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WALKING BY FAITH

For we walk by faith, not by sight – 2 Cor. 5:7

Bible Text: 1 Sam. 23: 1-13

1. You have just received a letter of appointment from the School Board and you are required to assume duty in two weeks' time. You have already gone to check out accommodation and you have signed a lease for one year. When you assume duty, you won't be paid anything until the end of the first month.

2. A child sees her mother returning from work. She runs gleefully to meet her and flings herself up into the air just before reaching Mummy.

*What do you think is the basis for the actions described above? Presumption? Positive thinking? Hope? No, it is much more! You have taken a one-year lease even when your first pay will not come until a month-and-half from now **because you are sure that you will be paid**. The little child is **sure** that Mummy won't let her fall down. That is what the Bible calls **faith [Heb. 11:1]**. It has to do with how much trust you can put in a person or system. With respect to God, faith has to do with how much trust we can place in Him to guide our steps in **everything** that we do. Without it, we **cannot** please Him [Heb. 11:6].*

In today's discussion, we shall first examine the concept of Christian faith and learn how we can apply it in our daily walk with God. David's response to the distress call from the inhabitants of Keilah under attack from the Philistines will be used as our case study.

1. What is faith?

In **Hebrews 11:1**, faith is defined as the **substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen**.

A good illustration of this definition can be found in **Genesis 45: 26-28**. Recall that his sons had much earlier told Jacob that wild animals had killed his favourite son, Joseph. They had shown him the bloodstained coat of many colours as evidence [**Gen. 37:31-35**]. So many years later, the same sons have now come back to tell him that Joseph is alive and that he is the Governor of Egypt.

Jacob's heart fainted for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had

sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived and [he] said, it is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die. [Gen. 45:26-28]

He had not seen Joseph but he believed that he was alive. He saw the *substance of things hoped for* [the wagons indicated hope out of the famine] and the *evidence of things not seen* [Joseph's words spoke the truth about him].

So, from the foregoing, we can define faith in God as follows: He shows/tells us in *advance* [by visions, dreams, prophecy, etc] what will happen later as a guide to what *action* or steps we must take now. The Chinese say that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. God tells you in advance the direction of your first step. So, when you take that first step, you are very sure that you are going in the right direction. During our 1 July 2000 session, we had treated the subject of "How do I know that it is God speaking to me?" You may want to refresh your memory with that.

2. Types of faith

Jesus talks of people with *no faith* [Mk 4:40], or *little faith* [Matt. 8: 26; Lk 12:28], or *great faith* [Matt. 8:26].

Faith may be a *gift of the Holy Spirit* [1 Cor. 12:9], just like prophecy, healing, wisdom, knowledge and understanding. It may also be a *fruit of the Holy Spirit* [Gal. 5:22], i.e., it can be cultivated. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith [Heb. 12:2]. Therefore, *by gift or by nurturing we all have faith. Making it work is the problem.*

3. Why do we all need faith?

- (a) Without it, we *cannot* please God [Heb. 11:6]
- (b) Faith in Jesus makes us sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ [Rom. 8: 15-16]
- (c) It is only by faith in God by Christ Jesus that we can be declared righteous [Rom. 4:3, 22-24]. God will never forsake the righteous nor his descendants [Ps. 37:25].
- (d) We walk by faith, not by sight [2 Cor. 5:7] for the things we can see are temporal while those we can't see are eternal [2 Cor. 4:18]

4. Faith in action: 1 Sam. 23: 1-13

- (a) Decision situation [v.1]

David received a distress call for help from the people of Keilah who had been attacked and robbed by the Philistines. Every day, we have a variety of decisions to make: who to marry, what future in current job, what business lines, what studies, to travel or not to travel, etc.

(b) Ask God first [v. 2]

David asked the Lord a very direct question: *Shall I go and smite these Philistines?* Apostle Paul has told us to be anxious for nothing but in *everything*, by prayer and supplication, we should make our request known to God [**Phil. 4:6**]. When Balak sent for Balaam to come and curse the Israelites, Balaam told the messengers to stay overnight and “*I will bring you word again as the Lord shall speak to me*” [**Num. 22:8**]. After the death of Saul, David did not go “stupidly” to claim the throne. Instead, he asked the Lord if he could go into any of the cities of Judah. God told him that he could. David followed up with another question, “*Which city?*” and God replied, “*Hebron*” [**2 Sam. 2:1**]. Paul came boldly to the scared passengers of a Rome-bound ship facing imminent shipwreck and told them to be of good cheer and that only the ship would be lost not the people. Where did that boldness come from? It was the angel of the Lord who had told him the *night before* [**Acts 27: 21-25**]! Therefore, ***our first port of call should always be God’s throne of grace for His guidance.***

Psalms 1, 37 and 119 are very helpful for meditation in times of decision when you are seeking God’s will and guidance.

(c) Doubts: by faith or by sight? [v.3]

When David told his 600 men what he had decided to do, they were afraid and reminded him of their own personal predicament and the enormous strength of the Philistines. David ‘s reasoning did not make sense to his fighting force!

Your doctor may be telling you that that cancer is incurable, that that womb is barren when God has told you to thank Him because you are already healed! When Elisha told the king that the national inflation rate was going to drop overnight by more than 80%, the king’s aide-de-corps (ADC) laughed, saying that it was impossible even if God were to open His windows in heaven [**2 Kgs 7:7-12**]. The prophet assured the skeptic that it would happen but he would not eat of it. In deed, the next day, the ADC was killed in the stampede as starving people broke through the gates to take free food from the abandoned Syrian camps [**2 Kgs 7:16-17**]. ***So, listen to God, not man. Walk by faith.***

(d) Clear doubts by going back to God [v. 4]

David went back to ask God in order to reassure himself that he indeed had His authority to go. God reassured him. In **Psalm 27:4**, David wrote: “*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple.*” On his deathbed, he said: “*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord*” [**2 Sam.**

23:2-3]. Therefore, we must form the habit of returning to God if doubts and fear challenge us. We need to reassure all those who may be affected by our choices that we are leading them in the right direction.

(e) Act on your faith [v.5]

David put his faith to work. He led his men and defeated the Philistines “with a great slaughter” and “brought away their cattle” while saving the inhabitants of Keilah, *just as the Lord had told him.*

With only 300 men as God had directed him, Gideon killed 120,000 Midianites. Based on his military expertise, he had planned to use 32,000 [**Judges 7: 1-22**]! It is not your concern *how* God will answer your prayer. Jehosaphat “fought” against the armies of three nations with praise singers [**2 Chron. 20: 15-23**]! Joshua pulled down the impregnable walls of Jericho by marching around them for seven days *in accordance* with the word of God [**Josh. 6: 2-3, 15-20**].

(f) Post-victory doubts: be on guard [vs 6-8]

Somebody sneaked out to tell Saul that David, his mortal enemy, was holed in at Keilah, a walled city. Immediately, Saul reinforced his troops to come and kill David.

The devil may want to downplay the victory that God has just won for you in your life. He will upgrade the spiritual attacks on you to scare you or make you wonder if your miracle wasn't mere luck or coincidence. After Elijah's spectacular victory over 450 prophets of Baal, he went into hiding in fear just because Jezebel, King Ahab's wife, had threatened to kill him [**1 Kgs 19:1-3**]!

(g) Avoid presumption: return to God continually [vs. 9-12]

An average modern believer would remain in Keilah, pleading the blood of Jesus and boasting that no weapon fashioned against him shall prosper, that he can lay claim to every piece of land that the sole of his feet has touched! But, that is not David. He went back to the Lord and asked Him two pointed questions [note the order][v.11]:

- i. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his (Saul's) hand?
- ii. Will Saul come down, as Thy servant hath heard?

God's answer was “He will come down.” Note, He answered the second, not the first question. Then, David put the first question again and He answered that they would give David up. What have we learnt from that?

If you examine the sequence of David's questions, it was not logical. If Saul does not come, the people of Keilah will not give David up. ***Therefore, when we are***

exercising faith, we should not forget to use the other faculties [2 Tim. 1:7] that God has given us! Use your knowledge of mathematics (binary operations) or operations management (decision tree analysis), logic and common sense to first lay out your options in a logically chronological order. Taking them in binary sets, pray and choose one as God directs. Then, step by step, little by little, you will get to where He wants you to be.

Let's illustrate with what David did after he had established his reign over the whole of Israel [2 Sam. 5: 17-25]. The Philistines had attacked Israel and David was planning how to fight back. He asked the Lord the following questions [*the unasked corollary question is added in each case*]:

- i. Shall I go up to the Philistines [or shall I wait for them in the city]?
- ii. Wilt Thou deliver them into mine hand [or will they defeat me]?

God answered David thus: (i) "Go up," (ii) "I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand." David did as he was commanded and won a major victory [vs. 20-21]. Then, the Philistines reinforced and attacked again [v. 22]. David asked the Lord if he should go up as he did last time, and the Lord answered: "Thou shalt not go up, but fetch a compass behind them and come upon them over against the mulberry trees." Read the rest of Verse 24 to see how detailed God could get with His loved ones. David again did as he was commanded and won another major victory. No wonder God loved David so much so that He made his kingdom last forever [2 Sam. 7:13]. That is what it means to walk by faith!

5. My personal experience

I have often been asked what personal experience has given me so much confidence on the subject. Well, my family's testimony, especially in the last few years (1996-date), will make a big book. For now, let me give you a *glimpse* of our earlier experiences:

(a) How did it all start?

My family and I go to a spiritual church (the Celestial Church of Christ). Since it is largely a deliverance ministry, they believe that whatever you do must be Spirit-led. During worship [Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays], prophets, visioners and others, as they are moved by the Holy Spirit, can call you out and give you messages. Also, each member of the congregation is encouraged through prayer, fasting and Bible knowledge to cultivate a direct personal relationship with Jesus and the Father. **Obedience and fear of the Lord** are the watchwords. In no time, you cultivate a spiritual consciousness that God has to direct every facet of your life. I believe that every congregation that is Spirit-led will also enjoy this kind of grace from God.

(b) Give specific examples

- When I newly joined my church, I had a fundamental disagreement with the Shepherd (head) of my Parish. I walked out and vowed not to return. That night, I got on my knees and asked the Lord what I should do, bearing in mind that He had specifically called me into that congregation to *ultimately* teach and preach. While sleeping that night, I dreamt of a big TV screen on which was flashing: **John 15:16!** At that time, my Bible knowledge was close to nothing. I woke up, opened the Bible and read: ***“You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you.”*** There and then, I confessed my sin of pride. The next day, I returned to the church and made up with my Shepherd.
- When I became the DG (Director-General, i.e., the CEO) of the Nigerian Employers’ Confederation [NECA] in April 1992, the first task I embarked upon was to source for funds to construct a multi-million dollar head office complex in Victoria Island, the prestigious business district of Lagos. The project had actually been abandoned because we could not finance it from internally generated funds and the Nigerian banking sector was ailing. I prayed and fasted, asking for the Lord’s guidance. One morning, one of my young officers, a Pentecostal, staggered into my office, sweating profusely. “Sir, have you seen him?” he asked. “Who?” was my prompt reply. “The Lord!” he began. Then, he went on to tell me how he was doing his morning devotional prayers when he suddenly went into a *trance*. He saw Jesus strolling along the corridor of our floor. When He came to the door leading to my office, He wrote a long list of instructions which the young man himself could not understand. After He had finished writing, He turned to the young man and asked him, “Where is your DG?” He replied that I was inside my room. He told the young officer, “In case I don’t see him, tell him that his prayer has been answered. I have shortened the time to build his house.” Then, Jesus went on to give specific details on how I should go about sourcing for the funds. *I followed the steps outlined by the Lord.* Lo and behold, the construction of a 12-storey building started in December 1993 and my organization did not contribute a dime!

6. Conclusion: Learning to walk by faith

(a) Get right with God

God does not spare those who doubt Him [Ps. 95:8-11; Rev. 21:8]. Therefore, the first thing to do is to ask for His forgiveness for all the mistakes you have made in the past. You may have shut Him out of your decision-making processes for too long only to come to Him when you run into trouble. Commit yourself anew to

doing only what He allows you to do. Thereafter, diligently seek Him in *all* you do and He will guide you [**Micah 7:18-19**].

(b) **Form the habit**

Moses **Ex. 4: 1-17**] and Gideon [**Judges 6:11-40**] were taught by God how to exercise faith. [Please, read up those references before proceeding any farther] Moses fled from his rod the first time it was turned into a snake. By the time he came before Pharaoh, he was no longer afraid [**Ex. 7:8-12**].

(c) **Water your faith with miracles/testimonies**

Read other people's testimonies of faith. For example, in *The Torn Veil*, Gulshan Esther, a Pakistani lady from a very famous and rich Moslem family that could trace its ancestry to Fatimah, the daughter of Mohammed, has told a very moving story of her conversion. She was crippled from childhood up to the age of nineteen. After medical help in both Pakistan and Britain failed, her father took her on pilgrimage to Mecca. Yet, she could not be healed. Her doting father died when she was seventeen and left her with enormous wealth. However, all she wanted was to walk. In desperation, she started to question God's credibility. That was when she heard a voice from within her, saying, "I will heal you." When she queried, the voice replied, "I am Jesus the son of Maryam [Mary]. Go and read about me in *Sura Maryam* in the Koran." For the next two years, she soaked herself with the story of Jesus as told in the Koran, the holy book of the Moslems. Thereafter, as she would be telling her prayer beads, she would say, "Jesus, son of Maryam, heal me." One day, Jesus came into her room with the 12 Apostles, healed her, taught her the Lord's prayer, introduced her to the nearest Christian centre to obtain a copy of the Bible, etc! Today, she is doing exploits for the Lord among the Asian Moslems in Britain.

In due season, you yourself will begin to have miracles to report that will strengthen other believers' faith

(d) **Faith comes by hearing the Word of God [Rom. 10:17]**

Study and meditate on the Word of God at all times [**Ps. 1:1-6; Joshua 1:8**]. How can you be so meticulous with the menu for your body which will one day die and yet there is none for your spirit which will last forever?

(e) **Faith without works is dead [Jam. 2:26]**

You must learn when to stop praying and start working. You don't pray for what you can do for yourself because God has already empowered you [**2 Tim. 1:7**]. When the Israelites were crying to God by the Red Sea, what did He ask Moses? "Why criest thou to Me?...Lift thou thy rod and stretch out thine hand over the sea and divide it..." [**Ex. 14:15-16**]. When Jesus came to Lazarus' grave, He

commanded the *people* to take away the stone (because they put it there, not God or Satan!) [**Jn 11:38-39**]. After raising him from the dead (which human beings could not do), He again asked the *people* to loose him and let him go! Jesus is standing at your door and knocking. If you *hear His voice and open the door* [these are human steps of cooperation], He will come in and dine with you [**Rev. 3:20**]. In deed, heaven helps those who help themselves.

(f) **God is very jealous!**

God does not like to share limelight with human beings or science. Therefore, if logic or science or chance can explain your testimony, it is not a miracle.

The three stages of a miracle are *difficult, impossible, done*. Human ingenuity can only take you through the first stage and no more! Therefore, learn to wait for God to unravel His promise to you. Abraham waited for 25 years to have the child of promise, Isaac [**Gen. 12:4 & Gen. 17:17**], Caleb for 45 years to get his land [**Joshua 14:6-14**]. Let the Spirit of God lead the way while you follow. You will never go wrong.

Walking by faith makes God very real in your daily living. My family and I have done it for the past 20 years with incredible results. It is painful but it is worth it. Therefore, I encourage you to try it and see the glory of God in your life. May your walk be fruitful, in Jesus' name.