

TRUTH YAF WATERBROOKS



“WALKING WITH GOD”

A collection of articles on the various aspects of walking with God.

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WALK WITH GOD?

- Bro Samuel Joseph

Introduction

To “walk with God” is a description used of some of the great men of faith in scripture. Enoch “walked with God” (Gen. 5:22). Noah “walked with God” (Gen. 6:9). Every believer, in fact, is commanded to “walk humbly with thy God” (Mic. 6:8). It is important for every Christian to walk with God, and therefore we must know what it means to walk with God.

There are some who take this idea literally. Before entering FEBC, I worked for several months in a law firm in Singapore. The founder of the firm was a Christian, and he organised weekly meetings for the staff, often inviting external speakers to talk about their Christian ministry. One such speaker was a missionary to Africa, and I remember her telling us how she used to go on long walks, “hand-in-hand” with God, as it were – “walking with God.”

Now there is nothing wrong with taking a long walk, and there is certainly nothing wrong with spending such a walk in quiet meditation, prayer, and communion with the Lord. But the true, biblical meaning of “walking with God” goes far deeper than the simple idea of a prayerful stroll in the park.

What does it mean to “walk”?

Let us first consider the meaning of the word “walk,” in this context. Biblically, to “walk” is often used not literally, but figuratively, as a metaphor to describe one’s life. The picture is that of life as a journey; to “walk” is then to progress along the pathway of life’s journey. With this understanding we can make sense of descriptions such as that of Omri, king of the northern kingdom of Israel and father of Ahab: “he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat” – he “walked” in the way of Jeroboam, meaning that he lived after the same manner as Jeroboam. Omri’s life was characterised by the same sin and wickedness that characterised Jeroboam’s life (specifically, causing the people of Israel to sin against God by idolatry).

Again, we can make sense of the description of Jehu, that he “took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart” – he did not “walk” in the law of God, meaning that he did not live according to that law. In the journey of his life, the path he was treading was not the one marked out by the signposts and fences of God’s law.

To “walk,” then, in this context, describes the whole life of a person, and the way it is lived from day to day.

What does it mean to walk “with” someone?

Next, let us consider the meaning of the word “with,” in this context. In our familiar, everyday understanding of walking, there are certain implications when we say we are walking “with” someone. In the first place, it implies that both parties are going in the same direction – if a colleague of mine says he is walking across the road to buy lunch, and I say, “I’ll walk with you,” the obvious implication is that I am also intending to go to the same place. Secondly, to walk “with” someone implies a certain level of familiarity and friendship – if I am walking along and a total stranger comes up next to me, falls in step with me, and walks with me, I will not be comfortable!

The biblical picture of walking “with” someone is somewhat similar, but goes further. The idea of going in the same direction, and the idea of friendship or companionship, can be summed up in the concept of “agreement.” Biblically, to walk “with” someone implies agreement – hence the prophet Amos asks, rhetorically, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). The word “agreed” here has the idea of meeting or assembling by appointment; the same word is used in Job 2:11 to describe the agreement of Job’s three friends to meet together to mourn with Job and to comfort him.

To walk “with” someone, therefore, in the biblical sense of the term, implies an agreement or compact – a willing, agreed relationship that exists between the two parties. It is a close relationship; a close communion. And since the idea of “walking” in this context extends to all of life, the relationship implied here is far more than just a casual or a superficial relationship – to walk “with” someone in this biblical context implies a relationship that impacts and influences every aspect of one’s life.

What does it mean to walk with “God”?

Finally, let us consider the implications of the word “God” in this context. We are dealing not with an agreement or relationship between two creatures, but a relationship between a man and his God – between creature and Creator. Two men can “walk together,” if they are “agreed,” and they can walk together as equals: but no man can walk with God as His equal!

The relationship is thus not one of mutual agreement and companionship, but is necessarily one of obedience and submission. There can be no mutual agreement with God! He is God, and we must agree with Him, not the other way around.

Conclusion

Putting all this together, we can see that to “walk with God” simply means to live day by day in obedient submission to God’s will, seeking constantly to conform every aspect of our lives to His law, and enjoying the communion with Him that He created us to have.

Walking with God is a command, not an option: every one of us is commanded to “walk humbly with thy God.”

At the same time, walking with God is also a great privilege. As fallen sinners, while we were lost and dead in our sins we could not hope to walk with God. But in His great love and mercy He has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins and rise again from the dead – so that by repenting of our sins and believing in Him, we can have life, and spend that life in walking with God.

EVIDENCES OF WALKING RIGHT WITH GOD

- Pr Joshua Yong

To be able to walk with God is a great privilege which God has given unto men. In the garden of Eden, this was what Adam and Eve enjoyed before the fall. After the fall, the Bible tells us in Genesis 3:8, that when Adam and Eve heard the voice of God who was walking in the garden, they felt ashamed and hid themselves from the presence of God. Although sin has separated us from God, the Lord Jesus Christ has restored this relationship and privilege we have when He died on the cross, shed His precious blood and rose from the dead for us, saving us from sin. In Christ, our relationship with God is once again restored, and we can walk with Him.

As Christians, we can now share in this wonderful privilege in walking and communing with God. As we grow and mature in the faith, we must walk closer and closer with God. This is sometimes also expressed as walking right with God. The question we want to consider today is, when we are walking right with God, how is it manifested? What are some of the evidence of walking right with God?

First of all, we want to see what walking right with God does not mean. Walking right with God does not mean that you will not experience afflictions, trials or hardships. In fact, the Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:12, that “all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” To suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ is not a mark of one who strays away from Christ, but it is what one who walks close to God must be ready and willing to bear.

Walking right with God also does not mean that we live a sinless and a perfect life. It does not mean that we will not struggle against temptation and sin. David, is known as a man who is after God’s own heart, but he fell into sin when he committed the sin of adultery with Bathsheba. Yet, what marked David as one who walked with God was his urgency and sincerity in his repentance of his sins when Nathan pointed out to him the sin he had committed. Someone who walks right with God then is one who does not want to continue in sin even when he falls into sin. He knows that sin will hinder his fellowship with God, and he will not allow anything to come between the fellowship with God which he enjoys.

How then will a close walk with God be manifested? To walk with God means to share in a close fellowship and communion with God. This is where we talk to God in prayer, and we hear His voice through His Word. It is to share in His company and to enjoy His presence. If this is what walking with God entails, then the first way a right walk with God will be manifested in the enjoying of God’s presence through prayer and the meditation of God’s Word. This was David’s testimony in Psalm 63:1-2 – “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.” Even though at this time David was

wandering in the wilderness of Judah, he could still share in wonderful communion and fellowship with the Lord as if he were in the sanctuary of the Lord. David constantly sought the Lord in crying out to the Lord and through the meditation upon God's Word. One who walks right with God enjoys and seeks the presence of the Lord. This is in contrast to one who has strayed from the Lord; such a person will be like Adam and Eve who were ashamed and hid themselves from the presence of God. One who walks right with God enjoys communing with God in prayer. He not only prays without ceasing, but he will also set aside seasons of time that it may be spent with the Lord in prayer. Communion with God is also expressed in a desire to hear God's voice and to know His will; this is accomplished in a desire to meditate upon God's Word.

A right walk with God is also manifested in the Christian's desire to please God. The Bible tells us in Genesis 5:24 that Enoch was one who "walked with God." Though the Bible does not give us much detail concerning the life of Enoch, the Bible does give us an important detail regarding the life of Enoch in Hebrews 11:5 - "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." The testimony of Enoch who walked with God was that "he pleased God." What can be said about the life of Enoch was that "he pleased God." This means that in all things which he did, he made sure that they were well accepted of the Lord. This is how a close walk with God must also be manifested in our lives. We will not seek our own desires or gain, rather, our desire will be to please God in all things. Though this is a simple truth, yet it is most profound. Is your desire even in the little things in life to please God or to please self? This truth also means that we will seek the approval of God and not of man. This brings us back again to the above thought of desiring to meditate upon God's Word. If we want to seek the approval of God, then we must know God's will and we can only discern God's will through His Word. A hunger and thirst for God's Word is a reflection of one who walks right with God.

Another example we see in the Bible of one who walks right with God is Noah. The Bible in Genesis 6:4 says, "...Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Noah was identified as one who walked with God. How was this walk manifested in the life of Noah? The Bible says that he was a "just man and perfect." This means that he was an upright and righteous man. To be just or upright, describes someone who is lawful and who seeks to do that which is right; he abides by the law of God and does what is right in God's sight. The word "perfect" does not mean that Noah was without sin, but it means that he was blameless. In his character and conduct, he is without blame. Someone who walks with God and who shares in fellowship with God must reflect the character and nature of God. Such a person will therefore be just and perfect because this is a reflection of God's person. He will walk and live in a way which is consistent with the character of God.

That this is what the Lord desires of one who walks with Him is also seen in Micah 6:8. Here the prophet Micah said: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Someone who walks right with God will reflect humility in his walk. When one walks with God, there is a dependence upon God, and knowing who God is, that He is God almighty, then one can only walk

in humility with God. Humility also expresses the thought of reliance and trust upon God. He will not trust in his own wisdom or strength but he will trust in the Lord. He also readily submits to wherever the Lord leads him. He will not seek his own path but will follow in the Lord's direction.

Our meditation of how a close walk with God will not be complete without also seeing how such a walk will be manifested with the bearing of the fruit of the Spirit. One who walks right with the Lord will also be one who walks in the Spirit. Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 5:16: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." When one walks in the Spirit he will bear forth the fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23 – "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." The fruit of the Spirit stands in contrast with the works of the flesh. Notice the fruit of the Spirit not only describes our fellowship with God, but it also has got to do with our relationship with our fellow man. Therefore, we may observe that a right walk with God will also be manifested in how we relate to our fellow man. For example, one who walks right with God will manifest a patience in relation to others. He will not be easily provoked and will be able to respond in love even to those who may treat him unkindly. He also bears the virtue of gentleness. This describes the kindness and generosity and helpfulness that he shows to others. Notice that as this is the fruit of the Spirit, these are virtues that are the product of one who walks in the Spirit. These are not artificially created or forced, but they are products of one who walks close to God.

Walking with God is a great privilege that the child of God can enjoy. When the child of God walks right with God, it will be manifested in his relationship with God and with man. With God, it will be reflected in the submission and the enjoyment of God's presence; with man, it will be manifested in his love for his fellow man. When one does not walk right with God, it will impact and affect every area of his life, even in his relationship with others. When one walks right with God, what a sweet fellowship he will be able to share with God, and his testimony will also be a blessing to others around him.

RESULTS OF NOT WALKING RIGHT WITH GOD (JUDGES 2:1-15)

- Dr Jose Lagapa

Introduction

The Book of Judges is preceded by the Book of Joshua. The last chapter of the Book of Joshua records the leader's brief review of the history of Israel from how the LORD called Abraham to the time the children of Israel reached the Promised Land. Joshua closed the period of the Conquest leading into a time of settlement in the land in the period of the judges with his declaration that he and his family would serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15).¹ On the contrary, the Book of Judges records the failure of the nation to walk right with God following Joshua's example. Parents did not pass on the faith through their families into the next generation. They disobeyed the commands of the LORD through Moses.²

The Book of Judges contains a prologue that sets the stage for the judges (Judges 1:1-3:6) and an epilogue that contains additional accounts of Israel's apostasy because they did not walk right with God.³ It commenced with the note of the death of Joshua. The LORD commanded the tribes of Israel to advance and occupy their apportioned territories. Judah went first and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hand (1:4). Nonetheless, in verse 21, it is noted that "the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem" (Judg. 1:21). This was followed by the different negative comments of "neither did Manasseh" (v. 27), "neither did Ephraim" (v. 29), "neither did Zebulun" (v. 30), "neither did Asher" (v. 31), and "neither did Naphtali" (v. 33).

The LORD Rebukes Their Disobedience (vv 1-5)

"Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites." (Judges 1:1-5).

The LORD rebuked the disobedience of the children of Israel. The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim to declare God's displeasure upon His people. The LORD reminded them of how He brought them out of Egypt to the land, which He swore to their fathers. He assured them that

¹ Joshua 24:15, "And if it seems evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." The people responded, "The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey (v. 24)."

² Michael J. Smith "The Failure of the Family in Judges, Part 2: Samson." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 (2005): 436.

³ Andrew E. Steinmann, "The Mysterious Numbers of the Book of Judges" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48 (2005): 492.

He would not break His covenant with them forever. The promise of the LORD “shall not break His covenant” with the people of Israel. This is a very strong prohibition against violating His own covenant with His people. The LORD indicated that there was no possibility for the covenant to be broken. The command for Israel not to make a covenant with the people of the land also carries an equally strong emphasis. They should not make covenants with the dwellers of the land. In fact, they were commanded to pull down the altars of the heathen. It orders the tearing down or demolishing the structures of their altars. Israel did not obey the LORD’s command. The LORD in response strongly prohibited Himself to drive out the heathens from before them, and instead let them be thorns in the sides and the idol gods a snare to the children of Israel (v. 3). The people lifted up their voice and wept after hearing God’s pronouncement. The act of one generation in not walking right with the LORD resulted in the apostasy of the next immediate generation of Israelites.

They Serve The LORD until The Time of Godly Fathers (vv 6-9)

“But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire. And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.” (Judges 1:6-9).

Joshua let the people go to their respective inheritance to possess them. They faithfully served the LORD, while Joshua and the elders were alive. It is interesting to note that the Scriptures do not say, “they served the LORD all the days of their lives.” After this note, the writer highlighted the death of Joshua. We can infer that the writer wanted to give significance to the endpoint of their service to God, the death of Joshua and the elders who saw the great works of the LORD. This is the same as saying, “they served until this period.” The verse that follows showed the results of this cessation of service to the LORD.

They Fail To Teach The Word of God (v 10)

“And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.” (Judges 1:10).

As the generation was gathered unto their fathers, it is noted that there arose a new generation. The Hebrews word for “arose” is which is used figuratively here to mean “come on the scene.” It is noted that the previous generation did not teach their children about the LORD their God. The word “knew” means “involving intelligent worship,” “obedience” or “learning.” They did not know from their parents who the LORD was. They also did not know the works of the LORD.

This resulted in the children of Israel to do evil in the eyes of the LORD. The adjective form of “ra” means “evil,” “bad quality”, or “injurious activity.” It designates the lack of quality, or the inferior quality of things, or people which are thus unable to meet the standards of value or function beneficially. More often, “ra” indicates moral deficiencies and moral qualities that injure oneself

or others, or a condition that is below par. The measure of these negative qualities is God's evaluation (Prov. 15:3), which is often couched in a phrase "in the sight of the Lord," occurring about fifty-five times mostly in the historical books.

The parents failed to remind them of the works of God. Their parents did not rehearse to the next generation the works that God wrought for them. They left the LORD, the God of their fathers, the One who brought them out from the land of Egypt to walk after other gods of the people, which surrounded them. They did not walk right with God and turned away from Him because they rejected the Word of the LORD.

They Forsook The LORD (vv 11-13)

"And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher: And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife." (Judges 1:11-13).

They turned aside to the worship of "Baalim" (v. 11). The term "Baalim" is used to describe all the false deities of the land and would, therefore, be synonymous with the expression of "other gods." The principal gods of Canaan, which this generation worshipped, are named in verse 13. Baal was one of the most popular gods in the Canaanite pantheon. This is attested by both Ugaritic and Biblical literature. Baal was the fertility god who rode upon the clouds and was responsible for the rains which brought life to the parched soil of Canaan.⁴ The forms under which Baal was worshipped were necessarily as numerous as the communities, which worshipped him. Each locality had its own Baal, or divine "lord". The worshippers would frequently take his name from the city or place where he belonged. All these various forms were collectively known as the Baalim or "Baals", and they took their place by the side of the female Ashtaroth and Ashtrim.⁵

Discussion

The Result of Not Walking with the Lord - Apostasy

"The fall of the new generation was quick and complete."⁶ It is explained that people's failure was due to spiritual compromise and idolatry (2:1-5).⁷ What is rejected in apostasy is the Word of God. It was the failure of the previous generation to take heed God's Word to separate from the heathen nations around them that resulted in the falling away of the next generation.

"When they forsook the only true God they did not turn atheists, nor were they such fools as to say, There is no God, but they followed other gods: so much remained of pure nature as to own a God, yet so much appeared of corrupt nature as to multiple gods and take up

⁴ John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb, *Israel from Conquest to Exile: A Commentary on Joshua-2 Kings* (Winona Lake, IN: Brethren Missionary Herald Books, 1989), 100.

⁵ ISBE, s.v. "Baal (1)."

⁶ Suan Yew Quek, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth* (Singapore: FEBC Press), 46.

⁷ Robert B. Chisholm Jr. "A Rhetorical Use of Point of View in Old Testament Narrative" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159 (2002): 407.

with any, and to follow the fashion, not the rule, in religious worship. Israel had the honour of being a peculiar people and dignified above all others, and yet so false were they to their own privileges that they were fond of the gods of the people that were round about them.”⁸

It Is Failure in Biblical Separation

The individual tribes were expected to occupy their respective assigned portions, nonetheless, not one tribe succeeded in occupying all the territories allotted, and the cities listed as conquered in Joshua. They needed to be reconquered because of this failure.⁹ The apostasy of the new generation from the LORD was a necessary consequence of the attitude of Israel to the Canaanites who were left in the land.¹⁰

The prohibition of idolatry is one of the three immutable absolutes in the Jewish system of ethics (incest and murder being the other two). The first two commandments of the Decalogue prohibit image worship as well as the worship of any other god (Exod 20:1–2).¹¹ The question that needs to be raised at this point is, “Why did Israel fall prey to this sensuous form of worship of Baal?” Several answers are suggested, which can be summarized as failure to separate because they walk not right with the LORD:

“1) The gradual fragmentation of the tribes contributed to an abandonment of Shiloh as the only centre of worship. The principal unifying factor in Israel was her religious commitment to one place of worship. As the tribes moved into new territories, rather than defeating their enemy, they sought ways to establish peaceful coexistence with them. This was probably the case as tribes moved down into the valleys where Canaanite religious and cultural influence was the greatest; 2) Baalism may have had pragmatic appeal. The Israelites who attempted to farm in the hill country must have experienced some frustration and looked with envy on the beautiful crops of their Canaanite neighbours in the fertile valleys. The temptation to look to Baal to increase fertility was always there and many fell to it; 3) Thirdly, the sensuous appeal of temple prostitution would have allured some into Canaanite practices; 4) The quest for political compatibility led many to recognize the gods of Canaan through formal treaties; 5) Intermarriage, also led to formal recognition of the god and gradual infiltration of pagan ideas into the community of Israel. One of the factors leading to national apostasy was the widespread intermarriages between the Israelites and the Canaanites in the land. The result of such intermarriages was a recognition of the gods of the Canaanites (v. 6). This led Israel to abandon their worship of the LORD their God and they served Baalim and the “groves.”¹²

⁸ Henry, “Judges 2:6-23.”

⁹ Wood, 172.

¹⁰ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, Volume II: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted 1984), 267.

¹¹ Charles C. Ryrie, “Perspectives on Social Ethics” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 134 (1977): 117. It is said that “The story of idolatry among the Hebrews begins with Rachel’s stealing Laban’s teraphim (Gen 31:19).”

¹² Davis and Whitcomb, 102, 105-106.

It Is Failure of Biblical Instruction

There was a clear failure of the parents of that generation that walked not right with the LORD in teaching the Word of God. The children knew not the LORD experientially. They probably heard about His name and wonderful works but the teachings from their parents did not affirm such claims. They were following the LORD only up to the time of Joshua and the elders who witnessed the great works of God.

They should have remembered what Moses commanded in Deuteronomy 6:4-7.¹³ As this passage testifies, with the loss of the memory of His Words, they did not walk right with God, apostasy ensued and the Canaanization of culture followed close behind.¹⁴ The tragic events that followed in the book demonstrate that the absence of godly leadership in the family as well as in the nation resulted in everyone doing what was right in his own eyes (17:6; 21:25).¹⁵ The spiritual malaise that set in after the death of the generation that witnessed the mighty saving acts of Jehovah is sketched in bold strokes. Without a clearer memory of Jehovah's claims upon them, the Israelites quickly apostatized, turning to the gods of the Canaanites around them.¹⁶

“The memory of God's great works gradually faded away, and with this memory their influence upon the hearts of the people. The seductions of idolatry and the influence of heathen examples were ever fresh and powerful. Had the people obeyed the voice of the Lord, the idolatry and the idolaters would have been out of the way.”¹⁷

“This apostasy shows its subtle process and disastrous results. Thus, “merely being in possession of a correct theology does not guarantee freedom from the crisis. There must be a consistent application of divine truth in the life of the believer in order to be assured of a job well done and a battle well fought (2 Tim. 4:7).”¹⁸

It Is Failure of A Biblical Conversation

The last five chapters of the Book of Judges represent the author's supplement or appendix to the history of the Judges period. The author wanted to provide “further insight into the issues, which

¹³ Deuteronomy 6:4-7. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

¹⁴ Daniel I. Block, “The Grace of Torah: The Mosaic Prescription for Life (Deut. 4:1–8; 6:20–25)” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 (2005): 20. Block wrote, “The New Testament includes exhortations to pass on the faith from generation to generation (e.g., 2 Tim. 2:2), and Jesus deliberately transformed the Passover, as prescribed in Exodus 12–13, into the Lord's Supper in order for His followers to keep alive the memory of His saving actions: “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24).”

¹⁵ Michael J. Smith “The Failure of the Family in Judges, Part 1: Jephthah.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 (2005): 279.

¹⁶ Daniel I. Block, “Echo Narrative Technique in Hebrew Literature: A Study in Judges 19.” *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 338.

¹⁷ Spence and Exell, “Judges 2:10.”

¹⁸ Davis and Whitcomb, 104.

gave rise to the conflicts of the Judges period and the later periods.”¹⁹ It was noted that though the Judges period is the longest period of time in which Israel was under another nation. There is no record of the Israelites crying out to the Lord for deliverance as in the past. Instead, they seemed to have been content to exist under foreign domination. Judah, which had begun the fight against the Canaanites (1:1–2), had dropped the goal of conquering the land in favour of a peaceful survival under the Philistines.²⁰ The apostasy of the Judges period, according to these chapters, was characterized by three observable trends in the general lifestyle of the people:²¹

1) There was religious syncretism

It involves the blending together of different religious attitudes and ideas into one system. This trend was observable in the lives of Micah and his family, as they were affected by the popular trends of their day. According to Judges 17:1, Micah was an Ephraimite. This fact is significant because the tabernacle was set up at Shiloh based in Ephraimite territory. However, as we study the story of Micah, it becomes clearer that Shiloh had lost its spiritual influence among many of the families in the tribe of Ephraim. If Shiloh has lost its spiritual influence in the tribe of Ephraim, how much more this influence would be seen affecting the other tribes located in more distant regions? In the Book of Judges, the faith of Israel was so compromised that marriage to a Philistine was viewed as a cultural issue rather than an issue of religious separation (e.g. Samson). Syncretism was the rule of life in that everyone did what was right in his or her own eyes because of the absence of guidance from God’s Word.²²

2) There was extreme materialism

Another individual entered the scene at this point. He is described as a Levite from Bethlehem-Judah (Judg. 17:7). Evidently, this Levite was unemployed and had no place of permanent service. During his travels northward he encountered Micah and indicated that he sought a place of service. The fact that the Levite wandered, seeking a means of support, revealed that the Levites were left destitute. In any event, Micah extended to this young priest an official “call” to his local shrine. This included a salary of ten shekels of silver, a suit of apparel, and food (Judg. 17:10). The introduction of the Levite into this story is important because it shows how departure from God’s Word influenced the thinking of the Israelites generally but particularly the spiritual leaders in Israel. The Levite was content to accept such a position (Judg. 17:11) in spite of what he knew of the Law of Moses and its prohibitions with regard to idolatry.

Materialism sets in when the Word of God is neglected; it dispenses a spiritual element in man, bringing him down from the position given him by God, to where he is but little lower than the

¹⁹ Ibid, 143.

²⁰ Smith, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 (2005): 424.

²¹ Ibid, 143-145.

²² Smith, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 (2005): 435. Smith observed, “Though separation as a Nazirite was a central issue in Samson’s life, one that he knew (16:17), precept and practice were separate issues.”

angels and little higher than the apes.²³ When materialism is embraced, objective truth goes into the trash and can go along with objective morality.²⁴

3) There was moral relativism

On the surface moral relativism appears to be the epitome of tolerance.²⁵ This period was the pre-monarchical period, hence there was no “king in Israel” (cf. Judg. 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). Israel began to reject the Law of Moses as the standard of conduct. There was only one other way in which moral activity could be conducted and that was on the basis of subjective norms; that is, every man established principles of righteousness on the basis of his own evaluation. “Once the foundation for absolute truth is destroyed, relativism and subjectivism follow.”²⁶ This type of philosophy led to confusion and spiritual conflict among the tribes. “The conclusion is inescapable that a thoroughgoing relativism entails a thoroughgoing scepticism but among the dreadful consequences of thoroughgoing scepticism is the fact that the theory is self-referential and therefore self-refuting.”²⁷ The absence of a moral standard, God’s Word, is seen in chaotic marriage relationships. Separation of husband and wife was probably common as revealed in the story of the Levite and his wife. Moreover, the sons of Belial had no regard for law and morality for the Levite in their lustful desires. The Levite offered his concubine, a clear sign of spiritual degeneration. When the Benjamites refused to hand over the sons of Belial to the Israelites to be punished, a war broke out where 22,000 and 18,000 Israelites died on the first and second day, respectively. At this juncture, it was concluded that the spiritual state of Israel as a whole was a form of apostasy.²⁸

Conclusion

The Israelites failed to conquer the respective territories assigned to them. They disobeyed the LORD when they made leagues with them. Their failure to walk right with God by not taking heed of God’s command to separate resulted in the failure of proper teaching of the Word of God. Lack or absence of Biblical instruction produced a generation who knew not the LORD nor the great works that He had wrought upon them and their forefathers. They forgot what Moses and Joshua commanded them in continually teaching the Word unto their children (Deut. 6 and Jos. 8).

²³ E. G. Sihler, “Can Religion Deny the Soul and Still Be Religion?”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 90 (1933): 460. He added, “Materialism and Religion have generally been considered mutually antagonistic. Undeniably, they are so in fact when Religion is understood in the traditional way as concerning, on the one hand, God and, on the other, human souls in their relation to and service of Him.”

²⁴ Phillip E. Johnson, “Separating Materialist Philosophy from Science,” *Bible and Spade* 10 (1997): 36.

²⁵ The SBJT Forum: “Foundations for Ethics in a Secular Age,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 4 (2000): 93.

²⁶ Norman L. Geisler and Thomas A. Howe, “A Postmodern View of Scripture,” *Christian Apologetics Journal* 7 (2008): 65.

²⁷ David R. Dilling, “The Emergence of the Idea of Scientific Historiography,” *Grace Journal* 9 (1968): 36. Dilling added, “Scepticism is inherently contradictory, and if consistency be abandoned then not only is history a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, but utter nihilism is inevitable. No meaning of any sort is possible; communication itself breaks down, and with that human society and human existence as well.”

²⁸ Quek, *Joshua, Judges and Ruth*, 59.

The abominable sin of syncretism pervaded the land because of the absence of God's Word. The mixture of Jehovah worship and Baalism was rampant. Idolatry was proof that the people apostatized, and thus departed from the Word of God.

Relativism destroyed the moral fabric among the people of God. They were put into the numbness of their spiritual discernment, unable to identify between the evil and the good.

Apostasy of a generation is a very pathetic condition. Blameable are the parents who are supposed to know the Word of God but failed to walk right with God and separate from the world, even failed to teach God's Word to their children. Biblical separation is demanded from the Scriptures. Lack of biblical separation which is characterized by not walking right with God will result in the apostasy of the next generation. Let us take heed of God's Word and walk right according to the Scriptures.

BOOK REVIEW

- Sis Ho Xiao Wei

J. C. Ryle's "Walking With God" is an "easier to read and abridged version of Practical Religion", the author's other work. At the very beginning of the book and all through its chapters, the author calls the reader to serious self-examination. Ryle is not content with a false profession of faith or mere external observance of Christian practices or superficial Christianity. He reminds readers that Christianity, to be real and true in one's life, must stem from the inner man, and it must result in fruit. That is the only genuine walk with God. By his faithful exposition of God's Word, Ryle urges the reader to look deep into his own heart to honestly consider his own walk with God.

Ryle calls the reader to check his own salvation, followed by various aspects of the Christian walk. E.g. One's devotion life in prayer and Bible reading, Christian graces of love and zeal, one's relation to the world and carnality, future judgment etc. Throughout the book, Ryle makes pointed statements and asks pertinent questions which strike the heart. Ryle gives warning, hope and encouragement, suitable for the unbeliever and the believer to meet their different struggles and needs. At the close of every chapter, Ryle concludes with direct application of the principles previously drawn from God's Word.

Ryle presents his thoughts and arguments with Biblical support, in an organized, clear, and easy to read manner. His points are full of relevance for both the sinner and saint, and with each paragraph, there is plenty for one to ponder over. Most of all, Ryle writes from his heart to the reader's heart, with a deeply personal and pastoral style.

This reader highly recommends a thoughtful reading of this book accompanied with serious self-examination to derive the greatest benefit from it. Its contents are not to be rapidly glossed over, but its weighty matters must be considered with greatest gravity.