

#145 “The Real Meaning of Walking by Faith”

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2 Corinthians 5:7 gives a reminder and exhortation that believers are to "walk by faith, not by sight." "Walk" speaks of how we live our lives, conduct ourselves, behave, and use the time and opportunities God has ordained for us. Walking "by sight" speaks of choosing to live based upon how things naturally appear, feel, and seem at first glance. Those who walk by sight rely upon fleshly instincts and temporal pleasures to make decisions. They are concerned with the present rather than the eternal and with blending in with the world rather than with keeping the commands of Christ. Walking by sight is selfish, shallow, and according to the Scripture, a totally insensible way to live. Walking by faith, on the other hand, makes sense if we understand what faith is and the profound glory of what it accomplishes and gives back to us in return.

Hebrews 11:1-2 gives the definition of faith, saying, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." *Faith is being absolutely convinced and assured that what we hope for and believe in according to the promises of God in the Scripture is indeed going to come to pass.* Faith is more than just empty hoping or thinking positively. It is an assurance and confidence that pierces to the depth of our souls that what God has said is true because God is for real and His promises are sure. As Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." Even though in this life God and heaven are unseen, those who believe God and His Word still choose to adjust their lives in light of eternal priorities. They choose not to walk by what is only visible to them now but rather based upon an unwavering belief of what they will see later. They are confident in their coming reward and in God's ability and faithfulness to keep His Word.

Those who walk by faith are keenly aware of the temporal nature of this life and world, and their focus and hope is fixed upon heaven. Hebrews 11:10 says of Abraham who operated by faith, "For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." This city is an eternal city guaranteed by the promises of God to those who believe. Sarah, Abraham, Noah, and other men and women of faith from times past had to, like us, wait until after they died to see the fullness of God's promise to them. Although it is true that they did see God's faithfulness throughout their lives, they had to wait until heaven to see that they were wise and correct to follow God, to obey His leading, to stand for truth, and to deal with the ridicule that comes from doing so. Hebrews 11:13-14 continues, "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own." For believers, our true country is heaven where we are eternal citizens. We cannot forget this because nations come and go, societies rise and fall, cultures ebb and flow, but God's promises stand forever. What we only believe in from a distance and what others mock and ignore is to be our anchoring hope. Though we are strangers now, we can be confident that we will go home one day

soon. It is imperative if we want to walk by faith rather than by sight that we desire a better country, namely heaven (Hebrews 11:16).

Walking by faith requires a willingness to suffer now, knowing that there will be no suffering later. Moses left Egypt, "choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward" (Hebrews 11:25-26). Sin is the easy way out, but the pleasure it offers is short-lived. It only breeds further and deeper pain and death. Moses chose to join up with his people, Israel, despite the difficulty and the cost of doing so, having to flee and later being mocked and persecuted. Yet he could do this by faith because he was looking to the reward. *The reward Christ offers is so much better than any earthly pleasure, and suffering for His sake is more fulfilling than any earthly treasure* (Hebrews 11:35-38). We must remember this if we are to walk by faith in this life.

Walking by faith isn't only marked by suffering and sacrifice, however. It is also marked by service for the Lord. Hebrews 11:33-34 speaks of the many things that the saints of old were able to accomplish, from winning wars to shutting the mouths of lions to performing acts of righteousness, because they walked by faith. The fact of the matter is that of ourselves we can do nothing of eternal value. Only by faith can we accomplish true spiritual victories through and in Christ. It is those who are willing to suffer and sacrifice and to believe and obey who will be used powerfully by God to do the work of the kingdom, advancing the truth, being ministers of light and love, and proclaiming the gospel to a world desperately in need.

If we want to truly be those who make a difference in ways that are eternal and not merely temporal, we must do as these faithful saints of old did and choose to walk by faith.