

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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What should I do: Doing in Faith

As ever, the Bible is found to be not only inspired by God himself, but inspirational as far as the human writer or poet is concerned. For example, a poet, after reading of the acts of faith-filled people (found in Hebrews chapter 11) wrote:

*Faith assures us of hope complete
And is proof of things unseen!
It honours those who hold it dear
And speaks of all that's been!*

*The worlds were framed by God's own word,
Invisible their source.
The things now seen with mortal eyes
Once took a different course.*

*Abel, by faith, once gave to God
The most noble offering;
While Enoch for his faithfulness
Was placed upon God's wing.*

*And so it is, this word is heard:
"Not one the Lord can please,
Except they trust with all their heart
Our God and His decrees."*

*It was by faith the ark was built
By Noah - long ago.
He preached in faith for many years -
Few cared his words to know.*

*Abram in faith was called to leave
His home in Eastern lands.
And led by God, he travelled on
Seeking the city planned.*

*By faith, Moses a prince became
In Egypt's fertile field;
Yet, he left all to serve the Lord
And do what God had sealed.*

*By faith, Israel the Red Sea crossed,
By wind and water saved.
But Pharaoh's mighty men were drowned
As mud their pathway paved.*

*By faith two spies found Canaan's land
With milk and honey crowned!
The walls of Jericho, so strong,
Were brought down to the ground!*

*Many in faith were tried by men
Yes, mocked and sawn in two.
While others with the sword were slain -
Their names are not a few.*

*Yet, the full riches of God's grace,
By these were never gained.
Yet trusting Him, they ran their course,
So faith was never drained.*

*And, above all, Jesus we see,
Of faith, the Start and End!
And He who suffered on the cross
Now greets me as His friend.*

*Although a life of grief and shame
May mark our journeys here;
Lord, give us grace to trust Your word
And live in reverent fear.*

(GE Stevens).

O, the wonder of faith in the true and living God! It shields, supports, strengthens, supplies and, coupled with love, forms the greatest power for good here upon earth. So, Lord willing, in this talk, we will seek to answer the following questions:

- How can "faith" be defined?
- Does everyone have faith?
- What is meant by "doing in faith"?
- When is faith found dead?
- Are there some people with special faith?

Let's begin by seeking to answer the question, "How can 'faith' be defined?"

In his *Dictionary of New Testament Words*, WE Vine states that faith means "a firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing". He continues by saying that, in the New Testament, it refers to faith in God, in Christ or in spiritual things. Furthermore, he reminds us that the main elements of faith in relationship to God (rather than man) include three things:

1. a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God's revelation or truth;
2. a personal surrender to God; and
3. a conduct inspired by such a surrender.

There are those who will not accept the full revelation of God found in Creation and in the Bible. They say there is no absolute truth. We even hear, so-called Christian ministers, stating that parts of the Bible are nothing more than myth or legend. Such people are lacking in faith. In fact, God looks into their hearts and there discovers why they say such things. The motive (along with their end) is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:12: "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

People say such things so that they can enjoy their sinful ways without the fear of answering to a holy God. Others profess to have faith and may even be in positions of responsibility in the church, but their lifestyle tends to deny the fact. So, you may ask, how should a person with faith behave? Well, along with faith, the fruit that marks a Christian is found in Galatians 5:22-23 where we find:

- a love that always seeks the best for its objects;
- a joy that is deep-seated knowing the God who delights to bless;
- a peace that has no fear of God, but acknowledges Him in every circumstance;
- a longsuffering that is prepared to forgive the adverse comments and actions of others;
- a gentleness that is reflected in all our actions towards others;
- a moral excellence that makes us trustworthy and faithful in the sight of others;
- a meekness that reflects the humility of Christ;
- and self-control that enables us to live stable God-centred lives.

Notice, that "love" heads the list. Love motivates faith. If we act in faith, then we act in love. This is not the "love" bandied about in popular songs or the lustful "love" used as an excuse for promiscuity. Nor is it the shallow "love" of many relationships today that, when tried, end so quickly in separations or divorce. This is a deep-seated love that

always seeks the highest good for the blessing of its object! It is expressed in the eternal relationship between God the Father and God the Son. There, love is seen in all its perfection.

The characteristics of love are found in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. They include: long-suffering, kindness, humility, graciousness, patience and unselfishness to name but a few. We also read that it does not reckon up evil, but does rejoice in the truth. It suffers silently and it endures under trial. These characteristics are all found in the impeccable life of the Lord Jesus Christ who, as a man dependent upon God, lived in faith on earth. Hence, we could say that a life of faith is a life of love.

This leads us to ask, "Does everyone have faith?" Well, there is certainly a natural faith that is exercised by people in their lives. If youngsters had no faith, then they would not seek to be educated in order to gain future employment; farmers would not bother to sow their seeds; the politician would have no manifesto; the labourer would not bother working; and the seriously ill would give up all hope. The whole of society is built upon this natural faith. Without faith, there is simply ruin. However, it must be stressed that "faith in God" is not simply trusting in the future; but being entirely dependent upon Him in every circumstance of life and living a life that glorifies Him in every way.

This is expressed in the scriptures that declare the just shall live by faith. In Habakkuk 2:4, we find this statement: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." The verse presents a contrast between those who are rebellious towards God, and those who are humbly submissive. It reveals the striking difference between the proud soul and one who is accepted by God - a person of faith. As another scripture says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

In Romans 1:17, we find a similar verse, namely: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." In this verse, the emphasis lies on the words "the just". The latter are those who have taken God at His word and put their faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. They realise that Christ was delivered up to death which was the punishment for their offences before God and that He was raised from among the dead in order to prove that they were made righteous before God. The hymn writer, Cecil Alexander put it this simple way:

*He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to Heaven,
Saved by His precious blood.*

In Hebrews 10:38 we read the following: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." The stress in this verse lies upon the word "live". If Christ has shed His blood in order to free us from sin and its judgement and been raised to prove that we are made the righteousness of God in Him, then our lives must reflect this. The book of Hebrews emphasises that faith is for the long haul. Faith is not a solitary event, confined to a distinct point in time; but it is a way of living. Those who have good and honest hearts will bear fruit for God in their lives (Luke 8:15). While, the race of faith must be run with a patient endurance (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Galatians 3:10-14 stresses the word "faith" when it states: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." The Old Testament law for life could not be kept by any person except for Christ Himself. Therefore, it failed to bring salvation to mankind. Instead, it brought judgement. However, when we look closely at Scripture, we can trace "faith" as the means of blessing from the beginning to the end. For example, it was the faith of Abraham that was reckoned to Him for righteousness. James 2:23 reveals this as it says: "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God." Faith is, therefore, the key to the treasures of God's blessing.

As a summary of this section, we may say that faith is an acceptance of the reality of God and the truth of His revelation that brings people to submit all that they have and are to His will.

This leads us to the question, "What is meant by doing in faith?" In writing to the Christians at Thessalonica, the apostle Paul comments on their work of faith, their labour of love and their patience of hope. By way of contrast, in the message of the Lord to the church at Ephesus, we read His commendation for their works, labour and patience; but without any mention of faith, love or hope. Any service for the Lord Jesus marked by the three things mentioned before, must prove more effective than work, labour and patience without them.

A "work of faith" is selfless work that is done to the glory of God. Christ Himself is the perfect example of this kind of work. In John 17:4, we read: "I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." This means that the Lord's servants must discover the will of God and submit to that will. This may only be achieved through personal prayer and study of God's word - communion! As the Lord Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

The “labour of love” is the translation of the love of God into constant toil by us in order that men might be blessed. It is seen in the unceasing toil of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of others. His love for men and for God led Him to the cross and its curse. His love was self-sacrificial. “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet- smelling savour” (Ephesians 5:2). It is also expressed through Paul and his fellows: “For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe...” (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

The “patience of hope” is that ability to endure while under pressure because we have a full confidence in all the promises of God culminating in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is expressed in the verse concerning the Lord Jesus Christ: “...Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2).

The joy of Christ related to every blessing that emanated from the cross, whether for God, man or himself. He has personally gained both earthly and heavenly brides; men have received salvation; and, God has gained both glory and children. This was part of the hope that motivated Christ.

Similarly, it is found in Paul: “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (2 Timothy 2:10).

Returning to “doing in faith” we can find at least three areas in which we can act. They are, primarily - towards God; towards the saints; and towards our fellows. These areas are covered as we are found to be those who:

- worship the Father in spirit and in truth;
- walk with God according to His will;
- work for the Lord among the saints and mankind;
- witness to Him; and
- fight for Him against His and our enemies.

There seem to be many strange ideas about the subject of “worship” today in various Christian circles, but John chapter 4 gives good instruction relating to it. In that chapter, worship is to be addressed to the Father. When we worship, we express the worth of the Father (in this case) in thought or word. It includes humility – a bowing of the heart before Him. This may be seen in the word used for “worship” which means “to kiss the hand towards”. We bow to kiss a hand. It is an act that shows both respect and affection. Furthermore, that worship is to be “in spirit”. This means that no physical means like pictures, statues, prayer beads or other artefacts are necessary. Furthermore, that worship is “in truth”. It is guided by the revelation found in the New Testament, in particular. Furthermore, worship does not require a special place like a church or temple. Individual and collective worship may be occur anywhere. Finally, it is by the power of the Holy Spirit of God who prompts us to worship (Philippians 3:3). Worship is not to be confused with “consecration” which is a giving of ourselves and that which we have to God.

If we are walking with God, then we have full communion with Him. This involves fervent prayer and the study of His word. Enoch walked with God and the Lord took him. We are encouraged to walk in love and be prepared to lay down our neck for the sake of Christ. The subject of “walking with God” is pregnant with truth and makes an excellent Bible study.

This leads us to consider working for the Lord. Generally, walking with God is linked with doing good works. Colossians 1:10 states: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God...” The definition of a good work is similar to that of a work of faith. It is a selfless work done in the will of God to the benefit of others. It is a work where God receives the praise. There are untold avenues of work for God that we may do while here upon earth. If you wish to know what He would have you do, then seek Him out on the matter.

Of course, these works are works of faith. They are done in obedience to God. James wrote that faith without works is dead. Faith must be exercised by works. James went on to state; “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18). He then gave examples of Abraham and the harlot, Rahab, as those who did works of faith. They were works done in full, unquestioning, submission to the will of God. The measure of love is obedience. If we love God, then we will obey Him. Firstly, He witnesses the works and, secondly, others acknowledge Him in them.

Someone once wrote:

*“The faith of the head is the faith that is dead;
The faith of the heart is better in part;
But the faith of the hand is the faith that will stand,
For the faith that will do must include the first two.”*

This verse emphasises that faith must dwell in the head, the heart, and the hand! A merely intellectual acceptance of the truth is not sufficient; willing obedience to the will of God is necessary.

Witnessing for the Lord is also a work of faith. It is His will that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations. That witness was to begin at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). Yet, even as we witness to the Lord, we must remember that it should be in the power of the Spirit of God and in accordance to the Bible. That means we should only use methods and media that would not grieve the holiness of the Spirit.

Then there is Christian warfare. We are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Here, “the faith” refers to the Christian faith. It was given once and does not change with times or cultures. Christians are responsible to stand up for the truth and to leave any company that is denying the word of God and, hence, the authority of Christ. Our spiritual enemies are the world (that evil of this world that rebels against God); the flesh (the sin we find within us); and the devil. We have two main weapons. They are the Bible and prayer.

Without doubt, there are people who have a special faith. We read of a gift of faith from the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:9. This is faith like that of George Müller. He depended entirely upon the Lord in order to provide the shelter and care for the orphans under his charge. His prayer was fervent and effectual in full communion with His Lord. It is reported that he would pray with an open Bible before Him. This showed not only that he prayed in accordance to the nature, attributes, works and ways of God; but also expected the same God to speak to him through his word. He is but one example. Consider those who have given their lives for the faith and those today who work in perilous conditions for the name of Christ. Their faith is able to move mountains. However, we are not exempt. Romans 12:6 indicates that there is a proportion of faith given to each of us as Christians. We are to use the gifts that God has given to each one of us according to that faith.

May we do so, for His name's sake.

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