

The Walk of Faith

Lesson 1: Are you in the way of peace?

Read Mk 4.3-20, 24-25; WSC 31

- “My design is to bring the great and leading points of our religion into use and practice, and to show how necessary the doctrines of grace are for the well governing of the Christian walk. Everything needful is promised, and by faith is received, which can make it even and regular, holy and happy.”
 - “May your heart and mine enjoy more of the liberty of the children of God, and they we shall not only go forward, but also run fast; and may nothing stop us from pressing toward the mark, until we win the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.”
 - The point of this first lesson is *to call every man to examine himself to see whether he knows the way of peace in which the believing walk.*
- I. Whoever walks with God must first be acquainted with the way of peace
- A. Every man walks in *a way*. His mind thinks on it, his heart is set on it, his feet trace it, his hands engage it, and his mouth praises it—his whole self is in it and given over to it. He lives for it and will die in it.
 - B. The way made for man at his creation was the way of loyal service and obedience, Gen 2.15-17. It was the way of peace and pleasantness because it was the way of fellowship with God, Prov 3.13-18
 - C. And when man sinned, he lost his way, and had neither the will nor the power to return, Rom 3.10-12, 16-17. Now, all men go their own way, Isa 53.6, refusing to turn again into the way of God, committed instead to the way of flesh, the way of their heart’s sinful desires, Rom 8.7-8; Ps 36.1; 53.1. All men are now gone out of the way, Ps 51.5; 58.3. They have all left the way of God and every man goes his own way, unable, like a poor sheep, to return.
 - D. And the most grievous effect of traveling the way of sin is that it blinds its travelers to its dangers, to its ruin and misery, and to the deadly drop off into hell at the end of it, Prov 7; 9.1-6, 13-18
- II. **But God.**
- A. It pleased God in the exceeding riches of his grace to reveal the way of salvation to our first parents in the Garden, Gen 3.15, 20-24. It was the way of faith, faith in God’s promise and provision.
 - B. And all believers, from that time forth, have seen it and walked comfortably in it. E.g. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc. are all said to have walked with God in the way He marked out for them, a way of faith given, first, to the Jews and then, at Christ’s coming, opened wide for all the rest of the world, Col 3.11
 - C. This way of faith is the new and living way in which men are taught by God, Jn 6.45; Isa 11.1-2. And therefore those who walk in it are constantly praying that God may teach them *His way*—more clearly, more fully, more effectively, and may also lead them in it by His Spirit, Ps 25.4-5; 27.11; 51.6; 86.11; 119.124; 139.23-24; 143.10; cp. Jer 32.33
- III. And what is it that God teaches?
- A. A right knowledge of ourselves and our lost estate
 - 1. God begins to move us out of our own way and into the right way, first, by convincing us of our sins against Him, of the sinfulness of them, of the guilt

we've incurred before Him by them, and of the wrath we deserve from Him for them, Isa 1.1-15; Rom 3.10-18; Eph 4.17-19; 2Pet 2.14-15; 17-19; 1Pet 4.3-5; 1Cor 6.9-10. We know we're being taught by God when we can agree with God that we are what He says we are: guilty sinners in need of His mercy and grace.

- a) "No man will see any reason to set out in the way to heaven until he's been made acquainted with these truths. His judgment of himself must be enlightened by God. He will never think of changing his course until he's made sensible of his own sinful and helpless estate. And when this is brought home to his conscience, and he has nothing left to trust in, then he will be led to look outside himself for help."

B. A right knowledge of Him and His salvation

1. Moving us outside of our own way by conviction, bringing us to the end of ourselves, and leaving us no help at all in ourselves or in all creation, God then teaches us of His way of grace, of His Son as the Saviour of sinners, the atoning Lamb of God, the Surety, the Mediator, the Reconciler, the Prophet, Priest, and King. He teaches us of the covenant of grace by which He is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus, Rom 3.26; 6.23; 5.19; 4.25; 10.9-10. He teaches us of the fullness of Jesus, from whom we're to draw every help, every need, every blessing, Eph 1.3; Phil 4.13, 19; Col 2.6-7, 9-10; Jn 1.14, 16; 2Cor 3.16-18. He teaches us of His Holy Spirit, who indwells us, sanctifies us, helps us in our weaknesses, and ever conforms us into the image of Christ our Lord, Eph 2.22; Rom 8.15, 26, 30.
2. In short, He teaches us that *all* is of grace, from first to last. Whatever good we receive on earth or in heaven is given in a way as to exclude all boasting and to lay every proud sinner in the dust, so that grace *alone* may wear the crown and have *all* the glory, Dt 5.33
3. And at the heart of it all, He teaches us to live on His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to exercise faith in His person and work, and to live utterly dependent upon who He is, what He's done, what He's doing, and what He's promised to do. He teaches us to live resting on Christ, trusting in Christ, looking to Christ, following Christ, honoring Christ, and living for Christ, until we die in Christ, since Christ is not simply all, but *our* all in all.

IV. *Here, then, is a call for self-examination.* "Do I know myself and have I fled to Christ from the wrath to come? Has God ever shown me myself fallen in Adam, out of the way of God, and lost in the way to hell? And I have been brought by God to enter into the way of faith and life in Jesus?

—Is there in me an abiding sense that there's no help or hope in myself to get back to God? And have I fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before me in Jesus? Is my knowledge of the way of salvation mere theory, or has it been brought into believing-practice? Do I know the Father's love through the work of the Son by the witness of the Spirit?"

- A. These truths are at the very *foundation* of a comfortable walk with God. We must see that we're well-grounded in them. For 1) a right knowledge of myself is meant to bring me to God for salvation and life; and 2) a right knowledge of God is meant to lead me to walk with Him in life and salvation. The first is to teach me to renounce all trust in myself; and the second

is to show me that I can safely place the confidence of my heart on my reconciled Father.

B. Therefore, let us be often looking up to Him and praying to Him,

1. “Oh Lord God, that which I do not see, teach me. Keep me a humble disciple in the school of Christ. Let me be daily learning what I am in myself—a fallen sinful creature, justly deserving everlasting separation from your presence. Oh let me never lose sight of my need of a Saviour, nor ever be without the sense of what He said, “without me you can do nothing.” Teach me this, O eternal spirit. Open my understanding to understand the Scriptures. What you have revealed in them concerning the Godhead, and concerning the counsels and works of the ever blessed Trinity, reveal to my soul. You have declared that no man can say “Jesus is Lord” but You. O shine, then, into my dark mind, and lead me into the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Make me acquainted with His covenant undertakings, and His perfect fulfilling of them, that by resting on His finished salvation, I may find the Father’s love in the Son and may be brought, through your blessed influence, to have fellowship with the Father and the Son. O lead me into all truth, Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that I may know the things which belong to my peace, and may, through you, be made wise unto salvation. Amen.”