

# West Side Fellowship

## Walking By Faith

*He said to the Levites, who instructed all Israel and who had been consecrated by the Lord: "Put the sacred ark in the temple that Solomon built. It is not to be carried around on your shoulders. Now serve the Lord your God and His people Israel.*

*2 Chronicles 35v3*

Last week we started to look at Josiah who from an early age sought the Lord and through that relationship with the Lord brought about many reforms in Judah and the surrounding area (2 Chronicles 34v3-7). Not only did his relationship with the Lord lead to the removal of the altars of Baal and the Asherah poles, but it also led to a recognition that the temple of the Lord was also in a terrible state both physically and spiritually, for the temple had been neglected by the people including the priests. Notice it is this young man who through his relationship with the Lord is telling the priests what they should be doing, for the priests, the so called men of God, because of their lack of relationship with the father had been going their own way and so instead of being led by God had been turning God Almighty into the god they wanted. Despite their position they had no idea of the leading of the Lord and this really becomes evident in 2 Chronicles 34v14-21 when the book of the law is found. Just think about the gravity of this moment. The temple has been functioning for years without it, slowly drifting off course and going in whatever direction seemed right at the time. The holy ark of the covenant had been reduced to a religious icon that was taken out before the people as the Levites saw fit. Put into context, the priest instead of being led of the Lord just dragged God around to suit themselves having no idea of the spiritual disaster that had come upon them. Only as the Word of God is read do they start to grasp the disaster that lay right in front of them (2 Chronicles 34v24-25). It is a reminder of the words of Jesus in Matthew 7v21-23 that in our pride we can become so blinded to the truth and to the true state of our relationship with the Lord that we have no concept that disaster is staring us in the face. It was only as the word of God came back into their lives that once again the revelation from God returned to the people and the Lords ways became clear again.

This week we will start to look at how the Word of God is crucial to the walk of faith and we will start by defining walking by faith. Over the years the idea of walking by faith has been polluted and distorted to the point that like the Levites, we drag the ark around to the place where we want God to be. In the same way faith has become about our ability to generate enough belief that God will hear us and do what we want, be it health, wealth or happiness, delivering these things in the way that we want them. We need to recognise that this is not walking by faith for the Lordship of the relationship is backwards, we have turned "thy will be done" into "my will be done". What we need to understand is that walking by faith is not us generating enough belief for God to trust in our abilities and plans, but about us trusting in His abilities and plans. Walking by faith means walking the path that the Lord has called us to, trusting Him step by step through fair weather or the storms of life until we reach the end of the journey. This is not based on an intellectual understanding of the Word of God, but comes from a humble relationship with the Father Himself and that is the place we will start.

As we think about the Word of God it is very easy to reduce it to an intellectual knowledge of the Bible, a knowing of the rules. Let us be clear that we can have an intellectual knowledge of the Bible without a relationship with God Himself. We can have our theories and doctrines, our rules and regulations and yet miss God completely. We can become like someone who owns a manual for a car, knowing every little detail of how it works, yet never having learnt to drive. We see it in the days of Josiah, we see it in the days of Jesus and we are fools if we think that man's heart has changed today, for these same old issues fill the church today.

As we think about the Word of God we need to understand that God's word is eternal, if it is from God, then what He says will happen, will happen. It's why the Bible is trustworthy, because God has given us His word and His word can be trusted because like the Father himself it is unchanging. Yet even as we think of the Bible we need to understand that it was created from individuals personal relationships with God. People wrote down what the Lord said through those people, men and women, old and young, in high position or low. However, we also need to understand that these revelations, without the relationship with the Lord will just become dry bones, rules to be obeyed. Let us remember that Jesus spent the most time arguing with those who claimed to know the scriptures the best, yet didn't recognise the Son of God when he stood right in front of them. It is something we all need to be careful of, for it is easy to substitute a relationship with God for a relationship with the Bible and change revelation from God into intellectual understanding. For one is about us in our intellectual pride finding the way, while the other is about us humbly admitting our need of instruction and leading on a daily basis and that if we are going to understand His revelations in the Bible there is no better teacher than the Holy Spirit Himself. For when the Holy Spirit explains the Bible to us we experience the same burning of the heart that the disciples had on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24v32). This is when the Lord speaks and the revelation cuts through to our Spirit as seen on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2v37). It's when God's word becomes alive in our hearts and leads to action based on obedience, faith! For true faith is always an action that is a response to the instruction of the Lord and the Lord alone.

As believers this hearing from the Lord is crucial and is an area that has been constantly under attack with clever religious substitutes put in place. It is so easy to think that because we have the right books, the right versions of the Bible, the correct pastor or online ministry that we are alright, when so often we are following another rather than following the Lord Himself. Instead of having a surety of direction that comes from clear revelation from God we run around looking for someone else to speak the Lords word into our lives, displaying by our actions that our relationship with the Lord is not what it should be. For if we read about the great men of faith in Hebrews 11 we see a list of people who walked in obedience after hearing clearly from the Lord. Many of them never had the written word, but they had relationship, they had hearts after God that humbly sought to know Him. It's the same heart that Paul constantly prays for in his epistles. His desire for each person to be hearing from the Lord, to have Gods revelation in their lives, what is His revelation? It is God explaining things as He sees them that we may know Him and His ways better (Ephesians 1v17-23). It is what we see in the life of Jesus as he walked with his disciples, he didn't give them a discipleship manual or some other book of instruction, but instead spoke into their lives by word and deed as different situations arose and is the role that the Holy Spirit now plays in our lives as he promised (John 16v12-15).

It is the feature that struck the High Priest and the leaders as they spoke to Peter and John after the healing of the lame man. They realised that these men were unschooled, not spiritually educated as they were, yet moved in the power of God as they walked in obedience to the leading

of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4v13). The leaders had all the theory and knowledge, the traditions and the authority of this world, yet the power of God was not with them, for their pride in what they knew had blinded them to their lack of relationship with the Father, the very thing Jesus died on the cross for (John 14v6). In many ways that has become the picture of the church today, knowing a lot about God, proclaiming our theories and doctrines yet lacking the walk of faith that comes from a true knowledge and trust in the Lord. For to walk by faith we must hear the instruction, the revelation and then trust the Lord to fulfil that instruction no matter what He asks us to do and no matter how we are seen before the world. That is what made the great men of faith we read about in Hebrews 11, a knowing the Lord that led to a trusting obedience in the face of opposition and mockery from the world. It is why we are inspired by the testimonies of great men and women of God who heard the Lords calling and set off even at the cost of their lives. The Holy Spirit speaks through their lives today because they fulfilled the calling of God on their lives in the same way that our lives speak when we fulfil the Lords call on ours be it overseas or at home.

One of the great benefits of walking in the obedience that comes from faith is that it brings peace into our lives. I have lost count of the difficult, sometimes impossible, situations I have found myself in after following the Lord in a step of obedient faith. Often finding myself in far off lands with no human way to move forward, yet knowing that the Lord will provide because He called me to that place. That blessing grows as we walk in obedience, allowing the Lord to take us further and further from the safety of our own provision and plans. For too often we can find ourselves either running round in endless circles hoping to find the Lords will by chance, for we need to always remember that being busy doesn't make us obedient (Matthew 7v21-23). Many years ago I had a fantastic programmer working for me, he developed an amazing piece of software that did lots of very clever things while looking fantastic. He came to me expecting congratulations, but went away disappointed, for he had not built what I had asked for. In his enthusiasm he had forgotten the task I had given him and allowed his own imagination to take over, a failing that comes from a pride that assumes it knows the whole plan, something we all so easily fall into. The amazing peace that comes upon us even in the darkest of situations is a crucial part of our walk of faith, it is the demonstration to the world that the Lord is truly Lord of our lives (Philippians 4v11-13). When we are unsure of our calling, when we are not fully in communication with the Father we start to fear as the storms gather and our lives instead of displaying the peace of this world display the frantic plans of men.

For our walk of faith to progress, we need to increase our knowledge of the Lord, to draw closer and allow Him to lead us in the small training steps that lead to the larger leaps of faith. For if we do not know God in the way we should we will not trust Him in difficult situations. Many years ago I was involved in a lifeboat drill in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Even though the sea was calm I hated the experience because in all honesty, I did not trust the integrity of the lifeboat. Others who worked with the life boats all the time had no such fear, they had a trust that was built up on their knowledge and experience of the boats and so it is with the Lord. I may have had the intellectual knowledge that the life boat was unsinkable. By my actions and attitude I displayed a fear that came from a lack of faith.

As we look to move forwards in faith, we need to humbly recognise our need to know the Lord, not just know about Him, and the key to knowing the Lord is taking the time to listen. In any relationship we only come to truly know the other person as we spend time listening to them. If we are doing all the talking then the other person may know a lot about us, but even after many hours together we will know little if anything about them or their desires. So too in our times of prayer we need to get the Lordship in the correct order, for all we can do is pass on our worries

and concerns that the Lord already knows. To know His plans, to know His will for our life we need to humbly listen. For the one who is listening is displaying the servant heart, the one giving instruction is taking the position of teacher.

It is the simple lesson Jesus tried to teach his disciples in the Lords prayer; Who is Lord and whose will needs to be done? Followed by our daily needs to carry out that will and the recognition that we are just sinners saved by grace (Matthew 6v9-13). It displays an order that leads to a true walk of faith and no matter how much we may think there are short cuts, there are none. If we want to be the great men and women of faith, the sons and daughters that the Lord desires and deserves, it will all start with a humbling of ourselves as we take the time to sit at the feet of the Lord and listen. If we are not willing to sit and listen, then servant hood is out of our reach and the walk of faith becomes impossible because we are worshipping another God.

When we stand before the Lord it will not be our intellectual knowledge and understanding or our position or rank before others that gets us a reward, it will be our faithfulness in serving in obedience as he called and instructed us. This is the walk we see in the life of Christ and is the path we are to follow.

*“His master replied, ‘Well done my good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master’s happiness!’”  
Matthew 25v21*