

**Hebrews 12:13a: Principles of Walking; Psalm 23:1-2**

The word “walk” is often used metaphorically in Scripture to indicate a way of life. The Greek word *peripateo* means “walking” and often refers to one's way of life. Walking is, according to:

**Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. “walking”:**

*the gait of a biped in which the feet are lifted alternately with one foot not clear of the ground before the other touches. It also defines the term as “a manner of living: conduct, behavior.”*

The etymologies of three English words help clarify the metaphorical use of walking in the mind of the Greek-speaking people.

**American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. “peripatetic”:**

*Walking about from place to place; traveling on foot.*

**American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. “peristyle”:**

*A series of columns surrounding a structure, or enclosing a court.*

**American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. “gymnasium”:**

*A room or building equipped for gymnastics and sports.*

**American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. “academy”:**

2. a school for special instruction.
3. a secondary or college-preparatory school, especially a private one.

The use of these words as they were defined and understood by the Greeks sheds light on the figurative meaning of the word “walking” or *peripateo* - “a way of life,” or a “lifestyle.” I will quote from two sources:

**The Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories, s.v. “stoic” and “gymnasium”; A Dictionary of Ancient Greek Civilization, s.v. “gymnasium” and “academy”:**

*“The gymnasium was specially intended for physical exercise. The best known gymnasiums at Athens were the Academy, the Lyceum, and the Cynosarges.*

The Academy, or the *Akademeia*, was named after a Greek hero, Academus, and has given its name to all the “Academies” of the present day, because Plato moved there with his followers in 387 B.C.

Following the death of his father in 367 B.C., the young Aristotle (then aged 17) was sent to Athens to study at Plato's Academy. He spent the next 20 years there with Plato. However, after Plato's death he was passed over twice for the position as head of the Academy. He subsequently opened a rival school in the Lyceum, or the

**Lukeion**

Lukeion, a gymnasium attached to the temple of Apollo Lyceus, situated in a grove just outside Athens.

As a teacher there, Aristotle used to conduct classes while walking in the *peripatos*, a covered walkway (what we refer to in the English as a “*peristyle*”) surrounding the Lyceum. From this practice of walking about while teaching, the disciples of Aristotle came to be called Peripatetics.

The third academy was the Cynosarges, or the Kunosarges, which was used for non-Athenians.

The ancient Greeks placed a high value on both physical and mental fitness. Each important city such as Athens, had public areas set aside, for example, the three academies we just noted near Athens, in which young men would gather to exercise, compete in sports, and receive training in philosophy, music, and literature. The Greek *gymnasion* became the Latin gymnasium, which was used in two distinct senses to mean both ‘an exercise ground’ and ‘a public school.’

The English gymnasium has lost the scholarly connotations of its Greek and Latin sources; very little training in philosophy, music, and literature is likely to occur in the typical American gym. In German-speaking countries, however, the ‘school’ sense of the Latin word has been kept alive through the use of gymnasium to mean ‘a secondary school preparing students for the university.’

Thus, in the Greek-speaking world, the idea of developing one’s lifestyle at the academy and the gymnasium became associated with the habitual practice of walking. In order to develop one's mind and body, a lifestyle had to be developed which included a daily walk to the outskirts of Athens to attend one of the academies.

Both mind and body were consistently developed through a repetitive regimen of discipline in both the gymnasium and the *peripatos*. Thus walking, *peripateo*, metaphorically refers to one's established lifestyle which has been developed by repeated action over a long period of time. In the same vein, the foot represents the individual volitional decisions which are required to sustain the process of walking.

God has established the ruts, or wheel-tracks, by means of His righteousness. Volition places us into those ruts, or wheel-tracks, and keeps us there. By staying there, we establish a lifestyle of righteousness as its principles are communicated by the Mentor of the Grace Academy, God the Holy Spirit.

CTL: “*Be making straight wheel-tracks with your feet ...*”

In other words, “*continue to follow the way of life established by divine righteousness by means of your own volition.*”

Let’s observe this process as it was established in the life of David and revealed in one of the more popular Psalms, Psalm 23:3.

David wrote Psalm 23 under what was probably the greatest pressure of his life. He was involved in a forced march from Jerusalem in the wake of the Absalom-Ahithophel Revolution. His own son sought to dethrone him and possibly to take his life. And so, he was in retreat from his own kingdom and at war with his own son. In the midst of this catastrophe, David sits down and reflects upon the ever-present grace of God.

Only a man in complete control of his spiritual life could write such a perfect piece. It is perfect poetry expressing perfect doctrinal principles put to what was probably perfect music.

First of all, a corrected translation of verses 1-2:

**Psalm 23:1 - A psalm of David. The Lord is the One shepherding me. I cannot lack anything.**

David realizes he is in the perfect plan of God and as a result is kept alive both physically and spiritually by God’s grace. In David’s imagery, he compares himself to a lamb under the supervision of the heavenly Shepherd, the Lord of Israel. David sees himself under the watchful care of the perfect Shepherd. Under divine grace, he knows he cannot lack any necessary thing.

**Psalm 23:2** - He causes me to lie down in pastures of choice grass; He leads me to waters of refreshment.

As a lamb's physical growth is enhanced by the more nutritious species of grasses, likewise the human soul is nurtured best by the choicest teachings. The Shepherd causes David to lie down. This refers to the tranquility of soul necessary for the Shepherd to teach David the doctrines he needs to know.

Before doctrine can be applied it must be stored in the heart's stream of consciousness. Faith-rest and utilization of the two power options are required for that transfer of information to occur.

“*Choice grass*” refers to the highest quality information available to the human soul, the immutable Word of God.

In the first phrase of the second verse, David is caused to lie down. In the second, he is led. Lying down in pastures of choice grass is analogous to the inculcation of Bible doctrine under the first two spiritual skills. This is matriculation in the Divine Academy of Grace Didactics under the mentorship of the Holy Spirit. Being led to waters of refreshment refers to the momentum of spiritual growth and application of doctrine to experience.