

Walking By Faith

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Walking In the Spirit – Series 6
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What is Faith?

In the last couple of studies we have talked about the spiritual realities that surround us. About how God's plan is to reconnect earth and heaven so His will is done on earth as it is in Heaven and how that plan is opposed by the 'kosmos' - the present world rulers of darkness from which the Christian must be separate.

Now the key act in connecting heaven and earth is living faith. Faith is the creature reconnecting with the Creator. Faith is believing in the goodness of the One who made us and in His power and in His capacity to act on our behalf, even in the midst of this fallen world.

Faith is the intuitive spiritual apprehension of God, His nature, His power and His works. Faith understands that there is an invisible realm behind all things, that God rules over it as a real and actual Creator and that this God is not an impersonal force of fate but rather a God who loves and rewards those who seek after Him.

Hebrews 11:1-6 HCSB *Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. (2) For by it our ancestors were approved. (3) By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen has been made from things that are not visible. (4) By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By this he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through this. (5) By faith, Enoch was taken away so that he did not experience death, and he was not to be found because God took him away. For prior to his transformation he was approved, having pleased God. (6) Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.*

The ancients did not have the religious structures we have today, or even the Bible we have today, but they believed God. They connected with Him and followed Him and gained His approval through their faith. By their faith they glimpsed the heavenly realms and by their faith they became people who did God's will on earth as it is done in Heaven. The ancients had this deep intuitive spiritual apprehension of God, His nature, His power and His works that I spoke of earlier.

Faith is not just about Scripture memory, external righteousness or obedience to rules – the Pharisees had that but they did not believe when Jesus came. Nor is it

about right ceremony – the high priests and the Sadducees had that yet they failed to understand the Scriptures or the power of God (Matthew 22:29). Nor is it about having a deep knowledge of doctrine. Nicodemus was a teacher of all Israel yet Jesus told Nicodemus that he still needed to be born-again.

Faith is what the Samaritan woman at the well had (John chapter 4) when she simply believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Her life was a moral mess, her doctrine at that point was mainly wrong (Jesus told her 'you do not know what you worship') , and she had probably never been to the Jewish temple. But she believed in Jesus and was saved. As Jesus gently revealed her past the Samaritan woman simply knew that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah. Again we find faith existing as an intuitive spiritual apprehension of God, His nature, His power and His works.

When people have faith they latch onto God and they connect or reconnect with Heaven. As a result of moving into alignment with God and with Heaven they move out of alignment with the earthly, demonic powers of the kosmos mentioned yesterday. Two passages from Hebrews 11 illustrate this principle:

Hebrews 11:7-10 HCSB *By faith Noah, after being warned about what was not yet seen, in reverence built an ark to deliver his family. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. (8) By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went out to a place he was going to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was going. (9) By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, co-heirs of the same promise. (10) For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

Hebrews 11:23-27 HCSB *By faith Moses, after he was born, was hidden by his parents for three months, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they didn't fear the king's edict. (24) By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (25) and chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the short-lived pleasure of sin. (26) For he considered reproach for the sake of the Messiah to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, since his attention was on the reward. (27) By faith he left Egypt behind, not being afraid of the king's anger, for he persevered, as one who sees Him who is invisible.*

Faith is not a creed, it is a dynamic spiritual principle of personal relationship to our Abba Father God who loves us! Faith looks beyond this world and into the next:

2 Corinthians 5:7 HCSB *for we walk by faith, not by sight--*

2 Corinthians 4:18 HCSB *So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

As we exercise the spiritual intuition of faith and believe in God and in His promises then unusual things start to happen. Creeds do not produce miracles - but true faith does.

Hebrews 11:32-34 HCSB *And what more can I say? Time is too short for me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, (33) who by faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, (34) quenched the raging of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength after being weak, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight.*

Indeed Jesus constantly encouraged His disciples to have this kind of world-transforming faith:

Mark 11:21-24 HCSB *Then Peter remembered and said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that You cursed is withered." (22) Jesus replied to them, "Have faith in God. (23) I assure you: If anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. (24) Therefore, I tell you, all the things you pray and ask for--believe that you have received them, and you will have them.*

Now, going back to the start, the purpose of such world-transforming faith is for God's Kingdom to come and for God's will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Within that framework, within the Grand Cause of a world infused with God's glory, you can move mountains by faith alone. Because when you believe then God's character, power and goodness is brought into the picture. If you do not believe all you are left with is human strength and the powers of darkness.

Walking By Faith

How can we live a vital Christian life like that of Abraham, the prophets and the apostles? The people who have vital Christian lives are people who trust in God and who walk by faith:

Romans 4:12 HCSB *And he became the father of the circumcised, not only to those who are circumcised, but also to those who follow in the footsteps of the faith our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.*

2 Corinthians 5:7 MKJV *for we walk by faith, not by sight;*

Romans 1:16-17 MKJV *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (17) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

We walk by faith, and this leads us to be in the Spirit and to being led by the Spirit.

Now how did Abraham walk by faith long before there were churches, bibles, and modern worship services - even long before the law of Moses? Abraham believed that what God said would actually come to pass. Faith is trusting that God will keep

His promises. In Abraham's case it was believing the promise that he would become the father of many nations:

Romans 4:16-21 MKJV *Therefore it is of faith so that it might be according to grace; for the promise to be made sure to all the seed, not only to that which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (17) (as it has been written, "I have made you a father of many nations") --before God, whom he believed, who makes the dead live, and calls the things which do not exist as though they do exist. (18) For he who beyond hope believed on hope for him to become the father of many nations (according to that which was spoken, "So your seed shall be"). (19) And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body already dead (being about a hundred years old) or the deadening of Sarah's womb. (20) He did not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, (21) and being fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was also able to perform.*

So we see Abraham believing in a God who makes the dead to live and calls the things which do not exist as though they do exist. In hope against hope Abraham believed without any doubt or wavering. Abraham held on to that promise of God for for 25 years. Abraham was strong in faith, and gave glory to God, convinced that what God had promised He was able to perform.

Abraham did not set his hope in a creed or a philosophy or a set of notions and ideas. Instead Abraham believed in a real and tangible outcome from a real and knowable God. Christianity is not a philosophy or a systematic set of human ideas about God. Rather it is faith in a God who really, actually will turn up in the midst of your life:

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 MKJV *(4) And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) so that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

Faith is believing that what God said will occur

Doubt is being unsure that what God said will occur

Unbelief is being firmly convinced that what God said will not come to pass

Presumption is thinking God said something would occur when He did not say so

Rebellion is deliberately going against the word of God so as to disobey it

For instance faith is believing that God is righteous and good and will work justice even when everything seems crooked and unjust. Faith is deciding not to take revenge because you can trust God to work things out rightly in the end.

Saving faith is believing that Jesus has died on your behalf and has purchased your salvation. It is letting go of your own spiritual efforts to climb some kind of spiritual ladder into Heaven! Saving faith involves letting Christ take charge of your life and works - and letting Jesus do that within you which you cannot do yourself.

Walking by faith is directing your life in the sure knowledge of the character and purposes of God. It also involves having real tangible expectations, based on God's promises, that affect your major life decisions.

Genesis 12:1-4 ESV *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. (2) And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. (3) I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (4) So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.*

For instance when you are considering a major change in your life do you just consult your own reasoning or do you wait upon the Lord?

Proverbs 3:5-7 ESV *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (7) Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.*

People who walk by faith are distinctly different. They believe that they will inherit a real heavenly reward that will make any earthly affliction seem temporary and passing.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 HCSB *(16) Therefore we do not give up; even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. (17) For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. (18) So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

This kind of courage comes from having real trust that God will perform what He has promised. It is believing the unseen is more real than the seen. It is believing your inner knowledge of God rather than the outer knowledge of the senses:

Matthew 14:28-32 HCSB *"Lord, if it's You," Peter answered Him, "command me to come to You on the water." (29) "Come!" He said. And climbing out of the boat, Peter started walking on the water and came toward Jesus. (30) But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me!" (31) Immediately Jesus reached out His hand, caught hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (32) When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.*

Walking by faith is like Peter's walking on the water – and it takes a lot of practice!

Walking by faith involves supernatural knowledge known as revelation. Now revelation is just God's information revealed to your spirit. It is information that the human mind cannot find out by itself. One bible teacher has called them 'downloads from Heaven'. It can be as simple as "cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will have a catch of fish" or as complex as Paul's revelation concerning the nature of the Church. In 1 Corinthians Paul tells us a bit about this process:

1 Corinthians 2:7-10 MKJV *(7) But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, which God has hidden, predetermining it before the world for our glory; (8) which none of the rulers of this world knew (for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory). (9) But as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard," nor has it entered into the heart of man, "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (10) But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

The smartest and most powerful people of the day could not figure out the truth about Jesus but those who listened to the Holy Spirit could. The Holy Spirit bypassed the natural senses (what eye has not seen, nor ear heard) and even the inner life of the natural man (nor has entered into the heart of man) to reveal His blessings to believers (... *the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.* " *But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit*).

So we see that the person who is walking by faith gets 'downloads from Heaven' and that these downloads from Heaven reveal Christ, His blessings, and all that God has prepared for those who love Him.

Romans 8 tells us that the Christian is to be in spiritual contact with God, through the Holy Spirit so that he or she can say "Indeed I am led by the Holy Spirit".

Romans 8:14 MKJV *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

Now as I said earlier this is a process that we practice. Each day we need to spend time alone with God and we need to slow down now and then and 'put up our spiritual antenna' to hear exactly what God is saying.

We are to stop rushing, fretting and over-calculating life (though we are still to use our God-given brains). Rather we are to put our noisy selves to one side, and be quiet and be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10).

John's gospel reveals Jesus' humble dependent relationship with the Father in some detail:

John 5:19-20 MKJV *Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He sees the Father do. For whatever things He does, these also the Son does likewise. (20) For the Father*

loves the Son and shows Him all the things that He Himself does. And He will show Him greater works than these, so that you may marvel.

John 5:30 MKJV *I can do nothing of My own self. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of the Father who has sent Me.*

John 8:28-29 MKJV *Then Jesus said to them, When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you shall know that I AM, and that I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things. (29) And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things which please Him.*

Jesus says that He can do 'nothing of Himself' and He says that three times, which in Scripture is frequently a way of emphasizing something. Jesus tell us that he only does what He sees His Father doing (John 5:19-20), then what He hears from His Father (John 5:30), then that He only speaks what His Father has taught Him (John 8:28-29).

By doing 'nothing of Himself' He means nothing out of His own personal will or initiative. Jesus always waited for the 'download from Heaven' before proceeding with His ministry. He was completely Spirit-led and instructed from above.

We are to be a God-instructed people with His laws written upon our hearts and minds:

John 6:45 MKJV *It is written in the Prophets, "And they shall all be taught of God." Therefore everyone who hears and learns from the Father comes to Me.*

1 Thessalonians 4:9 MKJV *But regarding brotherly love, you do not need that I write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.*

1 John 2:20 MKJV *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.*

1 John 2:27 MKJV *But the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true and no lie, and as He has taught you, abide in Him.*

God Personally Teaches Us How To Walk By Faith

Toward the end of the last study we saw that God is involved in teaching His saints how to live the Christian life. This teaching is an inner work of the Holy Spirit:

1 John 2:27 MKJV *But the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you*

concerning all things, and is true and no lie, and as He has taught you, abide in Him.

This teaching ministry of the Holy Ghost lies outside of the 'merely human' realm:

Matthew 16:15-17 MKJV *He said to them, But who do you say I am? (16) And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. (17) Jesus answered and said to him, You are blessed, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but My Father in Heaven.*

1 Thessalonians 4:9 MKJV *But regarding brotherly love, you do not need that I write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.*

Jesus briefly describes this process of heavenly revelation in Matthew chapter 11

Matthew 11:25-27 MKJV *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the sophisticated and cunning, and revealed them to babes. (26) Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. (27) All things are delivered to Me by My Father. And no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son will reveal Him.*

Jesus tells us that God has structured spiritual knowledge so that certain truths are 'hidden' from natural human reasoning (the sophisticated and the cunning) and yet are revealed to the open, innocent mind ('babe') that truly seeks after God.

Jesus also claims to be the gatekeeper of all spiritual knowledge: *Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son will reveal Him.*

We cannot 'figure God out' as a result of our own independent thinking (indeed that is often how cults start). Rather we are dependent on Jesus Christ to reveal the Father to us. This infuriates those who think they understand - but who are blind to real spiritual truth:

Matthew 15:12-14 MKJV *Then His disciples came and said to Him, Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying? (13) But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. (14) Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*

Many of the religious experts of Christ's day – the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and chief priests, missed the point. They did not follow Christ. Instead they just defended their own knowledge and their own religious system.

1 Corinthians 2:7-8 MKJV *(7) But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, which God has hidden, predetermining it before the world for our glory; (8) which*

none of the rulers of this world knew (for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory).

God's teaching ministry involves the Holy Spirit and may even bypass the senses and the intellect:

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 MKJV *(9) But as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard," nor has it entered into the heart of man, "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (10) But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

Continuing in 1 Corinthians we find that this process involves communication directly from God's Spirit to us:

1 Corinthians 2:11-12 MKJV *(11) For who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of man within him? So also no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (12) But we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.*

The Spirit of God educates us so that we 'might know the things that are freely given to us by God'. So we see that the Holy Spirit shows us our blessedness! The Holy Spirit is within us to tell us all the wonderful things that God has done for us!

Ephesians 1:3 MKJV *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ;*

This internal teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is integral to being a true New Covenant Christian, a follower of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit:

Hebrews 8:10-12 HCSB ... *"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the Lord: "I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they will be My people. (11) And each person will not teach his fellow citizen, and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. (12) For I will be merciful to their wrongdoing, and I will never again remember their sins."*

In stark contrast the Pharisees knew their Scriptures but they did not personally listen to God. Jesus states this very powerfully in John chapter 8:

John 8:42-47 MKJV *Jesus said to them, If God were your father, you would love Me, for I went forth and came from God; for I did not come of Myself, but He sent Me. (43) Why do you not know My speech? Because you cannot hear My Word. (44) You are of the Devil as father, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not abide in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar and the*

father of it. (45) And because I tell you the truth, you do not believe Me. (46) Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe Me? (47) He who is of God hears God's Words. Therefore you do not hear them because you are not of God.

Jesus finishes this paragraph with "He who is of God hears God's Words. Therefore you do not hear them because you are not of God". In verse 43 Jesus tells them they "cannot" hear his words. And in verse 44 Jesus tells the Pharisees that they are children of the Devil – because they listen to the murderous lusts of Satan more than the truth of God!

So we see that while the Pharisees were bible-believers they were not God-followers or children of God. In fact they were children of the Devil with murderous instincts in their hearts – which is why they crucified Christ. Paul was caught up in this same hateful spirit until his Damascus Road experience and later writes:

Romans 10:1-4 MKJV *Brothers, truly my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is for it to be saved. (2) For I bear record to them that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. (3) For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes.*

So we can see that bible-knowledge and zeal for God are insufficient for salvation. Many people caught up in cults and false religions have Scripture knowledge and zeal for God yet there is frequently a deep self-righteous obstinacy that blocks them from entering the Kingdom of God.

There must also be humble submission to God, connection to God and acceptance of the righteousness that is by faith (not works). There has to be a personal opening of the spirit and of the conscience to Jesus Christ. There needs to be a new creation, an inner work that writes the law of God, not just in a book, but deep in the human heart and mind so that the true Christian hears God's Words and is 'taught of God'.

Returning to 1 Corinthians chapter 2:

1 Corinthians 2:13-16 MKJV *(13) These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged by no one. (16) For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

The natural man cannot receive spiritual things but the spiritual man can receive knowledge from God. Thus Christianity is not a philosophy – a human system of logic that can be understood with a sufficiently intelligent natural mind. Nor is

Christianity a religious system of commentary and counter-commentary. Christianity is a living faith where we exercise personal trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and He in turn teaches us, day by day, to follow Him, through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

We all start in such different places that no single philosophical or theological system can bring us all to maturity in Christ. We need a personal coach every step of the way and that Coach is the Holy Spirit of God.

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