

Hebrews 11:5-8;
2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:5-10

Sept. 13, 2020

Walk By Faith

For we live by faith, not by sight, 2 Corinthians 5:7. Just what does that mean? ... to live by faith not by sight? The Bible talks a lot about faith ... Christians talk a lot about faith. Trusting God is what our faith is all about. When the Bible speaks of faith it's more than a way of thinking, or a feeling, or even an assurance of salvation lodged in the heart. When the Bible speaks of faith it includes action. It has been said that faith is hope with its boots on. Let's take a look at that.

A Spiritual Thing

We live in our bodies in this world bound by geography, time, and all the natural processes. Yet behind, beneath, and around this life and world is a spiritual reality. Hebrews 11:3 says: *By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.* In other words, the universe was first conceived in the mind of God before it took physical shape. This faith principle is what brought everything into being. When the children of Israel were about to take the city of Jericho, the LORD said to Joshua, *"See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men"* (Joshua 6:2). When the Lord said "see, I have delivered Jericho into your hands," there was nothing outwardly to show that the city was delivered unto their hands, in fact the enemy was still in possession of the city. What were they supposed to see? It wasn't what appeared to the eye that the Lord said to see, it was what they could not see. Joshua had to see with the eyes of his spirit, through faith, because there was another reality different to what the natural eyes were seeing, and that was what he needed to take the city.

Original Intent

Right from the beginning, with Adam and Eve, God intended for humans to walk with Him. But they fell into temptation to be as God Himself and so walked away from Him. *Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees*

of the garden, Gen. 3:8. The result was a turning away from the spiritual and eternal life that God gives. As a result, in this temporal and physical life we all share, walking with God becomes a chore ... a chore avoided by most people. But without faith spiritual life is impossible... for faith follows the promptings of God, who is unseen, rather than the promptings of the “conventional wisdom” evident among most people in our culture or in our own passions.

To walk with God means to walk in the spiritual life, since God is spirit. But most people naturally hesitate or even dismiss the notion. How can we walk without seeing what is ahead? But one moment’s thought will reveal that none of us knows what tomorrow will bring ... we can plan and have a reasonable idea ... but we don’t know for sure.

Faith in the unseen God seems a rather risky proposition. But think of other things or people in which you place your faith regularly. Faith comes into play when you step on an airplane. Without thinking about it you walk onto that plane by faith in the pilots and the mechanics and even those who designed the plane. When driving your car down a highway you have faith in people you’ve never met coming at you in another car. You have faith that a strip of yellow paint will keep them from plowing into you.

Walking by faith in God means to trust God, even when you cannot see the road ahead. Even more so, it means trusting in God’s direction, which we do not always want.

Faith is as essential to us just as blood is to human life or oxygen is to our lungs. When we are tested and tried we must reach beyond mental reasoning into the realm of faith in God. But even for the routine and daily aspects of living faith in God brings a deeper understanding and contentment of who we are and why we are here.

Answer God’s Call

To walk by faith is to respond to God’s call to follow Him. Ever since humanity’s fall from the original perfection of creation, God has been calling people to return to Him in whom is life eternal. The call is to walk with Him and to be His voice to call to others.

The Bible records the lives of those who responded to God’s call ... how they walked by faith. It says in Genesis 5:24 that: *Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.* The point here is that he

walked so closely with God that he did not taste death – his spiritual life overrode his temporal life.

It says in Gen. 5:9 *Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.* He put his entire faith in God for his family's future. Can you imagine the mockery he endured from his neighbors as he built the ark for a flood none of them could imagine? I wonder how much mockery you and I could endure for the sake of our faith in Jesus Christ? [The way things are going in our culture we may live long enough to find out.]

Then there's Abraham who set out into the unknown in response to God's prompting. *Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you,"* Gen. 12:1. Talk about walking by faith! How many times have you moved because God told you to? I've moved quite a few times, but it was in response to a call from the bishop and I'm not sure how much God was in it. Yet Abram, who later was known as Abraham, walked by faith, not by sight, taking his family to an unknown place. Later God would say to him *... walk before me and be thou perfect* Gen. 17:1. That is, walk closely with me and my perfect and holy character will rub off on you.

Moses was a fugitive and outcast from Egypt where his kith and kin were still held as slaves. As a goat herder, working for his father-in-law, he wandered the desert. Perhaps he was looking for meaning and purpose after having fled the life of privilege and wealth he had as Pharaoh's adopted son. He came upon a burning bush. *There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush ... God called to him out of the bush...* Exodus 3:2-3. Now when's the last time God has spoken to you from a burning bush? ... when's the last time you saw a burning bush? [That might not be so hard in California these days!] I had a preaching professor in seminary who said, "There's a burning bush in every field ... for those who have eyes to see it." Yes, God does speak to us, call to us, sometimes in unusual ways and sometimes through the routine and mundane. It's a matter of being attuned to His voice. Too many people tune Him out, listening only to the voice of unredeemed human cultures.

The Disciples of Jesus - Peter, James, John, Thomas, Paul, and the others - each was living their life mostly according to the patterns they'd been taught, in accordance with the conventional wisdom of

their culture and religion. But upon meeting Jesus their lives took another direction ... they began to walk more earnestly in faith, trusting God implicitly because they had met God in Jesus. So can you. Jesus makes the call of God personal, perhaps unavoidable. He called upon those disciples long ago not only to trust Him, but also to extend the call of God to every person. Their lives are a pattern for each of us.

The figures from the Bible are remembered not because they were special and holy. They are remembered simply as examples of faith in God... faith leading to actions. Please read their stories in the Bible and please note that all of them were people called out of ordinary life into a life with God. They weren't especially holy people, and even after they followed God's call the sinful life still tempted them, and sometimes they fell. The point is that they responded to God and made effort to follow Him ... walking by faith.

God Calls You

It has been unfortunate that in modern times the word "call," as used in Christian circles, has largely been associated with specialized ministry, a religious vocation, or the ordained ministry of priest or pastor. Yet Scripture makes plain that the call is not reserved for a special few or to a narrow set of vocations or tasks.¹ To walk by faith is not just an exercise for the pastor or other church leaders. It is the journey of each and every believer who has found new life in Christ and daily turns to Him to share life and ask His guidance. You will be asking for spiritual insight that oft times is different from "conventional wisdom." The first step is meeting Jesus, personally, and receiving Him as your Savior. This is a spiritual experience.

The history of the Church has illustrated how believers who humbly walked by faith, no matter their vocation, were the ones who changed the world for the better. In the history of God's work you will nearly always find that it started from the obscure, the unknown, the ignored, but the steadfastly true to Jesus Christ.² You are invited to be one who changes history.

¹ Richard Thompson, *Hearing God's Call in a Post-Modern World*, doc. dissertation at Fuller Theo. Seminary, 2006;

² Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*, September 7.

We don't see what God sees. Really all we see is what lies between heaven and hell. What God sees is beyond our line of sight. Thus, our faith lies in what He sees. We cannot possibly fathom God's plans for us, but we can know that surely, He wants the best for us. Sometimes we must wait for the best to show up while we are being prepared by Him to receive it.

Walk by faith in family life. Walk by faith in the workplace. Walk by faith in all the challenges of life. Walk by faith in the sunset of life. The sooner in life you begin to walk with God the stronger will be your faith for the times when life is a challenge. Faith is hope with its boots on. We may hope in God but if we don't walk in faith our hope cannot become a reality.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, Hebrews 11:1.