



Christian Report

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Useless Faith?

Is there such a thing as ‘useless faith’ from a Christian worldview? Does the Bible answer the question?

First of all, I think it fair to say that we (professing believers) almost always think about faith in a positive light, as does scripture. The Old Testament is full of men and women of faith. The New Testament tells us we are saved “by grace through faith”. On occasion, Jesus commended individuals for their faith. In the book of Hebrews there is a long list of notable men and women of faith, as well as heroic deeds that were the result of their faith in a great God.

So what’s this about “useless” faith? Is it even a ‘thing’ from a biblical perspective?

I suggest to you that it is, and that ‘useless faith’ is a serious topic at least twice in the Bible, once from the perspective of the Apostle Paul, and once from the perspective of James, the brother of Jesus, in the book bearing his name. The Apostle Paul addresses the topic from something the Bible claims is a historical fact, while James approaches it with human works in view.

For a look at what Paul had to say about “useless” faith, we need only take a look at 1Corinthians, chapter 15, his great treatise on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the final resurrection of believers:

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even

Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Cor 15:12-19)

Apparently, there were some in the Corinthian church who were denying the future resurrection of the dead,

although it was being preached that Christ indeed rose from the dead, a fact attested to by witnesses.

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Paul then states that if Christ has not been raised, his (Paul’s) preaching and the faith of believers in Corinth is in vain (useless) (v

14), a point he reiterated in v. 17.

Moving on to what James has to say about “useless” faith, we’ll turn to James, Chapter 2:14-26.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?

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As I shared in an earlier writing, as hard as fellowship can be, we are told in Hebrews 10:25 to not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Another reason for not neglecting to meet together is: Encouragement. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. (1 Thes. 5:11)



Ok, maybe I shouldn't say 'another reason.' Clearly this reason is stated right there in the verse that inspired this series. But in our last article, we talked about restoring those lost in sin. Today I want to talk about another fear that will keep us hesitant to draw in, another reason to fear 'being seen.' Discouragement.

So many times we walk into a congregation and see a lot of people who appear happy, easy, and go-lucky. Whether we are perceiving them in their truth, or our expectation of their truth, they can seem to be plastic people. They have these fixed smiles and simple greetings. If you ask how they are doing, they often have a one word answer which is usually, "Fine." If they ask how you are, you have the impression that all they want to hear you say is, "Fine." But we're not fine. For whatever reason we're not fine.

*And chances are highly probable
that they're not fine.*

The Bible says that we are imperfect people. That tends to affect us all differently, right? But all it means is that we aren't complete, yet. Someday we will stand before God blameless, spotless, perfected by a process called sanctification--a process of God taking us through trials and sufferings and difficulties that are like a fire that burns away our impurities bit by bit. It's a process that God uses to make us more and more like Him. But it is a process. We're not finished yet, so we are imperfect.

But, look back a paragraph, if you need to, and linger on the thought that God allows hard things in life—trials,

sufferings, difficulties—in order to take away our impurities. Ugh, y'all. If we want to get to the state of completed, perfected, we can not escape these things that are difficult, painful, heartbreaking, and even discouraging.

This is another area where we need believers around us.

We are meant to come together in all truth and say things like: I'm sick. I'm hurting. I'm lonely. I'm afraid. I'm angry. I'm grieving. I'm suffering. I'm real and here's my real. We are meant to come along and listen.

We are meant to respond with compassion. Compassion can be intimidating because we are driven to combine feeling and action. The action starts with weeping with those who weep and laughing with those who laugh. Or as another translation words it, rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. We need to share genuinely—smiles, or tears. Laughter or justified anger.

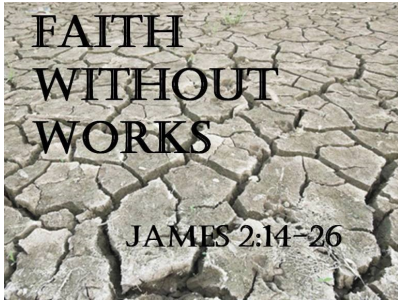
After we feel with them we start to encourage with God's word while meeting any physical needs that may apply to the situation such as food, clothing, and shelter. We need to lend our strength so that the other person leaves with the strength they lacked when God drew us together. We need to come together and just be real.



After all, If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. (1 Cor. 12:26)

Mary Heller is a Navy Veteran, wife of a retired US Navy Sailor, and a mother of four, the youngest two whom she continues to homeschool through their now-high school years. Mary has long been active in ministry and is past-president of the Ft. Meade, Maryland, Chapter of PWOC and has also served other capacities, most often Vice President of Spiritual Life. Her passion is studying and teaching God's word. Mary currently serves as Vice Chair of the CMF Board of Directors.

You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.



First James asks his listeners if want to be shown that faith apart from works is useless (v. 20) and then says very clearly that faith part from works is dead (v. 26). Clearly he is saying that faith

without works is useless and dead, but in what context? We need only go back to an earlier verse (v. 14) to see that James' conclusion is based on someone professing faith but never displaying works did not have saving faith. He is saying that if claims to having faith do not produce works, it was personal faith professed, but NOT saving faith possessed, and completely "useless".

So yes, there is such a thing as 'useless' faith according to the Bible, from at least two perspective:

1. If Christ died but was not resurrected, our faith and indeed Christianity itself is useless (1 Cor 15). This is a serious doctrinal issue.
2. If we say we have faith, but our faith does not result in works to the glory of God, we never had the 'gift of God' faith (See Eph 2:8-9) that actually saves (James 2:14-25). This is a serious personal issue.

So we all have good reason to follow some sound advice from the Apostle Paul:

"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" (2 Cor 13:5, ESV)

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Just Pray, Okay?

"Now Jesus was telling the disciples a parable to make the point that at all times they ought to pray and not give up and lose heart," Luke 18:1

Today is the start of 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting in many churches across the United States which is intentional intense focused prayer which every believer should participate in just once if not every time it rolls around. But don't wait for an organized prayer event to pray but pray always!

Don't wait until a crisis and cry out to God but go to Him daily several times a day and talk to Him. He can use you to reach others for the kingdom as well.

I can testify to the power of not quitting and seeing miracles and I am sure some others can as well. Your words and cries and groans don't fall on silent ears. Your enemy the devil tries all he can to keep you from seeking God. Don't listen to his lies and keep pressing in trusting God.

PRAYER: Lord I pray for those I know who don't pray for whatever reason some even being raised in Christian homes. I pray for others who may have grown weary not to give up. Help me trust you each day that you work all things for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Becky Jewett Miller is an Army veteran, military retiree wife, prayer leader, and a long-time CMF member and contributor. She is author of God's Lemonade Stand, available free from CMF.

Are You Interested in Becoming a Local Leader?

Christian Military Fellowship exists to help you fulfill your calling in Christ to share the hope that is in you with those with whom you interact as part of your daily life.

Briefly, CMF Local Leaders will start, and sustain a CMF fellowship made up of members of the military community in their area. While CMF is an "all ranks" ministry, our area of focus is on enlisted personnel. Local leaders institute and lead the military community in Bible study, prayer, and fellowship,

keeping in communication with participants. They should also seek to build relationships with the chaplains and the chaplain team.

Toward that end we encourage you to study and complete the CMF briefing material:

Orientation (Brief #1) that shares an overview of the CMF ministry.

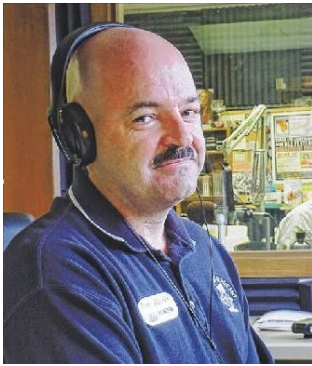
Developing a Local Ministry (Brief #2) that shares the Biblical foundation

for and delineates the logical steps in beginning your local ministry.

Pray and Plan (Brief #3) that shares the most important activity of all! Asking Jesus what He would have you to do and then being obedient to follow His leading in your local ministry.

If you choose to begin this process, please reach out to us at: leader@cmfhq.org.

We're praying for you!



Sorry, I went to the Bahamas for a minute. Comedian Steve Martin used to pause in his comedy routine to explain the lapse with that statement. His humorous line helped me survive Marine Corps boot camp. The week before, I had been to Hawaii on a school trip after graduation. That trip was an amazing experience filled with great memories of a tropical environment.

One week later, I found myself standing on yellow footprints at the Marine Corp Recruit Depot in San Diego with a bulldog of a drill instructor screaming at me while questioning my lineage. There were palm trees nearby, but the atmosphere was not as heavenly as when I was under palm trees in Honolulu.

During the next 11 weeks, when I would be most miserable in that boot camp experience, I would make a concerted effort to re-visit Hawaii in my mind. I would try to remember every detail of the event to include remembering the hotels, beaches, and excursions. Those memory vacations helped me survive the grueling months of boot camp on my way to being a Marine. To some extent, I used the same technique a few years later when I crossed into the Air Force. While only spending 3 weeks at Air Force basic training ... mental excursions helped me through the somewhat easier basic training.

I love the way Elvis Presley sang 'Memories'. This song was co-written in one night by Mac Davis and Billy Strange especially for Elvis' 1968 comeback concert. The words about 'memories being pressed between the pages of my mind' and 'sweetened through the ages just like wine' have captured my fascination. It is sadly ironic that so many television specials have been produced and so many people flock to Graceland so they can focus on their particular memories of Elvis.

Lately, I have been spending time on memories of places I have been. At times it helps me to go to sleep thinking about places I have been and trying to think back to the intricate details of those places. For instance, I spent 4 months at Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia. I think about the

heat, the camel spiders, the scorpions and how we would cut the ends off of water bottles while duct taping them together to create ducts into our individual tent living areas. I thought about the sound of the blowing tent flaps in the night. And, I recall the great feeling it was to leave the Arabian desert at the end of those 4 months and sleep in a Baltimore hotel bed on my first night back on US soil.

In the Old Testament, the Jews were directed to do something with their memories in Deuteronomy 4:9 (NIV). God said, "Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." It is sound advice today. We live in a world where there are influences trying to pull our children away from Christian values. It is important we convey to our children the memories of how we have seen God prove his faithfulness.

Was there a time you were jobless and God provided new employment? Could it be you remember passing a deadly accident and realized you had been delayed a few minutes in leaving where you might have become involved? Has there been a time when the Lord provided a friendly face when you were broken down on the side of the road? Spend some time recalling those memories. Try to remember the details of what was going on around you. What were the smell and sounds? What frustrations were you experiencing? Then make it a point to talk to your children about what makes those memories special.

Certainly, we don't want to harp on bad times. But, for the memories that have shaped our lives we should ask God to help us remember the details and to discover the value these experiences have brought to our lives to share with our families. Certainly, that was a command to the Israelites of old, but very sound advice for us today. Share with your children the legacy God has linked them to in this life. Let them read the memories of the pages of your life that have been sweetened through the ages like fine wine.

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CHRISTIAN MILITARY FELLOWSHIP

An Indigenous Ministry • Discipleship • Prayer • Community • Support
Encouraging Men and Women in the United States Armed Forces, and their families, to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are pleased to announce that MinistryWatch has listed CMF as one of their "Shining Light" Ministries. To become a MinistryWatch "Shining Light," a ministry must have earned a 5-star rating on MinistryWatch's 5-star financial efficiency scale. Further, those ministries on this list have a Transparency Grade of "A." That's MinistryWatch's highest transparency grade. Out of 700 ministries, only 13 meet these strict criteria.

<https://ministrywatch.com/ministrywatches-annual-list-of-shining-light-ministries/>

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