

This Is Faith

By: Jim Hohnberger

As a people, we are sadly destitute of a daily living faith, the kind of faith that keeps us from sin, selfishness and worldliness. Paul in Romans 1:17 clearly states that, "the just shall live by faith." Can we claim to be living by faith, when daily is seen in our lives, a giving way to irritation and frustration? If a husband or wife frequently give way to harsh, cross words with each other ... have they in essence, found a faith that saves? And if they haven't found a faith that saves, certainly they will not be accounted among the "just" (those who have been justified by the life and blood of Jesus Christ). If our faith does not produce works, like a sweet and kind disposition towards our spouse, then we have not a living faith. And without a living faith, no man or woman shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

From the pen of inspiration we are told, "He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that he can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God." R&H 3-10-1904. This, then is what the apostle James was saying when God inspired him to pen the words found in James 2:17, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead."

So which do we possess - a living or a dead faith? This is a question wrought with eternal consequences! For if we haven't found a living faith, that works daily, whenever we are tested and tried with the annoyances that come into our everyday life, we have not yet entered into the true life of a Christian. Oh, we may say that we have church membership, that we accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, that we give our tithes

and offerings, that we have a pure vegetarian diet and don't partake of any injurious substances. Indeed all of this is good, but it does not prove whether or not we have a daily living faith.

Faith has been described picturesquely as the clasping of the hand of Christ in every emergency. How does this translate into everyday life?

I was a speaker at a camp meeting and fifteen minutes before I was to be in the pulpit, I received a phone call from my wife. As the phone rang at the home I was staying at, the lady of the home said, "It's for you Jim, and it's your wife." Here I was just walking out of my room and on my way to the pulpit. You should know that I was raised to be always on time, in fact almost no one in my family is ever late, for our parents philosophy was essentially, "if you're early, you're on time; and if you're on time, you're late."

Here I was, I had been in prayer, study and contemplation of the message God wanted me to present to these people. My dependence had been in God and I knew He would be with me in presenting the message He had impressed upon my mind. It would take me at least 10 minutes to get to the pulpit and I couldn't afford to be late. Instantly my mind was flooded with the following thoughts:

- Sally, why are you troubling me now?!
- You know, I speak in 15 minutes. Why aren't you praying for me instead of bothering me?!
- Couldn't you have waited for a more conven-

ient time?!

- Sally, have you no consideration for the importance of what I'm doing?

Friends, the true believer, the one that has a daily living faith - chooses to clasp the hand of Christ in every emergency. It always boils down to a choice. Would I choose faith, which works by love and purifies the soul? Or would I choose the flesh, that's centered in selfishness and destroys the soul? Which one did you choose last week when your spouse annoyed or irritated you? Which did you choose last week when your children didn't listen to you? For you see, it is when we are put into an emergency that it will be determined whether or not we possess an active living faith. You see an emergency is any time we open our mouths.

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A terrible struggle was going on in my mind. God was calling me to surrender those self-centered thoughts and words, and the flesh was saying, let her have it, she should have known better than to disturb you at such a time! You see, I had formed a union with Christ during my quiet time with Him, but now I was learning that my union with Him can be **preserved** only by earnest prayer and untiring effort. We must **resist**, we must **deny**, we must conquer self. Through the grace of Christ, by courage, by **faith**, by watchfulness, we may gain the victory.

God was saying to me, *My grace is sufficient; submit this irritation and annoyance to Me.* As I did - He gave me the power over my thoughts and feelings to resist, to deny and to conquer that self-centeredness.

I said, "Yes Sally, what can I help you with?"

She said, "I have a small emergency at home and I'm having a hard time making a decision, fearful that it will be a wrong decision. I know God has given you a talent of quick discernment and I need your help."

So I asked her what the problem was, she shared it and I responded immediately with a solution.

Sally then said, "Thank you honey, I love you and will be praying for you as you speak."

I made it to the pulpit on time and was able to deliver living water to God's people as well as living water to my wife. But I cringe when I think of how many times in the past I would deliver salt water to my wife while claiming to possess living water. The apostle James clearly states, "If any man among you **seem** to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is **vain**." James 1:26. Vain means, useless, worthless, has no value to it whatsoever.

Friends, does the use of your tongue render your religion vain? For many years, the improper use of my tongue rendered my Christian experience **vain**. Though I had church membership, though I held the scriptures as the only rule of my life, though I had much zeal and a pure vegetarian diet, I had not found that absolute dependency in Christ, coupled with a willing surrender of my thoughts, words and actions, that allowed me to live above irritation and frustration. Thus I had yet to find the living water.

Christ said, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" If Christ was to return today, this very hour, would we be found to be living by a faith that denies the flesh? A faith that says, "no" to irritation, frustration, appetite, passion, inclination and impulse? If not then we have not found the true Christian experience. I believe that the vast majority of Christians have yet to find an experience through a living faith in Christ, which keeps them from sin, selfishness and worldliness in their everyday lives.

You see faith in Christ makes an end to the controlling power of sin in the heart and life of the believer. We must venture to go all the way with Christ, not just accept His forgiveness for our past sins, but also accept the provisions made to live above sin in our daily lives. We must each have a

progressive experience of continual obedience through a continual dependency in Christ and a continual surrender of our wills. As the Holy Spirit draws us, we need to respond and give our consent and our cooperation. This is faith.

It was mid-winter and the roads were snow packed and icy. My oldest son, who had just received his driving permit, was driving me to the airport and he was going too fast for conditions. When suddenly our vehicle went into a spin, he overcompensated, due to inexperience. Now our vehicle was out of control and SMASH—we hit the snow-bank, facing in the opposite direction from where we were headed.

"Faith is the clasp of the hand of Christ in every emergency." My flesh wanted to respond

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with an irritated vocalization of straightening him out. But the Spirit was prompting me to put my dependency in Christ, to surrender those feelings and emotions of the moment. Which will I choose? The life of the flesh or the life of faith? Faith always calls for self-denial, in Christ. Whereas the flesh always says, "have it your way." A terrible struggle went on in my heart. But I had made an agreement with God that morning to always heed God's still small voice.

So in faith, trusting in the Lord for the proper words to say, I denied the flesh and said, "Matthew it was a good experience. I'm glad no one was hurt. Let's drive on."

How is it friends, that our children learn the life of faith? Is it merely a result of taking them to church once a week? Is it because they've learned proper doctrine and scripture? Or is it that they have witnessed it in the daily lives of their parents?

Friends, our children need to see it lived out in us. Not merely a profession, but a daily experience in which we, in Christ, deny irritation and frustration. Resist feelings and emotions. Conquer appetites and passions and refuse the inclinations and impulses of the moment. It is when they see real faith **lived out** in our daily lives, that they will then want our religion.

If you have not yet found this kind of faith and experience in Christ, it can be yours. All that is required on your part is a complete and continuous dependency in Christ, coupled with a complete and continuous surrender of your thoughts and purposes, your will, all that you have and are, to Christ to be used as He may direct. As you enter into this entire consecration and continue in it,

you become a new creature in Christ. This is Faith! A faith that works by love and purifies the soul.

Power for Living



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