

We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...

In the time that I have with you this morning I want to reflect on 2 Corinthians (chapter 5) – where Paul is describing what happens to believers when they die... and he's mentioning that when we pass from this world (into the World to Come) not only will we have a different body (but we will be present with the Lord)... and what I want to focus on specifically (is found in verse 7) where St. Paul describes how we are to live now... in fact, he writes these words, "*for we walk by faith, and not by sight*"...

And so, before I begin – I want to ask you – what does that verse mean?... what does, "*We walk by faith, and not by sight*" - mean to you"?

That was a question that I asked random strangers on Wednesday while in Manhattan... I was on my way to the Met (only to discover that the museum isn't open on Wednesdays) and so I decided to walk back to the West Village instead... and on the way back – as I passed by people who were sitting on benches in the shade (along 5th Avenue on the Central Park side) - and since I was thinking about my message for this morning - (I decided to ask random strangers what they thought about the verse)...

And so, when I saw someone who looked interesting, I said, "*Can I ask you a question?*"... and most people agreed... and then I asked, "*What does this mean to you? – 'We walk by faith, and not by sight?'*"...

Now, what I like about this 'evangelism style', is that it gives people an opportunity to speak (rather than being told what to think) – and it's amazing what people will share with you (if you make clear that you're not looking for the right answer)... it's sort of like an ice breaker... in fact, people will often let you pray with them afterwards (if you can honor their insights)... and so here are some of the things that people said...

One woman (who was probably in her mid-40s), said, "*I think it means that we trust God rather than trust ourselves or even the world around us*"... and so I said, "*Tell me more... what do you mean?*"... and she said, "*Well, I just lost my job the other day and my mind wants me to go into panic mode – but if I walk in faith I can trust that God will help me find another job (just as He has always done) because my god provides*"... and then she said with a smile, "*And who knows?... it might even be better than the last one*"...

An older black man – with graying dreadlocks, African beads and clothing, and a small radio playing Reggae music – seemed somewhat relaxed (and so I asked him – “*Can I ask you a question? – what does it mean “We walk by faith and not by sight”... and fiddling with what appeared to be a book that he was reading, he looked up and said, “It means that we have to be comfortable looking like a fool for God”... and so again I said, “What do you mean?”... and he said, “Well, think of Noah building the ark in faith (when there wasn’t any rain) – or Abraham telling his friends he was going to raise a child when he was 100 years old – Joshua marching around the walls of Jericho”... he said, “I can go on brother – but when you walk in faith (you’ve got to walk to the beat of different drummer)”...*

I also met another man who was wearing an orange robe (who mentioned that he was a Tibetan monk – and looked like the Dalai Lama’s twin)... and visiting from India his English wasn’t the greatest (but after I asked him about the verse he pointed to the pigeons (who almost seemed to be happy pecking around on the ground) in front of us – when the man said, “*I guess it means that we live like they do – without a worry in the world*”)...

Another woman said, “*It means that we hold onto the promises of God - when all other promises fail, disappoint, or let us down*”... someone else said, “*Trust that God’s ways are better than our ways*”... and still another person said, “*walking by faith means that we can stop trying to figure everything out (and trust that God already has)*”...

Now I’m sure that you have your own understanding of what it means *to walk by faith and not by sight* – (and feel free to write it in the chat function on Facebook Live) - but I also love what Martin Luther King, Jr. once said... he said, “*Faith is taking the first step, even when you don’t see the whole staircase.*”...

Perhaps that’s why I have so much respect for St. Paul (who certainly knew what it was like to walk in faith)... *+hessa-low-neelee*

In fact, a few years ago I went to Greece on a ‘Footsteps of Paul’ *bible trip* to visit Philippi, and Thessaloniki, and Colossae (and, of course, Athens) – and as we traveled from city to city (with plenty of stops along the way) we went along a trade route that was known in the Ancient World as the Via Egnatia... and I remember thinking to myself (this is a wonderful trip – but the only downside was that it took hours to travel from one city to another – I mean, yes it was air-conditioned, but who wants to sit on a bus all day?)...

And before I could make another complaint the tour guide reminded us that St. Paul actually traveled the Via Egnatia by foot (and not only was it a very difficult road to walk – but St. Paul also had plenty of health issues that he mentions in some of his letters)... and unlike those of us who were looking forward to being greeted with open arms upon arrival – (as I mentioned last week) Paul was constantly being rejected, beaten, robbed, thrown into prison, and harassed wherever he proclaimed the Gospel (including the churches he served)...

And yet, what's amazing about Paul's witness (and what continues to inspire believers today) is that even then (he continued to *walk by faith and not by sight*)... not always sure of where the road would take him (but always confident that our Lord would *lead the way*)... and what that tells me is how much Paul loved the Lord (and how Paul always put Jesus first in his life)...

Friends, but perhaps that's not where you find yourself today – instead, you're feeling lost in your walk with the Lord – finding it difficult to live by faith (when what you do see before you is frightening, and challenging, and seemingly hopeless) ... and if so, you're not alone (because we all go through difficult times in our life where our vision gets cloudy) ... and it's so easy to be blinded by problems and troubles...

in fact, we all fall short from time to time (and sometimes we stumble) – and *walking by faith but not by sight* can be easier said than done (unless, of course, you're St. Paul)...

But here's the question: what would your life look like (IF YOU DID) *walk by faith and not by sight?* - (especially today as you navigate through some obstacle in your life)... How could you strengthen your walk with the Lord right now?...

Well, if we look back on Paul's life (and study his own walk with the Lord) – I think the first thing you would notice is that Paul **listened to God speak to his heart**... and no, he didn't just pray (but with a discerning heart he kept listening for God's voice to guide him)... in fact, this is why he tells us in Romans 10:17, "*Faith comes from hearing, hearing the Word of God*"... and so the first question we might want to ask ourselves is : are we listening to God?... (are we taking the time each day to meet with God – to be in His presence – connect with His power – and listen to His voice)... where do you meet with God to listen to His voice?..

Secondly, I think it's important that I point out that God doesn't always tell us what we want to hear (and the road that He would have us travel on isn't always

the easier road) – because like it was for St. Paul – sometimes the road that God wants us to take (requires sacrifice, or courage, patience, forgiveness, compassion, mercy, or even fortitude)... but Paul walked the walk – not because he was any better than the rest of us (but because he **trusted God**)... trusted that in the end, God’s ways were better than his ways...

In fact, listen what he tells us in Romans 8:28, “*And we know that all things work together for good (to those who love God), to those who are called according to His purpose.*” ... in other words, Paul chose to trust God in all areas of his life (and we know that it wasn’t an easy road to walk)...

And so again, ask yourself a question – are you trusting God?... and are you putting your faith in His Word for your life?...

Friends, no one said that walking in faith would be easy (and perhaps right now you’re struggling to do just that) but this week as I was preparing my message I kept thinking of an article I once read about trapeze artists... and it said that nets are put under the trapeze artist for two reasons : number one – to keep them from breaking their necks should they fall...

But even more importantly, to keep them from falling...

It went on to say – if there wasn’t a net the artists would be so nervous they wouldn’t be so daring – wouldn’t take so many risks – and would be so focused on the ground below that it would interfere with their performance... but instead the net is a promise of their safety...

So why am I telling you that story?... I tell you that story because when you have God’s promises secure in your heart (and you believe in His love) you have a safety net that will protect you – and when you step out to do God’s will you can rest assure that God will be there to embrace you in His arms... No, it may not always be the easier road to take – but what Paul is telling us is that in the end it will always be the right road (and because we know as Children of God that the Lord is always with us, like those trapeze artists, we can be bold)...

Friends, God wants all of His children *to walk by faith and not by sight*... and that includes you... in fact, even Jesus says to us in John 20:29, “*Blessed are those who have not seen - and yet have believed*” – and wherever the road ahead is leading you today (as long as you let God walk alongside of you) you can trust that road will lead to Home...

And so, until the day we see Him face to face – *we walk by faith, and not by sight*... knowing that you will never get lost (when you follow the Lord along the way)...

May the eyes of your heart be open to God's love and His promises... May your path be illuminated and all your days bright... and may you trust our Lord enough – to walk in faith...

In Jesus' name we pray...

Amen!