

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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"We Walk By Faith"

"Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord - for we walk by faith, not by sight"; (2 Cor. 5:6-7).

The Bible often uses "walk" as a metaphor for one's manner of conduct. Life is a journey; we are merely "sojourners and pilgrims" here. An old hymn says, "this world is not my home; I'm just a passing through..." In the body we are "absent from the Lord," but like Paul, we "walk by faith..." and "make it our aim to always be well-pleasing" to God (2 Cor. 5:2-9). Our choices are made with respect to things, which are unseen, rather than to those which are seen (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Although we cannot see God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Heaven with our eyes, we have complete confidence that they are real, and we act accordingly.

Whether we see or do not see does not alter their nature or importance, nor does it make it improper to act with reference to them.

Faith enables us to see when the eye cannot. It makes easy the most self-sacrificial service required of us (cf. Abraham, Gen. 22). It enables us to endure sore trials without murmuring. When dangers arise, it lights our path and gives us courage. It enables us to overcome doubt and temptations for we believe that "Faith is the victory that overcomes the world!"

We do not "walk by sight." One walks by sight when he is motivated only by the approval of other people. He walks by sight when he makes mammon his god...when he lives for getting and hoarding, or spending and squandering...when he estimates worth by wealth, or property. A man walks by sight when he cannot control his appetite or passion; when he cannot put aside things "good for food and pleasant to the eyes" for the sake of tomorrow's sickness, or a life of disgrace; when he finds himself again and again yielding to the same temptation from which he has suffered. Weakly lives and miserably dies the one who is a slave of what his better nature condemns and despises, but to which his fleshly appetite, long made a tyrant by yielding to it, ties and binds him.

- James E. Cooper

The Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation, as all New Testament books, was written for churches in the first century to describe and deal with the problems they faced. Revelation differs in that it is written in visions and symbols, but the message was still a contemporary one.

The writer, John, tells us, for example, that the events described in the book were "shortly to come to pass" and that the "time is at hand." He makes this point to his readers at the beginning (1:1, 3) and at the end of the book (22:6, 10).

The apostle then addresses the book and its message to "seven churches that are of Asia" (1:4). The Spirit told him: "What thou seest, write in a book and send it to the seven churches: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea" (1:11).

After penning a letter to each of the seven churches, he begins in visions and pictorial language to write about how these churches were suffering persecution, being imprisoned, and even put to death "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." In the fifth seal he describes the blood of these martyred brethren, which was under the altar of sacrifice crying out to God to avenge their cause with wrath against their adversary (1:9; 6:9-11).

He describes their enemy as a beast come out of the sea who had received his power and authority from Satan. This enemy is helped by a

beast coming up out of the earth - a beast with horns of a lamb but the voice of the dragon. These represent an evil power in the first century that was persecuting and putting to death all who would not receive its mark and bow before it (Chapter 13).

Some would identify this as the persecuting power of the Jews and others say it is the evil opposition of Rome. Regardless of its identity, it was a wicked enemy that the churches of the first century faced. The book ends with the defeat of this adversary and the victory of the martyred saints who reign with Christ (Chapters 19-20).

The point of the book is clear: God's faithful children will find victory in Jesus - even if they die for their faith at the hands of ungodly men who serve Satan in an effort to destroy the church of the Lord.

The message of the book is likewise simple: the glorified Jesus, pictured among the seven lampstands, declares to the saints in tribulation, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades" (1:17-18). Jesus suffered and died but was victorious over death, and has the keys of victory for those in him.

Revelation does not describe modern nations and events, but struggles brethren of the first century endured and overcame through Christ.

- L. A. Stauffer

Too Late

Are you ever late? Late completing assignments at school or work? Late getting to work, appointments, school or church? Are you ever too late? I've known people who got the time for church services wrong and drove up in the parking lot just as church members were coming out the door. I've also known people to show up for a dinner appointment just as everyone else was finishing dessert! Now that is too late!

What makes us late? Procrastination. Laziness. Failing to recognize and value opportunities. Poor scheduling. Not allowing for emergencies or unexpected circumstances. These are a few of the reasons that people are late for things every day. These same factors will cause some people to be too late when it comes to obeying the gospel.

In Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus tells a parable about ten virgins who were to participate in a wedding feast. They all waited for the appearance of the bridegroom, but the five "foolish virgins" had taken no oil for their lamps. Why not? Procrastination! Laziness! Poor planning! They failed to prepare properly. Then, when the bridegroom was delayed (an unexpected circumstance), the foolish virgins had to go out to buy oil. He came while they were out (another unexpected occurrence), and when they returned, they were too late. They were not allowed entrance to the wedding. Imagine their frustration, sorrow and humiliation.

Another Bible example of folks who were too late is found in Luke 19:41-44. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, "He saw the city and wept over it." He foresaw the day when all that were within would be destroyed and the city would be leveled to the ground, without one stone left on top of another. Why would this happen to Jerusalem and its people? Jesus tells them that it is "because you did not know the time of your visitation." They missed their chance.

On the judgment day, it will be too late to obey the gospel. Those who squandered opportunities to heed and obey in this life will feel a lot like the five virgins who were shut out of the wedding feast - very foolish indeed. They will realize that, like the people of Jerusalem, they missed their chance. And like the children of Israel of old who disobeyed God, they will cry out in despair "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" (Jeremiah 8:20)

Don't allow that sickening feeling of despair and loss to be yours for all eternity. Life is too short, eternity is too long, and the risk is too great to wait too late to make your life right with God.

- Steve Klein

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- Sinners find it hard to believe in the resurrection when Christians are not living the resurrected life.

- > If you have a good heart, you will not have a bad mouth (Luke 6:45).

- > When the books are opened on the Day of Judgment, every man's life will be an open book.

- > Let your speech be better than silence, or be silent.

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Kingdom of Heaven!"*
(text: Matt. 13:10-12, 17); Sunday evening: Bi-monthly singing!