

SOUTHERN BAPTIST COVENTION
Chattanooga, Tennessee
May 12, 1921

Report of sermon delivered before the Southern Baptist Convention,
Chattanooga, Tennessee, May 12, 1921, by Dr. H. L. Winburn, of
Arkansas.

Text: "We walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7)

The sermon was a discussion of the place of faith in the Christian system.

I. Faith defined the limitations, the spirit, the very genius of Christianity as a world movement. Religion must challenge the attention of men sufficiently to gain proper publicity. The miracles of Jesus were for this purpose. Religion must also have the merit to hold the attention of men.

The test of time is perhaps the ultimate historical test, and after two thousand years of testing under every conceivable condition, Christianity warrants its holding of the attention of men, by presenting truth as divinely true, hope as supremely victorious and ethical inspiration as certainly efficient unto righteousness as it did when Jesus walked among men.

A successful religion will also offer sufficient sanction to commend it to our deepest human needs. Men need a proper social relationship and Christianity has something to say along this line. We need proper industrial and economic conditions, and Christianity has suggestions along these lines that are of paramount importance. Men need also a body of truth that is of sufficient dignity and importance to

engage all the glorious possibilities of the human mind, and for this need no offering has ever been presented that begins to rival the superlative excellencies of the revealed truth of Christianity.

II. Walking by faith gives the Christian victorious attitude toward all the important crises of life.

The way in which Paul gets to the heart of this inquiry is itself highly suggestive. He seems to disregard, utterly, the lesser crises which make up so great a part in the thinking of most of us and goes on at once to a final estimate. This life in the flesh, to him, is a passing event. Its involvements may possess a curious interest and its relationships a certain value but all interests and all values that pertain mainly to this earth-life are passed over as subordinate. Life as a whole stretches out to endless lengths. By far the most important part of it is lived after we are through with the flesh. Paul has faced death many times but always calmly and confidently. Standing on the strand where the waters of death flow in the league-long moan of its grey waves breaking, has never caused a shudder but always lifted his eyes to saffron gates of hopes beyond the cloudy sunset.

III. Walking by faith gives the Christians motive and power for Christian conduct. Walking by faith guides the conduct of his life.

The most challenging spiritual phenomenon of the ages is the Christian life. Clean in the midst of a "crooked and perverse generation," unselfish amid a very tumult of selfishness, spiritual in the midst of a well-nigh universal materialism, the Christian life needs adequate explanation. If there was anything in human nature to explain it, all humanity would by now have more nearly approximated it. If there

was anything in legislation to explain it, the earth, now bound in a multitude of laws, would already have become heavenly. If there was anything in education to explain it, there never could have been an educated thief, a cultured criminal of a developed degenerate.

The words of our text may be rightly understood as describing the motive and power that produce this supreme spiritual result. To walk by wisdom was no new thing. To walk by force was a common occurrence. To walk by craft was so ordinary as to attract no attention. Paul, in describing the motive and power of the ideal Christian, uses this brief and simple formula, "We walk by faith." Throughout the whole New Testament faith is declared to be the essence of Christianity. The Christians live by faith, hope by faith, walk by faith, die in the faith, and by faith enter upon the promise.

The sermon concluded with a clear statement of the basal truths of our religions upon which faith stands. Taken all in all it was a great sermon and listened to with profound attention.

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