

We Walk By Faith

“Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith not by sight); we are of good courage, I say, and are willing to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Wherefore we also make it our aim, whether at home or absent; to be well-pleasing unto him” (2 Cor. 5:6-9).

In the passage just prior to these words Paul had written that God had wrought for us the assurance that He would clothe our mortal frame with an immortal one and gave us the earnest of the Spirit as His assurance of this. Paul, living with the expectation of a future resurrection and immortal body, frequently wrote of this hope in his various epistles to brethren and/or churches. This hope of a future resurrection was the foundation for his seeing the unseen and having strength to enable him to, in even the most severest of persecutions, regard those afflictions as “light” (2 Cor. 4:17).

Confidence in God’s word had a constant effect upon the apostle. It empowered him with courage because he knew that so long as he was in the body, he was absent from the Lord. In his mind he was a pilgrim, a sojourner and he believed that to be at home with the Lord (which necessitated that he depart from the body) to be infinitely better than to be at home in the body for he wrote the Philippians that “I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for it is very far better” (Phi. 1:23). He could with courage be optimistic about the future — it would be better — far better — than any joy he might experience in earthly life.

Paul did not know what that immortal body might be; he knew simply that God had fitted all creatures with a suitable body for the state in which they lived and he was confident that God would fit a body (home) for his soul for that state of eternity. John expressed the same expectation: “Beloved, it had not yet been manifested what we shall be. We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him, even as he is” (1 Jn. 3:2). And, such hope on John’s part make him “echo” Paul’s words: “And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 Jn. 3:3).

So “we walk by faith and not by sight.” Paul’s faith by which he walked (lived) was the consequences of God’s word: “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Jesus’ promise “I go to prepare a place for you” (Jn. 14:2) had been given to His original twelve apostles but was not intended exclusively for them. Paul had such a hope and which hope he assured us was for all them “who love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). Peter told us that God hath granted unto us his “precious and exceeding great promises” and that through them we can escape the corruption which is in the world by lust (2 Pet. 1:4).

The good courage of Paul, the result of his unswerving faith, lay in the fidelity and trustworthiness of God’s word. “Let God be true, and every man a liar” the Roman writer wrote (Rom. 3:4). God, who cannot lie, promised eternal life to His faithful before time eternal (Titus 1:2). The Hebrew writer tells us that Abraham’s faith was based upon two

immutable things: God's promise and God's oath (Heb. 6:13-14). Our faith rests upon the same two things.

Because of his confidence in God's promise and his awareness that sharing in them was conditional upon his own steadfastness, Paul made it his aim "to be well-pleasing to God." Even though he felt that his departure would mean that he would be with Christ (Phil. 1:23), he wrote to the same church the following words: "Not that I have already obtained or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold, but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14). He wrote the Corinthians, "I buffet my body and bring it into bondage: lest by any means after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (1 Cor. 9:27).

We must imitate Paul if we would be a co-heir with him of eternal life. We must be of good courage, knowing, as he knew, that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which be revealed to usward" (Rom. 8:18). We must also reckon that we have not yet laid hold on that prize and so, with singleness of purpose, we press on toward it!

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