

What Does It Mean to Walk by Faith

by Tim Conway

Walking by faith means making decisions in life based on unseen spiritual realities rather than physical sight. It involves trusting in God's promises and believing in the existence of an unseen God and Christ. Living by faith requires betting our lives on the truths revealed in the Bible, even though we have not physically seen God or Jesus. The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in things hoped for and unseen, as demonstrated by the examples of faith in Hebrews 11.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:7, Romans 8:24, Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 11:27, Hebrews 11:6, Hebrews 11:1, Romans 4:20

Topics: "Faith in the Unseen", "Trusting God's Promises"

Description

Walking by faith means making decisions in life based on unseen spiritual realities rather than physical sight. It involves trusting in God's promises and believing in the existence of an unseen God and Christ. Living by faith requires betting our lives on the truths revealed in the Bible, even though we have not physically seen God or Jesus. The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in things hoped for and unseen, as demonstrated by the examples of faith in Hebrews 11.

Transcript

What does it mean to walk by faith? And you also give practical examples of walking by faith and living by faith. That's a good question. That's at the heart of Christianity.

What does it mean to walk by faith? Well, what comes to my mind when I hear that is that there's actually a New Testament text that has exactly those words. You know where I'm thinking? 2 Corinthians 5.7. Somebody look that up. A very well-known passage.

Read it when you get there. 2 Corinthians 5.7. "...For we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home, we walk by faith." Walk by faith, not by sight.

Now, I think any time you want to look at what something is, it's always good to look at the opposite. Looking at the opposite of something can be very helpful. If we know exactly what the opposite is.

Sometimes we have an idea, oh, that's the opposite. Well, sometimes it's not exactly the opposite. But what we know is this, we know from this text, by inspired language, what the opposite of walking by faith is.

What's the opposite? Walking by sight. Okay, that's helpful. Walking by sight.

Sight is what we can see. It's what we can feel. It's what the physical senses can pick up on.

So we really walk by an organ that only regenerate people have. It's a spiritual organ. It's not the physical senses.

That's not how we walk. So, if you go back right up before this, just let your eyes go back up to 2 Corinthians 4.13. Somebody read that verse. Right there in context.

Somebody read that. Don't be shy. 2 Corinthians 4.13 We have the same spirit of faith according as it is written.

I believe and therefore have I spoken. We also believe and therefore speak. Is that right? Is that the verse I want? I didn't know if you wanted 18.

What's 18 say? Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's the text I want. But to the things that are unseen.

Things that are seen are transient. Exactly, exactly. Yeah, look there.

That's the text I meant. I got a 3 on my page instead of an 8. We look not to things that are seen. You see, this keeps coming up.

In fact, if you follow that idea through Scripture, you see it with regards to faith over and over. That sight versus faith. Or what is seen.

What is invisible. That kind of terminology comes up. Think with me here.

Romans 8. Now there we have hope, not faith. But that's a very similar word. What's the difference between hope and faith? Hope is future.

And we often talk about faith in future things as faith just as well. We can talk about things in the future as though it's something we believe will happen or we have faith it's going to happen. Or we can call it hope.

We don't call hope something that we believe right now. Well, we may believe it now about the future. But we may believe things will be true right now and we don't call that hope because hope is always future.

We can believe in things present. We can believe in things future. But hope is always future.

But listen to what the Apostle says. Romans 8, 24 and 25. Somebody have that? For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope.

Keep going. For why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it to be seen. You see, this is the idea.

It's constantly the idea in Scripture. We don't walk by sight. We walk by faith.

Hope, hope. We don't see it. It's something that we have an expectation of, but we don't yet see the thing.

Now, Hebrews 11 is known as the faith chapter. We have example after example after example. And one of the things that I want to jump out at you in Hebrews 11 is how much this faith versus sight, that which isn't seen, that which is not yet possessed, that which is hoped for, that which is not yet attained, that which is right now invisible.

I mean, how often this comes up that faith is specifically said to be that which is placed in something that is yet unseen. And in fact, it starts right at the beginning. Look at chapter 11, verse 1. Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for.

Isn't that interesting? To even define faith, the author of Hebrews brings the word hope in. We were just talking about the difference. But there's the idea.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. The conviction of things not seen. That's the idea behind faith.

You say, what does it mean to walk by faith? It means I am making decisions in my life based on things that people cannot see with the physical eye. Even if it's a promise, what's the thing about a promise? A promise is not yet fulfilled. Or it's being fulfilled, but its finality hasn't come yet.

And so, even in promise, the fulfillment of promise is a future expectation. And so I'm living my life based on promises. And it may be a promise for today, but where does that promise come from? It comes from an unseen God.

And so, I'm basically believing a truth that comes off this page, and I'm believing that there is an unseen God behind the promises in this book. And I'm willing to bet my life on it. I'm willing to bet my family on it.

I'm willing to risk all. Although I can't see the One that I'm trusting. I cannot see these promises being inspired.

I can't even see that these promises were penned by Peter. Or Paul. Or Mark.

I can't see that. I'm resting on promises that are in a book. I mean, you think about how much we live by faith.

And people challenge it all the time. You know, Muslims come along and they say, well, that book's corrupted. I'm living on the faith that it's not.

Oh, the God of the Scriptures? That's not the true God. Not the God of Isaac. It's got to be the God of Ishmael.

Or John 1.1? Jesus isn't God? I mean, all sorts of people attack this book. We live on the faith that what's in this book is real. That it's true.

And that there is an infinite, unseen, almighty God who's backing up every single promise in this book. And an unseen Christ. Peter speaks about an unseen Christ.

But look how much this comes out of these verses. You see it right there in verse 1. But keep going. Verse 3. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God.

See, you don't see God. You never heard God speak. You didn't watch the universe spring into existence.

And yet what? By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God. So that, here it is, what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. You see, what's seen is made by the unseen.

And you see where the faith is. The faith is resting on the God we can't see and believing in all of this sprang into existence. Now, the thing about it all, is it's not just a fool's errand.

Why? Romans chapter 1 says, look, there's natural revelation in all of this. We know that the attributes of God, it's kind of like looking at a machine that somebody's built. We've got a few mechanical engineering students in our church who are going to UTSA and they're working on their senior project and they're trying to make an avocado pitter peeler for HEB.

You know, when they get that machine done, if you went and looked at it, well, you can tell some things about the guys who made it. You can't tell everything. You can't even tell most everything.

But you can tell some things. It's the same thing with the world and the creation around us. Scripture plainly tells us that we can see realities.

Psalm 19, right? Have you ever read that? How does it read? Keep going. See, that's it right there. Day after day, they utter speech.

What's speaking? All of this. It's like you go out and look at those stars. What Scripture says is it's speaking.

What's it saying? It's saying there's a God. You can't see Him, but He's there. How do you know? Because you can see His handiwork.

It didn't happen by accident. Who was debating? It was one of these intelligent design guys debating one of these atheist guys. And the intelligent designer guy was saying, there's so much order.

There's so much intelligence in the design. And the atheist was saying, he just didn't see it. He thought things were just messed up.

He's blind. That's the only way he can say that. He's just absolutely blind.

I mean, if you look around, you've heard me say it before, but I still marvel at it. A man and a woman can create a baby? That doesn't happen by accident. The human eyeball? How many designs in nature would not work if you removed one component like the eyeball? Or seriously, a worm becomes a butterfly? These things are miraculous, but there's people that are blind and they can't see because they don't have that spiritual organ that only the Spirit of God can give that causes us to see what isn't seen.

But let's keep going here. 6. Without faith, it's impossible to please Him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He is.

That's basically what it says. Exists is ESV. But that He is.

We must believe that He is. And see, we don't see Him. So we must believe that He is, that He exists, though our eyes don't behold Him.

And watch this. As you watch these men and women of the faith, just watch how often they get brought up not seeing the very thing that their faith is set on. Watch this.

Verse 7. Let's not go to 8. By faith Noah being warned by God concerning events as yet. What? There it is. See, it comes back to that all the time.

Noah was building an ark. I've heard John MacArthur say, well, it never even rained before. I don't know that you can prove that.

A lot of people say that. They say that fairly dogmatically. I don't know that you can prove that, but I guarantee this, he never seen a flood that covered the earth before.

Whether he'd seen rain or not, I guess we could debate about that. But he's being told that the whole earth is going to flood. He's never seen that before.

Can you imagine? How long did he build that ark? A hundred years. Can you imagine a hundred years of building that ark? Do you think it ever crossed his mind? Maybe his faith was like Abraham's. It just never wavered.

Think about Abraham. About this time next year, Sarah's going to give birth. And what does it specifically say there in Romans 4 about his faith? It didn't waver.

Here he is a hundred years old. His wife is 90 years old. She's beyond childbearing.

The whole thing seems impossible. And the thing is, he doesn't even have his own child yet. His own heir according to God's promise.

And God's telling him to change his name from Abram to Abraham. You're not only going to be the father of many, you're going to be the father of multitudes. And he's saying, I've got this foreigner in my family.

But you see it here. He didn't see it. Verse 8, By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

Since he went out, here it is, not knowing where he was going. So, he doesn't see it. He's been promised an inheritance.

He hasn't seen it. But out he goes. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents.

Isaac, Jacob, heirs with him. Same promise. He was looking forward.

Now here it is, the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. He's looking forward to a city that he doesn't see. He doesn't see.

He's looking for it. But he doesn't see it. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

But there it is. What did she see? She saw an old woman. She saw an old woman who had reached menopause undoubtedly.

No ability to have kids. She laughed when she heard that she was going to have a child. Why? Because it seemed ridiculous.

She was way beyond that age. And you see it, verse 12, Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants. As many as the stars of heaven, as many as the numerous grains of sand by the sea.

They all died in faith, not having received the things promised, having seen them, and greeted them from afar. Now that's interesting. They saw them from afar, which means that they didn't actually see them.

You know what that seeing is? That's faith. That's not seeing with the physical eyes. That's seeing by faith.

They didn't see with the physical eye, but they did see with the eye of faith. And that's how we're living. We see things in the future.

That's what living by faith is. Living by faith is, I believe God has called me to go out there. I haven't seen that land.

I don't know what it's going to be like when I get there. I'm looking for a city that has foundations, not like the ones here. They don't have their foundations crumble.

He's talking about real foundations, everlasting. He's looking for it. That's how you live.

You live in light of an unseen God, an unseen Christ. We love in light of the unseen Christ. Have you not seen Him? You love Him, Peter said.

We haven't seen Christ. Isn't that amazing? Isn't it amazing that, think about this, you sing songs and your heart is filled with gladness and thanksgiving, appreciation and love towards Christ. Isn't that amazing? You feel love for Christ and you actually keep His commandments, feeling love for Him.

You ever met Him? Not in person. You ever set your eyes on Him? No. You've got people who tell you He doesn't even exist.

He never existed. He's a figment of somebody's imagination. Or maybe He was a historical figure, but He certainly wasn't God.

He certainly didn't die on a cross to atone for our sins. And yet, isn't it amazing? We've never met Him. We've never seen Him.

We've never talked to Him personally with our physical mouths. We've never seen Him with our physical eyes. We've never heard His voice with our physical ears.

And the amazing thing is, we believe that He died on a cross and we're willing to throw all in and risk our eternal souls on that reality. And that's faith. You keep going.

Let's see, I had some others marked out here. Where were we? We were about 15. I guess go to 24.

By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the Pharaoh's daughter. Now, you know what's interesting about that? He saw firsthand the benefits of being Pharaoh's daughter. You see, he saw.

Choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God that enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. You know what's interesting? He undoubtedly saw the harems. Why? He was a palace guy.

He saw the benefits of being in the ruling class in Egypt. He saw it with his own eyes. But you know what's amazing? He swapped it for something he couldn't see.

That's faith. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt. Imagine that.

He swapped the treasures of Egypt for the treasures of Christ. One he sees. One he doesn't see.

That's walking by faith. I think I had another couple. Look at 27.

"...By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured..." You see it again? "...as seeing Him who is invisible." How do you see Him who's invisible? By faith. It keeps coming up. The idea of what you can see keeps coming up.

How about 1135? "...Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release so that they might rise again to a better life." And here's the thing, when you're being tortured, you feel it. See, this is the test of faith.

Can you imagine being tortured? Can you imagine being tortured and if you're just told, if you'll recant, they'll stop? You know why you continue to endure that? Because your expectation of what you can't see is that great. And your knowledge of what it is to turn your back on Christ and refuse Him and what the eternal consequences of that are, are greater than the suffering and the pain that you're enduring. How about 1135? Oh, we did that one.

How about just 12, 1, and 2? "...Therefore, since we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses..." Listen to those witnesses. Those guys walked by faith. Those are the witnesses and they beckon us on.

"...Let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so easily. Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." Looking to Jesus. See, isn't that interesting? Looking to someone you can't see.

The Founder and Perfecter of our faith. This is interesting. "...Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross." You know what's interesting about that? He didn't yet possess that joy.

He didn't yet have it. It was a promise. It was future.

And yet He endured the suffering. So, that's basically it. That's what it is to walk by faith.

It's that whole idea of living in light of things that we don't yet see. Well, I mean, how does that happen? It's supernatural. It is.

I mean, what did I think when I was lost? I was mystical about this book. I thought it almost had magic powers. I could get ward off spirits much like the vampire movies and the cross.

I looked at the Bible like that. I never read it. I remember in my lost days opening up Revelation and just thinking, whoa, I don't know what that is.

But just leaving it on my dresser. It's the same dresser I have upstairs in my bedroom right now. I'd leave that Bible there like it was going to ward off spirits out of my bedroom or something when I was going through college.

But how is it that we come... I mean, once I got saved, I had such a confidence in my soul that this book is true and such a sense of the reality of Christ. But more than that, more than just a sense of Him, it's like Peter says, we love having not seen Him. We love Him.

And it's amazing. Isn't it amazing that something actually happens in a person when they're saved? Not just that they love Christ, but that they love Christ more than their own life. More than mother or father.

More than husband or wife. I mean, that's supernatural. That's supernatural.

And think about that. Think about if you came down from that upper room. You're one of the 120.

Okay, we're going to try to turn the world upside down. We're going to try to get everybody to become followers of Jesus. Oh yeah? Who is He? He was a Jew.

From where? Nazareth. Oh, we thought He was coming from Bethlehem. Seriously? What did He do? Did He overthrow Rome? No, they actually killed Him on a cross.

They killed the Messiah on a cross? Yeah, but He rose three days later. He did? Where is He? Oh, you see, we can't show them to you because after 40 days, He ascended up to the right hand of God. I mean, imagine coming down and making up something like that.

You're going to go and try to convince everybody. You know what? The only way that message turns the world upside down if there is such reality that through the preaching of the Gospel, power is unleashed whereby people actually become possessed of a faith like this that sees beyond what can be seen and lays hold on realities beyond the veil. And it's real.

It's true. I mean, I feel those realities burning in my soul and in my life every single day since I've been saved. I mean, I am not going to forsake the unseen realities for what I can see with these eyes.

And that's the testimony of all these people listed in Hebrews 11. That's what it is to walk by faith. You know what? I mean, if anybody wants to know, well, what is it to walk by faith? All you have to do is follow God's people through the Scriptures.

I mean, that's all the author of Hebrews did. He just thought about the Old Testament. And he said, well, there was this guy, and there was this guy, and there was this guy, and there was this woman, and this woman, and just look at the way they walk.

People of faith always walk the same way. What way is that? In the direction of something unseen. Always.

Anything else we need to bring up or say about that?

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