

Working Faith

Faith that Works

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Faith; has anything been doubted more severely and has anything been more passionately believed? Throughout time Kings have tried to slay it, politicians have tried to outlaw it, mobs have tried to beat it, and yet its alive and well today! The strongest force in the world is faith. Faith calms the storm and walks on water. It has humbled the intellectual and has enlightened the uneducated. Faith stands tall on its feet in strength when mighty empires crumble and fall to their knees. Though faith is foolishness to a foolish world, faith has overcome the world when all else has succumbed to it. (1John 5:4).

We live in an era of complacent Christian living. Complacency is rotting the very bones of the Church. Men desire to have the least amount of responsibility towards Christ and yet receive the most amounts of rewards from Christ. As weeds are to a field so are the unfruitful to the Church (Matthew 13:24-43). The attitude and message today is believe and receive while the biblical message has always been repent and believe (Mark 1:15). I had a recent talk with the Pastor who told me about a conversation he had with one of his church members. Their conversation was regarding the relationship between believing and repenting, and the responsibility the lost has of doing both of those. All the lost has to do is confess and believe. Thats it. If they confess and believe they will be saved, a lady insisted. I found the Pastors response to be very wise. Yes, I completely agree. All someone has to do is confess and believe and they will be saved (Romans 10:9). But now we must define what believe means as he explained that true faith is always accompanied by action.

Faith entails and includes more then some admit. It is a common thought and message today that repentance is not necessary for salvation because youd be adding works to faith. While it is faith only that saves us and not any good work, I dont see how you can separate faith from works, especially the work of repentance (Luke 13:3). What is one without the other? Faith that works is truly a working faith. Real faith is an active faith. A faith that moves mountains is far from being idle! Faith that is real is violently forceful spiritually and aggressively active physically. We do not need to add works to faith, because they should already be there. If a man desperately needs a car and he hears over the radio that a certain car dealership is giving away all their cars for free, yet he doesnt act, we would all safely conclude that he had no faith. He must not have trusted the offer. Had he trusted it, he would have found his way to the dealership even if he had to run to it. Likewise when a man hears the claims of salvation and says Oh I believe all that yet he is not willing to leave his sin for the Savior and serve Him, it can be safely concluded that he had no faith.

Under the disguise of adding works to faith many have subtracted works from their lives. You can not remove works from faith anymore then you could remove moister from water. What good is a perfume without a fragrance, without a scent? And what good is

inward faith that does not produce outward acts of love and charity? You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! (James 2:19). Our faith, meaning our trust in God, ought to cause us to be willing to do anything that He asks of us. Our faith in God makes us willing and wanting to serve Him because of who He is, what He has done, and what He is going to do!

How many Christians are there today who are statue Christians. They look good, even as good as a statue, but do absolutely nothing except sit and stand idly all day long? In essence many preachers ultimately teach you can have your sin, you can live entirely for yourself, and you can get to heaven at the end of your life as well! This is appalling to a God who is worthy of all the fruit we could possibly bear to him. God will destroy the fig tree if he comes to it at a time when it has no fruit. (Matt 21:19). Works is the expression of a living active faith. Works are the branches that spring up from the roots of faith. I asked a brother recently, If you saw a tree without any branches or leaves what would you think of it? Without a moments hesitation he simply said dead. A tree without branches and leaves is a dead tree! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? (James 2:20). For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:26)

T. T. Eaton wrote in his 1906 publication Faith and the Faith The relationship between faith and works is the relationship between doing and deeds. To say: show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works (James 2:18), is equivalent to saying – show me thy doing without thy deeds and I will show thee my doings by my deeds. Of course there can be no doing without deeds and no deeds without doing. He went on to write New Testament faith is far more than the mere acceptance of certain teaching. Faith is more then believing. A man might believe everything in the Bible, from lid to lid, and still be lost. Gospel faith is a heart trust in Christ as Savior and Lord, the heart including the will, so that actions follow. Faith is not passive. It is the doing. Christian faith involves turning from sin to God, surrendering the will to Christ, and throwing ones whole power into His service.

Who can genuinely deny that faith must work in light of the scriptures? Was John Baptist out of line when he said bear fruits worthy of repentance (Matt 3:8)? Did Christ intend to have a stagnate Church when he said Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven? (Mt 5:16). Will a Christian be judged by his faith or by his works? You are saved by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9) but you are judged and rewarded by your works! (2 Cor 5:10). Our attitude must be that of our Lord Himself who said I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day (John 9:4)

A couple hundred years ago the old Methodists would sing a hymn which would do us some good if we learn it today. The fifth stanza sums it up plainly and painfully. May this be our prayer:

Lord, shall we live so sluggish still,

And never act our part?
Come, Holy Dove, from the heavenly hill,
And warm our frozen hearts!

While the questions of a child are innumerable - the value of their answers at time are immeasurable. Children have a way of educating adults. As a family returned home from Church, the child asked Mommy, the preacher said that God lives inside of us. Is that true? The Mother with a smile responded with yes dear. God lives inside of us. With a look of confusion on the child's face he asked Isn't it true that God is bigger than us? Yes, God is bigger than us the Mother said. After some quick thoughts the child said then wouldn't he show through?

Faith cannot help but to work. If it fails to work it fails to be living faith. A Christian cannot help but to bear fruit to His Lord so long as he has living faith. If He fails to serve, He fails to be a servant. A mirror cannot help but to reflect. That is just what it does. We are to be mirror images of the Christ who served and loved God by serving and loving men. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor 13:18). Moses was a man who was a friend of God, who walked with God, and had been in God's presence so much that his face brightly shined and needed to be veiled. As a great preacher once said when Moses left nobody knew where he went, but when he returned everyone knew where he had been. God must shine through or God is not there. A bush that doesn't burn does not have God. The Christian must shine with love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal 5:22-23) or the Spirit of God is not in him. There are many veiled faces and mute mouths today. We've played the fool and have put our lamps under the bed (Mark 4:21). It's time that our light shines through to brighten this dark world. It's time that we allow our faith to flow out so that it can flood and fill this dry land!

The hall of fame of Heaven's heroes, Hebrews chapter 11, describes to our shame the tremendous works of faith God has done through men. Their faith was always accompanied by works; who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. (Heb 11:33-35). Faith conquers all. Men of greatest faith will do the greatest works! A faithful church will be a world-changing church. The men who have done the greatest good to all of mankind have all had faith which was faithfully married to works. Our great need today calls for great works of faith.

Let me give a final warning in ending. Just as surely as faith without works is dead, so also works without faith is dead. Men try to use works to bring the assurance which doubt holds captive. There is a type of works which flows from a loving heart of faith, and then there is works created to fill the void of non-existing faith. Many do not have the

assurance of salvation by grace through faith. They feel they must perform certain duties and works in an attempt to secure their salvation and to feel saved.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matt 7:21-23). What a frightful day it will be for those at The Judgment who start boastfully spouting off all their works when they ought to be thanking Christ for the cross! They will expect their deeds to be the keys which open up the gates of Heaven. How shocking it will be when those expecting life receive death. The staff of good works for salvation is a weak one. It will one day break and those leaning on it will be pierced by the very thing they thought would save them. These men havent faith, meaning they havent trust in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They trust in themselves and in their works to save their guilty souls, not knowing they are adding to their guilt. These men are not known by the Lord, but He knows those who trust in Him. (Nahum 1:7).

That Day will be great and very terrible (Joel 2:11) for those who have faith without works and for those who have works without faith. Therefore may your faith be full of works and may your works be full of faith that we may all be faithful workers!

Quotes:

T. T. Eaton Faith and the Faith copyright 1906, Fleming H. Revell Company page 10,35

Methodist Hymns published by Swormstedt & Poe, 1857 edition, stanza 5 of Unfaithfulness Mourned, page 507.