
“Walking By Faith” Lenten Series
“Walking By Faith: Choose The Right Response”

Second Sermon In The Series

I Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)

“6 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20 do not treat prophecies with contempt. 21 Test everything. Hold on to the good. 22 Avoid every kind of evil. 23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

I Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)

Children's Sermon: *“The Right Response”*

Needed: Duct Tape

Does anyone know what this is? That's right. It's duct tape. It's the one kind of tape that will stick to anything, anywhere, anytime. That's the good part of duct tape. The bad part is that it's hard to get off. Once it sticks to you, it keeps on sticking.

I've taken some duct tape and placed it sticky-side-up on the floor. I'd like to have a volunteer step on it to see just how sticky it is. Do I have any volunteers?

(Take the volunteer) Now, that I have a volunteer, I want you to step on the tape. (Volunteer steps on the tape). Now, can you get it off? (Volunteers struggles to take the tape off the shoes, then off his fingers after grabbing the tape).

Now, let me ask you a couple of questions. First, what do you think of duct tape? It's sticky, isn't it! Now, here's the second question. If you knew it was sticky, and I told you it was sticky, why did you get stuck anyway? What did it feel like when you were stuck?

That's what Satan does to us. He tries to get us stuck. But he doesn't use duct tape. He uses our hearts. When Satan controls our hearts, he can make us afraid to ask Jesus for forgiveness, to trust Jesus and, most importantly, to serve Jesus.

Can you think of things that Jesus would want you to do? Can you do them? Would you be afraid?

We don't need to be afraid, do we! Why? Because Jesus conquers our fear. He wasn't afraid when He went to the cross. Why? Because He didn't get stuck in the Devil's trap.

Jesus knew that the Devil would try to get us stuck. And he knew that sometimes the Devil would succeed. But what did Jesus do? He died for us. And why did He die for us? Because He loved us.

Now that Jesus loves you, what's your response? To love Him, of course! And how can we best show we love Him? By not letting Satan get us stuck in fear or anything that would get in the way of serving Jesus. That's the right response, isn't it!

Sermon:

December 1, 1955. Now that was a day that changed the world! No one planned it. No one predicted it. No one could have anticipated it...not even Rosa Parks.

As far as Rosa Parks was concerned, it was just another ordinary day. Get up, catch a bus, go to work, catch a bus, and go home. But on that December 1, 1955, she chose a different response.



Reflecting on her 1996 interview with Ms. Parks, Kira Albin, in her biography of Rosa Parks entitled, *A Nation*, wrote,

“But, there's a misconception here that does not do justice to the woman whose act of courage began turning the wheels of the civil rights movement on that fateful day.

Rosa Parks was physically tired, but no more than you or I after a long day's work. In fact, under other circumstances, she would have probably given up her seat willingly to a child or elderly person. But this time Parks was tired of the treatment she and other African Americans received every day of their lives, what with the racism, segregation, and Jim Crow laws of the time.

In her own book entitled, *Quiet Strength* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), Ms. Parks wrote,

"Our mistreatment was just not right, and I was tired of it. I kept thinking about my mother and my grandparents, and how strong they were. I knew there was a possibility of being mistreated, but an opportunity was being given to me to do what I had asked of others."

The rest of Parks' story is American history...her arrest and trial, a 381-day Montgomery bus boycott, and, finally, the Supreme Court's ruling in November 1956 that segregation on transportation is unconstitutional.

(Adapted from <http://www.grandtimes.com/rosa.html>)

All this started because Rosa Parks made the *right* response. The right response not only changed her world. It changed the world of everyone around her. It even changed our world, today! Imagine, for just a moment, what this metropolitan community called “Detroit” would be like if we still practiced discrimination against minorities—Africans, Asians, Indonesians, Native Americans, Arabs and others.

Rosa Parks. She *really did* change the world.

But what's really one of the most amazing about Rosa's action? She didn't set out to change the world. She didn't go to college to get a Ph.D. in political science. She didn't run for political office. She didn't start a political action committee to make this change. In fact, I don't think she had any resume that would “qualify” her for changing the world—our world—to such a remarkable degree.

The only thing she did...was make the *right* response.

I guess all this goes to show just how important, just how critical, making the right response is. Not just in “big” things...but in the small things as well. Contrary to what the best-selling book suggests, when it comes to choosing our response, perhaps we should “*Sweat The Small Stuff.*”

It doesn't require a genius to tell you the simple fact of life. Right responses are good. They help you grow. They strengthen you...and others. Wrong responses, on the other hand, are bad. They hurt you, destroy you and cause great harm to you...and others.

So, if you want a good life, what's the key? Make the *right* response.

Faith, like life, is also about making the right response. Right responses build, affirm and energize our faith. Right responses “make a difference” in our lives and others. Right responses move the church forward. Wrong responses, however, do just the opposite.

That's what our study series “*Walking By Faith*” is all about. Making the right responses. That's the greatest challenge for us because, after all, that's probably the thing Satan is most concerned about in our walk of faith. Can he prevent us from making the right response?

The legacy of Scripture is all about people—ordinary people like you and me—making right and wrong responses. When we think of those who made the wrong responses—Adam and Eve choosing the fruit, Cain getting angry and choosing to kill Abel, Judas decided to betray Jesus, the crowds responding, “Crucify Him”—we are reminded of our own folly. Their mistakes are, in so many ways, just like ours. Yes, it seems “sin” just never really changes, does it!

But no matter how wrong the response, one thing was always sure. Jesus never cast them away from their wrongness. Instead, He gave the right response—the GREATEST response—by dying for them—and us—and forgiving them—and us. Now *that's* a response that changed the world!

Most importantly, it's a response that changed you and me for eternity.

When one thinks about it, isn't it amazing that one right response could do so much? That Jesus' response to our many, many wrong responses was to love us, even though we didn't deserve it. And He gives His love to everyone, everyday, everywhere, no matter who we are...even though we so often don't give the right response back--to love and serve Him

In light of Jesus' right response of dying on the cross for us, it's a fair “faith” question to ask, “What's your response?”

When we realize that, as Mel Gibson said, “*My sins were the first to nail him to the cross,*” it's *absolutely imperative* that we re-examine *both* our Walk of Faith *and* our faith response.

In his classic book, *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis states that one of the states of mind Satan most desires Christians to have is “tortured fear.” (C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001, p. 71). Why does Satan desire this? Because he knows that if he can make us scared enough, we'll be stuck.

The best way I know to illustrate “tortured fear” is a mouse trap. There's some interesting types of mouse traps. Some are spring-loaded. Others are boxes with poison. Both result in a relatively

quick and painless demise for the mouse. But there’s another form of mouse trap. It’s a strip of adhesive. The mouse walks on the adhesive...and gets stuck. Frantically, he tries to escape. But he can’t. Why? Because the mouse is stuck. Unless the mouse can get free, the mouse will become increasingly anxious and eventually die.

Don’t be fooled. Satan traps us in the same way. When we step into sin, we get stuck in it. Unless we can get out, it can make us anxious, worrisome and even kill us if we let it. The important thing is not to step into it in the first place. In order for that to occur, we need to learn how to choose the right response.

One of the greatest joys of my ministry is to see people—even as we’re seeing today in our church—people starting to make the “right” response to serve their Lord. Maybe they’re coming to church more frequently. Maybe they’re starting to attend a Bible Study. Maybe they’re doing something they’ve always felt they couldn’t do. Or maybe they’re taking steps in their faith that they have always wanted to do...but were afraid.

I dare say in every case, when these individuals got “unstuck”, they began to experience the joy as they started walking—*not standing*—by faith.

Are you walking by faith...or just standing there—*stuck*—like a mouse on a trap. If you’re stuck on Satan’s tape, the only way off is to take up a cross, lay down your fear, and follow Jesus. After all these years of being a Christian, isn’t now a good time to again make the “Right Response”...and free yourself into the joy of following Jesus?

When given the opportunity to serve His Father in Heaven and die for us, Jesus made the right response, didn’t He! He could have retreated in fear. He could have succumbed to Satan’s pressure and stayed stuck. But He didn’t. He made the decision to follow and took the necessary steps. By doing this, He made the right response...not just of His feet...but of His heart, soul and mind.

A friend of mine who sends numerous humorous emails every day always has a humorous quip at the bottom of his emails. One of his most recent quips read,

“My dog saw a sign that said: "Wet Paint" ...so he did!”

Not the right response, right? As we consider Jesus’ suffering, death, resurrection and love for you, what’s your response? Is it the right response? Or are you simply stuck?

May God free you and give you the joy to have the right response of service to Him in your life and your walk of faith. Amen.

Thomas F. Fischer