears to me there is a higher thing than being able to say *God is with us*, blessed as this is, and that the higher thing is to be able in humility to say, "I cannot do this or do that, go here or go there, because I must *walk with God*, since I am not my own, and though self-will may press me to act, I am called to walk with God, for thus only can I be in happy communion with Him, and what if *He* has given me no word?" To go here or there, to do this or that, merely on the ground that I have no word from God *against* it, is to allow self to act, and this must plunge me into the further discipline of His hand.

May the Lord give us a distinct perception and apprehension of what a path it is—both individually and in service—wherein self is kept in the place of death, and to which the Lord calls us in this day.

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