

## **We live by faith, not by sight**

*2 Cor 5:6-8 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*

This seems a funny sort of subject to start a new year off with but I've had cause to reflect on these words recently as I've served the church as your Pastor. The funeral liturgy we often use refers to "the mystery of death". Why would it do that? Death is something we cannot look beyond with our eyes: in fact many of the symbols of death - skeletons, skulls, coffins, gravestones, darkness and the like - are all used as symbols of fear by horror writers and film directors. Each time we encounter death, we encounter fear - or own and others. Often we mask that fear by turning it into humour don't we. We're afraid, so we laugh it off.

Gravestone humour:

- *She lived with her husband fifty years and died in the confident hope of a better life.*
- *She always said her feet were killing her but nobody believed her.*
- *Spike Milligan: I told you I was ill.*
- *Harry Smith Born 1903 - Died 1942. Looked up the elevator shaft to see if the car was on the way down. It was.*
- *Here lies an Atheist. All dressed up and no place to go.*

For Paul, death was a welcomed occasion – why? Because he knew that if he was dead, he'd be in the Lord's presence and that clearly filled him with joy and expectation. How could he know that? *"We live by faith, not by sight"*. We're moving to a different standard, making judgements on the basis of faith - and that faith assures us of the promises of God.

But when trouble or difficulties come, we can panic, or fear or be depressed. Why do we find it so difficult to live by faith when we have God's promises? Because as we walk through life, we forget the greatness, power and love of God. At our Leader' Evening we were asked to list our greatest joys and our greatest disappointments of 2010. Actually we had to rack our brains for the joys to start with. Then we "counted our blessings" as we shared together and found that God had given us a huge amount to rejoice about in the last year, both personally and in our ministry as leaders. God is faithful, He keeps His promises.

We were also reminded of "the land between" - the wilderness of the world we walk in as we move from Egypt to the Promised Land. By sight, the wilderness is a bad place and the promised land seems a long way away. Like Moses and the people we complain and get depressed. It ends up as wreckage for some people. But if we look back at God's blessings and then look forward to His promises, then we start to live by faith and trust Him now. Then problems become possibilities, negatives become positives, and disasters turn into blessings as we see the power of God working in our lives. It's a question of perspective.

We often can't change the wilderness or many of the pains that life throws at us, but we can walk by faith through it and know the peace and power of walking closer to God as we travel closer to His promised land. As we come before God this afternoon to break bread together, let's be reminded of His ultimate mercy to us by sending His own dear Son into this world to die for us. Let's be reminded again of the massive price Jesus paid to redeem us. Let's be reminded of how much He loves us.

And as that happens let's allow Him to put our lives into perspective, to continue to trust Him in our walk through life. Let's ask Him for that strength to continue trusting in Him whatever our situation and to be assured afresh of the hope He's given us in Christ.

*Father, remind us of Your blessings. Remind us of your promises Give us strength by Your Spirit to use our eyes of faith rather than of the flesh as we walk through this world, that we may bring glory to You. In Jesus name. Amen*