

# **GOD'S WORD: SOURCE OF FAITH**

By

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There is one thing that often received Jesus' approval as he moved among people. We do not read of him giving praise to anyone for his or her education, or for his or her talent in the arts. He commended no one for their success in business or for their accomplishments in sports. But on several occasions Jesus did commend those to whom he ministered and it was always on their faith.

“O woman, great is thy faith” (Matt. 15:28). “I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel” (Matt. 8:10). “Thy faith has saved thee” (Luke 7:50). “Thy faith has made thee whole” (Matt. 9:22). Faith is the one thing that Jesus looked for in each individual.

The book of Hebrews begins by reminding us that while God in times past spoke to the fathers through prophets and various other means, He has “at the end of these days spoken to us in His Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). Jesus repeatedly stated that the words he spoke were not from himself, but from God (John 12:50, 14:10). He declared, “He that rejects me, and receives not my sayings, has one that judges him: the word that I spoke the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

In the parable of the seed, the seed was the word of God, and only those who heard the word and accepted it were able to bear fruit (Mark 4:14-20). Peter wrote that the redeemed have been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which lives and abides...for the word of the Lord abides for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23-25). Timothy was “nourished in the words of faith” (1Tim. 4:6), and to the Colossians Paul wrote, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God” (Col. 3:16). This means that each Christian should be so familiar with the word that he can teach it to others.

Much that is called faith today has nothing to do with the faith Jesus talked about. One may say that he has faith in God. But faith that God is what? That He demands what? Will do what? The writer of Hebrews says, “It is by faith that we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God,” and that, “without faith it is impossible to be pleasing unto him, for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him” (Heb. 11:3, 6). This means to have complete faith that God is the one almighty God of creation, and that it is our privilege to learn of Him and receive His promises.

Christian faith is belief in reality, the truth as revealed in the scriptures. “Belief comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). It was in hearing the truth that

God had revealed through Christ and the apostles that created in their minds the faith by which they were saved and that motivated them to obedience and godly living.

Since faith is absolutely essential for our salvation and the word of God is the only means of attaining that faith you would think that the word would be resounding from every pulpit every Sunday. But not so. Dr. David L. Matson of Westwood Hills Christian Church in Los Angeles reported that a full Gospel Baptist Church was paying \$5 per hour during the month of August for white people to attend its Sunday services in an effort to increase racial diversity. Then he suggests that there are ways many churches engage in the practice of paying people to attend. “We pay people to go to church when we give them what they want, and what many people want most today in our media-saturated culture is to be entertained. Thus, it is extremely important that people ‘enjoy’ our worship service, that we make it as ‘exciting’ as possible, we raise the energy level to compete with other forms of entertainment readily available in our society...And what better way to make it worth their while than to ‘pay’ them with a lively band or a dramatic skit?”

Dr. Matson goes on to say, “We pay them when we pander to them. Some people attend church simply to help themselves cope with a problem or deal with some addictive behavior. In an attempt to be relevant to their needs, preachers become psychologists, theology becomes therapy, and sermons become sessions on the psychiatrist’s couch. While church should always be a place for hurting people to find the healing that can only come from God, it is not a hospital. A hospital is a place one *leaves* after one gets well; a church is a place one *stays* after one gets well...” (*The Cathedral Messenger*, Aug. 24, 10808 LaConte Ave. Los Angeles, CA).

Faith is not emotion. It is not a feeling. There are a great number of mega-churches where thousands gather for an hour or two to hear emotional illustrations, or to watch a humorous skit or video, and find out how to feel good about themselves. No one is convicted of sin. The righteousness and justice of God and the necessity of the cross of Christ are never mentioned. Instead of preaching repentance and self-denial the appeal is to “one’s felt needs.” Christian faith is lacking because the word of God upon which faith must rest is lacking. The fact is, no one knows the first thing about faith and Christian living except through the word of God given in scriptures. The psalmist had it right when he wrote, “They word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11).

The disciples, knowing the emphasis Jesus placed on faith, came to him one day, saying, “Lord increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). The Lord responded by saying that if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed they could do wonders. Then he gave them a lesson on obedience, which was to say that the test of faith was in obedience to the master’s will (Luke 17:7-10).

Jesus made it clear that just to know God’s word is of no value unless one acts upon it. “Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

He drove home this lesson in the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount: “Every one therefore that hears these words of mine, and does them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended. And the floods came, and he winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And everyone that hears these words of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon the house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof” (Matt. 7:24-27).

It is a marvelous thing that almighty God has revealed Himself to us and given us His word, that not only we might know Him, but that we might know our own purpose and what we are to do to fulfill it. **Our faith will grow in direct proportion to our willingness to deny ourselves and obey all that God asks us to do.**

After the commandments were given at Mount Sinai, the Israelites were put to the test in the wilderness. Moses said that God afflicted them in the wilderness that he might teach them “that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live” (Deut. 8:3).

There is no substitute for God’s word. If you would have faith, faith that will sustain you when the rains fall and the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon your house, then you must know the word. Then you will be like the man in Psalms 1, whose “delight is in the law of Jehovah; and on his law doth he meditate day and night...and he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of living water.” (Psalm 1:2-3).

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”

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