

Lesson # 7 -- The Evidence of Faith

Introduction

- A. While we cannot "find our faith" by searching -- we can easily "see" the manifestation or evidence of either faith or unbelief in our attitudes and actions.
- B. The Biblical principles related to these truths are very helpful for the believer -- as he attempts to learn how to live by faith.
- C. We have considered that faith is not a feeling but a decision which results in obedience to God that is carried out in trust. In this lesson I wish to develop these thoughts a bit further.

I. The Biblical Instruction

- A. The principle: Faith is proven and completed by actions.

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 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. Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well, the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? James 2:17-20

Comment: Because of the nature of faith -- works cannot be looked upon as unessential or even as an option. When we fail to put our decision of faith into some form of works (attitude or action) it is an evidence that we really have nothing more than a religious wish. True faith does more -- it produces some form of action which is characterized by trust.

This action, which serves as the evidence of faith, is in itself a way of clarifying and developing the very heart of faith. For example, when one trusts God to meet his need, as he expresses his faith in obedience regarding tithing, his daily life becomes a way his faith is developed and completed. The actions that grow out of his decision become, therefore, a vital part of his inner decision to obey God.

- B. The examples: Abraham and Rahab.

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? James 2:21,22,25

Comment: The difference in these two individuals could hardly be greater. Abraham had lived for years as a godly man and now at the peak of his spiritual life entered into a series of actions in which he obeyed God in unusual trust. His actions proved and completed (made perfect) his faith. Rahab, by contrast, gives evidence of her conversion by hiding the spies. It was a daring act and not only proved her faith but caused her decision to trust God to be enlarged and completed. These examples are given to us to enable us to see the relevance and value of those actions which demonstrate our faith.

C. The conclusion: faith is inseparable from action.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. James 2:26

Comment: These passages all press us toward the conclusion that actions are the evidence of our faith. The importance of this simple truth is demonstrated by its harmony with other truths of major value in Biblical Christianity.

1. It underlines the truth that Christianity is practical.
2. It underlines the truth that Christianity is personal.
3. It underlines the truth that Christianity is powerful.
4. It underlines the truth that Christianity is transforming.
5. It underlines the truth that Christianity is based on the character and the Word of God.

II. The Biblical Illustration

A. By faith Abel -- worshipped God correctly.

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh. Hebrews 11:4

Comment: This verse emphasizes the choice of Abel to respond to God and His Word by obedience and trust. His sacrifice was the symbol of his faith as well as its evidence.

B. By faith Enoch -- lived a life that was pleasing to God.

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him, for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Hebrews 11:5

Comment: This illustration indicates how Enoch's entire life was an evidence that he had genuine faith. The divine comment which explained this truth is found in the simple words: "He pleased God." This man lived in a very evil time -- before the flood. He is a reminder to each of us that we can put our faith into practice and please God.

C. By faith Noah -- built the ark and testified for God.

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Heb. 11:7

Comment: From the book of Genesis we know that it took Noah a long time to build the ark. The reason he did so, as it states in this verse, is that he responded to God's warning by faith which was coupled with fear (reverence). Building the ark was an evidence of his faith and desire to do the will of God. Through his obedience to God he not only made it possible for his family to be saved from the flood and also gave a choice to the non-Christians of his day -- which choice they rejected.

D. By faith Abraham -- journeyed in obedience to God.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb. 11:8

Comment: From this passage, and others in Genesis, it would seem that Abraham was not told where he was going or how long it would take him to get there. A part of what it meant to obey -- was simply to do the will of God, in trust, each day. By this method the Lord trained Abraham to trust Him so He could give to him some of the greatest promises and blessing which anyone could receive. Too often we overlook the importance of the day by day events in our daily life. When we learn to trust God in the small items -- we will be given greater opportunity to walk with God.

E. By faith Sarah -- judged God faithful and bore a child.

Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Hebrews 11:11

Comment: Sarah's response to the promise God had given to her and Abraham -- was to simply "judge God faithful." This was the "action" of her faith. She is a reminder to each of us that faith starts within. For her it was not related to a building project, like the ark, but to an attitude. She chose to believe God's promise and maintained that faith as an -- affirmation -- an attitude of the heart.

III. The Biblical Explanation

A. The action of faith in -- affirmation.

I will bless the LORD at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Psalm 34:1

I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my mouth Psalm 39:1

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. Psalm 42:5

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. Psalm 56:3

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Phil. 4:13

Comment: The action of faith in affirmation is one of the most valuable of all the facets of the Christian life. Every believer must first learn to believe God -- within -- before he can practice faith without. The illustration of Sarah is a good example for us. She simply believed God in spite of her age, and her life-long inability to have children. Many fail to realize that an affirmation is one important way of practicing the truth. The Christian must learn to choose to believe God and to express this inner decision (the heart of faith) by a Biblical affirmation (a summary of the decision).

Faith puts the truth into practice by affirmation.

B. The action of faith in -- confession.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
I John 1:9

Comment: What is the first step of faith in dealing with sin? It is confession. By this action of faith we are obeying God and opening the door to forgiveness and cleansing. We may not allow our powerful emotions or desires to keep us from obeying God. We do not have to "feel" sorrow or remorse to act by faith (make a choice of faith to obey God and put trust into practice by confession). We cannot receive the help we need until we practice faith.

Faith put the truth into practice by confession.

C. The action of faith in -- renunciation.

That ye put off concerning the former conversation (life) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. Eph. 4:22

Neither give place to the devil. Eph. 4:27

Comment: Freedom to live for God comes through inner decisions to renounce sin for what it is and to reject it in an attitude of trust in God. When tempted to gossip, to criticize, to complain, to covet, to lust, to pretend, to manipulate, to be proud, to be self-centered -- we must choose to put our faith into actions by refusal. Every believer has the ability to do this. We can learn how to do this quite easily -- if we want to.

Faith puts the truth into practice by renunciation.

D. The action of faith in -- prayer.

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.
I John 5:14

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. Mark 11:24

Comment: Now that we have grasped the principle -- how easy it is to see that prayer is a manifestation or evidence of the action of faith. In prayer we respond to the promise of God by an act of trust. We say to God, by prayer, I trust You and hereby affirm that I believe You are wise enough, powerful enough, loving enough, and faithful enough, in Your infinite perfection to meet my need.

Faith puts the truth into practice by prayer.

E. The action of faith in -- covenant.

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands, in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. Eph. 5:24,25

Comment: One of the clearest indications of faith is that agreement whereby two people pledge to enter into the relationship of marriage in which both parties choose to live in the context of obedience and trust in God. This is the Biblical characteristic of marriage and makes it possible for God to bless and preserve the relationship.

Faith puts the truth into practice by covenant.

F. The action of faith in -- service.

And he (God) said unto me (Paul), My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. II Cor. 12:9

Comment: The apostle Paul was given a "thorn in the flesh" to remind him of his dependence on God. When he learned what God had in mind, in his affliction, he said he was glad for the weakness, so he could experience even more clearly the power of God in his life and work. Every believer has many reasons why service for God is something he cannot even attempt to do. God calls us to obey Him -- in the practice of faith. When we do respond by faith, God will work in and through us for His glory.

Faith puts the truth into practice by service.

IV. The Application

- A. Reminder # 1: Faith is a decision to practice the truth with the attitude of trust in God. It is not an emotion. We do not need some type of emotional or rational support to exercise genuine faith.
- B. Reminder # 2: Faith can be nurtured, strengthened, and developed by the use of Biblical affirmations. The next page in this lesson has been designed for that purpose. Please use the Daily Affirmation each day in this next week as your declaration of faith. Look up the verses and learn how to state your faith.