

“How to Walk with God around Others”
(Matthew 5:1-16)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, we concluded looking at how to walk with God alone:
 - a. When we're alone, we don't need to be an easy mark for temptation.
 - b. There are several useful things we can do actually to grow spiritually.
 - (i) We can read the book God has given to convert and sanctify us: the Bible.
 - (ii) We can benefit from the teachers He has gifted His church with through the centuries by reading good books.
 - (iii) Certainly, we can spend time with the Lord in prayer, seeking for His kingdom and glory, and the good of ourselves and others.
2. We finished up last week considering meditation.
 - a. This is how we can experience the things we read about.
 - b. We need to think about what we're reading: contemplation.
 - c. And then reflect on our own lives:
 - (i) Examine ourselves to see how we measure up (self-examination).
 - (ii) And then exhort ourselves to change where we see we fall short (self-exhortation).
 - d. This is where true Christian growth comes from:
 - (i) If we read, but don't meditate on what we read, we'll grow in knowledge, but not in holiness.
 - (ii) But if we actually put into practice what we know, we will grow into Christ's image: which is the goal of the Christian life.

B. Preview.

1. But as we saw at the beginning, we must walk with God not only when we're alone, but also when we're with others. This opens the door to three other areas:
 - a. How we should conduct ourselves to God's glory when we're around others.
 - b. How we should conduct ourselves to God's glory when we're around the ungodly.
 - c. And how we should conduct ourselves to His glory when we're around other believers.
2. This evening, we'll look at how we should conduct ourselves around everyone.
 - a. No matter whom we're around, our goal should always be to speak and act:
 - (i) To glorify God: “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

- (ii) To adorn our profession of faith with a godly life: “All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and *our* doctrine will not be spoken against” (1 Tim. 6:1).
 - (iii) And to try and be a real help to others: “Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35).
- b. This is why the Lord has placed us in society – we are to be salt and light – and why He has given us gifts (1 Cor. 12:7-25).
- (i) We are to seek to follow Christ’s example of godly service.
 - (ii) To do this, there are four things we should strive to be: holy, humble, wise and loving.

II. Sermon.

A. First, strive to be holy. Peter writes, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

1. Make sure your heart is filled with love for God and the things of God, so that you’re fully consecrated and set apart to Him to be His child first and foremost of all.
2. And then as His child, as His servant, do all in your power to bring glory to Him.
 - a. Speak and act at all times as one who represents God.
 - (i) When you speak, speak as though you are in the presence of God.
 - (ii) When you act, act as though you are standing before the Judge, act as you wish you would have acted if you were standing before God as your Judge.
 - b. Do your best to defend His honor.
 - (i) Be ready to defend God’s honor when His name is misused or abused, or defending the honor of His Word.
 - (ii) Defend the honor of your brother and sisters if someone should slander them.

B. Second, since pride will undermine everything you do to glorify God and become like Christ, strive to humble yourself, both in your own eyes and in the eyes of others, so that you can give the honor and respect that is due to all. “Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king” (1 Pet. 2:17).

1. Submit to those in authority over you and honor them: “Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor” (Rom. 13:7).
2. Consider those who are your equals as better than yourself and show them honor: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look

out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

3. And condescend to love those who are lower than you: “Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation” (Rom. 12:16).

C. Third, having put on these two attributes of holiness and humility, learn to make the wisest use of the opportunities the Lord gives you around others.

1. Be careful what you say to and about others and what you hear.
 - a. When you speak, don’t say too much and so betray a brother or sister’s confidence, and don’t say too little so that you shut others out from things they need to know.
 - b. When you listen, don’t believe everything you hear, but on the other hand, don’t doubt everything you hear.
 - (i) “The naive believes everything, but the sensible man considers his steps” (Prov. 14:15).
 - (ii) “But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men” (John 2:24).
2. Do your best to accommodate yourself to others. “For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it” (1 Cor. 9:19-23).
 - a. Your goal should be to relate to them as best you can so that you can do them some good: bring them the Gospel, counsel them.
 - b. You need to do this without compromising your faith or sinning against God in the process.
 - c. At the same time, guard yourself against hypocrisy – from being worldly on the pretense that you’re trying to win them to Christ.
3. Make sure that you don’t meddle in business that doesn’t concern you.
 - a. “*Like* one who takes a dog by the ears is he who passes by *and* meddles with strife not belonging to him” (Prov. 26:17).
 - b. “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you” (1 Thes. 4:11).
4. Be careful what you say if you are asked to mediate in some controversy, or if God providentially ordains that you become involved in one.

- a. Don't speak too soon; wait until you hear both sides of a controversy before you speak: "The first to plead his case *seems* right, *until* another comes and examines him" (Prov. 18:17).
 - b. Don't say too much: "When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise" (Prov. 10:19).
- 5. Know when you need to speak and when you need to remain silent: "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven – a time to tear apart and a time to sew together; a time to be silent and a time to speak" (Ecc. 3:1).
 - a. Speak only and always for the glory of God and the good of your neighbor.
 - b. "A man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!" (Prov. 15:23).
 - c. "Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances" (25:11).
- 6. Don't praise yourself or speak about yourself, unless you need to defend your actions or your credibility or your innocence, but even then do it modestly: "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips" (Prov. 27:2).
 - a. Be self-effacing: "I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody" (2 Cor. 12:11).
 - b. On the other hand, don't fish for praise from others by putting yourself down.
 - c. Try to draw the attention to God – that He would be glorified by you and in you (Rom. 2:29). Then God shall praise you, whatever others might do: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).
 - d. When someone is praised in your presence, don't become envious or think that it was said to take something away from you; but rejoice that God has enabled him to do good, that he has advanced God's cause, which is your cause as well.
- 7. Be wise in how you respond to good and evil:
 - a. Rejoice when you see something good and imitate it: "*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good*" (Rom. 12:9).
 - b. Be grieved and humbled when you see someone doing evil and let it be a warning to you that you don't fall into the same evil. "*Resolved* , To act, in all respects, both speaking and doing, as if nobody had been so vile as I, and as if I had committed the same sins, or had the same infirmities or failings, as others; and that I will let the knowledge of their failings promote nothing but shame in myself, and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God" (Resolutions, 8).
 - c. If someone praises you, direct the credit to God, knowing that it might tempt you to become prideful: "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, but no

one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.' Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer'" (Gen 41:15-16).

- d. If you deserve what they say, then praise the Lord that He has given you the grace to deserve it and ask Him for continued grace to do better.
 - e. If it's more than you deserve, then work to live up to it.
8. If someone accuses you to your face, don't be too quick to argue your case or to clear your reputation.
- a. When Shimei came out to curse David as David was fleeing from his son Absalom, "Abishai Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now and cut off his head.' But the king said, 'What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if the LORD has told him, "Curse David," then who shall say, "Why have you done so?"' Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, 'Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life; how much more now this Benjamite? Let him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him. Perhaps the LORD will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing this day'" (2 Sam. 16:9-12).
 - b. This accusation came from God's plan.
 - (i) If it's true, then see it as God's mercy to show you your sin and allow you to repent.
 - (ii) If it's false, then examine yourself to see if there's something you've done that has the appearance of that evil or if you were in fact tempted to it.
 - (iii) But if it isn't true and you've done nothing that would give that impression, then see it as God's wisdom to show you how wicked men really are and as a warning to yourself that you should never do anything that would cause you to deserve that accusation.
 - (iv) The Lord may have brought them to you to strengthen you against something like it in the future.
 - (v) Make good use of the slander you receive from your enemies, because they will say things to you your friends never will.
- D. Finally, seek to love all men.
1. Be kind and considerate towards all men: "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men" (Titus 3:1-2).
 2. As you have opportunity, do good to all: "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10).
 3. Try not to offend anyone: "Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32).
 4. Don't wrong anyone and be ready to forgive the wrongs done to you: "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one

another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you” (Col. 3:12-13). Be wronged, rather than revenge yourself on others.

5. Try to encourage your neighbors to do what’s right:
 - a. “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people” (1 Thes. 5:14-15).
 - b. If they reject you (Matt. 7:6), you must try to help them as far as God will allow (Lev. 19:17).
 - c. Make sure you think about what you say and its probable impact before you speak. Purpose not to sin with your tongue, but to bridle your mouth (Ps. 39:1).
 - d. Make sure your passions don’t get the better of you, and so you say things you shouldn’t. Control your passions and so your tongue.
6. You must strive to love them and try to cover over their offences: “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8).
7. In everything you do, don’t speak and act to please yourself, but try to build up others: “Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification” (Rom. 15:2).
 - a. Don’t try to make others think less of your neighbor by backbiting (Psa. 15:3) or spreading rumors (Prov. 16:28), or by leading others to believe something that isn’t true.
 - b. Pray before you get together with others that the Lord would help you to conduct yourself in a way that would honor Him; that you would do what you should and say what you should. We cannot tame the tongue (James 3:8), but God can.
8. Last, remember that no one can teach you to do these things or give you the power to do them, except God (James 3:13-18).
 - a. And so you must make sure that you have the Law of God written on your heart by the Spirit and that He has given you the power to keep it, otherwise this grace and kindness you are called to in your life and words won’t be there (Ps. 36:30, 31; Prov. 31:26).
 - b. If you have the power of nature only, you will never be able to do these things. As is the heart, so is the life. Out of the evil heart comes evil things (Matt. 15:19), but the good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings what is good (Matt. 12:34, 35). Amen.