

Responsible Faith

If our faith is something that really does not make a very big difference, if it is actually not crucial that we or others believe, no wonder it seems boring to some of our young. Anything we don't care much about can't be very interesting.

The things we do care about, however, we inevitably talk about

If faith is real, it seeks expression. It will communicate and profess. It will have the energy of passion.

John F. Kavanaugh

We speak about walking by faith and not by sight. We see men and women of faith taking steps of faith into the unknown. We know of missionaries who go out into the world without a salary but only trusting God. Is this responsible living? How can we say that Christians are responsible yet live by faith? Is there such thing as responsible faith?

James 2: 1 – 26

1) Responsible faith is trusting God

- Hebrews 11: 1 “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”
 - We need to understand that faith is never a blind leap in the dark but an assurance that God has promised us what we don't see and we take the step trusting in God's faithfulness.
 - When a small child is placed on a platform and the father tells him to jump and he will catch him. The child jumps without any question in his mind that his father will catch him. The assurance that he has not yet seen is that his father will catch him.
 - In the same way taking a step in faith believing the promises of God is not an act of irresponsibility but holds to the assurance that God's promises in each situation will hold true.
- Merely saying we trust God isn't an act of faith. We know we trust God because our faith can be seen in our actions
 - Story of a man who put a tightrope between two buildings and walked across. He then endeavoured to push a wheelbarrow across. He asked the crowd if they believed that he could do it. Most said that they believed that he could. He then called a man he said that he believed that he could do it and told him to sit in the wheelbarrow.
 - It is one thing saying we believe. It is another putting our faith in action.

2) Responsible faith is active

- In our personal walk with God
 - Our spiritual disciplines of prayer, studying God's word, fellowship with believers, witnessing
 - We have to take responsibility for our own walk with God.
 - We are all in the process of maturity in our faith
 - One way we see our maturity of faith is the responsibility we take for ourselves in our walk with God.
 - An immature Christian needs to be told to pray and read the Bible on a regular basis. A mature Christian ought to be responsible enough to do it himself.
- In the church
 - Every believer who has been born again and received the gift of the Holy Spirit has also received gifts of grace to serve the church.
 - How can we say we have faith in Jesus and then neglect the church which is his body?
 - Isn't serving the body serving the people of God and not the buildings, etc.?

- Yes. But someone who does maintenance, gardening etc. serves people by providing them a clean and tidy environment to come and worship God in.
- Every person has a responsibility to serve the church according to their own specific gifts that God has given each person.
- The immature irresponsible person withholds their gifts from the church.
- In mission
 - Jesus gave the great commission to every believer – “Freely you have received freely give” (Matthew 10: 8)
 - We have all freely received the grace of God and we ought to be responsible enough to extend that same grace to others who have not yet received it – locally, nationally and internationally
 - Maybe we can’t all go to another location or country but we could give, pray or write letters of encouragement to those who have gone.
- In social justice
 - Social justice starts in the church
 - When we bring discrimination into the church then we have lost all perspective of social justice having brought the injustice of the world into the church. (James 2: 1 – 4)
 - ^{PR 31:8-9} Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy
 - True faith in Christ sees all people as equal and works towards the practicality of this end.
- In caring for the needy
 - This is God’s heart from the beginning.
 - ^{EX 22:25} If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest
 - ^{Deut 15: 11} There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land
 - James speaks about caring for the needy in the context of practical faith
 - We cannot say that it isn’t our responsibility to care for the needy. We might not be able to give much but our response to someone in need reveals our true attitude of whether we would help them if we did have the resources to help.

3) Responsible faith leads to righteousness

- We are saved by faith and not by works (Ephesians 2: 8)
- However the faith that we are saved by is not a passive faith. It is an active faith that produces works
- Abraham believed God and so offered up his son on the altar at the command of God
- Rahab believed God and offered lodging to the Israelite spies
- They were both declared righteous because of their active faith – their faith that took practical responsibility to do what God require them to do.
- If your faith cannot be seen in active responsible works then your faith is dead and you have not been declared righteous before God.
 - We know a tree has good roots because it has good fruit. If an apple tree has dry and withered fruit and branches then we know that the roots are dead.