

# *Real Faith*

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To possess real faith, we must know what faith is. A few definitions of faith, according to Merriam Webster, are “firm belief in something for which there is no proof; complete trust; something that is believed esp. with strong conviction.” Keep in mind that this is a worldly definition of faith. To find the real meaning of faith we should let God define it for us. Hebrews 11:1 says, “*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*”

We have an example of real faith that even impressed our Lord in Matthew 8:5-10. A Roman military officer (centurion) approached Jesus and asked for His help. He said, “*Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented,*” v. 6. Jesus’ immediate response was “*I will come and heal him,*” v. 7. But with great humility the centurion responded in v. 8, “*Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.*” When Jesus heard this He marveled and said to them that followed, “*Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*” What did this man say or do that elicited such a high commendation of his faith from Jesus? Was it not his willingness to take Christ at His word? He was not asking Jesus to stand in the presence of his servant or to perform some elaborate ceremony. “Just say the word and I know my servant will be healed.” This man had no proof nor guarantee that his servant would be healed, but he had evidence. Jesus’ fame had spread all throughout the land concerning His miraculous healing and wonders. He healed the lame, the sick, the diseased, the maimed and those possessed by demons. His healing was complete, instantaneous, and consistent. No medicines, doctors, hospitals, or therapy were needed. This man saw, he heard, and he believed. Only two people were so highly commended for their great faith, and both were Gentiles: this centurion and a woman of Canaan whose daughter was possessed with a demon in Matthew 15.

Real faith is necessary if we want to enter into the glories of Heaven. This is not some blind leap in the dark as Merriam Webster seems to indicate, but a faith that is based upon evidence given to us by the word of God. The action of faith in New Testament Christianity cannot be overlooked. Notice what faith does for us: by faith our hearts are purified (Acts 15:9), we are sanctified (Acts 26:18), we live by such (Romans 1:17), we are justified (Romans 5:1), we access God’s grace (Romans 5:2), we walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), we are children of God by faith (Galatians 3:26), we have the righteousness which is from God (Philippians 3:9), and we know how the universe was formed by faith (Hebrews 11:3). Notice that the basis of our faith comes from God’s word (cf. Romans 10:17). Therefore, if it is not found in the scriptures, it cannot be a real faith, but a vain, worldly faith.

Real faith is not passive, but active. Hebrews 11 is a great chapter to show that people of real faith always acted. Abel offered, Enoch pleased God, Noah prepared an ark, Abraham obeyed and went and offered up Isaac, Sarah was able to conceive and bear a child in her old age, Isaac blessed his children concerning things to come, Jacob did the same, Amram and Jochebed hid Moses, the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea, Rahab received the spies, etc. all by faith! None of these people were saved by faith only, but by works of faith. That is what real faith is: believing God at His word and acting in harmony with His instructions.

Real faith is also consistent and not erratic. We must be “*steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,*” 1 Corinthians 15:58. Fickle faith only fades. For example, before the 9-11 attacks, religion in America was on the periphery of life – something to give lip service to but otherwise out of sight, out of mind. After the attacks, church buildings started to fill up and burst at the seams. However, this faith was not based upon a love of God, but out of fear. This wave of religion did not last hardly a year and America has only gotten worse over time. One reporter once said, “I’ve never seen such a dramatic change disappear so quickly.” How soon we forget.

The faithful can become unfaithful, and when they do the hopeful become hopeless. Real faith trusts in God’s word and is active and consistent; whereas fickle faith is no more than lip service and fades away with time. How would you describe your faith?