

## Real Faith or Just Good Works?

Bill Brinkworth

The one thing that has kept many out of Heaven, even professing Christians, is discussed in James 2 (vss. 14-26). Sadly, those people may have thought they had done what was necessary to obtain Heaven, but found out they were mistaken. The faith that they thought would bar them from an everlasting torment, turned out not to be “real” faith.

Just believing in God is not saving, or trusting faith! Even the devils believe in God (James 2:19). They tremble at the mention of Him, yet their “faith” will not save them any more than that kind of faith will save anyone.

Satan has even talked to God; yet his knowing the Creator is not going to get him into Heaven.

Knowledge is not necessarily faith. I can believe that there is a president in the Whitehouse, but that faith does not make me a member of his family or even part of his cabinet. Real Christian faith is more than knowing about spiritual things.

The one ingredient that makes faith real is that one trusts one’s belief alone to save him. That trust is exhibited by one’s works, and often observed by others around him.

One believes that Jesus died on the cross for his sins, and by faith trusts that sacrifice as

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## Ephesians 2:8-9

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## What Pleases God

Bill Brinkworth

Beginning in Hebrews 10:38 and continuing throughout the chapter, Paul writes about another important spiritual concept that the Hebrews needed to understand. He wrote about faith. This concept was also prevalent throughout Old Testament times, and should have been recognized by the Hebrews.

More about “faith” is continued in Hebrews 11. It is in Heb. 11:1 where one will read the best definition of what faith really is: “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” Faith is what one has when he is convinced that without visual proof, what he is desiring will come to fruition. Those with faith know what they require will happen! The expectation is so great that it is actually “substance”.

Much of the chapter gives highlights from the lives of believers the Hebrews would have known, and how faith was the driving force behind what they

accomplished. Over nineteen Old Testament saints were cited in “God’s Hall of Faith” for their great faith in their mighty God.



Three examples of the faith of Abraham (vss. 8, 9, 17), four from Moses (vss. 24, 27-29) were in the list, as were those of Abel, Enoch, Noah, and many others.

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## Look Up, Not Around

Bill Brinkworth

Like most of us, there was a time when Peter’s faith was stronger than other times. Peter found himself in a boat with vehement winds, and threatening waves all around him. The craft was tossed helplessly by the powerful sea when he and the other disciples saw a most unusual, unbelievable sight. They saw Jesus walking toward them, and He was walking on top of the waves!

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## What Pleases God

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Not only were some of the accomplishments of noted saints specifically mentioned, but also general references to other heroic steps of faith by others. “Prophets” in general were cited for their faith (vs. 32). Also, unnamed heroes of the faith that would not move from righteousness, but hung onto their faith even unto their death were also listed in verses 33-37. Many of the unnamed may have been known by those Paul wrote to, as many Christians were facing persecution and still would not waiver in their faith, even at the cost of their lives.

Faith is the crucial thread that runs from the earliest believers, throughout the Old and New Testaments, and even today. We can do all kinds of things that we may think please God. Some people are even convinced that their good intentions and works are enough to please Him. Without faith, verse six says, “... it is impossible to please him...” The one thing that all believers must have, if they want to please God, is uncompromising, unwavering, and unrelenting faith in their heavenly Father — whatever He requires of them! *“But 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.”*

*Hebrews 11:6*

## Look Up, Not Around

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After talking with Jesus, Peter was summoned to the Saviour’s side. Without question, the disciple stepped out of the boat and joined Jesus, and he also walked on water! However, his victory over all normal laws of nature did not last long. When he looked around, he felt the hard-blowing winds and saw the boisterous waves. He became afraid, and began to sink. His lack of faith changed what was happening in his life.

Many Christians start out their Christian walk in a similar way as did Peter when he jumped out of the boat. When they get saved and see the wondrous changes that the Lord has accomplished in their lives, their zeal is great. They faithfully attend church, read their Bible, and converse daily with God in prayer; then something happens to dull the excitement and fervor of their serving God. Perhaps it was an unkind word uttered by another, or a question that they may be doing too much. Maybe looking around they saw that others were not going on church-wide visitation, or they saw that too many lived differently most of the week than they did on Sunday. No matter what got them to question what they were doing for the Lord, they fell the same way Peter did; they looked around and their faith was weakened.

When anyone looks around

and sees only what the natural man sees, he will be discouraged and have his faith challenged. Looking toward a pastor or leader in a church may be a better example than most have, but that leader is made of the same flesh that you and I are made of. There may be a time that he may let you down.

The only one that is perfect and cannot let you down is Jesus. Do what Peter did for a short time; keep your eye on God. Look and lean on Him. Do not look around, compare, and criticize what others are doing. We may all let you down one day, because we are no more perfect than you; but look above. The Lord will never leave you nor forsake you, nor let you down.

## Real Faith or Just ...

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payment for his sins. One believes by faith that Jesus will hear his prayers, so he talks to Him every day. A believer believes the Bible is God’s Word, so he tries to follow every commandment Its pages reveal. The saved person, by faith, believes that God will meet his every need. The believer patiently waits for Him to meet his needs, rather than impatiently racking up credit card debt because God did not provide in the time expected. One tithes because God commands it, and the child of God

knows God will somehow help him live on less. These steps into uncertain situations may seem foolish to one not living by real faith, but to the faithful these steps are works proving that their faith is real.

Faith without these “works” (proofs) is not real faith. Three times (vss. 17, 20, 26) faith with works is referred to as “dead.”

*“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”*

*James 2:17*

Many know the “works” part is important and try to incorporate it in their own theology. Unfortunately, they get the order wrong. They put the works first, and think that it will save them and prove that they have faith. To prove their faith, they try to do religious ceremonies or do good deeds. They try to clean up their life, try to act righteously, and do many other good works. These acts, as noble as they may appear, are not done by faith. They are attempts to pay for God’s approval and are not done by faith at all. One cannot work one’s self to Heaven.

Faith is extending one’s trust, unproven and unseen, towards God first. The proof of the trust is that the “works” show one is acting on his faith’s behalf. This may seem like a fine line to some, but it is the line that separates the saved from the unsaved. Is your faith manifested by your works of faith?