

# Why Walk Worthy of God?

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Amen. That song is always one of my favorites of the ones that Becky wrote almost 25 years ago now and I trust that was a blessing and encouragement to you this morning. Open your Bibles, if you would, to 1 Thessalonians 2. As I was sitting here and watching the choir sing and then reflecting on Becky sing, as the choir was singing, I had a little bit of a tear that welled up in my eye. I happened to glance and notice that the arrangement that they sang this morning was arranged by Bob Walters and then Becky wrote the song that she sang, but the orchestration for that was arranged by Bob Walters that you heard in the track there. But Bob Walters, of course, was promoted to glory last year and he's in heaven so I couldn't help but think of his hearing his music from a slightly different perspective but grateful for his help with our music here over the years and a number of the different recordings that we've done and grateful for his contribution to the work of the Lord, specifically through the ministry of music.

1 Thessalonians 2, we'll begin reading in verse 7 and if you've found your place there, I'd ask you to stand to your feet, please. 1 Thessalonians 2:7. The Bible says,

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:  
8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. 9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. 10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: 11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, 12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for the wonderful 66 books that compose the Old Testament and New Testament in which we find our holy Bible, the word of God. Lord, we thank you for the way in which the Holy Spirit spoke through different men and caused them to record for us this message. Lord, we thank you for the relevance of the word of God and, God, we thank you for the importance of it. I pray, Father, this*

*morning as we look into your word, that we would be reminded of your desire of each one of us as your children in the very important and foundational matter of walking worthy of God. We ask, Lord, for you to open our hearts, to open our ears and, God, this morning that we would leave here having our hearts challenged and stirred to do more for you. For we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.*

You may be seated.

You may think I am preaching somewhat on the obvious this morning. After all, walking worthy of God is pretty basic, right? But you'd be surprised how easy it is for us to say that and then to put it into practice can be sometimes a different story. Now, I think of the condition of the walkers this morning from a spiritual standpoint. I realize there are some here that are incapable of walking worthy of God. Incapable, you say? Yes, because in order to walk with God, you have to have been born of God. You have to have made that personal decision to recognize Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, turn from your sins and put your faith and trust in, as we've just finished covering the Christmas season, the babe in the manger who went all the way to the cross to be your perfect sacrifice and substitute and mine.

So there are those that are incapable at this moment of walking worthy of God but there are also those this morning that might be saying, well, you just don't think it is possible. "You don't know where I am. You can't imagine." And for some, it may mean that their spiritual muscles have become a little bit atrophied. You know, you think about sitting for a long time or standing for a long time and then when you try and take that next step, sometimes it's a little bit more difficult than you think or if you've ever been there and you've had your legs crossed for a while and you have not thought about the fact that the blood is not flowing and so you get up and you try and take a step and you put that foot forward and it's like jelly. You think, "Man, what's going on? I can't go," and you realize, "Alright, I've got to slow down. Let's get the blood flowing again and then I'll be able after I go through that tingling, tickly sensation to take the next step." But, you know, that there are also people who would say, "Holiness in an unholy world, it just can't be done. We've got to lower our standards," and I would remind you this morning that God's standard was written for us in the word of God thousands of years ago, that it is an unchanging standard that was the same for the carnal people of Corinth as it is for us today in 2015.

But there also are those who are walkers this morning who simply lack the confidence. They would say, "You know, Pastor, I have tried to walk with God." Perhaps they might be thinking right now, "This time last year, in fact, I made a similar commitment and I said, 'Yes, I'm going to walk with God in 2014,' but 2014 did not turn out quite the way that I had anticipated." I wish to remind you that all of us are capable of falling. In fact, the Bible says in Proverbs 24:16, "A just man falleth seven times," but that's not where the verse stops, it says, "and riseth up again." I'm equally mindful of the fact that the Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes 7:20, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." You see, our standard of God's holiness is unchanging but God, at the same time, recognizes our limits, our weaknesses and so God says, "Hey, my desire is

that you would walk worthy of me and it can be done if you and I seek to accomplish that, not in our own strength but in the strength of our heavenly Father."

There is also another group of walkers here this morning, spiritually speaking, and that's those who are just too tired. They would say, "I've been there. Done that." But I would respond, "Not so." You see, we are to keep on walking worthy of God until we take our last breath. There are those who would say, "Oh, it's just time to step aside and let others do the spiritual walking," but I would say that this is the time to help others and to guide them in the process. Has Christ come back yet? Nope, he hasn't. So since he hasn't, I suggest we best get up and keep walking until he comes.

But what about the reality of walking worthy of God? The reality of walking worthy of God. I'm mindful of the fact that Paul is here writing to a church where he spent some 3 years and had given them in that period of time the foundation for their spiritual walk. He had shared with them principles regarding Jesus Christ, regarding his work on the cross, and at that same time, now he has come with his pen and recorded for us what although sometimes we tend to think of the order of the books of the Bible as being chronological, actually this was one of the first epistles the Apostle Paul, perhaps the very first, that he ever penned. So even though Romans comes before 1 Thessalonians in our Bibles, that does not mean that the book of Romans was written before that. And Paul is here on this second missionary journey, he's reflecting back, having gone to Colossae, having gone to Thessalonica, and he says, "Listen, I want you to remember how I cared for you." And I love the fact that he creates this word picture for us in verse 7, "we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

You know, you think of a mother who cares for her children and the love that she has and seeing them and holding that precious baby and then as they continue to grow, to watch out for them as they take those first steps and seeking to remove obstacles and to be there and be ready to catch them at any moment should they fall. The mother who is willing to spend long hours taking care of her children to impart to them her love, being able to get away with less sleep and to spend some time with them that she would have normally spent on herself prior to tending to those children. I'm very grateful for those that have dedicated themselves to the field of medicine, having spent the last couple of weeks in doing some hospital visits and seeing people there in different units at the hospital, oftentimes spending a 12 hour turn so that they can provide the physical care and attention that the patients need. They are willing to put up with a patient who may be a little bit agitated simply due to a medical condition or due to the physical pain that they are enduring and yet the nurse will be there and will continue to care for them, to seek to find out what's causing the pain, if they can help to alleviate that. Sometimes it's changing medications. Sometimes it's changing gauzes. Sometimes it's changing sheets. But just caring genuinely for their patients.

But Paul says, "You know, that's the way we were among you. We cared for you." And as I think about walking with God, I'm reminded of the reality of walking with God. Paul says, "You know, I cared so much for you all because I love you," and he's not putting forth before them something that is impossible. This matter of walking worthy of God is

something that is very realistic. Now, this past week I happened to hear some of the local sportscasters talking about the winter classic hockey game before the game had taken place. It was interesting to hear both the female and the male sportscasters sharing their childhood aspirations and dreams and the one dreamed of being a famous soccer player and the other had dreamed of being a famous football player and neither one of those remotely came true. Neither one of those were able to realize that dream. But do you know what's so exciting about the text before us this morning? When we think of "keep walking worthy of God," that is something that is very realistic for every single child of God. There is no one to whom you would say, "Well listen, if you don't come from this family, if you don't have this background, if you don't have these financial resources, you don't have a career, you don't have a chance at ever making it in professional sports." But do you know that the word of God lets us know? "Hey listen, if you know Jesus Christ, if you've been born into his family, then the reality of your walking worthy of God is extremely possible because it doesn't depend on you, it depends on your God." As you and I can think about this matter, walking worthy of God, it's very realistic and the difference, of course, with the Christian walk is that walking worthy of God truly can be a reality for anyone who desires to follow him.

I'm grateful for the admonition that we find from the Lord as he reminds us on more than one occasion, his desire for us to follow him. I'm grateful for the fact that he understood your weaknesses and mine and, at the same time, he told the disciples, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men," in Matthew 4:19. He also reminded those that were a little bit concerned with, "Where do I divide my time over following Christ and fulfilling my earthly responsibilities?" and not desiring that we become negligent of our earthly responsibilities but to help us, again, prioritize our responsibilities. He even went so far as to say in Matthew 8:22, "Follow me and let the dead bury their dead." That is, "Keep your focus on your walk with me." He told the disciples in Matthew 16:24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Notice he said "if any man." It's not "if those of you that are among the chosen few," it's not, "if those of you that have really arrived." No, it's "anyone who desires can be a follower of mine."

I love the fact of the reality of walking worthy of God, but what about the practicality of walking worthy of God? How is it that this would be accomplished? I believe one of the key ways of walking worthy of God is through a better knowledge of his word. This can first and foremost be accomplished through personal Bible study. I love Psalm 1 where it reminds us again of the importance of walking with God day and night. I think of Joshua 1:8 and meditating upon the word of God day and night. I think of the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily. I think of the fact that this sacred book is something that you and I will never, ever come close to exhausting this side of glory. So if I want to walk worthy of God, if I want that for myself, if I want that for my heart, if I want that for my home, one of the most simple ways to do that is to start off and determine to spend more time studying this sacred book.

I was appalled when this past week someone happened to forward to me something that a pastor of one of these mega-churches has come out and said, "Ten things that he has seen

that are desirous of a good church today," and one of the things he said, "We need to spend a lot less time reading the word of God," he said, "because what we ought to think back is in the very beginning, the Christians didn't have the word of God. All they had was their community." And while communion and fellowship is a vital part of the church of God, in fact, if you come back tonight, you'll hear a little bit more about that and some things that I'm desirous of doing here through our church family, I want to remind all of us there is nothing more important in the life of the Christian than coming to learn and know and live by this book.

This is it. This is where it's at and I have to do that on a personal basis and I would even say so far as thinking from a pastoral standpoint, some of you may think, "Well, you know, Pastor, if I was locked up in an office all week and had the Bible in front of me and was just there studying for messages, you know, if I had your schedule, I'd be able to do it too." And while God does certainly speak to me through what I study as I often consider the saying of having preached this message to me before I'm preaching it to you, I want to remind you that that is not a substitute for my personal Bible study which is why I get up at 5 o'clock nearly every morning and I make sure I have my personal time with God, going out and talking to God in prayer and coming back and studying the word of God apart from what I'm preaching, apart from what we're teaching through so that I am continually being fed for my personal spiritual needs that I have because I have spiritual needs just like every single one of us. There is no difference.

But again, the practicality of walking with God, yes, it can be done. It can also be accomplished as we gather a better knowledge of his word through group Bible study which is what we do in a variety of ways here at FBT and next week we're looking forward to rolling out a new structure in our adult BSF classes as was announced 3 or 4 weeks ago. But the sole purpose of offering different topics and allowing you to choose is that we realized that we are all at different phases in not only our physical lives but also our spiritual lives and there truly is a class for everyone. You know, one of the classes that may be a little bit misconstrued is the class that we have, what we're calling "For New Believers," and some of you may be saying, "Well, you know, I've been saved 5 years or I've been saved 10 years so certainly that wouldn't be for me." Well, it's for those that maybe still have somewhat of an elementary or a very basic knowledge of the Scriptures. It could be that you have been saved for months or years and yet you've really never had the opportunity or made an opportunity to dig into the word of God and to learn how to study the word of God and how to apply this to your life and so that's one of the classes that you don't have to say, "Well, I've been saved for a year or 2 or 3." If you just want to be able to have a more spiritual maturity, it's a great opportunity for you to sign up for that.

There are topics that are being covered. There are books of the Bible that are being covered. But the key is that we get in these environments and we allow ourselves with other brothers and sisters in Christ to say, "Wow, this is a living book. This is a practical book. This isn't something that's purely theological that we stick on the shelf. This is something that should be a part of my daily living." But of course, remember, you have to sign up and that's the key part so don't forget to sign up for your BSF class. I like what

Haney concluded in his class this morning after reviewing the portion of John that he had covered over the last few months, he said and this is, of course, before going on to glory and being promoted some day to heaven, he said, "We must continue to study the word of God. There is no end and no graduation." You say, "Okay, what do you mean?" It's the fact that studying the word of God is the most practical thing you and I can do and, furthermore, must do if we're going to keep walking worthy of God.

Now, not everybody here is a babe in Christ. There are some for whom the new believers class may not be the right one for you. There are some that would love to continue studying through a book of the Bible as has been mentioned such as Proverbs or such as Esther or such as Romans that are going to be discussed in different classes. So that's where it's up to you to decide, "Okay, what is it that I desire to be able to know more so that I can be a better servant of the Lord? So that I can walk more worthy, or to use a biblical term, even worthily of God?" Of course, we think of group Bible study can be accomplished through our monthly men's prayer breakfast. It can be accomplished through our frequent ladies' Bible studies during the week such as the one that my wife has this coming Friday. The dates for that will all be shown in the calendars that we'll be distributing next week.

So one of the key ways, the practicality of walking with God, is through a better knowledge of his word but it's also through a better knowledge of his work. I'm reminded, again, of what we find in Hebrews 10, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is." And I'm grateful this morning that rather than staying at home, rather than sitting there and watching television or laying in bed, you chose, you made the decision, "I'm going to go assemble with my brethren at church this morning." I recognize that's a personal decision that you've made and I want to remind you that in order to walk worthy of God, that needs to be a habit. That shouldn't be something that is just occasionally done. You know, we can all think of things that can come into our schedules and crowd out our time in the house of the Lord but I want to remind us, again, that Jesus Christ is coming back soon. You know, that's the whole theme of the book of 1 Thessalonians. I can't wait here in another few weeks on Sunday nights to go through that book verse-by-verse and examine the rapture and think about our own thinking process: the way we should talk, the way we should walk in light of the fact that Jesus Christ is coming back soon.

Tonight I look forward to sharing some things that we are planning to help people stay better connected here at FBT and I hope that you will make the decision not to miss out on this exciting news. You know, this is something that we can tend to stray from as our society continues to deviate more and more from the biblical principles on which we were founded. Yet, the importance of daily, consistent fellowship cannot be underestimated. I'm mindful of the fact that Jesus Christ himself was daily teaching in the temple even when all of them didn't follow him. The Bible says in Mark 14:49, "I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled."

You know, sometimes when we think about the practicality of walking with God, we may look and say, "Well, you know, what about So-and-so? What about her? What about him?" And this is where we've got to realize, "Wait a minute, what does God say in his word? Not what did the preachers say on Sunday, what does God say in his holy word?" And if God desires for me to grow, that should be my desire too. If God desires for me to walk worthy of him, that should be my desire too. It should be that I look at church as far more than an opportunity to hear beautiful music as we've heard this morning. As far more than getting a free cup of coffee as you walked in the foyer today. But it's a matter of coming to learn, to grow, to apply this to my life, to see how I can be more like Christ.

You know, the Bible says there, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ," in Acts 5:42. And the result in Acts 16:5, "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." You know, one of the ways that Fairfax Baptist Temple is going to grow is by each one of us taking to heart the practicality of walking worthy of God and of deciding right at the beginning of this year, "I want to do my part in understanding, studying, living by the word of God. I equally want to do my part in demonstrating my walking worthy of God and participating in the work of God." Of course, when we think about the work of God, we have to keep in mind that the work of God is not sitting in an office. The work of God is not going around and just being there as a Christian and hoping that someone will look at us. The work of God is coming together with God's people, taking the unique gifts and spiritual talents that God has given to each one of us and using them through the local church. That's what's so exciting is you and I can realize, "Hey, is there anything practical about walking worthy of God?" Absolutely.

The last thing I wish to remind us of this morning is: the necessity of walking worthy of God. The necessity of walking worthy of God. You see, Paul started off and he said, "You know, like that nurse, we cared for you. We were affectionately desirous of you." But now, go back and see what he says there in verse 11, "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children." You know, we think of the word "exhorting" there, it has the idea of encouraging. We think of the word "comforting" there and it really speaks to the tenderness that is to be there. Then we see the word "charged" and the word "charged" implies an urgency. It implies a concern, the concern of a father.

I thank the Lord for blessing me with 4 very special children. I still can't believe I'm now a father-in-law and I really can't believe I'm about to be a grandfather but, you know, I understand as well as we enjoyed having Nate home for a couple of weeks, I had to take him back to the airport yesterday and he's getting back there at the church today and he'll start working again tomorrow and classes start in a few more weeks, but you know, I enjoyed this week getting together with him, knowing that he was going to be heading back to school and going over to Starbucks and sitting down and having a cup of coffee and I'm glad that he's now of the age that he likes coffee, you know, that's one more thing that we've got in common there. But just sat down and just went through and shared some things with him from a father to a son that he needs to be mindful of in his relationships: and his relationships with his roommates, his relationship with his girlfriend, his

relationship with his God. And taking the time to share with him some things that God had taught me along the way and share with him, as well, the fact that God is watching him everywhere he goes. And that God has not remotely called him to be me, God has called him to be exactly who he is, in the image of God and walking with him and seeking to keep his personal time with God the number 1 priority in his life every single day.

You know, as I think of this in a spiritual context, you know, Paul said here that he did exhort them. You know, that denotes warning. It denotes urgency. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4:14, "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you." It's important that we take note of that, the concern that is there of a father as he thinks about his children. And I would share with you this morning, I thank God this week, the 8<sup>th</sup> of January will be 9 years since the Lord allowed me to become the pastor of this incredible church. But I care for you and I want to see us as a church in 2015 grow. Grow spiritually. Grow numerically. But you know, I can't make it happen by myself, it has to be all of us working together saying, "I'm going to look at this a little bit more close to my heart. I'm going to think about the necessity of walking worthy of God. I'm going to think about the high standard that God has set and examine what are the things that I need to do a little bit differently in my life so that I can be exactly what God wants me to be, so that I can walk worthy of him. I'm going to make sure that in my life that I'm spending that time in the word, I'm spending that time in prayer, I'm consistent in going to the house of God."

In verse 12, there's one other thing that I want us to think of as we think of the necessity of walking worthy of God. The Bible says, "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." Tonight, we're going to examine this passage again with some other aspects here that we've not touched on this morning. But do you know that word "called" there in verse 12? It's actually in the present tense which simply means it is to be a continual action. So sometimes when we think about the way in which God in his divine sovereignty drew us to Christ, exposing us to the Gospel, whether it was as a little child as it was for me at the age of 4, or whether it was as a grown adult as it has been for many of you that are here today, I want to remind us that when we think of being called unto God's kingdom and his glory as we'll be digging further into tonight, that that is not something that I look back at as one time it happened and it was over and done with but rather, every single day of my life God is calling me and if you're his child, he's calling you, to walk worthy of him. It's not, "Okay, I'm saved. We're fine. Move on. Go to somebody else." No, it's, "Wait a minute, every day I live truly in light of the fact that Jesus Christ may return."

Now, this morning I mentioned there are different walkers that are here. What's the reality of walking worthy of God in your life? Have you been born into the family of God? If you haven't, there's no better time to come this morning during this invitation where someone who just like you will show you from the word of God what they did to come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. You see, there's none of us that has ever been born as a Christian, we are all born as sinners. But thanks be to God, there are plenty of us who have heard the message of salvation, have recognized that we

are sinners and have come to place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ and are seeking to walk worthy of him. But there are some that are here this morning that have thought, "Well, you know, Pastor, I've fallen so many times, it's just not realistic for me." Well, I hope this morning that you will take to heart what the word of God says and that you might come to the altar today and say, "God, I may have fallen but, Lord, by your grace, I'm going to get back up again and I'm going to seek to walk worthy of my God." There may be some that are here this morning that are saying, "You know, I've just been a little tired spiritually. You know, it's been a while and I'm just going to kind of draw back a little bit." Oh my friend, that's when we are most vulnerable to the attacks of the devil. That's when we need to say that much more, "Lord, use me all the way until the very end."

You know, I thank God for all the people that are part of our church family, young and old, and I realize that we have some in our church family who due to physical conditions aren't quite as steady on their feet as they once were. There are some that wobble a little bit when they walk. There are others that have to have a cane. There are others that have to have a walker. But do you know what is a blessing from a spiritual standpoint? There are some who are looking for a brother or sister in Christ to be a spiritual walker, to come up alongside them and to say, "Hey look, let me encourage you in your walk with God. Let me help you through this. Let me, as the father doth his children, remind you of how important it is to be in God's house every time the doors are open, to make certain that your walk with God is as consistent during the week as it is on the weekend, to make sure that you are really seeking to be the husband, the wife, the child, the son, the daughter, that God wants you to be."

It has been said that our walk talks louder than our talk talks and so I would ask this morning: what does your walk say about you? And I would further ask: if our walk talks louder than our talk talks, what does your walk say about your God?

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.