

We Walk By Faith

Non-Series 2 Corinthians

By Richard Caldwell Jr.

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: 2 Corinthians 5:7

Preached on: Wednesday, September 24, 2014

Founders Baptist Church

24724 Aldine Westfield

Spring TX 77373

Website: www.foundersbaptist.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/smbconline

2 Corinthians 5 is where we're going to be this evening in our study of God's word. 2 Corinthians, the fifth chapter. I want us to read verses 6-8. We're going to set our focus tonight on verse 7, but we begin reading with verse 6.

6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Verse 7 says, "for we walk by faith, not by sight."

Let's ask our God's blessing on his word tonight in preaching.

Our Father in heaven, we have joy in our hearts as we meet together this evening. It's good to be with your people. It's good to sing your praises. It's good to express our thanks and to express our joy, a joy that we have come to know in your Son. Tonight, Lord, we come to hear from you. You have spoken. What we have just read is your word and we ask that you would strengthen us to be able to receive, be able to understand and change our hearts with it, Lord, change our lives with what we will hear tonight. Show yourself mighty in this next hour. Show yourself mighty in this place among this people and do a work in lives that could only be explained by you the living God. We ask for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

There are no throwaway lines in Scripture. Every word of God is tested. Every word of God is refined, which is to say that it is pure. Every word of God represents unimaginable treasure. Have you ever just stopped and let it sink in that we have God's words? That's what you're holding tonight in your hands? The words of God? I promise you that if you were somehow digging around in your backyard tomorrow and you dug up something that George Washington had written, you would probably value that. You would say, "My goodness, this is something George Washington wrote." What you have in your hands tonight is God-breathed. This is the word of our Creator. Just let that sink in. Proverbs 30:5 says, "Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him." Don't you love that connection? Every word of God proves true, or it has

been refined or it has been tested. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. The Holy Spirit is saying to us, "You're always safe to believe the word of God." Those who take refuge in God, who believe his word. Those people are safe.

There is nothing that comes from the mouth of God that isn't infinitely weighty, perfectly true, absolutely binding, completely trustworthy and profoundly important. There are no throwaway lines in Scripture. That's why I'm fascinated when I come to profound statements that are parenthetical statements in Scripture. Here is the author, here is the writer, going about his business and he's making a case; he's presenting an argument; he's taking us through a way of thinking and then as if he sort of just throws it in, he says to us in effect, "Here's a thought. Here's an idea. Here's a principle for living," and he just sort of inserts it right in the middle of his argument. It's fascinating to me. That's what we have in verse 7, it's a parenthetical thought. Verse 6, "we're always of good courage." Verse 8, "Yes, we are of good courage." He's right in the middle of that thing and then he says in verse 7, "for we walk by faith, not by sight."

It's important that we understand that these statements are not parenthetical because they are of lesser importance. Oftentimes, they are parenthetical because they were so well known. The principal being inserted is foundational in nature. It always has to do with what he's discussing. It's foundational in nature and probably something that he had talked about a lot to these people. Something he had taught them often and therefore he could just quickly remind them of it. It's as if he's saying, "We all remember this, don't we? You've all been taught this, haven't you? These things that we're talking about, don't they illustrate that truth, that principle, that we walk by faith not by sight?" And the subject matter that this statement belongs to, the subject matter goes all the way back to chapter 4, verse 1 and it's a precious subject. In verse 1 of chapter 4, look back there if you would, Paul writes, "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart." He says we do not lose heart. Why, Paul? Why do we not lose heart? Why do you not lose heart? He tells us in verses 1-6, it's because he's involved in a ministry of mercy. We ourselves are objects of the sovereign, saving mercy of God and now we're involved in Gospel ministry, we're involved in the administration of things that are all subject to the sovereign will of a merciful God. It's by God's mercy that we've received salvation and the ministry and it is by God's mercy that we see results in the ministry. So we don't become discouraged as we're preaching the word of God. Sometimes as we see people not responding in faith to what we preach, we don't become discouraged because we understand that all of these things are subject to the sovereign mercy of God.

Then in verse 7, he makes this statement, he says, we're still in chapter 4 now, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay." We have this treasure in jars of clay. Why did God do this, Paul? Well, you see, he uses frail men to show that the power belongs to God and not to us. That's what he explains in verses 7-15. In the servants of the word of God, you see weakness. In the results of the word of God, you see power. In the servants of the word of God, you see dying. But in the results of the word of God, you see people come to life. So as the sovereign mercy of God is at work in the preaching of the word of God, God has done it in such a way, he's used us in such a way that our weakness puts on display his power. That's why you don't lose heart.

Then you come down to verse 16 of chapter 4 and what does he say again? He says, "So we do not lose heart." Why, Paul, why do you not lose heart? Well because, you see, what's at work in the realm that you can see is not the end of the story. We don't lose heart because we understand something: there is a divinely ordained, paradoxical nature to the lives that we're living right now as believers in this age. Of course, this was true of the apostles as they administered the word of God but we're a living paradox, as it were. This is true with affliction, for example. Look at verse 16, "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." I mean, it looks like affliction right now. It is affliction but you can't see it, necessarily, but it's light and it's momentary. Where it's all headed is weighty and it can't even be compared to what we suffer.

Then he says in verse 18, "as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient," passing away, "but the things that are unseen are eternal." That's why you're not to lose heart because what you see is not the end. That's not just true of affliction, that's true with respect to our home where we're living now and where we're going to live forever. 2 Corinthians 5:1-5, "For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked." He goes on to describe this glorious promise that mortality will be swallowed up by immortality. God has even given us a pledge of this in verse 5, "He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee." So what does he say in verse 6? "So we are always of good courage." Do you see the connection? Chapter 4, verse 1, "we do not lose heart." Chapter 4, verse 16, "we do not lose heart." Chapter 5, verse 6, "so we are always of good courage," which is just another way of saying, "we don't lose heart." Chapter 5, verse 8 begins, "yes we are of good courage." That's the theme that runs through this whole section. We don't lose heart and right in the midst of it all, you find this profound parenthetical thought, "for we walk by faith, not by sight." That applies to the entire argument, doesn't it? That implies to everything that we've just seen in verses 1 through 18 of chapter 4 and in chapter 5 up to our verse and beyond our verse. What connects it all is that thought, "we don't walk by sight, we walk by faith."

So I want us to think about that tonight. I want to ask and I want to answer five questions about our statement in verse 7. The first one is this: what does it mean? What does he mean when he says "for we walk by faith, not by sight"? Let's begin with what's at the center of this statement, the words "we walk." We walk and he tells us how we walk and he tells us what doesn't explain our walk. But first we've got to understand what he means when he says "we walk." Who walks, Paul? Well, certainly he's including himself and all of the apostles in that statement but he's including his readers also because what he's expressing here is meant to apply to them as much as it applies to him. This is a statement about all believers. This is nothing less than the life of believing. We, believers, we walk by faith and not by sight. He's been writing earlier in chapter 4, he's been writing about his life and his ministry and his motives and he certainly wants the Corinthians to

recognize that and himself and the apostles, the true apostles, not these false teachers, he wants them to realize that this is the kind of approach you trust and this is the kind of life that you love and this is the kind of life that you're to mimic. So what he says of himself, that applies to all Christians.

Can I just pause and ask you: does this apply to you? Can you say tonight, "I walk by faith, not by sight"? I walk by faith, not by sight. Ultimately, this will characterize you if you're saved but as we'll talk about more in just a moment, this is something you have to choose every day. Hebrews 11:6 says this, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." He is, you see, he is and he rewards those who seek him. So when he says "we walk," who is the "we"? It's us. It's believers. What does it mean when he says "we walk"? Well, of course, he means that this is the way that we live. Walking simply gives us the picture of moving forward, taking steps, living our lives, making choices, making decisions. So as we're in the now and waiting for the not yet, he's saying, this is how we walk on.

I'm just going to sort of gather up for a moment what he's been saying in chapter 4 and in chapter 5. So as our outer man is wasting away, this is how we walk on. As our reputation on earth and our treatment on earth doesn't match God's valuation of us and his view of our service as the world mistreats us, this is how we walk on. As men are engaging in dishonest, underhanded practices with respect to God's word, chapter 4, verses 2-3, we are surrounded by false teachers and false approaches to ministry and we are committed in our own hearts and lives to just saying what God says, chapter 4, verse 13, this is how we walk on. As we're in the midst of affliction that doesn't feel light and it doesn't feel momentary, sometimes it feels like it's going to go on forever, this is how we walk on. As we contemplate earthly death and everlasting life, this is how we walk on. Paul is saying, this is how we live. This is how we live our lives as believers.

So how do we walk on? He says, "We walk by faith." If you read the whole section, he makes it very clear what he means when he talks about a life of faith. It is the life of believing God. It is the life of believing God's promises. It is the life of believing God's words. Do we believe God's words? It is a life of such complete faith in God's words that we would never tamper with his word. Do you see chapter 4, verse 2? "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word." You see, we just have one thing to do with it and that's to proclaim it. Next statement, "But by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." Or as he says it down in verse 13, "Since we have the same spirit of faith," here is a spirit of faith, "according to what has been written, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we also believe, and so we also speak." What God says, we believe. What God says, we say. What God says, we have confidence in. Next verse, verse 14, "knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence." We know this is true because, you see, this is what God has said. That's the life of faith. It's the life of believing God's words. It's the life of serving others by proclaiming Jesus, verse 5, "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord." It's the life of recognizing the sureness, the certainty of God's plans

and in rejoicing in his pledge. As we read a moment ago in verse 5, of chapter 5, "He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."

So Paul says. "This is how you walk as a believer. You walk by the words of God. You walk by the promise of God. You walk trusting in the character of the God who has taught you about himself in these words." You trust him. That's the life of the Christian. We walk by faith. Or you can state it negatively as he does in our verse, he says, "not by sight." Not by sight. This is the choice that is always before us. We can believe what God has said when it has not yet all come to pass or we can believe what we see at the moment. We can stake our lives, we can stake our life and our eternity on nothing but the words of God, the character of that God who has made himself known to us in those words, we can stake our lives on God and his word or we can walk, we can make decisions, we can make choices, we can make plans, based upon our own view of things. Based upon the information we receive from an unbelieving world. Based upon circumstances and situations that we face in our lives. That's the choice that's always before me. That's the choice that's always before you. Will I believe God's words and make my decisions based upon God's words, live my life based upon God's words or will I live in light of what I see right now? Will I live in light of the future, an eternal future, which is the perspective of Scripture, or will I live according to the moment which is the focus of this world? With a temporal focus? Without reference to eternity? What will I do?

You see, if we live by faith, it means that we don't live by sight. We read a moment ago in verse 18 of chapter 4, "as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient," passing away, folks. They are temporary. That's why he says of suffering, he calls it light and momentary as compared with the weighty eternity and the valuable eternity that we're heading toward. "For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." It's when my heart is assured about what God has promised though I can't see it. I'm convicted. I'm certain. I'm sure that what God says is true. That's faith. And I live my life according to that, according to what he says. Romans 8:24 puts it this way, "For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?" The very nature of our life right now in this era, in this age, is a life of pursuing what we've not yet seen; believing in what we've not yet seen; making decisions according to what we've not yet seen. It's a life of hope and that hope is God's promises, God's character, God's words.

So this is what he means when he says that we walk by faith and not by sight. We're living our lives every day, making decisions, walking forward, not based upon what is in the moment that we can see but based upon what God has said even if it hasn't come to pass yet. That's how we live. Second question: why is this difficult? Paul was acknowledging this is difficult by virtue of him taking so much time and so much space to describe why he's not discouraged. He says it again and again, doesn't he? We don't lose heart. We don't lose heart. We're of good courage. We're always of good courage.

Why are you saying this to us, Paul? Well obviously because he knows that from a human point of view there are times it would be easy to lose heart. He knows that believers are going to face the very real temptation in this world to be discouraged. He knows we're going to battle with that great battle called unbelief, right? What's the contrast between faith and what I can see? What's that about? It's about unbelief. It's about what God has said versus what I can see. Do you know the greatest battle you have every day in your life is a battle with unbelief? You may not think that but if you reflect on it, you'll see it. It's the greatest battle you have every day. Can I believe what God has said? Is it really true? Can I make decisions? I mean, take the simplest things: someone hurts you and you want to strike back. Well, why would you not strike back? Well, because of what God has said. Now, can I believe him about that? Or do I need to take vengeance into my own hands?

The reason why it can be so difficult is because these earthly things, these temporal things, that seem to be so opposite to what God has promised about our future, these things are real. I think that's very important to grasp. Christianity is very different from something like Eastern mysticism, isn't it? Very different from those demonically inspired philosophies that say, "Here's how you live your life. You live as though what you're facing right now isn't really there. You just sort of put your mind into a state where what you're dealing with isn't there. It's not real. You don't really have pain. You don't really have sickness. The world isn't really as it appears. You just live like it's not there." That's not Christianity. In fact, looking again at chapter 4:18, I think this is very important. He says, "as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are," not real. Is that what he says? He doesn't say that, does he? He says, "they are transient," that is, they are temporary. Oh, they are very real but they're temporary and "the things that are unseen," the things that God has told us about in his word, those things are real too. The difference is that they "are eternal." One lasts for a time, the other lasts forever.

So the message of Scripture is this: we are living in a world that bears all of the sad realities of the fall. I mean, it shows every day around us that the fall was a reality. Around us: the pain, the loss, the sadness, the sickness, the murder, the selfishness, the lying. All the things. The unfaithfulness that belongs to life in a fallen world. It is all very real. How did that all come into being? When man believed damning deceptive promises from Satan instead of relying on the words of God. Scripture tells us that these sad realities are going to exist for a time but if we stop believing the damning deceptive lies of Satan and we believe the promises of God in Christ and we put our faith in God's Son and then we follow the living God in Christ, our future, the eternal future will be as God tells us it will be. That's how you live right now. That's how you live in the moment. You live in the moment not for what you can see in the moment. You live in the moment in light of what God has promised you about the moment and about forever.

But it's hard because these things are real. We don't deny the realities. We face the realities. We face the realities with God's promises. When men don't respond with faith to the word we preach, that's what he's dealing with in the first part of chapter 4, that's real and that's hard but it's not the end. It's not the final word. When men persecute us, malign

us for our faith in Christ, that's real and that's hard but it's not the end. When the body is wasting away and we feel all the effects of death in this world, that's real and it's hard but it's not the end. Whatever it is that is battling you today, whatever it is that is challenging your trust in the Lord, whatever it is that is hard and painful in your life, I would never tell you it's not real and I would never tell you it's not hard. I would tell you to believe God right in the face of it. Trust him. Believe him. Obey him.

Third question: how is that possible? How is this life possible? To not fix see your vision on what you can see but to fix your vision, your spiritual vision on what you can't see. How is that life possible? It's possible because God has granted us faith. You see, God isn't calling for you to exercise something he didn't give to you. Faith, the result of regeneration, the result of rebirth, God has granted us life and light. Paul talks about that in this section. Look at chapter 4, verse 6, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give," you see, he gave us something, he gave us, "the light of the knowledge," he gave us a certain knowledge of his glory, "of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He granted us spiritual sight so that now what God is calling upon us to do is to exercise what we have. We now have the ability to believe him, don't we? We know that his word is true. We have been given this sight that sees that God is true and faithful and to be trusted and to be worshiped no matter what is going on in our lives. God has granted us that understanding and now what he's telling us is that this is how we are to walk. We're to walk with that vision. We're to walk with that understanding that he gave to us. Are you using the vision God gave you? Are you looking at things through the eyes of God because now in Jesus Christ you can and you know that you must. Are you doing that?

This leads to the fourth question and that is: when are you living this? He says, "we walk by faith, not by sight." When is that true in your life? When is that true in your life, that you're walking by faith and not by sight? I think this is extremely important. We who have been taught about the sovereignty of God, I think we're sometimes very comfortable using the language of sovereignty but we're not comfortable using the language of responsibility. I want to say to us tonight, dear ones, this will characterize the believer, this is a certainty in terms of being a pattern in the life of every saved person because God did grant sight. We do have new natures. We do have the indwelling Holy Spirit, verse 5. These things are true. So in a sense, this is a guaranteed pattern in our lives, nonetheless, listen, we must still choose it. We must choose to walk by faith and not by sight. There is the choice set before us every new day. Every new circumstance. Every new situation. Every new challenge. It's set right before us again every day, all the time. Will I choose faith or will I choose sight? Will I believe God and make my choices based upon what I know to be true from his word or will I listen to my own perspective or to the perspective of the world that is shouting its advice to me in the midst of my situation? In other words, what I'm saying to you is this, listen: you're not living this by simply knowing it and you're not living this when you simply repeat it. There are no magic phrases in the Christian life. There are no incantations where you can just say it and if we say it, it makes it so. No, this is something you have to choose and these are tough choices. You have to choose to walk by faith and not by sight. So there I am, I have the word of God on the one side and I have the world on the other side. Which one am I

going to choose? I have the testimony of my eyes on the one side, I have the testimony of Scripture on the other side. What will be the basis for my next choice? God's word or what I can see? You're living it when you are living it. If you ask when are we living this? You're living it when you're living it, not when you know about it and not when you talk about it but when you live it. We must choose this every day with every situation.

Which brings up my final question: what will that look like? What will that look like when we're walking by faith and not by sight? It looks like this whole section in the positive. In other words, it looks like not losing heart. Have you been discouraged? Have you been losing heart? Am I the only one in this room who ever deals with discouragement? Or do I have company? Do I have company tonight? So when we choose to walk by faith and not by sight, we don't lose heart because what we see is not the final thing, is it? What does it look like? It looks like understanding your role in God's merciful work. You see, we're ambassadors of Jesus Christ in this world. We are ministers of reconciliation, proclaimers of the good news of Jesus Christ and guess what? We're just clay jars. That's it. That's our role. If you wonder, verse 1, we don't lose heart, verse 16, we don't lose heart. Why verse 7, we have this treasure in jars of clay and then he goes on about God's power being put on display? Why does he say all of this? He goes on to say in verses 11, "For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you." Why do you include that, Paul? Well, because he says, "Look, you don't lose heart when you understand what your role is." We have the unimaginable privilege of simply being testifiers of the true God and his true Son and truth salvation. That's our role in this world. You see, what discourages us sometimes is that we just think too highly of ourselves and so we have all these grand visions of what we're going to be and what we're going to accomplish and all of this sort of thing. I mean, how our hearts would be calmed and how our hearts would be at peace if we embraced our role and that is, "I am a clay jar who exists to give glory to God and to tell somebody about him and about his Son. That's why I'm here. So Lord, if you mean to do that in my life through my suffering, I still can accomplish that. If you mean to do that in my life in times that are easier, well, that's still my purpose. That's what I exist for. That's what I'm here for."

Look at chapter 5, verse 9, after our verse. Verse 8, "Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him." I mean, if I'm here on earth or one day standing before Jesus, what is my goal? I just want to know that I pleased him. So I'm just a clay jar. I'm a frail person who has been saved by the grace of God, an object of God's mercy and I exist for this one reason: to please him. I can do that no matter what the circumstances are if I walk by faith and not by sight. It's going to look like faithfulness to the Gospel message, faithfulness to Gospel means. That's what he's saying in verses 2 and 3. We're not going to tamper with God's word. We're not going to engage in underhanded cunning sorts of things. We know how God saves sinners. He saves sinners, no compromise. That looks like faith and not sight. You know, when a man like Paul and to our own day, when you're carrying out ministry, maybe your ministry to your own family, when God's word and God's methods seem to be producing nothing, what

you going to believe? God's word or your eyes? You won't be faithful to the Gospel if you don't believe God's word. It's going to look like hope. A life lived in light of a future day. We're living our lives in light of eternity. It's going to look like confidence that can't be explained by circumstances. When is the last time that you manifested a holy confidence that could not be explained by your circumstances? I mean, everybody around you was saying, "I don't know. I don't know how you're doing so well." And the reason why you can say you are doing so well is because you are walking by faith and not by sight. "I believe God's vantage point on this situation." It's going to look like patience. It's going to look like persistence. Right? We don't lose heart. We're always of good courage. We're always of good courage, that's patience, that's persistence because we believe God.

I'll tell you something else and I hope this encourages you: it's going to look like someone who can be very honest and very real about their pain and yet at the same time, with sincerity and honesty, be very thankful and count yourself blessed. That's what you see in chapter 4, beginning in verse 8. Look there at verse 7. "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way." That's real, isn't it? We're afflicted. But do you know what? We're "not crushed. We are perplexed." When is the last time you admitted you were perplexed? "I don't understand this. This is hard for me to process." Here's the apostle saying, "I'm perplexed sometimes. But not driven to despair." Why? Because God's word is true. "Persecuted." That's a reality. We have brothers and sisters right now in Iraq and other places that are just being severely persecuted. But do you know what? They "are not forsaken." They are not forsaken and they won't get that by looking at circumstances. They won't know that by looking at circumstances. They're going to have to look to God's word. "Struck down." Have you ever been knocked down? Have you been knocked down lately? Guess what? "Not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our lives, in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." God puts us in circumstances to put himself on display. God puts us in circumstances to put himself on display. Our death means the manifestation of his life. That's a reason to live. That's a reason to rejoice. No matter what you're going through. So in the midst of this wonderful, precious section, you have this parenthetical thought. There are no throwaway lines in Scripture, "for we walk by faith, not by sight."

Let's pray

Father in heaven, we are so grateful that you have granted us faith in your Son. You have given us by your work in our souls, the eyes to see. The eyes to see the realities of this temporal age in their proper light and the eyes to see the everlasting future that we have not yet seen but to see those things by faith and to live in the light of them until we meet them face-to-face. So I pray for myself and for my brothers and sisters tonight, I pray that we would choose this life that will characterize us in the end, that we will choose this life of walking, walking by faith and not by sight. Strengthen my brethren to believe your word and wherever there is a decision to be made, wherever there is an action to be taken, wherever there is an attitude to be displayed, Lord, strengthen your people to

know that your word is true and to make their decisions, to speak their words, to display their attitudes, in light of what you say, not what they see. We can't do this, Lord, without you. We look to you and ask you for these things in the name of the one who has saved us, in the name of our Savior and King and Shepherd, Jesus. In his name. Amen.