

Walking with God

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

—Amos 3:3

THE QUERY OF OUR TEXT

was addressed to the nation of Israel. In the preceding verse Jehovah declares to them, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” (Amos 3:2) As his own chosen people, God had been faithful to them, but they had not been faithful to him. In this prophecy he explains his purpose in chastising them, that it was to bring them into line with the covenant he had made with them. He wanted them to see the error of their ways and to make a more earnest effort to do his will, and it was his will that they walk with him. Yet, how could they walk with God unless they were in agreement with him—that is, unless they were fully committed to doing his will?

While in principle the thought of our text also applies to human relationships, God asked the question of those who professed to walk with him, the Creator and Heavenly Father, with the intent of pointing out to them that this could be true only if they were in full agreement with him and with his will. This was true of Israel, and it is equally true of the Lord’s people today. We can walk with God only if our hearts and lives are in agreement

with his will. God does not change his course in order to walk with us. Instead, we must learn the way he would have us walk and agree to tread that way if it is to be true of us that we are walking with God.

The Hebrew word translated “agreed” in our text is one that is used almost exclusively in the Old Testament to denote joint action in the doing of God’s will. In Numbers 10:3 it is translated “assemble,” and in this passage instructions are given to the effect that when two silver trumpets were blown all the children of Israel were to “assemble” at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. If but one trumpet was blown, then only the princes of Israel were to assemble. Failure to respond to the call of these silver trumpets would denote a lack of full obedience and to that extent, a failure to walk with God. In Nehemiah 6:10 this same Hebrew word is translated “meet” and the reference is to meeting together in the house of the Lord—the Temple in Jerusalem.

From the use of this word in our text and its other uses in the Old Testament applying to God’s people, it becomes clear that God wants his chosen ones to be in agreement with him as a group. His will for one is his will for all, and in the execution of his plan he calls for joint action. This has been true in God’s dealings with all of his people in every age. His chosen people, regardless of when they lived, are his coworkers in the great plan of human redemption and salvation. Those who have had his blessing are the ones who have been attentive to the “silver trumpets” of Truth that have reached their ears through Jesus, the prophets, apostles and others whom he has raised up from time to time.

ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD

In Genesis 5:22-24 we are told that Enoch “walked with God.” Not a great deal is said in the Scriptures concerning Enoch, but we are assured that he had faith in God and was faithful in bearing testimony to the knowledge that had been revealed to him. (Heb. 11:1-3,5) Jude informs us that Enoch prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord to judge the world, and that myriads of his saints would then be associated with him. (Jude 1:14) In the light of Truth subsequently revealed it is manifest that Enoch’s walk with God consisted of his faithfulness to the light then due to be understood. His heart was in agreement with God’s plan, and his lips bore testimony to that which he understood.

Genesis 6:9 declares that “Noah walked with God.” We know more about Noah’s life of faithfulness to God than we do about Enoch’s. He was a chosen servant of God to perform a very definite mission in connection with the ending of the “world that then was.” (II Pet. 3:6) It required great faith in God and utmost confidence in his instructions to perform the task assigned to him, but it was his faithfulness in obeying the divine will that constituted Noah’s walk with God.

Much was involved in Noah’s walk with God. He was called upon to be a “preacher of righteousness” and was commissioned to build an ark in preparation for the coming flood. (II Pet. 2:5; Gen. 6:13,14,17) Had he failed in either of these privileges of service he would not have been walking with God. However, he did not fail. He was in agreement with God’s will for him and did not

shirk the responsibilities involved in doing what he knew the Lord wanted him to do.—vs. 22

Abraham most assuredly walked with God, his great faith enabling him to believe and act upon the promises made to him. Being in agreement with God cost him a great deal, changing the whole course of his life. Abraham's faith in the Lord and his agreement with the divine will constituted him a "Friend of God." (James 2:23) One of the essential foundations of genuine friendship is agreement. Those who are out of harmony with each other cannot be wholehearted friends.

In Moses we have another noble example of one who walked with God because of being in agreement with him. As a young man Moses was interested in the promises of God and solicitous for the well-being of God's people, his fellow Israelites. He had more respect for the promises of God and what they implied for him and all his brethren than he did for the glory of Egypt. On one occasion he even manifested his interest in God's people by slaying one of their oppressors. However, more was required than his faith in God and his interest in the people of God to constitute walking with him.—Acts 7:21-24; Heb. 11:24-26; Exod. 2:11,12

Forty years after Moses fled from Egypt to escape the wrath of Pharaoh, God appeared to him at the burning bush and there gave him a commission of service. He was to return to Egypt, intercede before Pharaoh on behalf of his brethren, and be the great deliverer of the children of Israel. At first Moses' agreement with this plan of God for him was only in part. Doubtless he was glad to learn that God intended to deliver his chosen people

from Egyptian bondage, but he did not agree with God that he was the one who was qualified to take the lead in such a great undertaking, so he offered the excuse that he was not able to speak.—Acts 7:30-34; Exod. 3:10,11; 4:10-13

In response to Moses' objections God assured him of his cooperation by providing Aaron to be a mouthpiece. Finally, Moses agreed with the Lord and embarked zealously on the mission assigned to him. (Exod. 4:14-16) It was at this point that his walk with God began. Prior to this he was in the position of those who know something about God's promises, and have a measure of confidence in their author, but have not come into full agreement with him as coworkers in his plan. There is a definite time in the experience of every servant of God when the opportunity is given either to go forward and cooperate fully in the divine program, or else be left on the sidelines among those who are glad that God has a plan but do nothing special about it—they do not walk with God.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

We might continue and cite one after another of those ancient servants of God and note their faithful walk with him, a faithfulness based upon their being in agreement with him. The Apostle Paul speaks of them as a "cloud of witnesses," recalling their example of loyalty as an incentive for us likewise to walk by faith with God and to follow faithfully in the way he indicates to be his will for us. (Heb. 12:1) This may often mean, as it did in the case of Abraham, exercising implicit faith in the promises of God and following his

directions without knowing just where he may be leading.—Heb. 11:8

In order to walk with God at all it is essential that we be in agreement with him, and the most outstanding example we have of complete fidelity to God is Jesus. After telling us of the great “cloud of witnesses” with which we are surrounded, the apostle sets before us the perfect example of our Lord: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) Had Jesus not been fully in agreement with his Heavenly Father he would not have attained that high position “at the right hand of the throne of God.”

At the early age of twelve Jesus began to inquire regarding the way of the Lord: “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” he asked his parents when they found him in the temple. (Luke 2:49, *New King James Version*) Even then Jesus knew that he could not properly be about his Father’s business until he discovered what that business was. What he probably learned on this occasion was that under the requirements of the Law it would not be proper for him to enter upon the service of God until he was thirty years of age. (Num. 4:3-47) Hence, we read that when he “began to be about thirty years of age” he came to John at Jordan to be baptized.—Luke 3:21-23

THAT WHICH HAD BEEN WRITTEN

It was at Jordan that Jesus began his walk with God. There he entered into a covenant with his

Heavenly Father, agreeing to do all that had been written of him “in the volume of the book.” (Heb. 10:7-9) Jesus steadfastly adhered to the terms of this covenant. On one occasion it may have appeared that his own natural preference would have been to take another course, but even in this severe time of testing he set aside his own wishes, saying, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”—Luke 22:42; Matt. 26:39

On many occasions during the self-sacrificing ministry of Jesus we find him emphasizing his agreement with God. “I and my Father are one,” he said. (John 10:30) What a beautiful statement of the resignation of his own will to that of his Father! They were one because he was doing his Father’s will, not because they had jointly decided what was to be done. Surely, if it was proper for Jesus, the “holy, harmless, undefiled” one, to agree with the divine will in order to walk with God, is it not likewise essential for his followers to commit their ways fully to the Lord if they are to have the assurance that they are walking with him?—Heb. 7:26; Gal. 3:27; I Pet. 2:21

This point cannot be emphasized too strongly. Many have been deceived by the argument that it does not matter so much how one serves the Lord, or what he believes, but the important thing is to be sincere in what we do and the way we live—that this is all the Lord requires. Sometimes even among those enlightened by the Truth of God’s Word there might be a tendency to adopt this easygoing viewpoint of what it means to walk with God.

Jesus did not have this viewpoint, however, nor did any of the apostles. Jesus had agreed to do all

that had been written of him, and thus being guided by the Word of God, he walked with the Father. Jesus knew that although uprightness of character was a vital part of a life dedicated to God, that alone did not constitute walking with him. He knew that God had a definite plan for the redemption and recovery of the human race. He knew that he had come into the world to perform a service in connection with that plan. He knew, therefore, that the only way to be pleasing to his God was to discover from the Word—the “volume of the book”—what that plan was and the manner in which he was to serve in connection with it. There were certain things which God wanted done, and certain ways to do them, and it would have been unthinkable for Jesus to undertake a service for his Father along any other line.

IN HIS STEPS

Few Christians would likely disagree with this thought with respect to Jesus. However, it is important to remember that as Christians we are called to follow in his steps. Hence this principle of learning and doing God’s will also applies to us. If we want to walk with God, we must walk as Jesus did in this respect as well as to emulate him along other lines. Jesus’ earthly ministry occurred at the end of the Jewish age and the beginning of the Gospel age. God’s will for his people therefore changed at that time in various ways, and Jesus was the first one to call attention to these changes.

Until then, for example, the keeping of the Jewish Law was an important consideration for all who would be pleasing to God. Jesus did not teach that

the Law had become unimportant, but now there was a higher service to be rendered. He introduced a new arrangement, not the prophetic New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31, but a covenant which called for sacrifice. (Ps. 50:5) From that time forward, no one could walk with God simply by sincere efforts to live up to the requirements of Israel's Law Covenant.

The apostles recognized this and taught it. Many in the early church failed to grasp the full significance of this great change which had been introduced by Jesus, so there was considerable controversy over the matter. Not once did the apostles suggest that if any could not see this great Truth of the new age they should not be concerned about it, that they could walk with God just the same by continuing to strive to keep the old Law Covenant.

When Noah walked with God it was necessary to build an ark, but in Moses' day a tabernacle was needed. Thus, beginning with Pentecost those who would walk with God were given a different task than were those who served him during previous ages. As God's plan developed there was another work to be done. This meant that those in the Early Church who walked with God would walk together. Not only would they be in agreement with God, but they were also to be in harmony with one another. They walked together, they served together, they died together, being faithful to the terms of their covenant of sacrifice even unto death.—Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:24,25

ANOTHER CHANGE

Now, two thousand years later, we are near the end of the Gospel age which was introduced by Jesus. However, it is still God's will that his people

follow in the footsteps of the Master by laying down their lives sacrificially in his service. The great Truth of the redemption and of the kingdom is the same now as then, but certain details with respect to the service of God are indicated by the Scriptures as being revealed at the end of the age. One of these is the difference between “sowing” and “reaping.” Another is indicated by the fulfillment of various prophecies which have taken place during the “time of the end.”—Matt. 13:24-30,36-43; Dan. 12:1-4,8,9

In order to appreciate the importance of this additional understanding, it is first of all necessary to take into consideration some of the intervening events of the last two millennia. The Scriptures foretold that following the death of the apostles there would be a great falling away from the faith once delivered unto the saints, and that a great Antichrist system would develop. The Truth of God’s Word would be largely replaced by the errors of human tradition and then, at the end of the age, it would be restored, causing the people of God to rejoice.—II Thess. 2:1-3,7,8; I John 4:1-3; Acts 20:28-30

Those who today are rejoicing in the light of the Word of Truth have noted these developments in history, and they understand that in fulfillment of the Master’s promise, at the end of the age he would gird himself and serve his people with “meat in due season.” (Luke 12:37; Matt. 24:3,44-46) To use another metaphor, they have heard the silver trumpet of Truth and have recognized that thereby the Lord has called them to joint action in the doing of his will and in furthering the divine cause in the earth by proclaiming the “gospel of the kingdom.”—Matt. 24:14

Just as Pentecost was a marked development in the plan of God at the beginning of the age, so also here at the end of the age the promised “meat in due season” indicates certain important facets of God’s purposes are now due to be understood and fulfilled. As in the case of previous changes from one age to another in the plan of God, so now there is a period during which the work of one age is drawing toward completion, and preparation for the work of the next age is being manifest. All of this has an important bearing on what the Lord wants his people to be and to do at the present time.

First there is the completion of the harvest work to be done. This is the calling, selection and development of the last members of the church, Jesus’ body members, which must be completed before the work of the incoming age of Christ’s kingdom begins. In addition to this, and in full harmony with what lies ahead for the world of mankind, there is the work of proclaiming the coming kingdom and the glorious hope of man’s resurrection and restoration to all that was lost in Eden.—John 5:28,29; Luke 19:10; Acts 3:20,21

On the part of those who have heard and accepted these reassuring messages of Truth there has been a spontaneous agreement that it was from the Lord, and a wholehearted desire to walk with God in keeping therewith. These have all walked the same way and done the same things—those things which the Truth has revealed to them as being the will of their God. Some, perhaps, have become disgruntled and have chosen to go their own way, but it has always been thus. This was true in the

days of the Early Church, and it is still true today. However, it is just as true today as it was in the Early Church that those who are walking with God are also walking together. Together they have responded to the message of the Gospel, and in cooperation with one another they are telling the whole world the blessed tidings of the kingdom now so near.

One of the blessings of walking with God is that those who are thus enjoying his fellowship have no desire to condemn or judge those who are not walking with him. We can feel exactly as the Apostle Paul did concerning those of his day who chose to walk in another direction, that the “Lord knoweth them that are his.” (II Tim. 2:19) At the same time, we should not slacken our efforts to carry out the terms of our own consecration along the lines which the Scriptures indicate to be God’s will for us. Simply because others with whom we come in contact may not see matters as we do is no excuse for us to say or think that it does not make any difference.

Besides, the Lord’s people should always be in a hopeful attitude toward others, feeling that if they do not see God’s plans and purposes today, perhaps they will tomorrow, or if not then, they will come to a knowledge of these things in the Messianic kingdom. Such an attitude helps us to be patient toward even those who today may strongly disagree with us. Thus, to walk with God requires not only testifying to his Word, but also being tolerant of those who do not appreciate the message at the present time and who are, as a result, not walking with us as we walk with God.

Are we walking with God by doing what he has commissioned his people to do in these closing hours of the Gospel age? We often sing: "Send out thy light and truth, O Lord, Let them our leaders be." However, the mere singing of these words is not enough. Two great truths are involved here. First, we are to make sure that we are following the leadership of the Word of Truth, which is the leadership of the Lord. Second, if we are doing this, we will also be laying down our lives in service and sacrifice by making known God's Word to others, and as often as we have opportunity giving the whole world an opportunity to hear the glad tidings. Thus, we will be walking with God, and in the very nature of things we will be walking with one another.

Brethren, as we close out the year 2023, let us not for a moment compromise the Truth, nor allow ourselves to think that it makes little difference what we do about its service. It has been given to us as a sacred trust, and by it we have been called to serve the divine cause. Let us serve in the right way and let us serve together. Let us walk with God as did the prophets, our Lord Jesus, the apostles, and all who have learned to know and love the doing of God's will. ■