

Chapter Five: Walk by Faith

We rely on sight for our daily activities. Everything we do from work to entertainment is based on our ability to see. We can, however, function without sight. The blind utilize their other senses, usually in a heightened state, to make up for their inability to see. Similarly, spiritual matters can not be verified by sight alone. We must use something else to aid us—faith. Second Corinthians 5:6-9 shows how our faith is related to: 1) Our present state in this world; 2) Our confidence and walk; and 3) Our labor.

Our faith relates to our present state in this world. “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). Currently, we are “absent from the Lord” (verse 6). Absent, *eklēmeō* (G: 1553), literally means “to go abroad...to emigrate, depart” (Thayer 193). It is contrasted with home, *endēmeō* (G: 1736), which means “to have a fixed abode, be at home” (Thayer 214). While we are “at home in the body” (verse 6), which “is used metaphorically of the life on earth of believers” (Vine 309), we are “absent from the Lord” (verse 6), or away from God. We “are pilgrims and strangers in this world...though God is with us here, by his Spirit, and by his ordinances, yet we are not with him as we hope to be: we cannot see his face while we yet live” (Henry *New* 8: 186). Though this is the way it is now we should, like Paul, be “willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (verse 8). Present is translated from the same word as “home” in verse six. Our desire should be to be at home with God. We are like pilgrims in a foreign land looking forward to the time when we can go home to be with God. Our true home is heaven, a place Paul looked forward to so much he actually desired death. “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you” (Philippians 1:23-24). Through his faith Paul knew he would die only to be taken home to heaven to be with the Lord forever, but he also understood the need God had to leave him in the flesh, on earth, to spread the Gospel. Paul knew where he was needed, yet still had the desire to no longer be a pilgrim. He wanted to be at home in heaven, a far better place. While on this earth we are travelers, pilgrims who through faith look forward to a time we can go home to God.

Our faith relates to our confidence and our walk. Twice Paul affirms his confidence (verses 6, 8). Confident, *tharreō* (G: 2292), means “to be of good courage, to be hopeful, confident” (Thayer 283). This confidence comes from

Paul's walk of faith (verse 7). Walk, *peripateō* (G: 4043), signifies "the whole round of the activities of the individual life" (Vine 664). Our walk refers to our manner of life and includes all aspects of that life. Our lifestyle is to be one of faith, *pistis* (G: 4102). Faith means "firm persuasion" and refers to conviction and conduct inspired by a personal surrender to God (Vine 222).

Hebrews 11:1 further defines faith: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This verse is vitally important "for it states what is the nature of all true faith, and is the only definition of it which is attempted in the Scriptures" (Barnes 1314). Two aspects of faith are cited in this divine definition of faith: substance and evidence. Substance, *hypostasis* (G: 5287), means "a setting or placing under...foundation" (Thayer 645). As used in this verse, it carries with it "the meaning of 'confidence, assurance'" (Vine 607). Our faith enables us to accept God's promises as fact and truly expect them to come to fruition. Faith is the foundation, or assurance, of "things hoped for." Hoped, *elpizō* (G: 1679), means to "expect" (Strong 1607) and indicates full confidence (Thayer 205). When we, as Christians, hope for heaven we not only desire heaven but also expect to receive it. Hope is not a possibility but a certainty. We can be certain because of our faith, the foundation of our expectant desires. Evidence, *elenchus* (G: 1650), is the second aspect of faith's divine definition. It means "certainty, proof" (Strong 1607) and is used to prove or test someone or something (Thayer 202). Faith, then, is the proof or test of the unseen. We can not see the wind. Trees sway and flags wave by an invisible force called wind. These movements are the test or evidence allowing us to know wind exists. Similarly, faith enables us to accept as fact (truth) things we can not see on our own. Based on biblical evidence we trust God and are confident he will fulfil his promises. Therefore, we accept heaven as an actual place where we will someday dwell for all eternity, even though we have never seen it. We can read about heaven in the Scriptures, the source of our faith (Hebrews 10:17), but it is an intangible. We can not sense heaven with our physical senses, but faith makes the intangible tangible. "It substantiates promises of God which we hope for, as future in fulfilment, making them present realities to us...convincing proof to the believer; the soul thereby seeing what the eye cannot see" (Jamieson 1431). Therefore, when we "walk by faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7), we live with the knowledge heaven exists and the confidence it will be our reward for faithful service to God.

Our faith relates to our labor. "(For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him" (2 Corinthians 5:7-9). Faith and confidence should lead us to

action. Labour, *philotimeomai* (G: 5389), means “to strive earnestly, make it one’s aim” (Thayer 655). We should always be striving to be accepted, *euairestos* (G: 2101), of God, or “well-pleasing” (Thayer 257). Our aim should always be to please God and be accepted by him. “So it is that well-grounded hopes of heaven will be far from giving the least encouragement to sloth and sinful security; on the contrary, they should stir us up to use the greatest care and diligence” (Henry *New* 8:187). Such faith and confidence will lead us to a continued obedience so that we will receive the very real promises God has made to the faithful. Without faith God’s promises become meaningless words to us. Yet, because we have confidence in God, rooted in a well-founded faith, his promises are real and we are ready to receive them. We see, then, that “the just shall live by faith” (Hebrews 10:38). This is a quote from the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk. The prophet complained to God about the persecutions Judah received from the Chaldeans (chapter 1). God responds, “the just shall live by his faith” (2:4). God essentially told Habakkuk to be faithful and patient. When the time was right God would send his vengeance upon the Chaldeans. Until then, the nation should continue in faithfulness, even in the face of persecution. While the specifics did not apply to the first century church, the concept did apply to them, the same as it applies to us today. Therefore, it is repeated in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and our text in Hebrews 10:38. Live, *zaō* (G: 2198), simply means “to live a life” (Strong 1614). Metaphorically, it refers to how we live—the things we do, the way we treat others, our general behavior and way of life. Live parallels walk, *peripateō* (G: 4043), in 2 Corinthians 5:7. Those who live by faith are just, *dikaios* (G: 1342), which means “upright” (Strong 1603). It refers to one who is “righteous, observing divine and human laws; one who is such as he ought to be” (Thayer 148). Those who are just, who live a righteous life, do so by faith. Our faith and confidence lead us into right actions in the eyes of God and man.

[T]he righteous should live by continued confidence in God. They should pass their lives, not in doubt, and in fear, and trembling apprehension, but in the exercise of a calm trust in God...to persevere in their religion, even in the midst of many persecutions...They should not confide in their own merits, works, or strength. They should exercise constant reliance on their Maker, and he would keep them even unto eternal life. (Barnes 1312)

When the time is right God will allow us to be “absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). Until then, we are to live patiently and faithfully, laboring in the face of persecution and temptation.

Faith is a key element in the lives of Christians. Not just a belief or way of thinking, faith is continued confidence in God and should be our way of life. Only then can we be accepted by God. Our every action should be based on our confidence in God and his ability to bring the promises he has made to fruition. If

we have such a life of faith we will labor and strive while on this earth, so we can be accepted of him and receive the very real reward of heaven.

It is the honorable character of just men that in times of the greatest affliction they can live by faith; they can live upon the assured persuasion they have of the truth of God's promises. Faith puts life and vigour into them. They can trust God, and live upon him, and wait his time: and, as their faith maintains their spiritual life now, it shall be crowned with eternal life hereafter. (Henry *New* 9: 303-304).

May we walk by faith, living a life of faith that leads us to labor and strive to be accepted by God and hear him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

Questions:

1. What is our relationship to God while on the earth?

a. What relationship should we desire?

b. When will we obtain that relationship?

2. Where is the only divine definition of faith?

a. What are the two aspects of that definition?

b. What do they mean? _____

3. For what should we labor?

a. What does it mean to be accepted by God?

b. What does just mean? _____

4. How is faith important to the Christian walk?

5. Use your own words to explain what it means to walk by faith.
