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## Doctrine and Duty.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

### WALKING BY FAITH.

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"We walk by faith, and not by sight."—2 Cor. v. 7.

In the preceding context we are called to contemplate no ordinary occurrence, a sinful man like ourselves not only elevated above the fear of death, but longing after it, as the consummation of all his hopes, and the completion of all his desires. This is a frame of mind totally unknown by man in a state of nature, and incapable of being produced by natural means. How, then, do you ask was it produced in the Apostle Paul? He tells us in the fifth verse "He that hath wrought us to the self-same thing is God." But do you ask, how did God work it, for it is certain that he works by means? I answer by begetting in the soul a principle of faith, and making this the grand motive cause of all action; this is the answer which Paul himself gives us, in the words before us, "We are willing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord; for we walk by faith, and not by sight." It was by faith that he attained to this blessed frame; and if we, like him, cultivate this heavenly principle, and make it the motive of all our conduct, we too, shall find it productive of similar blessedness in our souls. It is in truth the grand principle which above all others distinguishes the true Christian from every other person under heaven. "We walk by faith, and not by sight."

In discoursing from these words, we shall turn your attention in the first place to the principle by which the Christian is actuated, and in the second place to the reasonableness of his conduct in this respect.

I. The principles by which the Christian is actuated.

He fixes his eye not on things visible or temporal, but on things invisible and eternal. This is declared at the close of the preceding chapter, "We," says the apostle, "look not at things seen, but at the things that are not seen;" and so in the words of the text "We walk by faith, and not by sight." Faith is thus opposed to sight, as it has respect to things which lie beyond the reach of mortal eyes; and I remark—

1. That the faith of the Christian looks to, and terminates in, an invisible God. It was to this unseen God that the faith of Moses looked, when it is said of him that "He feared not the wrath of

Pharaoh, because he saw him who is invisible." The Holy Scriptures make known to us this invisible Jehovah, as the God of nature, providence, and grace. The faith of the Christian contemplates this adorable Being in all his revealed character: in all his glorious perfection, especially as these are displayed in the work of redemption. It sees his mind and will, as made known in the Book of revelation. It recognises his superintending providence in all events. It realises his omniscience as inspecting continually the most hidden recesses of the heart; as noting everything in the book of his remembrance, in order to future judgment; when the sins of men shall be brought to light, and all must give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad.

2. The faith of the Christian contemplates an unseen Saviour, as the supreme object of his people's love, and the only foundation of all their hopes. It contemplates him in all his revealed character and fulness, as the Eternal, the only begotten of the Father, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, as manifested in the flesh a real partaker of human nature. It beholds him as the surety of sinners, suffering and dying for them, offering up himself as a sacrifice for their sins, and rising again for their justification, that their faith and hope may be in God. It contemplates him exalted to the right hand of God, effectually interceding for his people, and preserving for them that peace which, by their sins and infirmities, they would soon forfeit. Yes, this faith contemplates the Saviour in his whole work, offices, and fulness. Surveying them in all their extent and variety, faith regards him as the fountain of life, and as having all fulness of spiritual blessings treasured up in himself, to be communicated to his people according to their necessities; "for of his fulness they all receive, and grace for grace."

3. The faith of the Christian contemplates an unseen heaven. This was the faith of our apostle; for he knew that, if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. His faith, like that of all true saints, looked above the world and all its perishing enjoyments, to the inheritance of the saints in light. It soars and penetrates into the very paradise of God, and surveys the realms of glory; and the kingdoms of light and happiness, which God hath there prepared for all that love him; for all the redeemed in Christ Jesus. There it beholds that glorious tabernacle which the soul shall inhabit so soon as the earthly house is dissolved: and in the great and precious promises recorded in the written word, it sees the possession of that glory secured to every believing soul—made

sure by an everlasting love, and the oath of him who cannot lie. Nor is this all; faith looks beyond death and the grave, to that blessed period when the bodies of the saints shall be raised from the graves, fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, and when, in soul and body, they shall be ever with the Lord; when all former things shall pass away, and all things become new.

Such is a general view of faith, and such are the objects on which the Christian eye is continually set. By these, when his faith is in lively exercise, he regulates his whole life and conversation. These draw forth the habitual desires of his soul. He is fully persuaded that things seen and temporal, cannot be a portion for his soul; and cannot satisfy the demands of a being made for immortality. He therefore considers earthly things as dross. He labors not for the meat that perishes, but for that which endureth to everlasting life. For these unseen objects of faith he sighs, and longs, and strives; and considers an interest in them better than thousands of gold and silver. Hear the expression of such a faith in the preceding verses, "For in this being burdened, desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven, we groan, &c." Such are the breathings of a Christian's faith. He considers an interest in these as the one thing needful, the good part which shall not be taken away from him. From whatever threatens the loss of them, he flees as from the fang of a deadly serpent. He says "my soul come not thou into their secret." Whatever leads to confirm his interest in them he constantly pursues. He gives all diligence to make his calling and election sure. He meditates on the word of God, which contains his charter to his inheritance. He fasts and prays; he waits upon all the ordinances of the gospel, the end of which is to confirm the faith and hope of God's people; upon the enjoyment of unseen blessedness, all his affections centre. In exact proportion as he is enabled to apprehend and realise them, he is happy. He walks by faith; every step he takes is under the direction and influence of this principle. Faith is to him, what the compass is to the mariner in the pathless ocean. Under all circumstances he consults its testimony, and follows whither it points. And in doing so, he has no fear but that he shall arrive at the destined haven. Faith is his pole star, looking to which he enjoys communion with an unseen God here, as a pledge and earnest of the eternal enjoyment in his presence in the lute to which he goes.

II. We turn your attention to the reasonableness of the Christian's conduct, in talking by faith and not by sight.

No man of the world will subscribe to this opinion. Doubtless those who are strangers to this