

2 Corinthians 5v7. We walk by faith.

Paul says, 'We walk by faith, not by sight.' It's a great statement. It seems to say so much.

But isn't this actually the problem with Christianity, though? Is Christianity unhinged from reality? Don't we all live with our heads in the clouds?

And don't you feel it personally, when someone says to you, prove it. Prove your Christian faith isn't just a fairy tale.

We already feel vulnerable to the charge, and then Paul seems to just come out and say it – Christianity is disconnected from reality. We close our eyes and hope for the best.

Let's look at what he says in three parts. First, the walking by sight part, then the walking by faith part, and then some concluding implications.

1. WE DO NOT WALK BY SIGHT

First, we do not walk by sight. What does this mean? Does this mean, we walk with our eyes closed? What happens when you walk around with your eyes closed? Did you drive here tonight with your eyes closed? How could Paul admit to this? What does He mean by this? It's a shocking statement. In our day and age, we exalt walking by sight. We're scientific, aren't we. We like the facts. The atheistic scientist, at least, deals only with reality.– the things you can see and feel and touch. The scientist deals in that which is quantifiable, measurable. The scientist is the empiricist, if you will allow me to use that word. The empiricist, which means that their work is based on observation and experiments. They can tell you how many hydrogen atoms there are in a molecule of water. They can tell you what the force of gravity is. They've examined, and weighed, and measured, the things round about us. And we're glad that they have. Because we have as a result advanced medical science, and anaesthetics, and computers and Ipads and so on. And yet Paul says, but we don't walk by sight. As though walking by sight was a bad thing. What does he mean? Well, don't be too alarmed this evening. Paul isn't quite saying what you might think he's saying, or that I am making out that he is saying. He's not actually saying, Just close your eyes. This is what he means: To walk by sight, is to live as though this world is all that there is. As though what you see with your eyes is all there is to the world. To believe only in the material universe, that which can be seen, smelt, heard, felt. It is to believe, then, in a limited universe – a merely physical universe. And to have your values and your moral code and your whole way of life defined by this limited outlook. It is to rely only on your eyes, and to see nothing beyond. This is how people today live. This is how Australians live. This is how your neighbour lives. This is how you once lived, before coming to faith in Christ. They walk by sight alone. They believe only in the things that they can see. And there's something really wrong with that.

The biggest problem is this – it rules out from the outset that God exists. I do not see God, therefore I cannot believe that He exists. At best, I'm agnostic. And I say at best, because at least it's a little bit honest. It says, I can't see God, therefore I do not know if he exists. At worst, I'm an atheist. I can't see God, therefore He does not exist.

That's quite a leap of logic there. To walk by sight alone, is to exclude from the outset the spiritual realm, it is to exclude the existence of God, and it is to exclude there being any higher power that might possibly have some sort of impact and say on my life. There is no God; no Law; no real morality. What a stroke of luck that is!

What a happy by-product of walking by sight alone. I am freed from outside rule.

I can love whomever I like, or hate whomever I like. I can use whomever I like. I can hurt whomever I like. To walk by sight is the path of human autonomy, you see. It's the path of human arrogance and selfishness and pride. And I'm going to labour the point. People claim to walk by sight alone. But before we move on, do you know it's actually a lie. It's a fraud. There actually is no-one who walks only by sight. People claim it, but no-one can live like it. The atheistic scientist, the empiricist, is a fraud. The atheist scientist goes home from his day locked up in the laboratory. And I'm going to say it's a male scientist, just because I need to choose one or other.

What does this male scientist go home to? A loving wife. A loving family. He comes in through the door, and gives his wife a kiss, and his children a hug.

What on earth is going on there? It's a family that loves. It's a family that says to each other, we are important/valued.

But what is love? That is not something that can be seen. And the valuing of somebody descended from an ape makes no sense. In the merely physical world, none of this makes sense. By faith, you believe someone else is important. It takes faith to have love.

And then our scientist goes to bed, and sets his alarm to get up the next morning. But why does he think there's going to be a next morning? Why should he believe the sun will come up? Why does he believe that what has been will be again? Why should there be laws of nature? Why should he believe in an ordered universe? That's not sight – it is belief. It is faith, of sorts.

Why does the scientist even believe that he thinks? After all, Darwin says, We evolved. It's all the chance arrangement of chemicals. Your brain is but a random chemical cocktail. Why would you believe that what's going on your head is actually this thing called thinking? Isn't it just chemical reactions? The empiricist, the evolutionist, the atheistic scientist is deeply inconsistent. Their sight is riddled with faith.

And then there's all the data that the scientist chooses to ignore. The current science that our government is peddling in schools says that you get to choose your own gender. Decide for yourself. That, despite that fact that the chromosomal realities are clear – you are either male or female, even as Gen 1 says. But empirical data be hanged, we'll believe we want. We don't even follow the data that's staring us in the eyes right in front of us.

No-one walks just by sight, and the apostle Paul is quite right to come out and say it. There's so much more going on in universe than just physicality.

2. WE WALK BY FAITH

And so Paul says, secondly, we walk by faith. We see what others say they cannot see. The world thinks us mad, but we believe what others refuse to believe. We walk by faith.

Now be clear, it's not as though we Christians have closed our eyes to the physical world. Have we lost our heads in the clouds? Not at all. We don't have the slightest problem looking at the physical world.

And here are some of the things we see, that the world refuses to look at. John says,

'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us...'

You see, we've got our eyes wide open. And we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

We look at the world, and we see that the very Son of God has lived amongst us. We see the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we see His resurrection as well. Or more accurately, we see the claim of those who were there, the testimony of the apostles and the first martyrs of the Church, and we accept their testimony. They have been our eyes for us.

And we also look at the world, and we see the miracle of the Church – a worldwide phenomenon, a universal Church that has beaten the odds, that has survived despite persecution. We see it as the power of the risen Christ at work in this world.

And what else do we see? We see the Word of God, the revelation, the very words, of God to us. We see the book, we see its beauty, its unity, its prophecies come true in Jesus. We see. Our eyes are wide open.

We see this world better than anyone else. We don't close our eyes to the bits of history that we don't like. We don't have our heads in the clouds. The empiricist has his head in the sand. But we see the world rightly. We live in the real world.

And we believe. As well as seeing, we live by faith. We see the other world as well. We see more than just physical matter. There is the spiritual realm. There is God – the God, whom to be God, cannot be seen with eye. By definition, if He is God, He cannot be seen with the eye. And it's God Himself who given us the knowledge of Himself. He has brought us to see/believe. And so we walk, we live our lives, trusting in Him. We have faith in Him, and in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And there's so much more that we believe, then. We believe in God; we believe in His Son. But there's more that our eyes can't see. Look at the context of 2 Cor 5. This is what we believe – we believe that there is a new world coming. We believe in the return of the Son of God, and in the very real resurrection from the dead. We cannot see it, we but read it in the Word, and we believe it.

And we believe that even when we die, our souls are immediately safe in the arms of Jesus. We don't cease to exist, but we're safe with him.

2 Cor 5:6-8: ⁶ Therefore we are always confident (bold), knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷ Because we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ And we are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

He's talking about death. We're then present with Him. That's what we believe. We read it, and we believe it. This is the faith by which we walk.

3. THE EFFECT OF FAITH

Finally, what does this all mean? We've spoken about philosophy and science. We've used words like 'Empiricism'. Maybe you don't understand what we're talking about. What does all this mean for me? Break it down for me.

Let's do that now. What does it all mean for you? What it means is this. Paul is drawing a distinction between two ways of living. There's a miserable way of living, and there's a confident, bold, victorious way of living.

How's that for simple? Do you want to be miserable, or confident and bold in life?

These are the very real implications of what Paul is talking about.

Do you want to be miserable? Then walk (or claim to walk) by sight alone. If you walk only by sight, you'll be miserable, or you ought to be miserable. Why?

Because if you only see this world, and nothing more – what do you see? You see all the evils of this world. You see terrorist bombings and gang attacks and atrocities and whatever else has been on the tele in the last week. You see violence and hatred. And

you might see some happier things, but what does it matter? It all has no meaning. It all has no resolution.

And ultimately, this is what you see: the body rotting in the grave. And that is it. That is all there is. This is Hopelessness. This is depression.

Is that the kind of life you want? If you walk by sight, then if you're being consistent, you should be the most miserable of people. Your life has no meaning, no hope, you spend your life battling fear and anxiety, and fending off the attacks of people all around you, and there's no point to it.

I have a favourite quote from a French philosopher. At least he had the guts to be honest. Jean Paul Sartre said this: 'Man is an empty bubble, floating on a sea of nothingness.' We're adrift at sea. Do you want to be miserable today – then live by sight alone.

But then there is walking with faith. What difference does this make to your life? What is the value of this for you? How does it change you for the better?

There is a God. There is meaning. There is the resurrection from the dead. How does this change you in your day to day life? You, of all people in the world, are the most confident and secure. You believe that God has everything under control. You believe that whatever happens, good or bad, even if terrorists manage to blow up the whole world up, that we will be raised from that. You, of all people in the world, are the most confident.

That's what Paul says here in 2 Cor 5. Paul says, We have such boldness. We have such confidence, v. 6, v. 8. We have such boldness, because of our faith. Faith makes all the difference.

Do you want to live a confident life today? Faith is the key – faith in the Son of God. Faith that God raises the dead.

That knowledge works its way into every nook and cranny of your life. It pervades your day to day activities and interactions with people. It gives you a quiet calmness. It gives you the assurance that all is right with the world, no matter what takes place. Even as the Government teaches kids in schools how to be perfect little pagans. Even as we see the last remnants of a Christian society sliding away. All is right with the world. Ours is still the victory through faith.

Faith is your armour, isn't it. Armed with this, you can get through anything in this world. Whatever it is that this world throws at you – even if we do get to persecution here in Australian - whatever the trials of this life are that you have to go through – you stand secure. You know that nothing can undermine God's plan for you.

You don't even mind if you should die. That's no big deal any more. Facing the lions – that's no big deal. Paul says, we're well pleased to be absent from the body but present with the Lord. I'd rather be with Him than living here. That's your confidence. That's your victory.

There's an old hymn. It's not a particularly great hymn, and it's not in Rejoice, so we're not going to sing it. But it just puts it so simply.

Sing the wondrous love of Jesus, Sing His mercy and His grace.
In the mansions bright and blessed, He'll prepare for us a place.
When we all get to heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus, We'll sing and shout the victory!

That's our faith. That's our confident life.