

Seeing and Walking by Faith

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 January 2022

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in 2 Corinthians. I'm not going to read it all, but the section verses 1 to 7 from chapter 5.

For we know that if the tent which 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 grow in longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. In verse 5 it says, He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us a spirit as a guarantee.

And we see in verse 7, For we walk by faith, not by sight. Now, as we know, death is an enemy that we don't really want to focus on because it is something which causes so much pain and disruption within our lives.

It brings in separation and tears, sorrow, and it changes, changes us forevermore. Our lives are never quite the same when those who are part and partial of our lives are taken away.

[1 : 29] Scripture talks of death as an enemy. It's termed the last enemy, and it sure is. But we have to remember that as God made this world, death was not part of the equation because when God made Adam and Eve, there was no sin, and as a result of no sin, there was no death.

It wasn't until they fell through their fall that death was brought in. And my word, how it changed this world. Now, the very interesting thing is that there are many people who, they don't go to church, many people who wouldn't even count themselves religious, that still kind of believe that there is an afterlife.

A lot of people will say, when you're dead, you're dead, that's it, no more. But so many people, you will find, I think that the majority of people, and even through their life at times, they will, by what they say or let it slip, that they do, although they have no idea what it is, they do believe that death is not the end.

You will often hear people, often, often, often hear people, who are not in any shape or form religious, and probably don't darken the church from one end of the year to the other.

When someone dies, they will often talk in terms of, oh, he or she is looking down on us. They have this concept of heaven and ongoing, even although they might say, no, that's the end, there's still this.

[3 : 15] And of course there is, because God has made us body, mind, and soul. And it's impossible, irrespective of how a person may try, and squash, and suppress, all that within them, it's impossible in a sense to do, because we have been created with never dying souls.

Now of course, it is only the Bible that tells us, really, a wee bit about what heaven is. A lot of people, they have this idea of heaven, but they have no knowledge or understanding in any shape or form of what heaven might be.

It's only the Bible that really tells us, and again, it's very limited. It's limited on two parts, because there is not an awful lot, there's quite a lot told us, but we don't have the capacity, we don't have the spiritual capacity or understanding to really lay hold upon what is being said to us.

And that is why it's just utter madness when you think of the number of people who want to remove the Bible, and they say, the Bible has no place in today's society.

You know, the Bible alone explains to us how everything has gone wrong. The Bible alone explains the root of evil. The Bible alone explains to us how this world came into being.

[4 : 44] The Bible alone tells us about life and about our moral responsibilities to one another and to God, and the Bible alone tells us what happens after death.

It's all there, and yet people say, don't want this book, don't want to know anything about it, close this book, remove it, out of society altogether. Can you think of anything madder?

But that's what so many people want. But the wonderful thing is that God has revealed all this to us, and it's all here in this word. Now, when we come to what Paul is saying here, we find that Paul is actually very positive about death.

And that is why the Christian is able to be positive about the future. Now, although there are many things that might fill us with apprehension and gloom when we look out into the future, but when we look way beyond, the Christian has something that others don't have.

I heard somebody the other morning, I think it was on Breakfast, in the news or on Breakfast TV, and they were talking, somebody was talking very much about this whole area of positive thinking.

[6 : 04] And he said it was very, very important to have something in the future to think on, something to give us hope, something that we can think about that will fill us with hope.

It's part of what helps us with regard to positive thinking. And I was thinking, well, the Christian does because we have a hope. That's quite extraordinary because we have a future that is guaranteed.

God tells us about it in his word. And that is why the Christian is able to look at life and even to look at approaching death in a different way.

Now, of course, we don't, we recoil from death. And there's none of us here are saying, oh, you know, I can't wait for death. We don't think like that. Bible tells us that we don't hate our own flesh.

But what we look forward to is what is beyond death. In fact, Paul himself is speaking about that. He's not looking forward to the actually being unclothed where he has to leave his body behind.

[7 : 09] But he's looking forward to what follows on afterwards. And so, Paul really begins this section in chapter 4 and he tells us there, so we do not lose heart.

Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. Isn't that wonderful? Here we are, we're living in this body that's been given to us.

Don't get another one here in this world. And this, we never get another one. It's the same body even in eternity. This body, as we get older, we age, our sight goes, our hearing goes, our strength goes.

Everything goes gradually bit by bit by bit. But you know, Paul says, there's something wonderful happening at the same time. Although this body is beginning to crumble and ache and all the rest, God's at work and he's actually renewing you inwardly so that every day you are becoming more and more.

You're resembling, though maybe you don't feel it, every day you're resembling Jesus a little more, a little more, a little more. That's exactly what Paul is telling us.

[8 : 25] For he says, our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. And so through all these afflictions and sorrows and pains and difficulties that are in your life, that is why Romans tells us that God is working.

He's working all these things for your good, for your eternal good. So Paul then tells us that this tent, that is our earthly house, when it's destroyed we have a building from God.

And our bodies are just like a tent. If you put up a tent, if you were camping or anything, you put up your tent and you leave it up for as long as you're there and then you take it down and away you go. Same are the houses that we live in nowadays.

These houses, and whether it's a new house or an older house, one day, like our bodies, that house will crumble and you just go around the island and you look at all the houses that have fallen into ruin and disrepair.

Once upon a time they were lovely houses. And it's the same with our bodies. Our bodies crumble, they give way. And so this is how Paul is resembling this.

[9 : 41] And he's saying then that although this body of ours, although it is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

So this is a wonderful thing of why we can look at death and look at what follows death positively. Because right now, if we just look at death on its own, it's an awful concept where we leave everything and everyone behind.

Everything you ever knew in this world, everyone you ever knew in this world, you leave behind. But you know, if you're a Christian, you're not on your own.

Every step, God is with you. Right down into death's dark veil. And he's going to take you right up the other side to be with himself.

And so that is why Paul is so positive about death. And he's looking at it really in two stages. He's looking at it at what happens right after we die.

[10 : 51] And then in verse 4, really, he's looking at it with regard to the resurrection. For while we are still in this tent, we groan being burdened. Not that we would be unclothed.

That's where our body goes. But that we would be further clothed. And that's what happens in the resurrection. Where we will meet up again with our body.

Now, a lot of people wonder, what happens when we die? How do we, it's a question we so often ask. How do we function without a body?

How do we function in glory without a body? Well, some people have an idea that an intermediate body is given to us after we die. Because the reason people think that is because they cannot imagine how do we function in this world.

We function through our body. Our body is the only way really that we can properly function. And so, it's very difficult for us to imagine how to function without a body.

[12 : 01] So, there's this idea some have that an intermediate body is given to us. But there is no warrant whatever in Scripture for that. And what we've got to remember is this, that God is a spirit. And God as a spirit functions perfectly.

And God as a spirit reveals everything. He is able to function as a spirit far better than we can in our body. So, however it will be, there will be no limitations or no restrictions.

And yet, I still believe that in glory we will be looking forward to the meeting up of our body again. Because at the resurrection, our bodies will be...

Some people have highlighted that in the different stages of this world that before the flood, Enoch was taken to glory in his body.

That from the flood to the time of Christ, Elijah was taken to glory in his body. And of course, Jesus, now in our time, he is there in his body as well.

[13 : 10] So that in these three, as it were, great stages within the world, there is someone in glory from this world who is there in the body.

Which is speaking to all the believers in glory of what is going to happen yet to them. So there is this anticipation still of what is going to happen.

Then there are other people who have the idea that somehow when the believer dies that we go into a state of limbo until the resurrection. But that again is not true. because you remember that the thief on the cross, when he cried out to Jesus, Jesus said to him, today, today, you will be with me in paradise.

So it is very clear that at death there is an immediate going to glory into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And some people will say, how do you know all this?

well, that is what we are told in verse 5. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God who has given us this spirit as a guarantee.

[14 : 26] You see, the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life is God's guarantee that all this is going to happen. You know, the actual wording there about, that we have here about this guarantee is where we get our engagement, engagement ring from.

You know, when a couple get engaged and a ring is given, it's there, this is a promise of what is going to happen later on. And that is really what the Lord has done.

He has given us his spirit as an absolute guarantee of everything that he has said is to be fulfilled. And you know, the Holy Spirit enables us by faith to believe all this.

and it's by faith we do, which we're just going to come to see in a minute. It's all, it's all by faith. And so the Holy Spirit brings in a wonderful way into our thinking and into our believing, giving us a capacity to lay hold upon all this.

So you know it, it's true, it's in there. And people may say, how do you know? And you just say, I know. We maybe aren't very good at explaining, and of course it's very hard to explain.

[15 : 42] But the Holy Spirit ministers with our spirit, assuring us that what God is saying is absolutely true. And then verse 6 says here, I say this not as a command, no, sorry, I'm in the wrong place, for so we are always of good courage.

sure, we're here, we're always confident. Confident. That's what it's saying. We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord.

But you know the great thing is, when we're at home here in the body, there is this confidence within us of where we're going. And the Bible talks about it in different terms.

It talks about it as a better country. Now, we're in this country, we're here in the United Kingdom, and we love our country. Whether we look at ourselves, sometimes as being part of the United Kingdom or Scottish, we love our country.

But you know, every one of us looks to a better country. And that's where we're going. You know, we're already packed. We're getting ready. We're all moving towards the departure lounge, getting ready for that journey.

[17 : 00] I hope you're ready to go. Because, you know, we can be talking about all this, and thinking about this, and meditating upon all this. You know this, if you're without Christ, poor, departure lounge is not a good place for you.

Because you're not ready for this huge event where you're going to leave time and enter into eternity. And if you don't have Christ, you have to do it on your own into eternity.

I can't think of anything more scary. But with Jesus Christ, you have somebody who's going to be with you every single step, and he's going to bring you into his eternal presence.

But we're also told about heaven, that it's a house of many mansions, and it's a father's house. That's the key. The father is at the head of it.

Father, it's a father's home. And we're going to go there to be with him. We're also told that it's the palace of the king. And it's not just simply a palace that we're going to view the king in.

[18 : 07] It's a palace where we're going to share in all the wonderful things that the king has given to his son to share with us.

Do we think about that? That we're going to reign. We're told that we're going to reign with him. Imagine we're going to reign with Christ throughout eternity. There's a royal stamp put upon you the moment you become a Christian.

No wonder we look forward. No wonder we're able to look ahead with an assurance. And so we have all these great blessings ahead of us. Now we know that here in this world it tells us that we groan.

But you know in the world to come we won't groan. because we're told there in that world of the wonderful how it'll be different. The great triplet of this world of sin, sorrow, all these things that so hurt us.

Sin, sorrow, death. There'll be no more. Can you imagine that environment? Nothing to hurt you, nothing to worry you, no fears, no anxieties, a glorious future.

[19 : 30] There's no darkness, there's nothing to impede our communion, our fellowship with Christ and with one another. And so this is what is laid up for the Christian.

But we're told that this is the key in a sense, for we walk by faith, not by sight. You see, it's all by faith that we have this.

You know, this is quite, in some ways, quite an extraordinary thing because people will say to you, how on earth do you believe all this?

Well, it is quite remarkable because we have never, we love and believe somebody that we've never actually seen when you think about it.

And we love this person so much that we're ready to die for him. That's quite a remarkable thing. We have never with a human eye ever set eyes upon Christ.

[20 : 39] And yet we love him and we would be ready to die for him. We have actually never met anybody who's been to heaven and come back and told us.

And so people will say, I can't understand all this. But that's why it tells us here that it's by faith. We walk by faith every step.

And in a sense when it tells us that we walk by faith, that's why sometimes the journey is so difficult because it's the slowest way of moving is walking.

if we were in a hurry to get somewhere and we were able to, we would like to run there. We know in our Christian journey, sometimes we fight, we wrestle, we do various things, but the main way of journeying to glory is walking.

And walking can be quite slow. And you and I know that there are times that we feel that our walk has become very slow. If you're going for a long walk and sometimes you set out and you think you're right, I'm going for a good walk here and you've gone so far and you realise as you're making your way back, I've gone further than I should because when you get older, maybe your bones start getting sore, your hip gets sore, you begin to get weary.

[22 : 07] So it is the Christian journey. Sometimes we become very, very weary and we begin to struggle on the walk. And we wonder, am I going to make it?

Oh yes, we'll make it. The Lord will see to it. But this is part of how we go. And so sometimes it's a slow walk and other times we're aware that it's a weary walk.

And again what we've got to remember is that we're walking through a wilderness with enemies all around. Now you say to yourself, it would be much better to be running because if you're running you can kind of dodge the enemy because you've got to remember that the enemy has fiery darts.

He's aiming to hurt you. In fact, he's aiming to kill you if he could. So all the time you're trying to dodge this as well. See, all of a sudden you realize, hey, this is a difficult walk.

It's a long, long walk. A walk where we get weary. A walk that takes a long time. And it's a walk where we're surrounded by enemies in terrain that's difficult.

[23 : 17] And you say to yourself, who's going to make it? Well, the Lord will make sure that we all make it because as the minister is going through Ephesians on a Wednesday night, the Lord has given us an armor.

He's given us protection in order to keep us, in order to help us as we journey through. And every single one who sets out with her hope and trust truly in the Lord will eventually make it to the other side.

And so it's all by faith. All by faith. Faith, as we're told in the scripture, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

There it is. It's as if you're actually seeing it, touching it, feeling it, you know the reality of it. And so it's by faith we walk.

And that's why we need to ask the Lord, Lord, sharpen my eye of faith. Help me by faith to see you more clearly. Help me to walk more surely.

[24 : 30] Lord, put a spiritual spring in my step. And remember that the only way that we can be strengthened for this walk is through the word.

This is where we feed in this. Every day, every night, we need the word. This is how we're sustained. That's why we come to church, in order to be strengthened for the walk that is in front of us.

And if you and I abandon the word and forget about the word, you know what will happen? We won't even enjoy the walk. You know what? One of the things often when you go out for a walk, you enjoy the walk.

It's good for you. Something that sort of often renews you, revitalizes you and such like. And so it is in our Christian journey.

But if we're not taking the word to be fed, then the journey is going to get tough. We're going to struggle. We're going to stop enjoying it. And I would say if you're a Christian here today and you're not enjoying it Christian walk, I would say it's because you're not getting the nourishment that's necessary.

[25 : 40] It's absolutely essential that every single day you talk to God and God talks to you. Because faith is at the very heart of everything that we do.

Finally, can I appeal to any in here who still don't know Jesus? It's wonderful that you're here. It's wonderful that despite lockdown that you've continued very often online and you've come back to church.

That is so good. But I pray that you'll come further than that. That you'll come to know Jesus. And remember he wants to save.

That's why he came into this world. He came to seek and to save those who are lost. He didn't come for the righteous people. He came for sinners. And if you like me are a sinner today, you qualify for saving.

If you feel righteous within yourself, Jesus says, you know, I don't really have much for you. But if you feel within yourself and you say, Lord, you need to help me. He's more than ready and more than willing to help you even now.

[26 : 56] Let's pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks that we are under your word and we pray that this word indeed will prove to be a blessing to our souls.

So often in life we struggle. We struggle with so many different things. But we give thanks that we have a Savior who understands our struggles.

And help us, Lord, to have the faith to come to you every day and every night. And that we might be willing to pour out our hearts to you. And that we might be seeking your face and your favor.

Lord, bless our homes and our families. Lord, bless all whom we love. Part us now with your blessing, we pray. Be with every broken heart.

Bind up that brokenness, we pray. We pray, Lord, for that trauma healing course. And we ask, Lord, that you will help Marianne. with this.

[27 : 57] And we give thanks, Lord, for all that you have done for her. And we pray, Lord, that there will be those who will feel that this is for them and that it will prove indeed to be a blessing to them.

Bless us, and we pray, and cleanse us from our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Let us conclude singing from Psalm 45 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 45, and we sing from the first version in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 45, the first version in the Scottish Psalter, that's on page 2, 6, 8, verses 13 to 16.

Behold, the daughter of the king, all glorious is within, with embroideries of gold her garments wrought have been. She shall be brought unto the king in robes with needle wrought.

Her fellow virgins following shall unto thee be brought. They shall be brought with gladness great and mirth on every side into the palace of the king, and there they shall abide.

[29 : 20] Instead of those thy fathers dear, thy children thou mayst take, and in all places of the earth, them noble princes make. Psalm 45, 13 to 16, Behold the daughter of the king.

king. Behold the daughter of the king, of glorious heads within, and with them bride and is the gold, and her man's brought of him.

She shall be brought up to the king, and robes and needle wrought, and fair the virgins following, shall come to thee be brought.

They shall be brought with loudness pray, and earth on many side, to the power of the king, and there they shall abide.

stand on those thy father's dear, thy children's man may stay, and take the places of the air, and hope of princes may.

[31 : 52] O may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more. Amen.