

MAKE FAITH YOUR EYE

- a) **“For we walk by faith, not by sight”** [2 Cor. 5:7]
- b) **“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, alas, my master! How shall we do? And he answered, fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire about Elisha”** [2 Kgs 6:15-17]

The eye is perhaps the most important of our five senses [sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing]. With it, we see the world around us, work, watch television, drive and read. Many people fear blindness more than any other disability.¹ The eye is that precious. We do not all have the same quality of eyes. For example, some of us can only see objects that are near [myopia or nearsightedness], while some of us can only see objects that are far off [hyperopia or farsightedness]. As we grow older, our eyes begin to get weak. That is why some of us use corrective lenses by way of glasses or contact lenses. Some people, such as Moses [Deut. 34:7] may retain clear vision into ripe old age.

In spite of its seeming versatility, the eye cannot see objects when light is absent! Therefore, it cannot see very far objects, such as tomorrow or the future. It cannot also see the back. Therefore, given the totality of the universe, we can conclude that the naked eye is very myopic. It cannot see very far. So, why then do we live and behave on the basis of “seeing is believing”? There must be another way of using our eyes to make them very farsighted, to see in the dark, so to speak, to see tomorrow and the future. God has offered us faith, as the fifth sense to replace the naked eye to meet our temporal and eternal needs.

In today’s lesson, we shall try to understand a little more the subject of faith, using Noah’s building of the ark as a best-practice example.

¹ Ted M. Montgomery, “Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology of the Human Eye,” http://members.aol.com/MonT714/tutorial/the_eye/overview.html

1. The naked eye is blind!

A high school art teacher once accidentally kicked an inkpot and splashed its content all over a white cardboard paper. Then, an idea struck him. He took the paper to his students and asked each of them to identify the “object” that he had painted. All six of them saw it differently! In fact, one of them saw “an angry young woman,” and it turned out that he had just split with his girlfriend! That result, although not quite scientific, confirms what psychologists [social scientists who study human behaviour] have long discovered, that people see what they want to see! Therefore, the naked eye may not be as objective [unbiased] as we think. This is the principle that advertisers know so well when they try to sell us goods and services. They try to capture our attention by saying things in a funny or senseless way, or by doing simple chores in odd ways.

What we pay *selective attention* to is influenced in most cases by what we are looking for. For example, a person looking for a job will tend to read mainly the job advertisement sections in the newspaper. Boys tend to see girls and vice versa! That is why the Bible says that because God loved the people of Israel, He kept them “as the apple of His eye” [Deut. 32:10]. In addition to selective attention, some other limitations of the naked eye include the following:

a) *The eye cannot see in the dark*

Research has shown that people who are born totally blind or who lost all of their sight very early in childhood, usually have little or no visual imagery in their dreams.”² That confirms that light is very essential to our ability to see. Here on earth, we get light from the sun, moon and stars, or from electricity and other man-made/discovered methods. The sun rises and sets, the moon has phases, and the stars come out at night, usually dimly. Power outages now occur everywhere around the world. Therefore, if we base our ability to see on those sources of light, we cannot see all the time!

At the creation of the world, God said, “Let there be light, and there was light” [Gen. 1:3]. Then, on the fourth day, He said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.” That was how the sun, the moon and the stars came into being [Gen. 1:14-18]. What then was the earlier light?

² Craig S. Hurovitz, et al, “The Dreams of Blind Men and Women: A Replication and Extension of Previous Findings,” *Dreaming*, 9 (1999), p. 192.

The Psalmist says of God, “for with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light” [Ps. 36:9]. Jesus, speaking on the subject said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” [Jn 8:12]. Referring to the Preincarnate Christ, the Word of God that was with God at creation and who was later “made flesh and dwelt amongst us,” Apostle John wrote, “That was the true Light, which lighteth everyman that cometh into the world” [read Jn 1:1-14 for details].

From the foregoing, it is clear that Adam and Eve saw the world through the light of Christ until their fall. Their disobedience traded the light of Christ for the devil’s darkness. Interestingly, Scripture calls the devil and his kind “the rulers of the darkness of this world” [Eph. 6:12]. Satan is “the god of this world” who “hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” [2 Cor. 4:4]. To restore our true vision, it becomes necessary to become born again because “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” [Jn 3:3].

b) *The naked eye cannot see far*

Even when there is light, the ordinary eye cannot see far. We need eyeglasses or contact lenses to read or drive. To look at the galaxies, we need powerful telescopes. Yet, telescopes cannot see 90% of the stars. Certainly, we have not invented any instrument with which to see tomorrow! So, if the born-again can see the kingdom of God, which is much much higher than the galaxies, then they are not using the natural eyes!

2. Faith to the rescue!

In the Bible clip used earlier, we saw the encounter between Elisha the prophet and his servant. The king of Syria was at war with Israel. However, he discovered that his enemies knew of his battle plans soon after he had agreed them with his war cabinet. So, he suspected that there were spies among his own servants. One of his servants answered, “None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchambers” [2 Kgs 6:8-12]. The king then amassed troops to kill the prophet. They surrounded the city under the cover of night. When Elisha’s servant came out first thing the next morning, he saw the mounted troops. He ran back to his master in fear, asking what they should do. Elisha, exuding confidence, told him not to fear because God’s troops had already encamped around both of them. Elisha, the man of faith, saw the spiritual beings but his servant, using his natural eyes, could not. So, his master prayed for God to open the servant’s eyes. God did, and the servant saw! [2 Kgs 6:13-17] That is why we are told to walk by faith, not by sight [2 Cor. 5:7]. What is this all-important faith?

Here is what faith entails:

a) *It must be God-centred*

We do not mean faith in yourself or your material wealth or earthly position or some idol. It must be faith in God because, “without faith, it is *impossible* to please Him: for he that cometh to God *must believe* that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that *diligently seek Him*” [**Heb. 11:6**]. In other words, if you are not ready to obey God *in everything*, then, don’t bother to pretend that He is your Father.

b) *It must be polished by Jesus*

We are to look on to Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith” [**Heb. 12:2**], and the light of the world. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” [**Jn 1:12**]. Therefore, unless the exercise of our faith is anchored on our acceptance of Jesus as our personal Lord and Saviour, we cannot see far “for without Me ye can do *nothing*” [**Jn 15:5**]. When Stephen was about to be stoned to death, he looked steadfastly toward heaven and “saw the glory of God and Jesus on the right hand of God.” Therefore, at the point of death, he was able by faith to say, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” [**Acts 7:55-60**].

c) *It is like thunder arriving after lightning!*

When wind-driven clouds collide in the sky, they produce a flash of light and a deafening noise, which we call lightning and thunder respectively. Both happen at the same time. However, because light travels faster than sound, we see the lightning long before we hear the thunder. Once you see one, then, you expect the other soon after. Faith has been defined as “the *substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” [**Heb. 11:1**]. In other words, the “substance” or the “evidence” can be likened to lightning, which tells you that the coming of “things hoped for or not seen” is *inevitable!*

Jacob had long believed that Joseph, his favourite son had been killed by wild animals. His mischievous sons had shown him the bloodstained garment of many colours [**Gen. 37:31-32**]. About ten years later, the same sons came back to inform him that Joseph was the governor of Egypt. He did not believe them at first, but when “they told *all the words of Joseph*, which he had said to them; and when he *saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him*,” his spirit was revived and he said, “Joseph my son *is yet alive; I will go and see him* before I die” [**Gen. 39:26-28**]. He had not seen Joseph, but on the strength of the evidence and substance of

Joseph's success, he started acting *as if* he had met him in person! His faith saw what his naked eyes could not see!

3. Seeing by faith: the story of Noah

Hebrews Chapter 11 is generally regarded as "Faith's Hall of Fame." The third name on the list is that of Noah, and here is the citation on him:

By faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith [Heb. 11:7].

Let us note the following about Noah's circumstances at the time:

a) *The environmental setting*

At the time, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth" [Gen. 6:5,7]. That is not different from our world today. We are actually worse!

b) *Noah did not join the crowd*

In spite of the depraved state of the generality of the people, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and *Noah walked with God*" [vv. 8,9]. Since the "just shall live by faith" [Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17], it follows that Noah walked with God by faith, not by sight. Therefore, God declared him righteous [Rom. 4:4-5].

c) *God revealed His plans to Noah*

According to Scripture, "*surely* the Lord God will do *nothing*, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" [Amos 3:7]. When Sodom and Gomorrah were about to be destroyed, the Lord who had visited Abraham, along with two angels, said, "shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" [Gen. 18:17]. Therefore, those who have absolute faith in God can enjoy the privilege of being told *in advance* what is going to happen so that they can prepare for it.

Noah also enjoyed the privilege for God told him, "The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth" [Gen. 6:13]. He then gave Noah specific instructions on how to build the ark [vv. 14-16].

d) *Noah obeyed God*

Faith comes by hearing the word of God [**Rom. 10:17**], and faith without works is dead [**Jam. 2:26**]. Noah was 600 years old when he was asked to make the ark. There is no evidence that a boat like an ark had ever been made by anybody before his time. Therefore, he lacked both the age and the expertise to build the ark. However, in the face of jeers from onlookers who might have thought that he was suffering from senile dementia, and over-worked family members who might have complained, “Daddy has gone too far this time,” he obeyed God.

e) *And floods, death and destruction came for the unbelieving*

Noah and his family entered into the ark, and for the next forty days and nights, it rained nonstop until everything on earth was destroyed. Meanwhile, the ark was lifted above all the destruction around! No prayers worked for the unbelievers at that stage because obedience is better than sacrifice!

f) *Noah becomes the father of the new world!*

God signed a covenant with Noah that He would no longer destroy the world with floods. He set up the rainbow to remind Him of that covenant [**Gen. 9:1-17**]. So, but for Noah’s walk with God by faith, humanity would have become extinct. We thank God for His mercies, which endure forever.

4. Conclusion: Lessons for today’s people of faith

The ordinary eye is spiritually blind because it relies on the light of the World System that is controlled by Satan and his fallen angels. But we know that “the things which are seen [with the naked eye] are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” [**2 Cor. 4:18**]. Satan only has darkness to offer. That is why those who rely on him wind up in a hell-ditch.

Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is the Light of the world. When we accept Him as our Lord and Saviour, and guide, we can “walk through the valley of the shadow of death” and “fear no evil” [**Ps. 23:4**]. Without light, you cannot see a shadow!

How do we hear from God? He speaks to us through Scripture [the Bible], and through visions, dreams and prophecies, if we live and dwell in His presence [**Joel 2:28-32**], and have the mind of Christ [**1 Cor. 2:16**]. In deed, those who know their God shall be strong and do exploits [**Dan. 11:32**]. Make faith in God your eye and you will see far and wide, and walk confidently and *assuredly* every moment of your life.