

☞ Practical Faith

Review: We have received **Precious Faith** as a gift from God and it is **Powerful Faith** as we learn to hear his voice. The more we know him the stronger our faith will be. And we want to have **Persistent Faith** because that is what God calls great faith; a faith that never gives up, but keeps on pressing forward with the Lord.

Today: Practical Faith

☞ James 2:14-18

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? **15** Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. **16** If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? **17** In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. **18** But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

v. **24** You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

v. **26** As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

☞ **Faith and action are yoked together.** James says that **faith without** some kind of **action** is **dead** and it has **no value**. He adds that faith without action is **useless** and **incomplete**. Faith is more than just an intellectual belief. Even demons believe, but their belief has no value because true faith is put into action. In fact, James says that faith combined with action is what makes a person righteous. It's not just the faith, but faith with action.

Someone may say, "I believe in God," but when you check out his life, he may not be living his faith. His faith is merely of an intellectual nature devoid of any power to change his habits. We have to go further than just having an intellectual faith. Some say, "Oh, I believe in Jesus Christ," and then recite John 3:16. That is not enough. Our faith must be practical, for without it, it is impossible to have a practical godliness. The devil also believes, but he is not godly.

Even the very definition of faith suggests that it is practical and active...

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

☞ **Faith is having complete confidence.** *It is living as if something is real, even if it hasn't happened yet. Faith is choosing to trust even when the circumstances are not clear.*

☞ **Hebrews 11:1 NKJV**

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Substance = substructure or foundation; in other words, faith supports and sustains our hopes of a better future.

Evidence = proof; this implies action. Faith takes what we cannot see and proves it to be true. One commentary said this is opposite of the posture of shrinking back and languishing.

Faith is directly connected to action regardless of what or who you believe in. When we board a bus or plane, we have faith that the vehicle is in decent condition and the driver or pilot is fit and well trained. If we did not, we just wouldn't travel. When we sit on a chair, we have faith that it will bear our weight and not collapse under us. If we did not have that faith, we would remain standing. And we must have faith, trust, confidence in our friends and hopefully in each other gathered here, or we would live very solitary, lonely lives.

Another verse often quoted about faith is Hebrews 11:6 which says, “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

☞ Here again, we see faith and action working together. **Faith believes that God exists and then earnestly seeks him.**

Faith is practical. Faith and action work together like two legs walking. For you theologians out there, we can say that faith takes the first step, but then action is the next step which gives us forward motion. If you just move one foot forward all you have done is change position. To move forward, both feet need to get going.

Hebrews 11, the Hall of Faith chapter, gives examples of faith...

v. 7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.

☞ Here, we see what I've been saying – **faith begins by hearing God's voice**. Noah was warned. Then he had a holy fear which clearly implies belief. God said he was going to destroy the earth and it stirred a holy fear in Noah. Then his belief was followed by action and he built the ark. And his faith was persistent because it took him decades to build that ark. And it was all of the above working together which made it possible for him and his family to be saved. In the end, his **Precious** faith was **Practical** and **Persistent** which enabled him to experience God's **Power** of salvation through the ark.

v. 8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

Here again, Abraham heard God's voice and clearly believed since he had no idea where he was going. And his belief turned into action because he obeyed and went. And there's more about Abraham in Hebrews 11... he considered God faithful; that's belief. He offered Isaac on the altar as a sacrifice; that's action. And his action was grounded in his belief that God had promised his descendants would come through Isaac, so even if he killed him, God could raise him back up to fulfill his promise. Abraham had a very practical faith. He believed and acted. Just like Noah, he had a **Precious** faith that was **Practical** and **Persistent** and resulted in **Power**.

☞ Jesus said it this way in **John 13:17. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.**

Matthew 7:24

everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

All throughout scripture there is an expectation that when you hear God and believe, you will respond with some form of action. Faith is practical.

Even our modern culture understands this basic principle. **If you really believe something, ☞ you will act on it...**

"Put your money where your mouth is"

"Put up or shut up"

"Actions speak louder than words"

"Belief determines behavior"

Charles Blondin – who believes? Who will do...?

☞ **For Christians, we need to read the Word so that we can hear God's voice and be established in our beliefs and faith. Then, we must choose to act on what we believe.**

--Fulton J. Sheen... *If you don't behave as you believe, you will end by believing as you behave.*

That statement has some powerful ramifications. If you believe in the power of prayer, you will pray. But if you don't pray, you may start to believe that prayer doesn't really work. If you believe that God gave us his word in the bible, then you will read your bible. If you don't, you may come to believe that God has not spoken to us. If you believe that people need the Lord, you will tell them the Good News or at least support others who do by giving to missions and the like.

And the list goes on and on...

- Psalm 95... If you believe God is truly worthy of praise, you will sing for joy, shout aloud and come before him with thanksgiving.
- Matthew 6:14... If you believe God won't forgive your sins if you won't forgive others, then you will be merciful and forgiving to others.
- Romans 14... If you believe that God will judge you, then you won't be so judgmental of others.
- also Romans 14... If you believe that your behavior can influence another person's walk with the Lord, then you will be careful to do only what leads to mutual edification.
- 2 Corinthians 9:6... If you believe in the biblical law of sowing and reaping, then you will be a generous giver.
- Galatians 6:9... If you believe there is a reward for good works, then you will not grow weary or give up.
- Hebrew 4... If you believe that Jesus sympathizes with your weaknesses, then you will go to him in confidence to receive mercy.
- Hebrews 12:28... If you believe you are inheriting the Kingdom of God, then you will be filled with gratitude.
- 2 Peter 3... If you believe the Day of the Lord is coming with destruction, then you will live a godly life and look forward to a new heaven and earth.
- 1 John 4:8... If you believe that God is love, then you will show love to others.
- Revelation 19:7... If you believe that the Lord is coming back for his bride, then you will rejoice and be glad and give him glory!

☞ True Christian **faith** is not just an abstract, theoretical thing but something which **affects our thoughts, words and actions**, and not just on Sundays, but **every day of the week**.

For believers, it is essential for faith to impact how we go about our daily lives. Many people who attend weekly worship gatherings are in reality practical atheists. What do I mean by saying they are practical atheists? I mean they come to worship on Sunday but deny God by how they live their lives the rest of the week. Brennan Manning said, "The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips then walk out the door and deny him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable."

☞ **Do people know by the way you live your life that you have faith in God?**

Faith is Practical. It is not just an intellectual belief, but it includes behavior that shows trust in the Lord. Faith and action go hand in hand.

What has God been saying to you? Are you responding with some sort of action? Are you persisting, even if you've been waiting for years? Is your faith practical?