

How Faith Behaves

by Dee Bowman

Faith is the foundation on which the Christian system rests. Without faith, there is no Christianity, no Jesus Christ, no salvation for man. “Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). It’s a passage with which nearly every Christian is familiar and to which every Christian subscribes. Faith is necessary, we all know that.

But the passage doesn’t stop at that point: it doesn’t quit when it says “without faith it is impossible to please him.” Nor does it stop when it says, “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.” It goes on to say, “and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Now, that part gets left out most of the time. And yet, it’s just as much a part of the verse as is the first part.

What that says is that belief, by itself, is not sufficient. There’s just more to faith than mental assent. There must be some action to demonstrate that faith, some activity that supports the contention that God is and that He rewards the faithful. Faith must behave itself.

Well, how does faith behave?

First, it behaves obediently. True faith does not question God. It does, without question, what God says to do. And it does not do what He prohibits. True faith has such abiding confidence in Who and What God is that there is never any question about what He requires. For instance, if He says we should be baptized for the remission of sins (Mk. 16:15-16), there is no hesitation about that: we just say, “here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized” (Acts 8:36). If He says “forsaking not the assembling of yourselves together” (Heb. 10:25), we don’t hesitate about that or ask why, we just go do assemble with the saints. When He says that the “disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread” (Acts 20:7), the true believer doesn’t question why that is required, he just comes together with the saints every first day of the week to observe the Lord’s supper. Real faith obeys.

Secondly, faith behaves consistently. That is, it doesn’t vacillate; it stays steady all the time. There is no such thing as a part-time faith, one you put on and take off when it’s convenient. You either have faith full-time or you don’t. And to just say you have it is not tantamount to having it, either. Faith is not something that you put on and put off, it’s something you embrace for the duration. “He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed,” we are told (Jas. 1:6). Faith is firm. Faith is fixed. Faith is secure. Faith is consistent, enduring, established and uncompromising. That doesn’t mean that

faith is mean- spirited; but it does mean that you can't bend it to fit the society or change it to accommodate the masses.

Faith behaves with hope. In fact, faith and hope are just about inseparable. Faith, for instance, believes all that God has said on a matter; and it puts its confidence in that so firmly that hope is the result. For instance, when the Hebrew writer gives us a characteristic definition of faith he says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hope, you see, rests on a man's faith. Without faith, there isn't any real hope. Faith firms hope; hope is supported by faith. Both the desire and expectation of heaven are the product of an abiding faith (1 Pet. 1:3). And when there is a coupling of faith and hope, based on the assurances and promises of God, it becomes "a lively hope," one that includes "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," for those who are "kept by the power of God through faith..." (1 Pet. 1:4-5). Just as surely as those verses are connected contextually, so is the faith and hope of which they so eloquently speak.

Finally, true faith is not mis-placed. Faith in God is stronger than anything man can imagine. Look at the ancients described in Hebrews 11. By it "the elders obtained a good report." Enoch's faith pleased God and because of it, he was "translated." Noah believed God and saved the people. Abraham went out "not knowing where he went," but knowing that by doing so, he was pleasing God. Sarah, Moses, Joseph, Gideon, and a host of lesser lights, pleased God by their faith and all "obtained a good report by faith" (Heb. 11:39). Faith caused all of them to receive the blessings of God. The fact is—faith works. And it is the same for us. Believe Him, do what He says, and be blessed. It's as simple—and yet as difficult—as that.

What about your faith? Is it there? Is it active? Is it real or imagined faith? Only you and God know for sure. Remember, "faith without works is dead, being alone" (Jas. 2:17). So, "be ye doers of the word and not hearers only..." (Jas. 1:23).