

## **We Walk By Faith, Not By Sight**

2 Corinthians 5:6-10, Trinity Sunday XXV

November 9, 2008

Beloved of the Lord..... The Bible says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he that done, whether it be good or bad." Many use this passage as a justification for salvation by works. They reason that their "good" works will pass the scrutiny, and judgment of God. But on the Day of Judgment, those who trust in their works will hear God say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Those who trust in their works will be damned, because they had no faith in Christ, and hence were not able to do one single good work at all. The Bible says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Unbelief is the sin of all sins, in that it rejects the very Son of God who only came to save. He that believeth not shall be damned. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Thanks be to God, that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." This means God cannot, nor will not condemn those who believe in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God cannot condemn those He has already declared righteous and forgiven. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Judgment Day for the believer is a glorious day not to be feared. Yet because each Christian still retains the sinful flesh, we need to regularly hear that God as a Judge is coming, so that repent of our dead works, and cling only to Christ by faith. Indeed God has already judged and declared each believer righteous through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. We are justified and declared righteous, because God through the cross has taken all our sins and cast them into the depths of the sea. God through Christ has blotted out with His own blood, our sins our trespasses that were written on the board. We are justified because "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Thanks be to God, those who are sorry in their heart for their sins, and place their faith in Jesus need not fear Judgment Day. Luther said, "The judgment is abolished; it concern the believer as little as it does the angels. ....all believers pass from this life into heaven without any judgment, and will even be the judge of others."

Indeed the Bible teaches that God has created us so that we can live in our heavenly home above. "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God." This is not the creation of man at the beginning of the world. Rather God creates us, He gives us life, when His Spirit through the Gospel works faith into our heart. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ, namely His face is always shining upon us and is gracious unto us. Jesus looked with mercy and compassion upon a sinful race, and born a Babe in Bethlehem. When God converts or turns us, He creates a new man within. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away behold all things become new."

Not only has He created us by faith, but He gives us the "earnest of the Spirit", which is the testimony of the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit of God Himself, the third person of the Trinity, which testifies to our hearts that we are the sons of God. Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The Spirit through the Word, testifies to our own faith. If we want to know if we are truly a believer, the Holy Spirit that lives within will testify "Yes indeed you are, for you know and believe that Jesus is your Savior from sin, and heaven is your home." We don't hear a voice of course, nor do we physically feel God's presence, nevertheless the Holy Ghost inside us testifies that we believe. Romans 15:13 says, "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost!" Though our faith and hope is weak at times, the Holy Ghost uses the preaching of the Gospel, and the Sacraments to strengthen and encourage us.

"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: For we walk by faith, not by sight." Confidence and faith are opposite to fear. When our faith looks to Christ there is confidence, when we look by sight elsewhere, there is fear and doubt. For example, we may look by sight at our nation, our economy, our president, and we become fearful and afraid. We may walk by sight and look at our paycheck and then our bills, and we become fearful and afraid. We may look at our health, our old age, the future of our children, and we become fearful. It is even worse when we look at our sins. Day to day the new and old man struggle within. Moreover when we look within there is nothing encouraging. We fear the power and strength of our own flesh. We fear death.

We fear the world and persecution. We fear the devil. We fear falling away. Like Peter when we see the storms and troubles of life, though we are walking in faith daily toward Jesus, we sink into the waves of hopelessness and despair. That is what happens when we walk by sight and not by faith.

But in our lesson today Jesus tells us, "Walk by faith, not by sight." Everything becomes clear to us, when Jesus Himself looks upon us and says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Jesus didn't forsake Peter, though Peter in weakness sank into the waves. Jesus didn't forsake Peter, when Peter in a moment of weakness became fearful crying out, "Lord save me". Immediately without hesitation Jesus grabbed Peter by the arm and said, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith." There is comfort for us in these words, for because of our flesh we are fearful too. While it is indeed a sin to doubt and be fearful, and we should repent of the times we have doubted God's goodness toward us, nevertheless Jesus freely saves and delivers us as He did Peter, but He does ask the question, "Why were you afraid?"

The point is that when Jesus is with us, there is never any reason to be afraid. "Fear not, only believe" Jesus says. If we are worried about our income, Jesus says, "I am the Bread of Life." If we are fearful that God will depart from us because our sins are great, Jesus says, "I will never leave thee", and "Lo I am with you always." If before our eyes there is a list of our sins on a chalkboard, Jesus says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions." If we feel that things in life are so bad, that surely God must have withdrawn His mercy from us, God's Word promises us "as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." God does not cast away the weak in faith, instead He strengthens the weak with His grace so that they become strong enough to weather even greater storms.

We walk by faith and not by sight, when firmly know and are assured of God's everlasting love which IS upon us. The more certain we become of His grace and mercy the better we are able not to get worked up about the cares and troubles of this world. Remember that when Martha was too busy preparing a meal to stop and listen to Jesus, Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." God doesn't want us to worry about the little things. God doesn't want us to worry about the big things. He has taken care of the biggest problem of all, your sin.

Jesus is the one thing needful, and if you have Him by faith, you "have chosen that good part which shall not be taken away."

Look then again at your life, take another look at the storm which surrounds you, if you will. Can it harm you, if Christ is your Savior and Redeemer? Can the damage of the storm upon the earthly tent of your body be all that great if Jesus is the lover of your soul? Can the devil himself have any power over you, if your confidence and faith is in the very Son of God who laid down His life for your own? Can the devil get you to move or budge even one inch if your faith is built upon the solid Rock of Christ? Since Jesus conquered death and rose again from the dead the third day ascending up into heaven, won't you rise from the dead also? Won't you ascend up into heaven? If you are tired of your sinful life, if you are tired of this sinful world, will you live here forever? Does your body of sin live forever, or did Jesus with His body deliver your body from sin? Isn't both your body and soul precious to Him? Wasn't the body of Christ glorified? Won't your own body be glorified also?

When we take our eyes off all the cares and worries of this world, and firmly set our sights upon Jesus who looks only with favor upon us, there is calm and gentle peace in the soul. Our soul gives a big sigh and says, "He loves me, He gave His life for me, I will not be afraid but only believe." Suddenly our only desire is to be present with the Lord. When we think by faith we can only think of Christ. We are willing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

"Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." We don't labor to gain His acceptance, but we labor because He has accepted us into His grace. We love Him because He first loved us. We love Him because of all He has done and is still doing for our salvation. Therefore let us be good and obedient children. Let us walk in love, and so fulfill God's command. Let us love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves. Though we are now absent from the Lord, He is never absent from us. We have the earnest testimony of the Spirit, that we are beloved children of our Savior. And so "we walk by faith, and not by sight." Don't take your eyes off your heavenly goal dear Christian. God will help you both to will and to do His good pleasure. Amen.

Pastor Tobin Pederson, 7685 Maple Hill Rd.  
Corcoran, MN, 55340, 763-494-5164,  
solidegloria96@comcast.net srmn0717

