

## What's So Bad About Living by Sight?

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Last week we began a new series on faith and we started with a definition. Before we can know what to do with faith – we have to know what *it* is, and it can be difficult to understand, for adults and for children.

What is faith? Do you remember our three-part frank work of faith which Philip Melanchthon articulated during the Reformation? (1) *Notitia* – knowledge – The collective teaching of orthodox Christianity, (2) *Assensus* – to ascent or agree that that truth is in fact true and (3) *Fiducia* – to trust and appropriate that truth to be applied in everyday life. You have knowledge of Christianity – great – good start! Do you believe it is true? You believe? Super! But even the demons believe and shudder. For faith to be complete, it must be put into action. It must make a difference.

Now an important part of faith that we will focus on in this message is that faith involves that which we cannot see. **Hebrews 11:1 reads, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”** Faith always involves the unseen. **2 Cor 5:6-7 says, “Being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord – for we walk by faith, not by sight.”**

### I. What's So Bad About Living By Sight?

All that leads to this question that I have pondered over the years: *“What is so bad about living by Sight?”* I mean, we have two eyes. We have a rational mind. Why can't I live my life operating based on what I can see and understand?

Living by sight is normal. We say... “Yes, I *see* what you mean.” Or “I don't know... I'll believe it when I *see* it.” Someone says – “Hey trust me.” We say, “No friend the proof in the pudding.” Someone says – “I'll get it to you next week.” We say, “No. A bird in the hand – that we can see – is worth two in the bush that we do not have.” In our businesses and in our churches we

want a leader who will cast a “vision” – What is a vision? A picture of the future – So we can *see* where we are going.

Why do we need to live by faith? We have doctors to heal our diseases, grocery stores to provide us food, lawyers to protect our rights and banks to loan us money. Why do we need God? I’m not saying these are bad things but we live in a time where it is very easy to live by sight and not by faith. What is so bad about living by sight, anyway? At least three things make living by sight disastrous for the believer.

**First, if we live by sight we will dismiss the invisible.** The saying goes, “Out of sight, out of mind.” The Bible teaches that much of reality exists in the invisible realms. Of God, John says. **John 1:18 says “No one has seen God at any time.”** Paul said, **“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible.” (Col 1:16).** Our faith involves invisible things – God, angels and demons. And you can’t get in the car and drive to heaven. If we live by sight, we will dismiss the invisible reality of the Christian faith.

Some scientists and atheists struggle with Christianity because faith requires belief in the super-natural. Famous Oxford atheist Richard Dawkins said, “We explain our existence by the anthropic principle and Darwin's principle of natural selection. That combination provides a complete and deeply satisfying explanation for everything that we *see and know*. The god hypothesis (is) unnecessary” (The Huffington Post Blog, 10-23-06). Dawkins argues that reality is comprised of what we can see – but the Bible says that there is much reality in the invisible. The man or woman of faith lives with an acute awareness of the super-natural – the invisible.

We can’t live by sight only, as Believers, because we hold that there is much reality in the invisible, including God Himself. You can see how, second, this life of sight-only would cause us **to doubt God** – as Dawkin’s does. If I have to see it to believe it, and God is invisible, I doubt.

This is classically illustrated by the apostle Thomas who said after the resurrection, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand in His side, I will not believe.” Jesus graciously said to Thomas. “Reach here with your finger and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into my side; and do not be unbelieving but believing (John 20:27). Thomas said, “My Lord and My God.” Jesus responded, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.” That is you and I, who are blessed to believe without seeing!

Living by sight does not only recognize the invisible and lead to doubt about God, but, third, the natural outcome of living by sight is this: **Living by sight causes us to dwell in anxiety.** Jesus said, “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ (Matt 6:30-31). When we fixate on the problems we can see – we stress out, we are fearful and anxious. The great pastor Charles Spurgeon was anxious or fearful about some things that most people would consider ordinary activities. For example, he was afraid to cross a road without some one to help him. Yet, one day near the Bank of England, a blind man caught his arm and asked him to guide him over what was probably one of the most dangerous crossings in London. Spurgeon told him he could not and that he was afraid to venture across himself. “But you can see,” said the blind man. “Oh yes, I can see,” said Spurgeon, “but I am afraid.” To which the blind man responded, “If you can see, I’ll trust you,” and the man’s trust in him lessened his fear and helped both Spurgeon and the blind man across, “I knew I could trust you,” the blind man said.” Spurgeon used this experience to urge the people in his church to trust Christ. We do not trust in our own sight, but in the one who can see all things clearly, Jesus Christ.

Living by sight is not an option for the Christian. Living by sight dismisses the reality of the invisible. It will lead to doubt about God and the outcome is a life dwelling in anxiety. No, we must not live by sight. How then are we to live? We must live by faith

## **II. Faith or Sight? Tug of War.**

It is like a tug of war for our lives. On one side the devil says – “Trust in what you can see and understand. You can be in control of life.” What he does not tell you is that this leads to fear and anxiety and emptiness. On the other side, Jesus calls to us – live by faith: “I can’t explain everything to you. I can’t show you the invisible yet – but I can promise you a life of peace, and contentment and fulfillment.” We struggle with living by sight and living by faith.

*This contrast – tug or war - is seen clearly in the gospel records.* Let’s look at a few examples. First, Matthew 8:10: There was a Centurion who had a sick servant. He came to Jesus and believed in the supernatural – he believed in Jesus’ authority and said – “Jesus you don’t have to come to my home to heal my servant – just say the word.” Jesus said to him, “**Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith in Israel.**” (Matt 8:10). On the other hand, the disciples were full of fear and anxiety on the Sea of Galilee – they were fixated on the big waves and danger of the storm when they cried out “Don’t you care that we are going to drown?” Jesus said, “**Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?**” (Matt 8:26). There was a group of men got together and believed that Jesus could heal their friend to the point that they put together a bold plan to cut through the roof and lower him through – it was their faith-in-action that Jesus noticed. Matthew tells us, “**Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Take courage son; your sins are forgiven.”**” (Matthew 9:2). On the other hand, when Jesus invited Peter out to walk on the water, Peter started out great – with his eyes fixed on Jesus. But a little ways out – he realized what he was doing and the Scripture said, “He saw the wind and became frightened - He saw the enormous risk and the danger and began to sink. Jesus

said, “**You of little faith, why did you doubt?**” (Matthew 14:31). Living by faith leads to doubt. The Canaanite woman had no cultural business asking a Jewish Rabbi for help with her sick daughter – but she did - and Jesus tested her faith and said to the effect of – “Don’t you know I am a Rabbi – I minister to the Jews?” The woman said – “But even dogs under the table get some scraps.” Jesus said, “**O woman, your faith is great, be it done for you as you wish.**” (Matthew 15:28).

When Jesus interacted with a person in the gospels, the main question on his mind was: “Are you Living by Faith?” or “Are you Living by Sight?” And if Jesus were here today and observed your life what would he say about you? Would he say, “My child – why do you doubt? Why do you live in fear? Why are you living by sight?” Or would he say – “My daughter – you are a great woman of faith. My son – what great faith you have – may it be done for you as you wish!”

*Living by faith is not just an important part of the Christian life – it is the Christian life.* We think we can be saved by faith and live by sight – by to live by sight is to miss the point of the Christian faith.

### **III. Application**

I have one application point with two prongs. The application is this – *We must be a church that encourages living by faith.* How do we do that? How do we encouraging living by faith? First, we celebrate the steps of faith among us. If Jesus commended those individuals in the Bible shouldn’t we do the same? Shouldn’t we be a church that encourages steps of faith. That holds them up as examples of Christlikeness that we might follow and be inspired by?

The starting of this church was an act of faith, based on many people being willing to take a step into the unknown. And let us not forget our own Martin and Fiona Jones left their home and friends 4,757 miles away to take a huge step of faith to study at Dallas Theological Seminary. They need our continued encouragement, love and support! Also, in 18 days, Markus and Julia Klausli

will take a great step of faith and travel 5,241 miles from Dallas to Germany following God to serve him there. Next Sunday at our commissioning service will be our greatest celebration so far – the celebration of a step of faith – of a willingness to follow God – the invisible God.

But not all steps of faith are big like that. Steps of faith come in all shapes and sizes – some are big and others small – but all are important in God’s eyes. What is important is that God has led you to do something and you have obeyed him. The decision to be a Sunday School teacher. The step of faith to get counseling to work on a personal issue. Whatever it is – we celebrate those steps of faith as a church.

We need to celebrate steps of faith, but also, second, we need to help each when we begin to live by sight. If you see that someone is discouraged – whose eyes have been hypnotized by the trails and storms of life - come along side of them. If you are struggling with doubt, with fear – this church is a place for you a place where you can get help – a hand, a hug and help – so we can turn our eyes together back to Jesus Christ.

Living by faith is not part of the Christian life – it is the Christian life. It is by faith, it is not by sight. Let’s pray.