

The June CFAMC Devotional Page

In this last two months, I have been going through some really challenging adventures; and in the midst of all this, something said at a Bible study I attended last Saturday really struck me:

“Faith is words or deeds in action.” – Rev. Eric McGee, Pastor, Zion Hill Baptist Church of San Francisco.

I do not even remember everything we were studying, but that stopped me in my tracks and made me think. “If Pastor McGee is right,” I finally concluded, “the quality of our actions must be determined by the quality of our faith.”

I have now spent a week on the thought, and essentially, I shall make a report of my findings. They are three-fold:

1. No faith, no action (well, at least no action that God will count as good)

The best example of this that I could find is in Matthew 25:14-29:

14. For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.
15. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.
16. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.
17. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.
18. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.
19. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.
20. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.
21. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
22. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.
23. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
24. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:
25. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.
26. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:
27. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.
28. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.
29. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

The problem here is in verses 24 and 25 – the wicked and slothful servant had no faith that his master would reward his diligent labor, so to him, it just wasn't worth it to get the work done. The servant also had no faith in the character of his master – he focused on the facts about his master he didn't like (perhaps with a touch of envy: “Why should I do all this for him when he already has so much, and has given me so little – just one measly talent?”), and failed to see the whole picture. In our lives, a lack of faith in God based on a lack of appreciation for His faithful, loving, righteous character likewise produces laziness and wickedness – and lots of wasted time and opportunity, not to mention the displeasure of God (Who controls both our time and opportunity – see verses 28 and 29)! We definitely want to steer clear of this category!

2. Strong faith in the wrong stuff, bad action

Okay, so we look at Isaiah 44:9-17 and think, “We're not that bad; none of us would do *this...*”

9. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.
10. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing?
11. Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.
12. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.
13. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.
14. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.
15. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.
16. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:
17. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

We laugh at the idea of cutting down a tree, burning part and worshipping the other part... but then, how many of us are looking to our technology (boy have I had a lesson about THAT in the last two weeks), our government, our jobs, our finances, our network of people – whatever – to do for us what only God can? And then, we wonder why our lives can sometimes be such a mess – faith in the wrong object can produce some really stupid, messed-up actions! Let's steer clear of this category too!

3. Strong faith in God, God-pleasing action

Ah, finally we get to where we want to be...

Hebrews 11:1-2

1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
2. For by it the elders obtained a good report.

And the rest of us can obtain a good report also – God is worthy of our complete faith in Him, and if we go forward through the challenges to the opportunities and duties He has set for us by faith, He will indeed reward us as only He can – during and after the process!

I mention a case in point: This Page comes after a week of illness and other challenges. It would have been easy enough to let it go one more day; the thought crossed my mind. But I let it cross through and out. My computer at home is not working, so I had to hike up to the local branch of the San Francisco Public Library... where I found out that, unbeknownst to me, the impossible has happened. The San Francisco Public Library has catalogued my book, *The Freedom Guide for Music Creators*, and has had it in circulation three whole months.

I was told last year because I had self-published, my book had not gotten sufficient reviews and would NEVER be purchased by major libraries. Had I not come here today to uphold the responsibility God has given me concerning this Page, I would never have even known to look. Only 119,999 libraries across the country to go now... but having my book in San Francisco is reputation enough to get past all other “self-publishing” obstacles! Thus the work of God becomes known... while we are being faithful in doing the work He gives us! I mention that to brag on Him and encourage you – stay at the task, by faith, for God is worthy of that faith!