

Faith

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:1 – 5

For the next five weeks we are going to look at Walter Scott's five finger exercise. This sermon series will have some CC (DOC) history and the topics will be: Faith, Repentance, Baptism, Remission of Sins, and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. These five things are the essence of Walter Scott's five finger exercise.

Let us start with some information about Walter Scott.

Walter Scott was born in Moffatt Scotland on Oct. 31st, 1796. Walter arrived in America in 1818 and in the early 1820's Walter Scott met Alexander Campbell. They discovered that they had a great many similar ideas about Christian life. They agreed that divisions between denominations were not a good thing and they wanted unity within those who believe in Jesus Christ.

So along with Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, Walter Scott became one of our denominational founding fathers. They lead the CC (DOC) which was also called the Stone-Campbell Movement.

Scott was an evangelist who was driven by his desire to convert unchurched people to believe in Jesus Christ. He did not believe, as was popular at this time that people had to be convinced of their sins before they could enter a faith experience. Scott believed that people had to first know about God's love. Walter Scott preached to whomever would listen and it did not matter where he preached – school building, a church, a town hall, or a clearing in the woods. He was sometimes referred to as the 'preacher on horseback.' Scott rode throughout the early America frontier on horseback proclaiming the gospel!

Walter Scott was filled with love for the good news of Jesus Christ and this love compelled him to share it wherever and whenever he could. He especially loved sharing his faith with those who had never heard of Jesus. Scott loved to talk with children because he wanted them to tell their parents the stories of Jesus.

The one method Walter Scott would use to teach children about Jesus was his five finger exercise. Because of Scott's enthusiasm and commitment to the Gospel, the early CC (DOC) grew in large numbers!

The five finger exercise uses every finger to explain a Christian life.

Today, we are going concentrate on the first of the five fingers – the thumb! The thumb is 'FAITH'!

Most dictionaries define 'FAITH' as confidence or trust in a person or thing, such as when we have faith in a person's ability or integrity. For example – a cancer patient may have faith that the surgery will be successful and that he will be completely healed.

The word 'FAITH' can also refer to one's belief that is not based on proven facts. For example to have faith or belief in God is a Christian faith. In the Bible, the word 'FAITH' is closely related to the idea of faithfulness. Humankind's faith is a response to God's faithfulness. Our faith is manifested in our faithfulness.

Faith is not blind belief in something we cannot see or fully comprehend but we have faith in God because the Bible reveals God's faithfulness through accounts of divine interventions made in people's lives. The Old Testament relates many stories of God's faithful relationship with a particular people called by God and God reveals his trustworthy promises.

I have faith in God because I have personally experienced God's faithfulness. I have discovered in my own life that God keeps the divine promises made in scripture. My life works much better when I obey God's law and live by the principles found in God's Word.

You can have faith in God because you can personally experience God's faithfulness and maybe you have already! You will discover in your life that God keeps the divine promises made in scripture. Your life will work much better when you obey God's law and live by the principles found in God's Word.

Walter Scott believed that people had to have faith in Jesus' message of God's love before they could repent of their sins and be baptized. Thus, FAITH is the first concept of Walter Scott's five finger exercise.

Walter Scott believed in Jesus. He trusted Jesus' message of God's love for all people. He knew he could depend on Jesus. He knew that Jesus always told the truth and if Jesus said that God loved him then he could believe that it was true! Scott wanted everyone to know about God's love. He wanted everyone to have faith in Jesus.

Do you believe in Jesus? Do you trust Jesus' message of God's love for all people? Do you know that you can depend on Jesus? Do you know that Jesus always told the truth and if Jesus said that God loves you then you can believe that is true? Do you want everyone to know about God's love? Do you want everyone to have faith in Jesus?

If you want all this, then maybe you are our next Walter Scott!

First finger of Walter Scott's five finger exercise – FAITH!

A young man came to his pastor and shared this – I have a great fear of public speaking! Like many other people, his heart would race and his mouth would feel sticky and dry. His face would turn bright red!

Glossophobia is the fear of public speaking. It is among the most common social fears people have. Many people even joke that they are more fearful of public speaking than of dying!

The Pastor suggested that the young man focus on the substance of his message instead on how well he delivered it. The Pastor also said jokingly – image everyone you are addressing as being naked!

At our Regional assembly just last weekend, we had a very good keynote address by Rev. Dr. Bernard Richardson who is the Dean of religious study at Howard University. He shared that many times seminary students would ask him this question – What should we preach on? Rev. Dr. Richardson answer was this – ‘Preach faith until they have it, then preach faith!’

Rev. Walter Scott lived this message and preached about faith always!

If you have trouble sharing your FAITH, shift your focus to what will be shared instead of your ability to share it. Paul used this approach when he shared his faith in Jesus Christ throughout his ministry. Walter Scott used this advice when he shared his five finger exercise. They always tried to point people to Jesus Christ.

In our scripture reading from 1 Corinthians, Paul remarked that his message and preaching were not with wise and persuasive words. Instead Paul focused solely on the truth of Jesus Christ and his crucifixion. Paul trusted in the Holy Spirit to empower his words, not on his eloquence as a speaker.

Walter Scott did the same thing! His message and preaching did not use wise and persuasive words. Instead Scott focused solely on the truth of Jesus Christ. Walter Scott used his five finger exercise to empower his words to the children, not on his eloquence as a speaker.

When we come to know God personally, we will want to share our faith in Jesus Christ with those around us. Yet we sometimes shy away from this because we are afraid of not presenting it well. We feel we do not have the right or eloquent words. Let us focus instead on the 'what'. Let us focus on the truth found in Jesus Christ.

We can follow Rev. Dr. Richardson's advice and preach on faith until we get it, then preach faith. We can be like Paul and we can be like Rev. Walter Scott – we can trust God to empower our words and share without fear or reluctance.

The first finger in Walter Scott's five finger exercise – FAITH!

Let us pray:

Father in Heaven, thank you for revealing yourself to us through the Bible and those you put in our lives to share with us. We also thank you for Walter Scott in the history of our denomination for his evangelism in our early history. Please help us to share with others our faith in your most holy Son. Let us trust that you will empower our words. AMEN.