

FAITH IS NOT SIGHT

- A. Introduction: We have been talking about learning to see ourselves as we truly are in relation to God so that we can demonstrate the will of God in this life and walk as Jesus walked. I John 2:6
1. We have made the point that salvation is transformational. The ultimate goal of salvation is to turn turn unrighteous, unholy sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God.
 - a. Jesus is the pattern for God's family. Jesus is God become a man without ceasing to be God.
 1. While on earth He did not live as God. He lived as a man in dependence on the eternal life of God, His Father, in Him. John 5:26; John 6:57; etc.
 2. In His earth walk Jesus showed us what holy, righteous sons and daughters of God look like. Our destiny is to be conformed to the image of Christ or made like Jesus in character and power, holiness and love. Rom 8:29
 - b. Jesus died on the Cross to pay the price for our sin so that it could be moved, opening the way for God to transform us from sinners into sons and daughters like Jesus. Rom 8:30
 1. Through the Cross we were justified or acquitted -- all charges dropped because there is no evidence of wrongdoing. Col 2:14.
 2. Now that we are acquitted we can be glorified. To be glorified means to be made alive with the uncreated, eternal life of God in every part of our being.
 2. When we believe on Jesus -- acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord -- we are born again, born from above, born of God. John 3:3,5; John 1:12,13; I John 5:1
 - a. At that moment God puts eternal life into our innermost being (our spirit). We become partakers of His life, the uncreated life in God Himself -- eternal life. I John 5:11,12; John 1:4; John 14:6
 1. We are united to the life in God through union with Christ. I John 5:11--And this testimony is that God has given us eternal life, and this life is given through union with His Son.
(Williams)
 2. Three word pictures are used in scripture to describe the believer's relationship to Christ. All depict union and shared life: Vine and branch (John 15:5), Head and body (Eph 1:22,23), Husband and wife (Eph 5:31,32).
 - b. This life is not a future event. It is a present-tense possession. If you are born again there is something in you that was not in you before you believed on Jesus. And, the entrance of this life into your spirit has produced a tremendous transformation in your make-up.
 1. You were dead in your trespasses and sin (lacking eternal life). Now you are alive with, living by (because of) the life of God in you. Eph 2:1,5
 2. Christianity is more than receiving forgiveness of sin. It is receiving a new nature, the life of God, and becoming a literal son or daughter of God by birth. John 1:4; 5:26; 14:6; II Pet 1:4
 - c. The condition of your spirit is the basis of your identity. You were a sinner because of the condition of your spirit. You are now a son or daughter because of the condition of your spirit.
 1. You still have unchanged parts in your make-up. Your mind must be renewed and your emotions purified. Your body must be brought under the control of your recreated spirit. But the unchanged parts are not the basis of your identity. Your spirit is. God deals with you on the basis of your true identity -- born of Him.
 2. The entrance of eternal life into your spirit is the beginning of a process that will ultimately transform your entire being, fully conforming you to the image of Christ (glorifying you) in every part of your being. Phil 3:20,21; I John 3:2; I Cor 15:51-53
 3. Because we are born of God we will go into Heaven when we die. But because we are born of God, we now have in us an unceasing source of life to continually enable us to walk as Jesus walked.
 - a. Jesus is in us by His life to produce fruit or outward evidence of the life within. Whatever is in that life is in you because His life is in you and it can potentially show up outwardly.
 1. God, in His sovereignty, has chosen to work in our lives by His grace through our faith (Eph

2:8,9). Although God's strength is in us because we are born of Him, He will not automatically be strength to us unless we believe Him to be.

2. When we believe God's Word that we (in our spirit) are strong, righteous, patient, loving, healed, God, by His life in us, does the work of building that reality into our soul and body.

b. God's part is to be our life (empowering ability). Our part is to believe that He is our life (empowering ability). God's life in us because of our union with Christ will do what it is supposed to do if we will believe it. In this lesson we want to talk more about our part.

B. We've said a lot about Paul who had outward demonstration of the life of God within him. Gal 2:20-- Paul knew he was united to Christ and that Jesus was in Him by His life. Paul said he lived by faith in the Son of God meaning that he expected Jesus to be in him and through him all He promised and provided.

1. In a lengthy discussion of the many trials he faced in his life Paul stated that in all of them the life of God was demonstrated in him and through him (II Cor 4,5). In that context that Paul made the statement: We walk by faith and not by sight. II Cor 5:7

a. To experience outwardly the effects of the inward changes in our spirit (to bear fruit or outward evidence of the life within) we must learn to walk by faith. What is faith? Faith is not sight.

1. There is more to reality than what we see. There is an invisible realm -- the realm of God and His kingdom of full power and provision. Part of our own make-up (the inward man) is invisible. Col 1:16; II Cor 4:16; II Cor 4:18 ; I Tim 1:17

2. Invisible does not mean not real. It simply means we can't perceive it with our five physical senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell). One of the reasons God has given us the Bible is to reveal Himself and this unseen realm to us.

b. Faith doesn't deny what it sees or feels. Faith recognizes that there is more to reality than what it sees and feels. Faith agrees with what God says about reality despite how it looks or feels. Faith recognizes that what it sees and feels is temporary and subject to change by the power of God.

1. Apart from the Word of God, we are completely dependent on our senses. We get constant input from our physical senses. This information stimulates spontaneous reactions in us called emotions.

2. Sometimes the input from our senses and emotions agrees with God. Sometimes it doesn't. But neither our senses nor our emotions have access to all the facts about reality in any situation because they cannot perceive the unseen realm.

3. Our view of reality has to be changed so that we see things the way they really are according to God's Word. That's what renewing the mind is all about. Rom 12:1,2

c. Most of us walk by sight and don't realize it. To walk by sight means you base what you believe and how you act on what you see and feel. We believe because we see or feel. Faith believes because God says, despite what it sees or feels.

1. Many of the accounts recorded in the Old Testament were written to keep us from making the same mistakes they did. I Cor 10:6,11

2. Much is written about the generation of Israelites whom God delivered from slavery in Egypt. They did not receive what God had given them, wanted them to have (Canaan) of unbelief (Heb 3:19). They walked by faith and not by sight. Let's see what we can learn from them.

2. After Israel crossed the Red Sea they headed for the land of Canaan. Once they reached the border they sent twelve men to spy out the land before the main group moved in.

a. After forty days they all came back and reported on what they saw. All agreed that it was a bountiful land, but noted that there were formidable obstacles -- walled cities, war-like tribes, giants. Num 13:26-29

b. They all saw the same things. But it's not what you see that makes or breaks you. It's how you see what you see. Do you assess what you see only in terms of what you see and how you feel about what you see or do you assess it in terms of what God says.

1. Caleb and Joshua said: We are well able to overcome them and take this land. The rest of the spies said: We can't take the land because the people of the land are stronger than us. v30-33
2. All saw the same things but reached two completely different conclusions about their situation. It wasn't what they saw. It's how they saw what they saw or their view of reality.
- c. We get insight into each side's view of reality. Caleb and Joshua: We are able to take this land because God is with us to fight for us. God with us makes us bigger than our enemies (Num 14:9).
The other spies: These people are so big that we look like grasshoppers compared to them, in our eyes and in theirs (Num 13:33).
 1. The ten assessed their situation according to what they could see. They walked by sight. Joshua and Caleb assessed their situation in terms of reality as it truly is: God with them. They saw beyond what they could see to reality as it truly is: God with them, bigger than anything that could come against them. They walked by faith.
 2. It was true that their enemies were bigger and stronger than all of them -- if we assess the situation only in terms of what could be seen. But there is more to reality than what we see and feel. There is an unseen, invisible realm.
 3. It looked right and felt right for Israel to refuse to enter the land of Canaan. But it was wrong. Why? Because they based their actions only on what they saw and felt instead of on what God said. Their view of reality was incorrect.
- d. Caleb and Joshua had a different view of reality. They fully followed the Lord. Num 14:24--
Caleb has a different attitude (Berkeley); Caleb was of another mind; he took my part (Knox).
3. It looked like Israel walked by faith because they had followed God to this point. God's presence manifested as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. When the cloud moved, they moved.
 - a. But commitment to the Lord is not the kind of faith that accesses the unseen realm. We've made the point in previous lessons that Jesus' original disciples left all to follow Him.
 1. They were so fully committed and sincere that all but one died a martyr's death. Yet Jesus regularly chastised them for their lack of faith.
 2. When we read what they did to bring such a response from Him we find that they put what they could see and feel above what God said. Matt 14:31; Matt 17:20; etc.
 - b. When Israel passed through the Red Sea and the Egyptian army was destroyed right before their eyes, they had a joyous celebration on the other side of the Red Sea. Ex 15:10-15
 1. They sang a song of victory declaring that God had delivered them from Egypt as He had promised. They proclaimed that fear would take hold of their enemies in Canaan because God was with them. They professed that by the power of God they would enter the land.
 2. None of that was faith. It was all sight. When they were able to see and feel the Lord's power and help they believed it. But at the edge of the land when what they saw on their reconnaissance mission contradicted what God said, they no longer believed what He said.
 3. Faith that accesses the power and provision of God celebrates before the Red Sea parts.
4. When we examine Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan we find that they had a well developed habit of walking by sight and not by faith. They walked by sight all the way to Canaan.
 - a. The journey to Canaan involved traveling through a desert wilderness. In their first three days of travel, they saw no water. When they finally reached water, it was undrinkable. Ex 15:22-24
 1. They began to complain. Complaining is the voice of the senses. It talks only about what it sees and how it feels about what it sees.
 2. God did not expect them to deny what they saw. But surely someone could have recounted how just three days ago God had parted the Red Sea for them. Or someone could have reminded them that God brought them out of Egypt to bring them in to Canaan.
 - b. But as we study their story we see that they complained about everything. What if, on the way to Canaan, they had continued to sing their victory song, continued to proclaim God's Word that He had promised to fight for them, defeat their enemies, and bring them into Canaan victorious?

c. It would have built their confidence (faith) in what He had promised and they would not have been moved by what they saw and felt. They would have believed what God said and experienced all that He intended them to have. Only Joshua and Caleb entered the land.

C. Conclusion: To walk by faith, your view of reality must change. Faith is not sincerity or a technique that will solve your immediate problem. It is an action that comes out of your perception of reality. Faith and believe are two sides of the same coin. Faith is the noun. Belief is the verb.

1. You can't believe what you do not know to be true. You must become persuaded of the reality of what you are trying to believe. Then it is easy or natural to believe.

a. Paul knew that he was a conqueror through (because of) his union with Christ. He knew that that reality made him bigger than anything that came against him. Rom 8:37-39

b. Paul knew that God, in His love, sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins which opened the way for the new birth which gives us union with Him. And nothing can undo that reality. Paul lived by faith in the Son of God to be in and through him all that He promised and provided.

1. v38--Note that Paul said he was persuaded of these things. One translation says: I have come a process of persuasion to the settled conclusion (Wuest). The word persuaded in the Greek means to convince by argument.

2. Vine's Dictionary of Greek Words says of this word: It means "to apply persuasion, to prevail upon or win over; to persuade, bringing about a change of mind by the influence of reason or moral consideration".

2. Coming to a place of full persuasion (or faith) was a process for Paul and it is for us as well. Our view of reality was totally shaped by our physical senses prior to conversion. It takes time and effort to expose our doubt and unbelief and reshape our view of reality.

a. We need to take time to think about the things we've discussed in these lesson. We need to meditate on God's Word and let it change our view of reality. Heb 13:5,6

b. We get constant input from our senses. We must learn to counteract it with the truth of God's Word. Become aware of where you are getting your information -- from what you see and feel or from what God says.

c. We all talk to ourselves all the time (just like Israel did on the way to Canaan). Learn to talk about what God says, not just what you see and feel. Build your faith in the fact that God is in you and wants to produce fruit in and through you. Rom 10:17.

3. We believe that God is in us, with us, and for us when we feel good. But that's not faith. That's sight. If you can see and feel something you don't need faith. Faith is for when you can't see.

a. We see, therefore we believe. But that's backwards. In the kingdom we believe then see.

b. Let God's Word persuade you to the point where you believe when you don't see or feel. Then, you will see and feel.