

BACK TO THE BASICS OF FAITH

The Two Faces of Faith

A misconception has crept in and settled in the minds of a whole lot of folks. It has caused a great deal of confusion in the faith arena and left a ton of us scratching our heads without so much as a clue as to why we're confused. The fact that we don't know why we're confused speaks to how subtle the misconception is. What is it? It's what some in the theological world describe as the *"two faces of faith"*.

In the Old Testament, we see very little of this word *"faith"*. There are many reasons for this, but for our purposes here, we will explore what I believe is the major reason. The Old Testament does not cover the principle of faith in the way that the New Testament does because, quite simply, Jesus Christ does not come on the scene until the Gospels. Most of us consider the Gospels to be the beginning books of the New Testament.

Jesus Christ is the definitive author of our faith. He lived, ministered, died, was resurrected, ascended to heaven, and is now seated on the right hand of God. He accomplished all of this through faith. Now, through him, we have access to it. By trusting Christ we can use this same extraordinary substance to become righteous and please God in the same way that His Son did. Without faith, as you know, it is impossible to please the Father. Galatians 2:16 (The Message) says *"We know very well that we are not set right with God by rule-keeping but only through personal faith in Jesus Christ. How do we know? We tried it—and we had the best system of rules the world has ever seen! Convinced that no human being can please God by self-improvement, we believed in Jesus as the Messiah so that we might be set right before God by trusting in the Messiah, not by trying to be good."*

Trusting in the Messiah to the point of making him Lord over our lives is our first act of true faith. We couldn't possibly have become good enough on our own to be righteous. We needed him to show and teach us the way. The belief and acceptance of what Jesus Christ made available literally transfers us from death to life, and causes us to become new creatures. After this rebirth, we must then continue to build upon our relationship with God through Christ by doing things that honor our commitment to the faith.

The things that we do to build upon our faith also cause us to grow in spiritual stature. These things, whatever it is that we do for the Kingdom, are directly related to our level of belief in Christ, so therefore, what we do to preserve our relationship with Christ is directly related to how much we are able to demonstrate faith and see results.

"Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group."

New King James Version, © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

"The Two Faces of Faith" written by Reverend Fran Times-Mack, edited by Kim Times for Sundie Morning Sistas ©2009. All rights reserved. All done to the glory of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! Sundie Morning Sistas is dedicated to spiritual inspiration and encouragement through the Word of God.

Notice in the previous paragraph that I talked about having a commitment to the faith. I'm sure this is something you have heard mentioned numerous times in church. Like most people, the term "*commitment to the faith*" has prompted you to make an unconscious distinction about this word "*faith*". You perhaps have segregated it to the same place in your mind where you have housed religion and tradition.

When you are thinking about your own personal "*commitment to the faith*", the visual of our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, hanging on the cross may come to mind. You might also equate this commitment to your loyalty to your religion, church, or faith community. This is of course because you have made the connection between your belief in Jesus Christ and your obligation to practice and honor this very central and life-changing belief.

This is known as "*one face of faith*". It is when the believer understands the sanctity of his or her belief in Christ. He or she has a respect for the broad stroke of Christianity which now encompasses several religions that honor Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone and head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:10). So this is the face of faith that translates to a committed belief in God through Christ, sometimes in a very religious way. It is where an individual sees his or her faith as their connection to Christ, as well as the foundation of his or her relationship with him.

The "*second face of faith*" has achieved maximum exposure in more modern times, particularly in the last few decades. The past twenty or so years has witnessed a lavishness of wealth that is quite possibly unparalleled in modern history. The tune to which we have seen "*Platinum this...*", and "*Fabulous that*" splattered across our TV screens borders on the absurd. If it has done nothing else, it has elevated our thinking regarding the true meaning of the term "*God's Best*". With the onset of excess, the application of faith as it applies to what you and I can possess and accomplish has come to the forefront of Christian consciousness.

All of us have tried to garner a little bit of that lavish excess for ourselves. Most of us did so by jumping on the "*too many credit cards*" bandwagon, and took to living way beyond our means. Recently we've seen the facade of wealth wear tragically thin for a whole lot of folks. Now left with a global financial system that has crumbled and is still trying to recover from it, the degree to which we, as well as our family, friends, and acquaintances, have been affected has left too many of us with a faith teetering on collapse.

Whether unconscious or not, we've separated faith into two faces by placing one in the context of how we view our relationship with Christ, and the other as what we can receive and accomplish as a result of this relationship. The duality can be very troublesome because it causes us to leave out an extremely important component, and that component is the work that we must do to back our faith.

"Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group."

New King James Version, © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

"The Two Faces of Faith" written by Reverend Fran Times-Mack, edited by Kim Times for Sundie Morning Sistas ©2009. All rights reserved. All done to the glory of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! Sundie Morning Sistas is dedicated to spiritual inspiration and encouragement through the Word of God.

We can't just leave Jesus Christ up on the cross. We have to see him rise up on that third day with all power in his hands. Many of us stop just short of comprehending the enormous, victorious reality of what he accomplished. We stop short because we are unwilling to recognize and accept his call to action. Jesus said *"I am going to be with my Father, but I'm leaving you something very special when I do. It's a comforter that will operate on the inside of you, and you'll need it because you have so much work to get done. You've got to continue my legacy. When you receive the Holy Spirit, you'll witness a new boldness and power to get stuff done for the Kingdom. So don't sit around twiddling your thumbs! Get busy doing what I called you to do!!!"*

So as it relates to faith, we become confused because we don't connect the dots. We don't associate our belief in Christ with the responsibility to prove this belief by what we do. We make the mistake of thinking that we are sufficiently believing in God through Christ, when our works don't indicate a strong belief at all, and then we sit around wondering why we don't see results.

The sanctity of our faith is the preciousness of our walk with Christ. This same faith is the marvelous thinking substance of the universe. They are one and the same. If you say that you really, really, really love and believe in Christ, but you do nothing for the Kingdom, and you sit around waiting for something great to happen, then you are confused. You've missed the fact that Christ was showing you how to do what he did, because he intended you to do it. We must grasp entirely that this same Jesus who died on the cross, rose again. He said in John 10:17 KJV, *"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again."* Death couldn't keep him in the ground; he was victorious over it. He demonstrated for us the awesomeness of his power! This same power is at work in you!!!

James 2:22, 26 (The Message)

22 Isn't it obvious that faith and works are yoked partners, that faith expresses itself in works? That the works are "works of faith"?

26 The very moment you separate body and spirit, you end up with a corpse. Separate faith and works and you get the same thing: a corpse.

Ephesians 3:20 (New King James Version)

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

Read this group of scriptures thoroughly, over and over again if you have to. I love how clear cut James 2:22,26 (The Message) lays out the hand and hand relationship of faith and works.

"Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group."

New King James Version, © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

"The Two Faces of Faith" written by Reverend Fran Times-Mack, edited by Kim Times for Sundie Morning Sistas ©2009. All rights reserved. All done to the glory of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! Sundie Morning Sistas is dedicated to spiritual inspiration and encouragement through the Word of God.

You've got to back up your faith with right action. You can't just do any ol' thing and declare you're walking in faith; absolutely not! The works you do ought to speak volumes about your commitment to Christ. This is the only way that you can have any degree of confidence that you are truly believing with a Christ kind of faith.

Take a look at Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV). It tells us a bit about the kind of expectation we can have when we back our faith with actions that follow the example of Christ. What is that expectation? Well this verse says that we can expect that God will do "*exceedingly abundantly above ALL that we ask or think...*" Now a whole lot of people stop right there, expecting the *exceedingly abundant* part without committing to the second part of the deal. Ephesians 3:20 tells us very concretely what God is able to do, but what He is able to do specifically FOR YOU is in direct correlation to how much you allow the power to work IN and THROUGH YOU.

Now listen to this, and hear it well: the reason why faith requires works is because spiritual power cannot be demonstrated without them. This is why God admonishes us over and over again in His Word to talk as Christ talked, walk as Christ walked, and live as Christ lived, because this is the only way we will demonstrate his power. This is the only way that we can have a bona fide experience of outwardly expressing our internal reality in Christ.

Every time you do something contrary to God's Word; every time you do, think, and say something negative, you deny the power of Christ that works in you. You set yourself back, rather than moving yourself forward towards what you want. Our faith lies in the doing! Christ is in you, but if you don't get busy continuing his legacy, then you are cutting yourself off from the "*exceedingly abundantly*".

For the Christian there is only one faith, the faith of Jesus Christ. It not only encompasses the reverence and sanctity of which we honor our relationship with him, but it also includes our ability to call those things that are not as though they were in his precious name. Jesus had a mission, and it was to please God. He was focused on completing the work that he was ordained to do, faith responded because of his intention to walk in God's love. He didn't have to force faith to produce results. It automatically responds when we align our hearts and minds to do good. The more we trust in the greatness of what we have on the inside, the more we will love others through our good works. This is the way we preserve our faith in Christ...by becoming more like him, faith will then automatically respond.

"Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group."

New King James Version, © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

"The Two Faces of Faith" written by Reverend Fran Times-Mack, edited by Kim Times for Sundie Morning Sistas ©2009. All rights reserved. All done to the glory of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! Sundie Morning Sistas is dedicated to spiritual inspiration and encouragement through the Word of God.