

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

If You Go To Hell

Going to hell? — not far fetched! Many are headed to hell; Ask Jesus! "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Mt. 7:13-14). Likely, many reading this — some sitting on church pews saying "amen" are going to hell! Even you! Hell is real; the threat is not imaginary.

But if you go to hell, it is no accident. It is your choice. I know you do not want hell's miseries; you do not deliberately pick that "lake that burns with fire and brimstone." Yet, when you choose the road, you also — necessarily include its destination. Choose booze — choose fornication — choose the "pleasures of this world" — choose to "just live as you please," and you choose hell! — at the end of that road . . . Your choice! — plain and simple! In the words of Joshua, "Choose for yourselves this day...."

If you go to hell, it will be in spite of God. Do not blame God!! “The Lord is ...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). God never forces you, overwhelms you, or makes you a robot. Yet He “works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12). He tries to get you to do right — to listen — to choose the road to heaven. To go to hell, you must reject all God’s efforts to the contrary.

If you go to hell, it will be in spite of God’s love for you. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-18). To go to hell you have to refuse such love; you must “despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering.” Otherwise, the “goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Rom. 2:4) — and eventually to heaven.

If you go to hell, it will be in spite of Jesus. You, as a sinner, have no sacrifice for sin. There is nothing you can do to free yourself from the guilt and consequence of your sin. It is a hopeless case! Hell looms on the horizon inescapably. Until — until Jesus enters the picture! He volunteers to be that sacrifice for sins. He volunteers to accept your punishment deserved as a sinner. For you, Jesus was scourged as a criminal. For you, Jesus died on the cross as a criminal. For you, his blood was poured out as a sin sacrifice. He changed your prospects from hopeless despair —from inevitable hell to an open door into God’s favor, blessings, and heaven. To go to hell, you have to ignore such a sacrifice on your behalf.

If you go to hell, it will be in spite of Christians. They are the ones who pester you trying to persuade you to change your life and turn to God. They just will not leave you alone to go quietly off to hell. To go to hell you have to turn a deaf ear to all their warnings and all their appeals. Christians are the ones who will not give up on you even when you try and fail miserably. They are there to pick you up and encourage you to try again. To go to hell you have to ignore people who care that much about

you — or you may have to get angry with them and then refuse their help and concern.

Christians are the ones who pray for you — even when you quit praying. They pray about your difficulties and your trials in life. They pray about your spiritual weaknesses and your sins. To go to hell, you must fight their prayers to God for you.

Christians are the ones who know what you can be — a son of God reflecting His image. They are not satisfied for you to fail to become all that God can make of you. Christians are patient because they were once where you are — and still have problems with spiritual weaknesses. To go to hell, you will have to close the door on these people who love you — who love your soul.

Are you not finding it hard to keep on going to hell with such obstacles in your way? In Jesus' words to Saul, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Acts 9:5). Why not just quit trying to go to hell — quit lashing out against those who try to help you — quit turning your back on God who wants to forgive you? Serving God and going to heaven is a tremendous alternative!

- Joe Fitch

He Never Had Such Good Friends

A man – a brother in Christ – has slipped away and fallen seriously into sin. Though he was once growing and active in the Lord's service, now he is distant, unconcerned, and clearly pursuing a different agenda.

His brethren see his condition. They are aware of the spiritual danger he is in. All signs point to the fact that he is heading down a path to eternal ruin.

Out of love for his soul, and with knowledge of their own duty in such matters (Galatians 6:1, 2) his brothers and sisters in Christ reach out to this erring one. They are crushed to think that one who once worked hand-in-hand with them in the Lord's service could now be so alienated from them and God. They humbly try to encourage him, reminding him of things he already knows – but has chosen to ignore. They plead with him to “repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22).

And, what is the response from this brother in desperate need of rescue? Too often the response is one of bitter animosity and resentment. Instead of looking inwardly and humbly admitting his sins, he lashes out at those who are trying to help him. He has harsh words of criticism and disdain for them. His effort is to deflect attention away from his own sins, and place focus on what he perceives as the failings of others.

What this man fails to realize is that he never had such good friends as these fellow Christians who are committed to help him and restore him to a right relationship with God. It would have been easier – much easier – to look the other way and ignore the situation all together. Let him go – clear his name off the ‘church roll’ – and proceed as though nothing significant had happen. But, love will not allow this. He is a brother – a friend – and they cannot, will not, let him go without a fight for his soul. Truly, he never had such friends as these.

- Greg Gwin

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: “*Would-Be Disciples!*” (text: Luke 9:57-62); Sunday evening: “*The Spirit Is Willing, But The Flesh Is Weak!*” (text: Matt. 26:36-41).