

DO YOU HAVE THE EYE OF FAITH

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The minister who baptised me — in a conversation one day — said he always tried to speak on the subject of Faith at least once a year. (As it was so important).

I'm sure he was right ... and I haven't spoken about it for some time. So let me put that right! We'll take a closer look at Faith over the next few weeks.

FAITH IS A FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICE FOR ALL BELIEVERS.

Romans 1:16-17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, **for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes**, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

17 **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith**; as it is written, "**The just shall live by faith**."

Romans 10:17 (NIV 1984)

17 Consequently, **faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**

Romans 10:17 (NLT)

17 **So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.**

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

Faith is not incidental! Not a luxury — not just something that is "nice to have".

This phrase occurs 4 times.

Habakkuk 2:4

4 ... **the just shall live by his faith.**

Galatians 3:11

11 ... for “**the just shall live by faith.**”

Hebrews 10:36-39

36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

37 “For yet a little while,

And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

38 **Now the just shall live by faith;**

But if anyone draws back,

My soul has no pleasure in him.”

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who **believe to the saving of the soul.**

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

Just as we live by eating ... breathing ... walking.

It should be routine for us to live and walk by faith. Not something we try to “work up” once in a blue moon when we need a miracle.

I think that one of our problems here is we are so dependant on our 5 physical senses. Normally ... that’s good! If we lose a sense (eyesight ... hearing) ... to some extent ... we’re handicapped.

So ... thank God for our 5 senses ... but we should recognise that **there is more to “reality” than just what our physical senses reveal.**

There’s an entire spiritual realm! And it’s more real than what our senses tell us! If we only go by what we see ... or hear ... we’ll be limiting what God can do in our lives.

2 Kings 6:8-23

8 Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, “My camp will be in such and such a place.”

9 **And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there."**

10 **Then the king of Israel sent someone to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice.**

11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?"

12 And one of his servants said, "None, **my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.**"

13 So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him." And it was told him, saying, "Surely he is in Dothan."

14 Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

15 And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. **And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"**

16 So he answered, "**Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.**"

17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "**LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.**" Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. **And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.**

18 So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, "Strike this people, I pray, with blindness." And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

19 Now Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." But he led them to Samaria.

20 So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, "LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and there they were, inside Samaria!

21 Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?"

22 But he answered, "You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master."

23 Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel.

The spirit army of God was already there.

Elisha had “EYES TO SEE”. His servant didn’t!

THE SPIRIT REALM IS ABSOLUTELY REAL. We can’t normally see it ... though perhaps **with the EYE OF FAITH we should discern it?**

Here is a somewhat amusing example. 😊

Numbers 22:20-34

20 And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “**If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you—that you shall do.**”

21 So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

22 **Then God’s anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the LORD took His stand in the way as an adversary against him.** And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

23 **Now the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field.** So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road.

24 **Then the Angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side.**

25 **And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD,** she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam’s foot against the wall; so he struck her again.

26 **Then the Angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.**

27 **And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam;** so Balaam’s anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff.

28 **Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam,** “What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?”

29 And Balaam said to the donkey, “Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!”

30 So the donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?”

And he said, “No.”

31 **Then the LORD opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way** with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

32 **And the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me.**

33 **The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times.** If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live.”

34 **And Balaam said to the Angel of the LORD, “I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back.”**

THE DONKEY SAW INTO THE SPIRIT REALM!!

Balaam didn’t — till his eyes were opened. The warrior angel was there all of the time.

We might be curious about what’s around us right now — but it seems rare that God opens our eyes in this way.

God’s normal way is for us to learn to walk by the eye of faith. It requires participation on our part.

Hebrews 11:1

1 **Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**

Faith — the evidence of things not seen.

The evidence of reality. It doesn't say the evidence of things "that don't exist". They exist — they're real — but not accessible to the 5 senses.

Hebrews 11:1 (ISV)

1 **Now faith is the assurance that what we hope for will come about and the certainty that what we cannot see exists.**

FAITH ALLOWS US "TO SEE" THE INVISIBLE.

It helped Paul on many occasions ... to deal with what he could see.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. **Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.**

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

18 **while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, (subject to change) but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

Paul is not looking at the things which are seen — he's looking at the things that are not seen. **Looking with the eye of faith.**

He wasn't focusing on opposition ... persecution ... stonings ... stress — things he could see and feel!

He focused on the spirit realm — God's faithfulness ... promises ... support.

He didn't deny the evidence of his 5 physical senses — but he chose to focus elsewhere ... on the invisible and eternal.

2 Corinthians 5:7

7 **For we walk by faith, not by sight.** (IT IS A CHOICE!)

WALK BY FAITH — NOT BY SIGHT.

Sight is important — but can't be our only source of direction. Paul could easily have given up if he'd just looked at his surroundings!

How about you and me? Are we endlessly knocked to and fro by circumstances? **Or do we choose to LIVE BY FAITH?**

If we're "normal" — we'll tend to rely on the physical — the evidence of our eyes and our incredible logical skills and reasoning. That will often fly in the face of faith.

Romans 4:16-22

16 **Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham,** who is the father of us all

17 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—**God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;**

18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."

19 **And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead** (since he was about a hundred years old), **and the deadness of Sarah's womb.**

20 **He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,**

21 **and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.**

22 **And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."**

Abraham could have relied only on his physical senses. What his eyes told him. It would have been logical ...rational? He could have said:-

"I'm old. Sarah's old. She was barren even in her youth. You can't ignore the facts? Have to follow the science".

Thankfully — **he chose to BELIEVE THE WORD** ... rather than his 5 senses.

A good example for us?

John 20:19-20

19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, **Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.”**

20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. **Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.**

John 20:24-29

24 **Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.**

25 The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.”

So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!”

27 Then He said to Thomas, **“Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”**

28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, **“My Lord and my God!”**

29 Jesus said to him, **“Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

“UNLESS I SEE”

Thomas was a disciple! He had been taught by Jesus — and observed Him — for years!!

Yet — he still demanded physical evidence! He belonged to the crowd whose motto is “seeing is believing”.

Jesus reversed it: “BELIEVING IS SEEING”.

Faith doesn’t need physical evidence. Though for most of us it’s hard to ignore the evidence of our eyes and senses.

Matthew 14:22-33

22 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.

24 But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

25 **Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.**

26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear.

27 **But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”**

28 And Peter answered Him and said, “**Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.**”

29 **So He said, “Come.” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.**

30 But **when he saw that the wind was boisterous**, he was afraid; **and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!”**

31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, “**O you of little faith, why did you doubt?**”

32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

33 Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.”

Peter walked on water!! Which is “impossible”!

He “walked by faith” — but only for a few moments. **Then his physical senses took over — his rational mind — SAW THE WAVES ... FELT THE WIND AND SEA-SPRAY — and down he went!**

Would you blame Peter? Jesus did!!

What does Jesus make of us — if our lives are dominated by physical senses and we make no attempt to develop our faith?

Peter had the Word of Jesus directly — but we have it in writing.

Hebrews 11:5-6

5 **By faith Enoch** was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that **he pleased God.**

6 **But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**

WITHOUT FAITH — IT IS NOT PLEASING TO GOD.

Mark 5:25-34

25 **Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years,**
26 and had **suffered many things** from **many physicians.** She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.

27 **When she heard about Jesus,** she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment.

28 **For she said, “If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.”**

29 **Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.**

30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, **“Who touched My clothes?”**

31 But His disciples said to Him, **“You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’ ”**

32 And He looked around to see her who had done this thing.

33 **But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.**

34 And He said to her, “**Daughter, your faith has made you well.**
Go in peace, and **be healed of your affliction.**”

What if this woman had relied only on the physical evidence?

- Issue of blood
- 12 years
- Best doctors had failed
- Medical opinion — it’s incurable

She chose NOT TO FOCUS on her body — “already dead”. **She LOOKED TO JESUS AS THE HEALER.**

THEN SHE TOOK ACTION!!

She’d obviously heard what Jesus had been doing. Just as we’ve heard — and read.

But **she still took action. She expected to be healed — and she was!!**

It wasn’t all by Jesus’ choice. He didn’t know what had happened! **He said: “Your faith has made you well”!**

James 1:2-8

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

5 **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**

6 **But let him ask in faith, with no doubting**, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. (*Doubting = diakrino — wavering ... hesitating.*)

7 **For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;**

8 **he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**

ASK — BUT IN FAITH!

Try not to be double-minded. Sitting on the fence. Maybe God will — maybe He won’t.

You need to decide!

The key way to grow in faith?

Romans 10:17

17 So then **faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

Faith comes by hearing.

So ... if we want to improve our ability to see with the eye of faith — **we need to exert the effort to spend good quality time in reading and reflecting on God's Word and His faithfulness and goodness.**

And as we continue to read and hear The Word — our Faith will grow.