

Seeing The Unseen

Franklin Church of Christ
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July 22, 2007
AM Assembly

Introduction:

Have you ever been discouraged? Have you ever said, "I am tired of all of this. I am tired of all the studying. I am tired of all the ridicule. I am tired of always trying to do good only to be hated by the world and even my friends and family." And of course, when we actually have those thoughts, we become more discouraged because nobody in the Bible ever had those doubtful days. Why can't we be more like Bible characters? Did you know the Bible describes Christians who have been through this? In **Hebrews 10**, the Hebrew writer encourages Christians like you and me who were struggling to keep their faith. In **Hebrews 10:32-39** he wrote to "remember the former days." How easy it was to believe and continue in faith when our Christianity was first started and our conviction was fresh. His final statement is we are not to be of those who shrink back to destruction, but rather to maintain our faith to the preserving of our souls. And then he records what I call the "Hall of Faith." He provides a great cloud of witnesses to teach us what faith can do for us and what we can do with faith. The definition of faith provided in this chapter is essentially "seeing the unseen". That is, not blindly accepting what some unknown source has stated but rather examining the evidence and believing the logical conclusion even though we cannot see it. This is the faith we had when we were first convicted of Christ and in those days we clearly saw the unseen things. But sometimes our vision becomes blurred. The Hebrew writer encourages us to get back to seeing the unseen.

Discussion:

- I. By faith, we see the unseen beginning of the world (**Hebrews 11:3**).
 - A. Only the Father, Son and Spirit were present at the beginning. By faith we know what happened. **Hebrews 3:4** claims God is the builder of all things. After all, every house is built by someone. It is illogical to see the design of our universe and believe it happened accidentally.
 - B. **Romans 1:18-20** explains the universe, the world, our bodies and even the very cells within us declare the power of God. **Psalms 19:1-6** speaks of the testimony of our universe. In fact, based upon the laws of nature, the mere fact we exist testifies a designer. We see the days of creation.
- II. By faith, we see the unseen judgment to come (**Hebrews 11:7**).
 - A. Noah had not seen a 40-day flood that could cover the whole world. In fact, there is some reason to believe he had not even seen rain. But God told him it was coming. Noah did not waiver in unbelief. He simply saw the unseen and prepared according to God's instruction.
 - B. We cannot see the judgment to come. And because it is unseen many mock us as we prepare to meet our God. But the day is coming and we see it by faith (**II Peter 3:3-13**). When you are able to see this unseen day, shrinking back to destruction will not be a problem.
 - C. Seeing this day is inextricably linked with seeing those first seven days we just mentioned. I must admit, I have days of doubt. Days when temptation attacks and life would seemingly be easier if there were no responsibility to obey God. But that first day when God said, "Let there be light" is implanted in my mind and, by faith, I know it happened. Because I know that day happened, I know the day of destruction and judgment will happen. I know that day will not be a day of sadness for those who serve the Lord. That faith keeps us going. Remembering the former days when that conviction was strong helps us keep from shrinking back to destruction. That day is coming. And if you see it coming, you will serve God faithfully.
- III. By faith, we follow the Master's direction though we cannot see where He leads us (**Hebrews 11:8**).
 - A. **Isaiah 55:8-9** says God's ways are not ours; His thoughts are higher than ours. He is greater, smarter and wiser. Therefore, we often do not understand what is happening in our lives, but we can trust in God that by following His direction, we will make it to that city.
 - B. As the Proverbialist said, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (**Proverbs 3:5**). That is exactly what Abraham did in **Hebrews 11:8**. I am not saying we can make it because everything that happens comes from God and we can just trust Him that it is what was best. Rather, we can trust God's direction to provide salvation no matter what happens to us. As Paul said in **Romans 8:28**, no matter the direct cause of what happens, if we love God, He will use it for good.

- IV. By faith, we are not distracted by the “cities” from which we came (**Hebrews 11:13-15**).
- A. All these mentioned died in faith, without receiving the fulfillment of the promises. Fulfillment came with Christ. But they continued seeing the unseen, focusing on it and not distracted by what they could see around them. Think of the times they could have returned to the lands from which they came because the Promised Land was too much trouble. Abraham: when the five kings captured Lot (**Genesis 14**). Isaac: when he had trouble with herdsman of Gerar over the wells (**Genesis 26**). Jacob: when he was frightened of meeting Esau (**Genesis 33**). But they were looking forward to the promise.
 - B. How easy it could be to get distracted by the cities from which we came? Most of us have had moments when we thought life was easier and better when we weren't Christians or when we weren't so involved in the life of the church. At those moments we must see the promise. As Paul said in **II Corinthians 4:17-18**, we must not look at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen. Because what we see is temporal. That is, it will be destroyed. But the unseen things are eternal. As Paul told the Colossians, “Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (**Colossians 3:2—ESV**). Heaven awaits us if we will see it right now while it is yet unseen.
- V. By faith, we are not overcome by fears, temptations and tribulations (**Hebrews 11:24-27**).
- A. The sins of this world are only pleasing for a moment. And yet, in that moment we are blinded. Temptation blurs our vision and we can justify anything. To overcome this we must see the unseen. We must see God. We must see the reward still to come for faithful service.
 - B. Then, no matter the temptation, no matter the temporal fears, no matter the persecution or tribulation we will have the strength to withstand. Remember, God does not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but always provides a way of escape (**I Corinthians 10:13**). We must simply open our eyes to see Him who is unseen and see the reward He offers for faithfulness.
- VI. By faith, we are granted approval by God (**Hebrews 11:39**).
- A. The Hebrew writer provides a litany of actions the faithful performed and endured simply because of faith. But the list is concluded by pointing out these were granted approval by God because of their faith. If we want God's approval we too must have faith (**Hebrews 11:6**).
 - B. **I Peter 1:3-9** says our faith will be tested as if by fire in order that God be glorified and we obtain salvation. Therefore, we must not shrink back to destruction. Despite the temptations Satan hurls, we must maintain our faith. Despite the ridicule others will give us, we must maintain our faith. Despite the hurt we will endure, we must maintain our faith. Then God will approve.

Conclusion:

Having looked at all this information about faith, we might easily become discouraged about our own salvation. After all, we have all had times of doubt in which we did not demonstrate strength against temptation. But, lest you be overcome, allow me to point out who all these people were in the list in **Hebrews 11**. Noah once became drunk and exposed himself to his sons. Abraham did not trust God's plan at one point and tried to fix it by having a son with a concubine. Jacob lied to his father and stole from his brother. Sarah laughed when her pregnancy was prophesied. Moses killed a man and later refused to go when God first called him. Rahab was a harlot. Barak was afraid to lead in battle by himself. Samson repeatedly disobeyed God's law and showed disdain for the blessing God had given him. Jephthah made a rash vow. David committed adultery and then murdered the woman's husband. Samuel did not raise his children to be faithful. Yet all of these are counted as faithful. In other words, you and I, like these in the hall of faith have had numerous times of unfaithfulness. But just as these, we can put the past behind us and grow in faith, not shrinking back to destruction but increasing our faith to the preservation of our souls. And then, in the final analysis, on the Day of Judgment we will be found faithful and hear, “Enter in good and faithful servant.”