

Faith is a Verb– Sunday May 5th 2013.

***Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen..
(Hebrews 11:1)***

Beloved in the Lord,

A few weeks ago I saw a sign on a Church that said: “Faith is a verb.” This little sign is thought provoking and true. I would like to delve into this thought and look at two things; firstly that faith is an active work and secondly that faith produces works.

Firstly then, faith is a active work. Faith by definition is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.

Having an assurance requires an act of faith. We have to actively place ourselves in God’s Hands and actively seek His face in order to have this assurance and conviction that our text speaks of. Faith is a verb. It is a doing word. Faith is an action. Faith is not sitting back and saying whatever will be will be. Faith is not fatalism, but is an active pursuit of God’s will.

J.B.Phillips translates the verse this way: ***“Now faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see. “***

Faith is putting our full confidence in God. Faith is the foundation of our relationship with God and the basis of our hope. Faith requires us to do something, namely to place our trust in Almighty God and His Holy Word. Paul writes in Romans 12:1-2

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

I like the way this text says this is your spiritual service of worship. Service is a doing word. Serving is something we do. Serving God is an active ongoing process. Serving God is a conscious decision that we make. To serve God is to swim against the common tide. Most people around us do not serve God but serve themselves. The majority of people seek their own will and not God’s.

In order to swim against the tide you need to put in effort. You have to be swimming all the time, because as soon as you stop, the flow drags you along. You have to keep on swimming all the time. This is why over and over again in God’s Word we are commanded to stand, to be awake, to be on guard, to be active.

The tides of the times are very strong and if we are not actively building up our faith and working on our relationship with Jesus constantly, we soon get carried away into error.

Paul is urging us to present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. This is an ongoing work and not a one off event. We need to be constantly and consciously submitting our will to God's will. In the morning when we wake up, during the day, and as we go to bed at night. We need to act in faith, to give ourselves over to God and to place all in His hands in the name of Jesus.

The more we practice this, the more natural it becomes. You understand that God's ways are always the best and that He does all things well. You experience the great blessings that come from obedience to His will.

In the book of Jeremiah we read:

***"Thus says the Lord,
"Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind
And makes flesh his strength,
And whose heart turns away from the Lord.
6 "For he will be like a bush in the desert
And will not see when prosperity comes,
But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness,
A land of salt without inhabitant.
7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord
And whose trust is the Lord.
8 "For he will be like a tree planted by the water,
That extends its roots by a stream
And will not fear when the heat comes;
But its leaves will be green,
And it will not be anxious in a year of drought
Nor cease to yield fruit.
9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else
And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it? (17:5-9)***

These words are very similar to Psalm 1 where we find contrasted the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. Blessings come the way of him who trusts in the Lord and lives in faith and obedience. To the one who loves God's Word, reads it and abides by it. To the one who places His hope in God.

The last verse of this passage in Jeremiah tells us about the condition of the human heart:

***"The heart is more deceitful than all else
And is desperately sick;"***

Our heart is deceitful and it so easily abandons God, rebels against Him and seeks its own pleasures. Paul wrote that the good he desired to do, he did not do and the evil he hated is what he did. Then he pointed out that the only solution is Jesus Christ.

We read in Romans 7:24-25a

“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! “

Only Jesus can save us. Only Jesus can set us free here and in eternity and that is why we must actively pursue Him and place our trust in Him alone on a daily basis.

So then faith is a verb. It is a work in progress.

Secondly faith produces works.

Faith that does not produce works is dead faith. James writes in his epistle:

“What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

(James 2:14-18;26)

James rightly teaches us that faith and works are indivisible. They go together. Here again we see faith in action, it is not a passive thing. It is not right to say “I believe in God” and then do nothing and produce no fruit. So many profess a belief and then fold their hands in their laps and wait to be called home, as they rest in their blessed assurance.

That is not pleasing to God, and it is no good. Jesus said that the branch that does not bear fruit shall be cut down and thrown into the fire. God expects us to bear fruit for His Kingdom.

We are God’s ambassadors, His representatives, His agents here on earth. Our role is to be salt and light. Our role is to be witnesses to the truth. If we were saved simply for the sake of eternity in heaven, then God would take us the moment we are saved. The fact that we remain here, and as long as we do points to the truth that we have work to do. We must be about our Father’s business till Jesus comes or we are called out.

Jesus said: ⁴⁶“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the

***Father in My name He may give to you. ¹⁷ This I command you, that you love one another.”
(John 15:16-17)***

Clearly Jesus states that we are to bear fruit. Our faith needs to manifest itself in works. There must be fruit. The main fruit is love. Jesus commanded us to love one another. He said:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

You see love is also a verb. Love is not passive but active. Love is a manifestation of faith. Love and faith go hand in hand.

So then faith needs to manifest itself in works of love. This is only possible if we abide in Jesus. To tie all of this up we have the words of Jesus:

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. ⁹ Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.” (John 15:4-9)

When we not only entrust all to Jesus, but when we actively pursue faith and abide in Him, then, our lives will bear fruits of love and God will be honoured and people will be blessed.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise stated.