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MOUNTAIN RAMBLIN'

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Number 4

A Leap Into the Dark? by Eric Lyons, M. Min

One of the most abused verses in all of Scripture is 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Often, those who "expound" upon the apostle Paul's statement explain that faith implies something less than knowledge—that is, they teach that we must accept evidence blindly and take a "leap of faith." Many so-called teachers and preachers, when commenting on 2 Corinthians 5:7, argue for a separation of faith and facts. German theologian Hans Kung upheld this idea of "biblical" faith when he wrote: "Even in faith, then, there is no certainty entirely free from doubt. In faith, we must commit ourselves to something uncertain" (1980, p. 61). Similar to Kung's ideas about faith is the statement of televangelist Robert Schuller, who suggested: "Faith is a commitment to an unprovable assumption" (1984). If these men are correct, faith is either something based on no proof at all or something composed of a small amount of knowledge and a big dose of uncertainty that allows men to "act like" they know something when, in fact, they do not. Is this the kind of faith to which Paul was referring when he wrote his second epistle to the Corinthians?

Second Corinthians 5:7 is both amplified and clarified by verse 16 of that same chapter: "Therefore, from now on, we

regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer." In other words, in the past Jesus had been present in the flesh, and hence could be known by sight. But, at the time Paul wrote his letters to the Corinthians, the situation had changed—Christ no longer was on the Earth. Thus, the apostle Paul clarified his statement about not walking "by sight" with the phrase "now we know Him thus no longer." Of course, Christ still could be known, but not "after the flesh." Had Paul written 2 Corinthians while Christ still was living upon the Earth, these passages (5:7,16) never would have been included among his remarks. But since they were written at some point after Christ's ascension, Paul therefore was compelled to make the comparison he did in 2 Corinthians 5:7.

His point, quite simply, was this. There was a time when faith and sight went together. That is to say, at one time in history, men walked by faith because of sight (cf. John 4:41; 20:25-29). However, eventually followers of Jesus possessed a faith in Him that was not based upon sight, but instead upon such things as credible testimony, deduction, and revelation. Jesus indicated His approval of those whose faith is based upon knowledge gained in ways other than by sight when he told "doubting" Thomas: -----*Continued on pg. 2*

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"Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

Today, Christians can have a genuine faith without sight, thanks to such things as credible testimony from reliable eyewitnesses (such as Peter, James, John, and Paul) and other means of knowledge that are not necessarily dependent upon having personally seen something firsthand (cf. 1 Peter 1:8-9). All of us believe in people, places, and events that we never have seen personally, yet that does not diminish their factuality. Nor does the absence of "sight" weaken the faith routinely produced via credible testimony from people of the past who did witness such things. Truly, one may "walk by faith, not by sight," and still possess knowledge-based faith.

One thing is for sure: the Bible nowhere discusses or recognizes the legitimacy of any concept such as a "leap of faith."

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Taken Captive by Neal Pollard

Mary Jemison was an illiterate, eighty-year-old woman when she recounted her abduction at the hands of the Seneca Indians to writer James E. Seaver. The year was probably 1758, when Mary would have been fifteen years old. Her first emotions were terror and confusion. She passed a group of white settlers whom the Shawnee had killed and whose corpses they were burning in a fire. She was whisked by canoe to the Seneca village, where she was given a squaw's clothing, accepted for adoption by the tribe, was taught to speak the Seneca language and not allowed to speak English in the hearing of her "sisters," had children by a Seneca husband, and eventually measured time, approached life, and spoke as a Seneca Indian. She even grew to feel contempt toward the white people and was completely sympathetic to those who snatched her from her home, saying that "one thing only marred my happiness while I lived with them on the Ohio, and that was the recollection that I once had tender parents, and a home that I loved" (*America Firsthand: From Settlement To Reconstruction*, Vol. 1, 3rd Ed. by Robert D. Marcus and David Burner. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1995, pp. 61-67).



While Jemison's fascinating story is not meant to suggest that the Seneca were wholly evil and the European settlers were completely good—history depicts a thoroughly mixed picture of both groups—what is so notable is how time and interaction with her captors eventually, thoroughly changed her attitude and outlook toward them. The Bible speaks of those who are "taken captive" by "the snare of the devil" (2 Tim. 2:26), "the traditions of men" (Col. 2:8), and by the beguiling actions of deceitful, ungodly men (2 Tim. 3:1-6). When we are captivated by Satan and the world, we gradually grow accustomed to worldly dress, habits, and viewpoints. We may even grow contemptuous of the righteousness and truth we once embraced. Sin changes our outlook and skews our perspective. We may have moments of fond recall of the life in God we once enjoyed, but the longer we stay where we are the harder it becomes to break free.

Thankfully, since Jesus came to lead captive a host of captives (Eph. 4:8), we can be freed from the confinement of sin! Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Unlike Jemison's situation, we only become prisoners by choice, there is a clear right and wrong party, and there is an absolute need to break free of life in spiritual captivity. Rejoice that Jesus makes that possible, and has done all He can to make it happen!