

Christ Community Covenant Church
Life Stewardship: Faith in Action
Pastor Dave Scherrer - November 18, 2012

- ***Baptism of Megan Friskney***
- ***Q and A with Roger and Cyndi Dewey – Not equal giving but equal sacrifice***
- ***A Faith Moving Forward stewardship campaign update***
- ***Dinner RSVP***
- ***Pledge cards***

Video

We have been seeing all kinds of acts of faith today. We have seen evidence that these who have testified are hidden in Christ. This decision to give God the first fruits, and in the case of Roger and Cyndi, second and third fruits, to sacrifice for the Christian common good takes great faith doesn't it.

Well, let me define my terms a bit. To give God a financial token or tip doesn't require great faith. To acknowledge that God has given me everything, including a nice Thanksgiving pie, and then to live as though it is mine and I am entitled to help myself is a problem for our culture. The bench mark that God establishes for humankind is the tithe, 10%. But we also learned last week that God has raised the bar, expecting us to give according to the personalized commands of God to each believer. Not equal giving but equal sacrifice. That was Heidi Wolle's statement last week. In fact, we have been learning that those who claim to have faith in Christ and to be a follower of Him and then to fail to give to advance God's purposes have to ask a question; What is the evidence of my faith in Christ? If I cannot find anything to give to God, what then is the evidence of my faith? In a moment we will learn that saying you believe in Christ is not enough to save you. But hang with me! The smallest amount of 'saving' faith, the size only of a tiny mustard seed, will be enough to save you, give you a one way ticket to heaven. Faith that moves us forward is what we are talking about this morning as we wrap up our series.

Prayer

What do we know about 'Faith'?

We know that for Christians, faith is everything. Faith in Jesus Christ is the great separator of humanity and it is the unifying characteristic of every believer through time and around the world. We may worship different, sing different, serve different, think differently and dress different, but the one thing we all have in common is the object of our faith.

We know that without faith, it is impossible to please God

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

I remember when I committed this verse to memory in college. I memorized it a bit different:

... for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

It seems that faith in God is critical to a life that pleases God. It all starts there doesn't it? "Without faith it is impossible to please him." Does that mean that everyone that does good deeds but has no faith or love for God's Son does not please and impress God? That is exactly what this means. This reality is a stumbling block for many who do not believe in God but think that their seemingly selfless deeds and acts of generosity and ought to count ***if there were a God.*** The trouble is there is no act that is a truly 'selfless'

deed. I had a friend, 89 years old Dorothy, who used to call me 'Little Davey' and she would often quote to me:

“Only one life to live and this soon will pass
Only what’s done for Christ will last.”

So our faith pleases God, and we also know that our faith saves us:

We know the Christian is saved by faith

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

I have always been humbled by this verse. Not even our faith is ours to brag about. God gives us the faith we need to believe, and all the credit for my salvation goes to God and God alone. This idea of saving faith is something we will come back to in a moment.

We know the Christian is to walk or live by faith

2 Corinthians 5:7

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

[Discussion: When the Bible says we “walk by faith” what does that mean to you?]

To walk by faith is to put our hope in an invisible God, who has asked us to live according to a Kingdom that is not of this world. Our actions and behavior and ways of thinking may make little sense to someone who has only this world in their sights. Finally this powerful word:

Romans 14:23b

For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

This may be the most challenging verse of the day. And we will come back to it because it will make more sense in a moment. But what is clear from this verse is that there are two camps for humanity – no middle ground. There is to be at war with God and there is to be at peace with God.

There is to be cloaked in the righteousness of Christ and there is on the other hand to be judged by Christ a sinner. There is a whole sermon series in the subject of faith but let’s turn our attention to our passage and just finish getting a taste of what a faith that leads to action looks like. Once again we find ourselves in a famous and important part of Scripture. We are about to learn about three kinds of faith and only one does us any good.

Three Kinds of Faith

James 2:14-20, 26

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

DEAD FAITH

James 2:14-17

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Faith *without a changed life* is "Dead."

Three times in this passage the brother of Jesus makes the point that the kind of faith that he is referring to has no power to give life, to save us from our condition. He is not making a contradictory point to the passage we read by Paul when he says we are saved by faith alone not by works. He is saying the evidence of our faith is a changed life. Paul is looking at the root of salvation and James is looking at the fruit of salvation.

James 2:17: "Faith by itself is dead"

James 2:20: "Faith apart from works is useless"

James 2:26 "Faith apart from works is dead"

James is noting that when we are born again, when we are made new in Christ, there is evidence of our faith that is a new kind of behavior. New actions. There is a desire to perform good deeds that honor our Father who is in heaven. In this passage we see the connection again to giving to the poor and to a call away from indifference. The "go in peace" line is the equivalent of our "Take it easy" or "Have a good one". It is simply a closing saying. "Have a great one, hope you don't die." To behave in this manner would mean that our so called "faith" in Christ is powerless to give life. It is dead.

"No man can come to Christ by faith and remain the same, any more than he came into contact with a 220-volt wire and remain the same." *Theologian, Warren Wiersbe*

Then there is something many writers call demonic faith. It is the faith in Christ that even the demons have.

DEMONIC FAITH**James 2:18-19**

¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹

¹⁹ **You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!** ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

We see the faith of demons in the accounts of Jesus' life when he encounters them during His ministry:

Mark 3:11-12

And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." ¹² And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

You see it is possible to believe in Jesus as the true God and to not willingly submit to His rule and reign. Again this so called faith will do you no good when you face God one on one. This faith of the demons has no power to save. There is a dead faith and a demonic faith and this passage also shows us a dynamic faith or saving faith:

DYNAMIC FAITH: A Saving faith or Living faith**James 2:20-26**

²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Abraham and Rahab could not have been two more different kinds of people but what connects them is their faith that resulted in the actions of a changed life. The Pharisees had dead faith. They had faith in a god, but not the real God. They were worshipping the law, not Jehovah.

Contrast that with the faith of the widow who gave her last coins to the church. She had a living faith. A faith that changed her life. It is a great and terrible test to look at our actions to see if there is evidence of our changed life. And more often than not, we can look to our day timer and our check book to see if there is evidence.

Works of secret piety are essential to true faith. Does a man say I believe that Jesus died for me, and that I hope to be saved, and does he live in a constant neglect of private prayer? Is the Word of God never read? Does he never lift up his eye in secret with "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth"? Has he no secret regard in his heart to the Lord his God, and does he hold no communion with Christ his Savior, and is there no fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Then how can faith dwell in such a man? As well say that a man is alive when he does not breathe, and in whom the blood does not circulate. *Charles Spurgeon*

We can change our habits today and start to give more and go to church more, but that will be true evidence only if your heart is first given to God by faith in Jesus Christ.

Here is what we know: [Saving Faith Leads to Action - Always!](#)

What is James' point? Saving faith is always accompanied by a life that acts in accordance with saving faith. In this passage we see that we care about the poor, we bridle our tongues, we treat poor people and rich people the same. Our life must show that we mean what we say when we say we believe. Does your life reflect the desires of God? James says, "Christian, your life must show that you mean what you say when you say you believe."

*An update on our building plans
The land sale seems to be dead
We are calling the other interested parties
We are looking at plan 'B'*

We are moving forward to sell the land and build. We are looking to God and looking deep inside ourselves to see what kind of faith we have. The faith to walk by faith not by sight.

Psalms 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!

Prayer: Be thou my vision

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Though my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my True Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower;
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

Words: Dallan Forgail (8th Century)