

INTRODUCTION

We’re back in the series from 2 Corinthians I’m calling, “Hope for Cracked Pots.” 2 Corinthians 5 is one of the most power-packed chapters in entire Bible. I would rank it up there with the 23rd Psalm, John 3, and Romans 8. In the previous message entitled, “This Old House,” we learned that this physical body we live in is like a temporary tent that eventually wears out and collapses. But that’s no problem for a Christian, because God promises we have an eternal home in heaven—and to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

When my two daughters first started driving as teenagers, I gave each of them a \$100 bill and told them to fold it up and hide it in their wallet and to use it ONLY for an emergency. There seemed to be several emergencies, because I replaced it several times!

But several years after Jenni was in college at OU she came home one weekend and was looking through her closet. She pulled out an old purse she hadn’t used for years and when she looked inside she was surprised and delighted to find—you guessed it- a folded up \$100 bill that she had hidden there and forgotten. Of course, she didn’t give it back—I think there was a retail emergency that weekend.

Frankly, when I read 2 Corinthians 5:7, I get the same feeling. The verse only has seven words, and all of them are only one syllable. This verse is like a hidden treasure folded away inside a section of scripture dealing with death. But it is a priceless spiritual principle that we sometimes forget is there. We read it in the last message, but I wonder if you even noticed it was there. Let’s read it again in its context.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 says, “Therefore [because we have a home in heaven, and the Holy Spirit as a deposit] we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. [Here’s the seven-word hidden treasure:] We live [actually the word is “walk”—*peripateo*] by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

Before you can learn to read, you’ve got to learn the alphabet. Before you can ever live the Christian life, you must learn this elementary spiritual principle: We walk by faith; not by sight. To me, that priceless principle is one of the foundational truths of the Christian life. We must learn to go beyond sight to faith.

As I started thinking and praying about this message weeks ago, I came to realize that I really don’t know as much as I’d like about walking by faith instead of by sight. As I prayed about it, God brought to my mind a lady in our church, Catherine Harrison, who is legally blind.

Using a cane, she literally has to walk by faith and not by sight, which is the name of the Bible Study she wrote about how God has given her spiritual vision in the midst of her blindness. Catherine has a degenerative blindness called *retinitis pigmentosa*. Several years ago, doctors told her the disease was advancing and she would never see the faces of her boys as grown men. In anticipation of that day when she would no longer be able to see at all, she enrolled in a blind training school to learn how to live day to day as a blind person. As I spoke with Catherine, she

offered to loan me the same blindfold she wore for three straight months as she learned to function as a blind person. So, this past week, I agreed to spend an hour as a blind person to better understand that world, and to learn how to walk by faith. So, I can now say most of what I know about walking by faith I learned from a blind woman.

Jesus spoke about the blind leading the blind, and that’s what we were doing, but Catherine has learned how to walk by faith, so she functions with confidence. I’ve been studying the Bible daily for the past 37 years, but I still feel like I’m in elementary school when it comes to walking by faith. So, based upon the Word of God, my conversations with Catherine, and my hour of blindness, I want to share four observations with you that may help you do what God’s Word says here and learn how to walk by faith and not by sight.

1. Walking by sight comes naturally—walking by faith must be learned

Walking by sight basically means to see all of life from a purely human perspective—that comes naturally. But walking by faith is something we learn to do—it’s not natural. By nature, we are NOT trusting people. When we see a “wet paint” sign, we usually don’t trust it and we have to touch it to see for ourselves. We are all born faith-challenged—it’s part of our fallen nature.

When Catherine first realized her blindness was progressing beyond her ability to use her eyes, she had to agree to attend a school in Austin, Texas where they taught her how to function as a blind person. She wore that same blindfold I wore for three straight months. During this time, she learned how to navigate around rooms, and even navigate around downtown Austin. She learned how to shop, how to use power tools, and how to use a computer.

She gave me a crash course (no pun intended) this week, and I was frustrated at how hard it was to walk with confidence. But she has learned to walk with confidence.

Faith isn’t some mysterious force. We utilize faith every day of our lives in natural ways. When you drive over a bridge, you’re putting faith in the engineers who designed it and built it. When you mail a letter, you’re putting faith in the U.S Postal Service. When you sat down on that pew, you were putting faith in it to hold you up. But the difference is in the *object* of your faith. You can see the bridge; you can see the pew to evaluate how strong it looks.

When we walk by faith, we’re simply putting our faith in a God who cannot be seen by human eyes. How do we learn to walk by faith? The answer is found in Romans 10:17, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” The more you read, study, and hear the words of scripture, the stronger your faith becomes. You can’t see God with your naked eye, but as you soak your soul in this Book, you learn what God is like, and you learn that He can be trusted. It doesn’t come naturally; it’s something you learn to do. Are you learning how to walk by faith more and more every day?

2. Walking by sight keeps you in control—to walk by faith you must surrender your will to someone/thing to guide you

When you walk by sight, you are depending on your own ability to see—and you walk according

to what you see. If you see a step, you step up. If you see a curb, you step down. When Catherine taught me to use this cane, I had to surrender my will to this cane. I couldn't see the steps; I had to trust the cane to find them. I couldn't see the curb; I had to trust the cane to find it. I could no longer trust my own ability to see.

Catherine says her cane is a metaphor for Jesus Christ. It's white, which reminds her of the purity of Christ. It has a red tip which reminds her of the blood of Christ. She never leaves home without her cane, and she never wants to walk without Christ. She has to keep a firm grip on her cane, just as she has to constantly abide in Christ. She says that where her cane goes, she goes. She doesn't feel in one direction and then walk in another.

As she was teaching me to walk by faith, she constantly told me to keep the cane in the center of my body, not to the side. In the same way, we need to walk exactly in the center of God's will.

The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6) Have you come to a place where you have surrendered your will to Jesus Christ? Do you have the kind of totally dependent relationship with Jesus that Catherine has with this cane? Can you honestly sing, “Wherever He leads, I'll go”?

3. Walking by sight depends on your five senses—faith is your sixth sense that you can trust above the others

Most people are born with five senses: sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch. Of these, sight, is the primary sense. When you live by sight, you live in the natural world believing only those things that can be “sensed” by one of your five senses. But faith is a sixth sense that often contradicts the other five. The Bible's definition of faith is found in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1)

I received a letter recently from someone who asked me what the one irrefutable fact was that caused me to believe in God and Jesus Christ. I wrote them back and said that faith isn't based on facts, it's based on truth. $2+2=4$ is a fact, but that fact really hasn't changed my life. John 14:6 is TRUTH. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me.” I can't see, hear, taste, smell, or touch that truth, but I believe it—and it has changed my life.

Franz Werfel said, “For those who believe in God, no explanation is necessary; for those who do not believe in God, no explanation is possible.” Sight says, “Give me proof and I'll believe.” Faith says, “I'll believe without proof.”

I once heard a story about high school teacher who asked a student to look out the window of the classroom. The teacher asked, “Do you see grass?”

“Yes,” said the student.

“Do you see trees?”

“Yes.”

“Look up, do you see sky?”

The student said, “Yes.”

“Do you see God?”

“No.”

The teacher said, “Grass, trees, and the sky exists. We can’t see God because he isn’t there—he doesn’t exist.” A Christian student then spoke up and said to the same student, “Do you see the teacher?”

“Yes.”

“Do you see the teacher’s hair?”

“Yes.”

“Do you see the teacher’s glasses?”

“Yes.”

“Do you see the teacher’s brain?”

“No.”

The Christian said, “Then using the same logic, the teacher’s brain doesn’t exist!”

The Christian faith is not rational, but neither is it irrational—it is supra-rational. If you’re waiting to see God before you believe in Him, you’ll never believe. Faith isn’t sensory, it’s extra-sensory. Elton Trueblood said: “Faith is not belief without proof, it is trust without reservation.”

4. Walking by sight works when life is great—you learn to walk by faith in the darkest seasons of your life

When she first began gradually losing her sight, Catherine really didn’t want to use a cane. She didn’t like the way people stared at her. But she said one day she was almost run over in the Brookshire’s parking lot, and she finally became desperate enough to submit herself to going to the school to learn to function in darkness.

I can only imagine how tough those three months were for her. You can still see the tear stains inside her blindfold. But she has taken this affliction and has turned it to her advantage. She says that instead of SIGHT, God has given her VISION—and that vision is much more important than faith. She has overcome her handicap and used it as an opportunity to share her faith with others.

Once she was at DFW airport riding the shuttle between terminals, and her stick was folded up. A young couple didn’t know she was blind and asked her if she knew where Terminal A was. She said, “I’m going to Terminal A, I’ll show you the way.” They agreed. Catherine said she really wished she could have seen their faces when the tram stopped and she unfolded her cane and started walking. She paused outside the tram and said, “Are you coming?” They said, “Yes.” So she took off walking and would occasionally stop and ask, “Are you still there?” They were.

When they got to Terminal A, she said, “This is Terminal A, so just find your gate.” They thanked her and said, “We didn’t realize you were blind or we wouldn’t have asked you.” Catherine smiled, and said, “Oh that’s okay. I’m just curious, what was it that made you follow a blind person?” They said, “Because you walked so confidently.”

The only way we learn to walk confidently by faith is when we've spent time in the darkness of adversity, and God has led us through. James said it best when he wrote, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." (James 1:2-3)

How's your faith walk today? Are you walking through a dark time? Faith is a lot like a photograph, it only develops in darkness. Faith is trusting following God, even if your other five senses are saying "Stop!" or "Turn around." God CAN be trusted!

One night there was a house fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. His father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms. He said, "Jump, son! I'll catch you!" But all the boy could see was smoke, flames, and darkness. He was afraid to jump. The father kept shouting, "Jump, son!" The son yelled, "But daddy, I can't see you!" The dad said, "That's okay, son, because I can see you and that's all that matters."

During the dark scary times of our lives, we *must* walk by faith. When we look by sight we say, "This looks bad. This looks hopeless." But when we look with eyes of faith we know God is there waiting to catch us.

I was going to be blind for only an hour, and after my experiment of walking to the Family Life Center and back, I thought maybe 30 minutes had passed. I was shocked to learn it had been 90 minutes. As I reflect on that, I realize I was concentrating so hard on the cane, and following it, that I lost all sense of time. As I am learning to walk by faith, I want to have that same kind of single-minded focus on God.

CONCLUSION

In the third Indiana Jones' movie called "The Last Crusade" there's a great example of walking by faith. The movie is full of spiritual lessons. Indy is searching for the Holy Grail, which is supposed to be the cup Jesus used for the Last Supper. There's a point in the movie in which Indy's dad, played by Sean Connery, has been shot and mortally wounded. Indy presses on to find the Holy Grail for his dying father because the Holy Grail is supposed to have healing powers. Indy follows clues written in a book of notes that belonged to his father. He has to pass through a maze by passing several tests. For instance, he is required to be a penitent man and kneel before God, and just as he kneels, a huge blade swings above him. The last test to pass requires him to take "a leap from the lion's mouth." He comes to the edge of a cave and there is nothing but a sheer drop of thousands of feet and no way to cross the chasm to reach the cave on the other side where the grail is kept. It's too far to jump and there's nothing he can use for a bridge. In frustration he reads the words again from his father's book (hint, hint), "a leap from a lion's mouth." Suddenly he says, "It's a leap of faith!" And even though he can't see anything in front of him he steps out and places his foot on thin air—only to find that there is a stone bridge that appears. It was impossible to see with his naked eye, but when he stepped out into nothingness, it was there. In the movie, his step of faith led him to the Holy Grail, his dad gets healed, and the bad guys get captured, and Indy hides the Grail again for all time. Good movie—good lesson.

Life is full of obstacles and tests, but our Father has given us a Book. This Book tells us walk by faith, and not by sight. If you’re waiting to see it before you believe it, you’ll never believe it. As we learned in 2 Corinthians 4:18, “We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.”

You may be standing on the edge today, and you have to decide, “Am I going to walk on by faith, and step out where I can’t see, or am I going to live my sight and stay where I am or go back?” God is there; without faith it is impossible to please Him. Go ahead—step out in faith—even if there’s nothing solid you can see. Step out and one of two things will happen: Either there will be a solid bridge for you to walk across, or God will teach you to fly!

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes