

A Faith that Works

Simply Teaching the Word Simply—Pastor Chuck Smith

Pastor Chuck Smith, founder of the Calvary Chapel family of churches, went to be with the Lord on October 3, 2013



Remembering without ceasing your work of faith.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:3a

If I were to stand before you on a Sunday morning and say, “I have credible information that terrorists have planted a bomb in this church. In fact, it’s going off in 30 seconds,” but then I continued to give my message in a calm voice, how would you react? You’d probably say, “He’s just teasing us.”

But if I were to say, “Terrorists have planted a bomb in this church! IT’S EXPLODING IN 30 SECONDS!” and I sprinted toward the door, I’ll bet you’d say, “Let’s get out of here!”

In the second scenario, my actions lined up with my words. My actions followed my professed belief. It is exactly the same with a life of faith. If I tell you that Jesus Christ is my Lord and I continue to walk and live after the flesh, you would have reason to doubt my faith, for true faith will always reveal itself in a life of obedience to God. This is why John wrote in his first epistle, “*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*” (1 John 2:3-4).

To profess one thing and then do the opposite is to lie. If you say, “I know Jesus Christ,” and you don’t obey His commandments, you do not have a saving faith. The only faith that will save is a faith that responds and reacts in obedience to God. Glad obedience proves your faith.

The Work of Faith

Many people have the idea that works and faith are mutually exclusive. They consider these words to be something of an oxymoron—if you have faith, then you don’t work; and if you work, then you don’t have faith.

Wrong.

It is true that Paul places great emphasis on the fact that our works can never obtain for us a righteous standing before God, no matter how good those works might be. He

states repeatedly that it is not by the works of the law, but by faith, that we are saved. “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law—this is Paul’s theme throughout his writings. And yet in 1 Thessalonians 1:3, this same apostle Paul commends his believing friends for their “*work of faith.*”

What does Paul mean? If we have true faith in Jesus Christ, our faith will manifest itself in our works. We respond to the blessings and grace of God by the works we do for Him freely, out of a heart overflowing with love. We do not look at our works as gaining any special favors with God. We don’t think, *I’m righteous because I pray so much, and I read the Bible so much, and I study so much, and I minister so much.* We do these things because we have received a glorious position of righteousness in Christ through faith. Good works come out of a believer’s life as a natural response to the grace of God.

Fighting Epistles?

Some people say that the apostles Paul and James are at variance with each other, contradicting one another in their epistles, but that’s simply not so. Paul speaks of the kind of faith that produces works; James speaks of the kinds of works produced by faith. The two apostles are talking about the same thing. True faith always manifests itself in the works of a life of faith. James asks, “*What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?*” (James 2:14).

If your faith does not prompt a positive change in your life, then you’re no different from anyone else.

You might say, “But I believe in Jesus!” If nothing godly follows your belief—if it doesn’t result in obedience or in serving the Lord—then can that kind of faith save you? James answers bluntly: *Faith without works is*

dead. He writes, “*But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works*” (James 2:18).

True faith is more than just a verbal affirmation that you believe in Jesus Christ. True faith demonstrates its reality in the work you do for Jesus. Paul said, “*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all*” (1 Corinthians 15:10a).

The apostle insisted that the grace of God in his life provoked him to greater labor—more labor than all of the other apostles. Paul did

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not labor for the Lord in order to develop a righteous standing before God or to boast that he outworked his fellow apostles. His works grew out of the abundance of blessings that God had bestowed upon him, by grace through faith.

And so it must be with us. When I declare Jesus is my Lord, this means I am His servant. Whatever He says, I am to do without question. Since Jesus commands us to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, follow Him, and to be a witness of Him in the world, He can rightfully say, “*When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do*” (Luke 17:10b).

You and I therefore need to ask ourselves a question: *What works of faith are being manifested in my life?* ↻

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