

Walking by Faith, Not by Sight

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References: **Hebrews 11**, Hebrews 11:1; Hebrews 11:6; Psalm 16:11; Romans 5:12-16; Romans 5:1; Romans 10:17; Genesis 22:11-12; Romans 8:1; Matthew 25:21

The Joy of Obedience

It's nice to witness that. I don't know who was happier: the ones being baptized or—gee, I kept looking at his face and seeing all his white teeth just shining away, and I think he looks pretty happy for each and every one of those that have decided to follow Jesus and obey him in baptism, and so that's a wonderful thing.

What is Faith?

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light. It was there by faith. What does that mean, **faith**? Sometimes when I talk about faith, some people think it's just wishful thinking. Sometimes Christians think of faith as wishful thinking. They shouldn't, but they do.

I was present this one—I'm going to say horrible—afternoon when a friend of mine was told that she had lung cancer. It wasn't a very happy time. And one of our friends said, "I have the faith that God's going to heal you."

Now, I looked it up on Google, and Google said she has the average of one year to live. And she actually died one year to the day. You see, what this gal was saying—"I have the faith that God's going to heal you"—was actually just **fantasy**. It wasn't based on God's word. I know what she was doing. She was trying to encourage our sister. She wanted to alleviate some of the heaviness of being diagnosed with stage 3 lung cancer. But that's what some people think of faith as: sort of wishful thinking. A kind wish upwards, something that is indistinguishable from a whim. And then you sort of forget about it, and it disappears. A faith that's distracted by a new feeling, a new circumstance. It's not something that comes from within.

But in the Bible, the Bible says—let's open our Bibles to Hebrews chapter 11. Hebrews chapter 11. Well, we should read verse 1 first, sorry.

[Hebrews 11:1 NKJV]

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Verse 6:

[Hebrews 11:6 NKJV]

But 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 diligently seek Him.

The Bible says faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. What does everybody hope for? Faith.

Well, if you were to go to a beauty contest—and this might be a little bit, what's the word? I'm not remembering what the word is... cliché—when they ask the model, "What would you like?" and they say, "World peace." This is something that they hope for. And it's actually something that everybody hopes for. They wish to live peaceful lives. They wish to not have too many difficulties along the road of life. They don't want to have too many splinters as they run their hand down the handrail of life. It's just this wish.

But it's a wish that's in the very creation of God, because when God made us, there was God. That's all. And God was in this wonderful relationship with himself. That sounds kind of weird, but the Bible teaches that there is one God in three persons. He manifests himself in three manners, as three different people. And so when Gene was baptizing, he was baptizing every candidate in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And so in eternity past, God was what we would call a Trinity. And as that Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, one God in three persons—was enjoying himself. He was love. And part of the reason for creation is God wanted creation to enjoy his love.

So the earth, the sun, the moon, the plants, the animals, and human beings—and human beings are made in the very image of God himself—to enjoy God, to enjoy his presence. Psalm 16 verse 11 says:

[Psalm 16:11 NKJV]

You will show me the path of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Sometimes when I think back to some of the things I've done in my life, I think to myself, "I don't think I was enjoying God's presence at that moment," because I wasn't very happy. But the Bible says in his presence is fullness of joy.

Sometimes I see Christians—and this is sort of a joke on a friend of mine, his last name is Lemon. And there is a family resemblance in the Lemon family. And so I was learning Spanish, and I said, "That fella has the face of the lemons." But in Spanish, it also means a sour face, and it looks grumpy all the time. I didn't know that at the time, because it's one of those sayings you learn when everybody laughs at you and says, "Ha, ha, ha, that's really funny." "Why, what did I say that was funny?" "You said that he has a lemon face." Well, some Christians walk around with a sour look on their face, like they're not enjoying God. But the reason God made us was so that we could enjoy him and enjoy his fellowship.

Unfortunately, something came in the way, called **sin**. And sin hid God's face from us. God bless. Sin causes division between us and God. Sin causes death. Romans 5 and verse 12, if you take a look there, it talks about sin entering the world. It's a horrible verse at the beginning, but it's a really good verse towards the end. Verse 12 says:

[Romans 5:12-16 NKJV]

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned-- ¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. ¹⁶ And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.

You see, verse 12 is a very sad verse. It tells about why you get sad, why I get sad. When we look around us, it tells why there's no peace in this world. We think there might be somebody who can broker peace in this world. There's nobody that's going to broker peace in this world except for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans chapter 5 at the very beginning of that chapter says:

[Romans 5:1 NKJV]

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

It's a marvelous thing. But when we look around, we don't see it, do we? There's something wrong with the world. And that what's wrong with the world is sin—things that disrupt the harmony of God.

But this is what faith is: faith is the substance of things that are hoped for. And true faith, this is where it is. Romans chapter 10 would tell us that faith comes by hearing. Hearing. And hearing from the word of God. Look at Romans chapter 10, just a little bit to our right in our Bibles, verse 17:

[Romans 10:17 NKJV]

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

You see, when my friend said she had the faith that my other friend would be healed, she didn't base that on the word of God, although she might have inadvertently. Because when our sister went to be with the Lord, she was completely healed of her lung cancer. She was completely at peace with God. But this is where faith comes from the Bible—from the word of God. There's a man known as the father of faith. His name is Abraham. Abraham.

The Father of Faith

And in Abraham's life, he had a life that was full of tests. And you can't really distinguish a fantasy and a whim from true faith unless there are tests. And so Abraham heard God's voice and it said, "Go to a land that I will show you." And so Abraham got up and went to a land that God would show him. It was a test. God said something. Would he obey or wouldn't he obey? And he left Ur, which is almost in Iran. You walked even further than he did—2,000 kilometers from Ur to the Promised Land. Almost to Iran, right?

That's a lot of walking. It's a lot of time. And Abraham was walking with God that whole time. And then... but God said, "When you go, you have to leave some things behind." And part of the testing in faith is, what do we leave behind? Because, you see, we are who we are. And some of us, the way we are, is not pleasing at all to God. God sees us dead in trespasses and sins. God sees us without any spiritual life. God sees us as disobedient, children of wrath. And he says, "Get up and follow me."

There were some like the fishermen, Peter and John. There were some like Abraham that just got up and followed him and left things behind. They left their old life behind, didn't they? They weren't going... Abraham wasn't going to live in Ur anymore. James and John weren't going to be dedicated fishermen anymore. They left part of themselves behind. And in every test that God ever gives us, if we're going to pass, we need to leave something of ourselves behind. And what's left behind gets replaced by our focusing on the Lord Jesus—focusing on God. Thank you.

Partial Obedience vs. Receiving

Now, he sort of obeyed God. He was supposed to leave all his family behind, but he took his father with him. They made it to Haran, which is sort of in northern Iraq. But then he finally left his father behind, and he went to the Promised Land. Abraham had this life where he

tried to work out some things on his own, and he said, "I'll do these things on my own ability. I'll do what I want to do, and I won't do it completely if I don't want to do it, and I will do it completely if I do want to do it." So sometimes when you obey God, sometimes people obey God only partially. But when we obey God partially, who's really the God, when it's us making the decisions what we should do or what we shouldn't do?

This is the lie that Satan told to Eve: "You'll be like God. You'll know what's good and what's evil. You'll make the decisions, and you'll decide what's good, and you'll decide what's evil. You can obey what you want to obey, and you can obey—not obey—what you don't want to obey. You'll be just like God." Except God is altogether perfect, and Eve wasn't. And God's altogether perfect and his will is altogether perfect, and we're not. So **partial obedience** is really disobedience, isn't it? And it's something that we have to take a thought about. So he went to Haran, and he couldn't go any further than Haran until he obeyed. And in this case, his father died, and he went. But he was in this habit of sort of being sneaky and sort of being... I guess sneaky is the best word. And as he was sneaky, he was trying to get things.

So he goes down to Egypt, and he gets cattle, and he talks his way into getting a handmaid, and he talks his way into getting his wife back, and he's getting, getting, getting. But by the end of Abraham's life, he's no longer trying to get things. Instead of trying to get things, he starts just **receiving** things. He received the promises. He received the covenant.

What's the difference between getting and receiving? Well, I'm going to tell a bad story on myself. I phoned Allison the other day—or she phoned me—and I had this horrible question for her. I said, "What are you getting me for Father's Day?" Now, if you come next Sunday and you're a father, you get a special gift, and if you're a male, you get a gift anyways. But it's always good to be a father, and it's even better to be a spiritual father and say like Paul, "This is Timothy. This is Onesimus that I've begotten in my bonds." So I think you can get a special prize if you're a spiritual father to somebody. But you'll have to confirm that with the elders. But do you see there's a difference there? They're trying to get something always.

And sometimes what Abraham got wasn't very good. He got a servant. Now, most of us would like to have a servant. That's why some of us are fathers—we've got somebody to take the garbage out and wash the car and do the dishes. It doesn't always work out that way because you might be given two girls that don't like washing cars, but that's beside the point.

But you see, he had this servant, and the servant that he got, she ended up being very bad in his life. And so as he went along, and sometimes as he went along, he sort of tripped and he fell, but he got up again. And as he got up again, he started walking with God again. And sometimes we fall in our walk of faith, just like Abraham did. Sometimes Abraham lied. Now,

lying isn't good at all, but sometimes to save face or to... whatever reason, he lied. And he had to face up to the lie, and then he could move on. Just like he had to face up to obeying and leaving behind his family before he could go on. And so Abraham had this life that was trying to get, get what he wanted. But he ended his life receiving, receiving what God wanted for him.

The Ultimate Test

In his life, he built a lot of altars. It's an interesting study. Somebody sent me some works on the times that Abraham built altars. And every time he built an altar, there was a sacrifice. And he sacrificed something, and there's a growth in those altars that you see. The last altar he built was an altar on a place called Mount Moriah. And there was the greatest test of his life in Genesis chapter 22. And there, in the greatest test of his life, he was asked to sacrifice his only son that he loved.

And there was Abraham walking with God. Now, I don't know how long it took him to go from Ur to Haran to the Promised Land, but I would imagine those three days seemed longer than that, as God said, "I want you to offer Isaac your son, your only son, your beloved son." And there he was. He had everything together. And he lifts the knife, and a voice from heaven calls out, "Abraham, Abraham." And he says, "Here am I." "Now, now I know that you have my heart. Now I know that you love me. Now that I know you obey me. Now I know that you fear God, that you have not withheld your only son." And Abraham lifts...

[Genesis 22:11-12 NKJV]

¹¹ But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." ¹² And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

And Abraham lifted... He lifted his eyes and he received a ram caught by the horns in a thicket. This is God's provision. And he came back down the mountain with his son, no doubt rejoicing. Hebrews said that he had the faith that God would keep his promise, even if he had to raise Isaac from the dead. But there he was: his faith was much different at the end in chapter 22 than it was at the beginning in chapter 12. And his faith grew through the testings. His faith grew through the leaving behind. His faith grew in the altars. His faith grew in the sacrifices. And that's what happens to you and I. All along life's journey, our faith gets tested.

Tested and Tried

First it gets tested. And do you trust in Jesus? It might go into a place where, are you going to trust in Jesus? Are you going to follow Jesus? Will you get baptized? Because there are people who say they're Christians and they're not baptized. That makes no sense to me. In the Bible, people believed and were baptized.

There was a very sad testimony given at Easter time at the conference about a man who got saved and he wanted to get baptized. But the church told him he had to take these classes to be a member of the church because they only baptize church members. And it's a 12-week course. But it was the beginning of COVID, and so they didn't know when they were going to start. And so I thought to myself, imagine being in charge of that church and your church leadership is saying, "Do not follow Jesus. Do not obey Jesus." Well, they wouldn't say that, like, "We don't want you to follow Jesus." They wouldn't say that from the pulpit, but they were saying it in their actions. "You've got to be a member, and it's 12 weeks." That's at least three months you've got to wait before you can obey Jesus. And then we have COVID, so we don't know when that's going to stop. Boy, oh, boy. They're going to be judged for that. We want to encourage people to follow the Lord Jesus and walk by faith and not by sight, because sight sometimes scares us.

I didn't tell the whole story, but we were in the hospital last night, and the doctors were checking out on our daughter to see if she had a stroke or not. Now, as a father, that's kind of a scary proposition. I would imagine as a 25-year-old person, it's even scarier. The trials of life come, and the Lord is looking to see if we're going to follow. The difficulties come. And as the difficulties come and our faith is tried and tested, the Lord wants it to come out that our faith is pure and precious, better than pure gold and pure silver. That's what Peter writes to us. And as we go along the trials of life and we see the difficulties and we see the things that happen along the way—yeah—we keep commending ourselves day by day into the Lord's hands. We keep commending our families into the Lord's hands. We keep being tried, and as we're tried, we be a witness for God in all those trials of life. Because life isn't easy. Walking with God isn't always easy.

But in his presence, his fullness of joy...

[Psalm 16:11 NKJV]

You will show me the path of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

...there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus.

[Romans 8:1 NKJV]

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Romans 5:1 NKJV]

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

And sometimes when we walk to God, the walk seems to take forever sometimes. But when the trial and the test is over, the Lord will look upon us and say—upon you if you've passed the test—He'll say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord."

[Matthew 25:21 NKJV]

His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

You see in his presence his fullness of joy? Do you see that the joy of the Lord becomes your strength? It becomes your salvation and your refuge.

Faith vs. Sight

You see, walking by sight sometimes... you see that big CT scanner machine and you go, and you think that's a kind of big machine for such a little person. And you see all the surgeons in their doctor's clothes, and it makes you worry even more. And you see all of a sudden five doctors there, the nurse is budding you from wherever you were number 100 in line right to the front, and sight begins to... weep.

But faith puts the person in the Lord's hands, puts the circumstance into the Lord's hands, and leaves it with the Lord, that the Lord would be honored and glorified by all we do. You

see, faith is what we had before, and we're convinced that the Lord is able to keep that which we've committed unto him until that day.

But faith—or, sorry, sight takes our eyes off the Lord, and off his precious promises, and off his word. And so, as we go through life, faith isn't a whim. It isn't a silly desire. It comes by hearing the word of the Lord, and by obeying him as we walk along this pilgrim pathway below.

May you be encouraged this afternoon. Some of us need to begin a walk with the Lord. We've never trusted in Jesus as our Savior. We've never said, "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light, and the burdens of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight, and now I'm happy all day." Some of us need to receive Jesus as our Savior. Some of us need to be encouraged to walk with the Lord by faith and not by sight. May the Lord do both of those things in our spirits this afternoon.

Closing Prayer

Father, we'd like to thank you for your goodness to us. We thank you for your word. We thank you for the great and precious promises that we've received through. We thank you that it's the Savior who's talked about—yeah—and glorified in your word. And our prayer is that he would be talked about and glorified in our lives.

So as we go this way, we thank you for these baptisms we had the pleasure of witnessing this morning. I don't know if all of our smiles can be as big as their smiles or if our smiles can be as big as Jeet's smile, but it was a wonderful thing to watch. And I, in my imagination, think of what's going on in heaven. They see someone obeying the Lord. We just commit them all into your hands, asking for your hand of protection to be about them. That you would give them a boldness to live and to speak for the Lord Jesus. And help the saints here at 16th Avenue Gospel Chapel to encourage them to grow in their faith, in the grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's for his honor and for his glory we pray. Amen.