

"TRUE FAITH IS ACTIVE FAITH"

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For many years among professed Christians, there have been numerous and varied opinions when trying to discern the difference between 'outward works' and an 'active faith' (on God). A true Christian should understand that difference between 'actions of faith', and that of mere outward acts of a self-life (which have no spiritual value nor merit). In contrast, 'an acting faith' can be the difference between victory and defeat in the prayer life, because for a believer it is a 'step of faith' that leads to victory.

A life of 'active faith' at the feet of Jesus Christ, means to place oneself (and family) at the 'foot of the Cross' in faith, under the protective covering Blood of Jesus Christ,.. taking our requests to God in prayer (in the Name of 'Jesus'), and depending solely on God for fulfillment of His promises. That is the only place from where 'spiritual growth' can come (that vitally important and necessary "growth in holiness'). (Heb.12:14), "Persistently strive for peace with all men, and for that growth in holiness apart from which no one will see the Lord."

Refusing to place trust on other people and plans, rather, to place trust on God alone, should never be considered 'works', because it is necessary 'faith in action'.

We must first truly 'believe' God's Word about the atonement sacrifice His Son made in our behalf (and what that sacrifice truly accomplished for us). A 'believer' will then be enabled by the Holy Spirit to 'act in obedient faith' on God's Word and 'promises' (supported by Jesus' Blood), to receive deliverance from God, (which will always include 'spiritual growth' and 'blessing'). (2 Cor. 4:4) informs us, "The god of this age (that is the devil), has blinded the minds of 'unbelievers', so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

In fulfillment of that verse, the minds of many professed Christians have been blinded by Satan because of their unbelief. Some people have been deceived to say that a person acting in 'obedient faith' on God's Word, is 'works',...and that person is trying to 'work' their way into Heaven (instead of being 'saved by grace' through faith on the Son of God).

They say, that because they are saved by the grace of God, they are not required to obey the Word of God (on finances, divine healing, or other instructions given in His Word). God's Word, however, commands a Christian to 'believe on His Son', and that command must be faithfully obeyed, because it is above everything else what God requires from everyone. It is the one condition God places on His Will, and His plan for our Salvation. (John 6:29), "This", replied, Jesus, "is above all the thing that God requires—that you should be believers in Him whom He has sent."

There is direct teaching in the Bible (James 1 & 2) on the subject of attaining righteousness by an active faith (just as Abraham did), and it clearly explains how an 'active obedient faith' in God, really works. (James 1:22), "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

Abraham had to truly 'believe' God's Word first, and because he did believe, he was enabled by the Spirit to 'act' in obedient faith on God's instructions (and thus become an example for us). (Gen.15:6) "Abraham believed God, and his faith was placed to his credit as righteousness." Because he believed he received righteousness from the Holy Spirit and was then able to obey and trust on God's faithfulness to His Word. God did not consider it 'works' because Abraham acted in faith on His Word, rather, Abraham became a 'child of God' because he placed his trust on God. (John 1:12) "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his Name, he gave the right to become children of God." (Abraham's active faith was placed to his credit as righteousness.)

Jesus told us (Matt. 5:6), "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. (8) Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

In many instances a Christian will be taken advantage of by others (because they stand for what is right), but Jesus promised, (10) "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus further explained that it is obedient and faithful followers who enter the Kingdom (Matt.7:21), "Not everyone who says to me, 'Master, Master', will enter the Kingdom of the Heavens, but only those who are obedient to my Father who is in Heaven." (NKJV says) "he who does the will of My Father in Heaven."

Acting in faith on God and refusing to place trust on other people and man-made plans is not a 'works religion', instead, it is obediently doing "the will of my Father in Heaven" to enter His Kingdom (just as Jesus said we must 'do' if we want to enter there through the narrow gate). (James 1:22) "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

It is through faith on the Son of God (not by outward good works), that we are 'saved by His grace',...and, "This is above all the thing that God requires—that you should be believers in Him whom He has sent." (replied Jesus, John 6:29) ('believe', means to trust or to have faith).

Some people think that obedience to God's Word is not directly connected to an active faith in His Son, but faith and obedience are never separated in the Bible. To label faithful obedience as works, is an attempt to find excuse for unscriptural ways (and disobedience to God's Word).

We cannot separate faith from obedience to God's Word. (1 John 3:22), "Whatever we ask for we obtain from Him, because we obey His commands and do the things which are pleasing in His sight."

We first have to believe (and accept that Jesus was giving us God's Word) (which we are to obey). We are to have a forgiving heart toward those who dislike us (Jesus said);...we are to trust Him financially, and to scripturally use the money that passes through our hands—not go into debt. Also, we are to trust God in Jesus' Name for healing of our body, and not rely on medicine and drugs; (and, to trust Him in all other issues of life).

The truth is, that if one does not truly believe a word given to them, they cannot faithfully obey that word. Faith does not work that way. This is most important for us to understand, because when we believe in something (or someone), we will automatically place our faith in them. If, (by God's grace and guidance), we can truly understand what Christ's Atonement work on the Cross accomplished for us, then we will take our requests (in faith) only to the foot of that Cross. Our spiritual growth by doing this, will be the most important result of all, (as we will know God better than before).

Faith cannot be carried out if there is unbelief or doubt in a person's heart about something they were told (nor could one obediently do as someone advised them). Why would a person act in faith on something if they did not believe it was true? If you do not believe that a mechanic can repair your vehicle, you would not have faith to take it to them. In the same way, if we do not believe that God can (nor will) fulfill His Word for us, then the devil will try to have us put our faith on someone (or another plan) aside from God's command to trust on Him. Trusting (or putting faith in) anything but God, however, would be showing unbelief in God, which is idolatry (as Paul explained), and it is a disobedience of God's 1st. and 2nd. Commandments to have no other god but Him, (and to have no idols instead of Him). To act in faith (by placing trust on God alone), should never be called 'works', (as believers are sometimes accused of), instead, it is 'doing the will of God' via 'acting faith'.

A close union with Christ, comes through having an 'obedient faith' in God. (John 15:7-10 Jesus explained) "If you continue in me and my sayings continue in you, ask what you will, and it shall be done for you. By this is God glorified—by your bearing abundant fruit and thus being 'true disciples' of mine. As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you: continue in my love. If you obey my commands, you will continue in my love, as I have obeyed my Father's commands and continue in His love."

We can remain in that same blessed position as Jesus did, if we obey (keep) God's commandments. (NKJ says), "abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

Having faith in Christ (and believing in what His Atonement work accomplished for us on the Cross), is what enables one to keep God's Word first in their life. It is the only foundation for real faith. Apostle Paul explained (Gal. 5:), that outward religion means nothing, but that an inward spiritual faith on the Word of our unseen God in

Heaven (about His Son's atonement work for us), should be inspiring for a true believer. (5-6) "For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness (by faith). The only thing that counts is 'faith' expressing itself through love."

Doing what God's Word tells us to do, is not 'works', it is faith on His Word and acting from our love for God (a desire to be a true disciple of Christ). (He said), "If you love me, you will obey my command," (John 14:15). And Jesus did command us how to do, regarding many important issues in life. Exercising an active faith in keeping God's command to trust on His Son, is not 'works', but it is an expression of obedience because of a genuine love for Christ (and our not wanting to disobey Him). The devil likes to cause confusion, by suggesting that obeying the Old Testament, and following Christ's commands in the New Testament, are both works. However, in speaking of Abraham's obedience (James 2:22 says,), "Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?"

We need to realize that God's 'Promises' all have 'yes' added to the end of them, and that is what we must 'believe' if we want to place our trust in God's Promises. Every time we pray for all those things which Jesus has already purchased with His own blood, those 'Promises' are saying to us, that God has already heard and answered our prayer. When we pray, we are really asking for God's mercy, which God has already extended to us through the Atonement work of His Son on the Cross. In faith, we should believe we have received the first time we pray, and not have to keep pleading for God's mercy (making the same request) because of our unbelief. It is a 'principle of Truth' that the Holy Spirit has to teach all of us. That is why the spiritual blessing received (with each answer to a prayer made in faith) is so important in the Christian life.

There are three actions of real faith; ask, believe, and receive. That is God's "plan for deliverance". After we have definitely placed our request before God (with no reservations or compromise), we should not doubt (or not believe for what we had prayed). Rather, we continue with our 'stand of faith' to receive that answer to our prayer, and, with a request to be shown why we have not received.

The 'condition' Jesus gave for receiving our answers to prayer, is to believe that we have already received when we ask, because God is faithful to His promises. No matter what the situation might be, we are required to take a risk on the faithfulness of God's Word to us through His Son, His apostles, and prophets before Him. (Mark 11:24) "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, 'believe' that ye have received them (Jesus said), and ye shall have them."

Therefore, if we have really believed that God has heard and answered our prayer, why should we ask over and over again (for the same thing? the late Pastor asked). If one of our children would ask for permission to do something, and we had told them, "Yes, you may do so", .. then they would ask the same question again, .. we would

conclude that they did not really believe us when we had said 'yes' the first time they asked.

(1 John 5:14-15) "And we have an assured confidence that whenever we ask anything in accordance with His will, He listens to us. And since we know that He listens to us, then (whatever we ask), we know that we have the things which we have asked from Him." (By faith on the power of the Atonement Blood of Jesus Christ, we can have every scriptural prayer answered.)

This being true, why should we ask over and again instead of believing to receive (what we had already prayed for)? The devil wants us to give up the Atonement right that we have, to pray and receive by faith.

An example of this is in the case of the nobleman whose boy was sick, (John 4:46-54). He came to Jesus and first asked Him to heal his son. Jesus said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." That answer did not grant the father's request, but he refused to doubt (nor to give up) on the request that he had already made. (He said in faith), "Sir, come down before my child dies." (He was still believing that his prayer would be answered). Jesus then gave the man His Word (instead of going with him), and here is where we see genuine faith taking action, for the man believed the words of the Son of God. We want to take note of that, because if we believe God's 'written' Word, it should mean the same to us today as His 'spoken' Word meant to that man whose boy was sick.

"You may return home," replied Jesus; "your son has recovered." He 'believed' the words of Jesus and started back home; and he was already on his way down when his servants met him and told him that his son was alive and well. So, he inquired of them at what hour he had shown improvement. "Yesterday, about seven o'clock," they replied "the fever left him." Then the boy's father recollected that that was the time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son has recovered," and he and his whole household became believers."

That man's true 'faith in action', ...bore fruit within his whole household. His faith was also recorded to be a spiritual 'light' for others, (and for us) to portray in our life.

God's written Promises should mean the same to us, as if He were standing here in person telling us that He has heard and answered our prayers. We want to ask God in fervent, personal, and private prayer, to reveal the hindrance (where our faith is 'lacking'), and ask Him to strengthen our faith, just as Jesus' disciples asked Him "strengthen our weak faith".

When we truly believe God's Word (that our prayer is answered), the second action of receiving through our valid 'faith' is to rejoice, 'praising' and 'thanking' God for the deliverance (even before we see, feel, (or have) the deliverance or answer to prayer).

[When Jehoshaphat and God's people of Israel were surrounded by three great armies (2 Chron, 20:20-22), "Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the

LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.' And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: 'Praise the LORD, For His mercy endures forever.' Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated." [God's people had praised God before they even saw their deliverance and victory.]

If we were in a trial (going through temptation from the devil), and we had placed the whole matter in God's hands definitely, for Him to deliver us, and we really 'BELIEVED' in our heart that we had the answer" (the Pastor asked), "how could we do anything but 'rejoice' . and thank' God. Real faith 'rejoices' in the Promises, (as much as if it sees the deliverance and is already enjoying it). This is because we truly believe on the power of the Atonement Blood of Christ, and, that it supports every promise from God.

The third action is for us to 'step out' in true faith by acting in faith, because we are 'believing' God's Word that our prayer is answered. It is 'actions of faith' (that God's Spirit inspires from within a believer) as we believe, ... because Jesus told us the Spirit He would send is for 'believers' (not unbelievers in the world). "The world cannot receive Him" (He said, John 14:17).

(James 2:14), "What good is it, my brethren, if a man professes to have faith, and yet his actions do not correspond? Can such faith save him? (17) Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have actions is dead."

This vital principal is not recognized by multitudes of people who are not acting in harmony with their professed faith. The average Christian claims to be trusting and believing in God, but in time of temptation (and trial) they turn their trust to other things. They act opposite from the faith they profess in God, (by seeking help from many plans of man).

(In summary), when we truly believe (and, as we 'place our trust' on God's Promises), that will be faith working through our love and obedience to Christ. It is evidence that we believe in what the power of His shed blood on the Cross has done for us. We are then on our way toward having conditions of the Garden of Eden restored in our life, because God has not changed, and He will do the same things for us as He did for people in the Bible times (who acted in faith). Everything in the true Christian life is by faith'. We cannot remind ourselves too often of that vital truth!

When we refuse to place our trust in something else (because God told us to trust on the One whom He has sent), that is not 'outward works' (nor trying to earn our way into Heaven), because it is "by faith" that we are "saved by God's Grace". [It shows, instead, that "those who possess faith are true sons of Abraham".]

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