

WALK IN FAITH

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Acts 2:17 ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

It has always been God’s plan to pour out His Spirit on the people of the Earth. This would have a profound impact on them, individually and collectively. The spiritual results will be glorious! And this has already begun. Hear Paul’s triumphant declaration:

Philippians 3:3 We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

God’s Spirit now lives within you. You are a creature of faith. Live like it!

Redirect the confidence you have learned to have in the flesh. Now put your confidence in the Spirit who is in you. Why is this necessary? Jesus told us:

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

The outpouring of the Spirit transforms our thinking and behavior, but it cannot change our constitution. Spirit-on-flesh is still flesh, but with something added. This is a truth that must be understood.

Your flesh did not go away when you were born again through faith in Jesus Christ. You still live in a body. And your body is not divine just because the Spirit is within you, it is still earthly. Earthly flesh and divine Spirit. Sounds like an oil-and-water mixture. And it is.

They can co-exist and the Spirit can influence our thinking and behavior, but it remains only an influence. Your thinking is not automatically divine (often it is not!), and your behavior is not automatically angelic.

Your flesh still wants to satisfy its base appetites. Your flesh still thinks that self-preservation is its Prime Objective. Your flesh still imagines that the world revolves around you and exists for your gratification.

Yet the Holy Spirit, whom God has given you, wants only to glorify Jesus Christ and make Him known.

Can you see how this could generate a struggle? And it surely does. Therefore, Paul advises:

1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Faith involves fighting. Not with other people, and especially not with other believers, but with your self — fighting against your old way of understanding the world, and your old way of leading your life. Thanks to God, it is a “good fight.” That can only be a fight that is *winnable*.

How many followers of Christ have discovered there is a fight involved?

How many groan within yourselves and struggle over decisions and activities?

How many long to be free of thoughts and behaviors that still appear magnetically attractive?

This is not your weakness — this is your strength! The fact that you struggle is a sign of the Spirit's presence and activity. You just need to know which side of the fight to take, because you want to win.

If you choose to side with your flesh, because it is familiar and because it is attractive to your senses, your struggles will only increase. Your flesh cannot survive, but you can certainly prolong its agony of dying.

Mark 14:38 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

"The flesh is weak." I am so glad that Jesus said that! That is a call to victory. You can *win* this battle, because your flesh is weak.

I know you are sometimes amazed at how strong and enduring it seems, but Jesus is using a comparative expression: compared to His Spirit, your flesh is weak! And the strength of His Spirit lies within your *will*. He is willing to overcome your flesh. Are you willing?

Romans 8:5 Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

This battle's arena is in your *mind*. The victory goes according to the *set* of your mind (like the set of the sails on a boat). Those who live by the flesh are thinking about gratifying the desires of the flesh and making plans to do so. Those who live by the Spirit are thinking about pleasing Christ and making plans to honor Him.

And here are the proven results:

Romans 8:13 If you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Clearly, the choice is yours. You have a choice. Your flesh is no longer in charge. (It thinks it is and asserts that it is, but it is not.) Compared to God's Spirit, your flesh is weak, and Jesus Christ is now Lord of your life.

Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

How is this done — this "walk in the Spirit"? How can I apply my will to side with the Spirit and overcome my flesh? Listen to what Paul says:

2 Corinthians 5:7 We walk by faith, not by sight.

Just as you would use your eyes to guide your feet safely over rugged terrain, now listen to the Spirit's voice to guide you. When the two are at odds, as they sometimes are, you must use your faith in Jesus *instead* of your natural perceptions. Sometimes, you will need to close your eyes or ears

(perhaps even literally) to focus on His voice. This demands an intentional exchange on your part; it is not automatic. This is walking *by faith*.

Hebrews 11:1 What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see. (NLT)

According to this verse, faith is two things: (1) assurance that our hope in Christ will be fulfilled, and (2) evidence of Christ's Kingdom, though it is not yet visible.

See that our faith cannot be separated from Jesus Christ. He is its object. We do not believe within a vacuum. This is what the world misses. And it is what the "hyperfaith" movement among Christians also misses. Let me explain.

The words, "what we hope for," have a context. They do not refer to just anything we may choose to set our hopes upon. They refer to the things *God has told us* are coming, the things for which He has given us hope (and they are too many to list just now).

Likewise, the words, "things we cannot yet see," have a context. Their meaning is not vague or simply applicable to anything that you cannot see. It is the things of God's promised Kingdom that are in view here. That Kingdom which has come and is still coming. This includes everything that, in God's plan, is moving from the invisible realm of Heaven into the visible realm of the Earth. Where His Kingdom touches our lives, these things become visible. And that is the result of our believing — believing in Jesus and believing in His words of promise.

2 Corinthians 5:7 We live by believing and not by seeing. (NLT)

That is to say that we come alive spiritually as we walk by faith, instead of walking by our merely human senses. Sometimes walking by faith means ignoring what we can plainly see *in favor of* what our heart hears from the Spirit — a God-given hope.

I do this every day!

My flesh wants its own way, wants to be appreciated, wants to be obeyed. But things don't always go my way, and people don't always appreciate what I do for them, and don't always do what I want them to do. (You would think they had a mind of their own!)

At other times, my flesh wants to do nothing, or take the easy way, or just hide. But there are times that I must act, and it may be difficult, but I'm put on the spot.

Humans walk by "falling" from one foot to the other and catching themselves each time. Walking by faith is similar to that: it is propelling yourself forward, moving off-balance, beyond your comfort zone, and being caught by the Spirit at the last moment.

If I make a mistake, God's grace will cover me, because I am walking by faith, following His lead to the best of my ability, and I will learn another lesson in listening.

I now do things I know I don't know how to do. I go places that are unfamiliar and challenging. I don't know if I will succeed, but I trust the Spirit of Christ to catch me; I trust Him to be with me and to show me what to say or do. I may go afraid, trembling, uncertain — but I go anyway. I don't let those things deter me.

It is still a struggle for me — every day, at some point — but it's a fight that I win more and more. And my confidence in God and, particularly, in His presence with me is increasing.

I don't think I have a lot of faith. Just a little faith in a great big God. Do you know Him? Do you trust Him?