

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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A Leap of Faith

It is not uncommon to hear one talk about taking a leap of faith. Often this phrase is used to refer to some aspect of our response to God — believing in His existence, acknowledging His work in Creation, accepting the Bible, meeting His terms of salvation, or trusting that His way is best.

What is a leap of faith? While it may be true that people use this phrase in different ways, it seems that there is one way in which it is generally used. For many, a “leap of faith” is a willingness to believe something, even if they have their doubts about it. If something cannot be proven, a “leap of faith” is required to accept it. Again, not everyone will use this phrase in this way. But this is generally the way in which it is used. Therefore, this is the definition we will consider in this article.

Faith is absolutely essential for salvation (Romans 5:1; Hebrews 11:6). However, God does not expect us to take a “leap of faith.” He expects us to be convinced in His existence, His word, and His promises.

The Hebrew writer provides us with a definition of faith: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not

seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Notice the terms he uses to describe faith — assurance and conviction. This is more than a wish. Faith is not believing something because we just want it to be true. Faith is believing what God has said because we are convinced that it is true.

Notice some of the appeals made through the word of God:

“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the Lord, ‘though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool’” (Isaiah 1:18).

“And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ’” (Acts 17:2-3).

We know that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). According to these verses, what kind of faith is the word capable of producing? Notice the Lord’s call to reason through the prophet Isaiah. Paul also reasoned from the Scriptures, explained them, and gave evidence to convince his audience that what he was telling them was the truth. The faith that comes through this type of teaching is not a wish. It is a conviction based upon evidence, providing us assurance that what God says is absolutely true.

We are to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). What does this mean? Are we to live our lives based upon a dream, choosing to believe God’s promises simply because we would like to think they are true? Certainly not! Notice the following passages:

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

Was Paul simply wishing that none of these things could separate us from God’s love, or was he convinced that they could not?

“For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

Why was Paul willing to suffer for the gospel? It was because he was convinced that God would keep His promises. If all Paul had was a baseless hope, how likely is it that he would be willing to suffer as he did?

“You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

Timothy was to continue in the Scriptures. Why? Not because they contained a “feel-good” message, but because he had become convinced of the message.

“Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22).

We are not to follow God out of the hope that maybe His promises are true. We are to be fully assured of these things. That is real faith.

There are many other passages that we could consider as well. They would reinforce what we have already seen. Our faith should be more than a wish. It must be an assurance and a conviction that God is real, His word is true, His way is best, and His promises are sure. How important is it to have this kind of faith? “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6). The type of faith we have will determine whether or not we will be saved in the end.

Paul wrote to the brethren in Colosse about the Lord’s work in our reconciliation to God. He told them, Christ will “present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach — if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel...” (Colossians 1:22-23). We can stand justified before the Lord, but only if we continue in a faith that is firmly established and steadfast. The word of God is able to produce this kind of faith. We need to use His word properly so that we can have this faith.

Don’t be content with a faith that is little more than a daydream. Know for certain that God exists. Become convinced that His word is true. Be fully assured that He will keep His promises. Once you have this kind of faith, act upon it (James 2:24), live by it (Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:20). We do not need to take a leap of faith to follow Christ. We simply need to “walk by faith” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

- Andy Sochor

Are You A Tree or A Post?

A tree and a post stood side-by-side. At first the tree was small and slender and could have been broken very easily. The post at that time was large and solid and strong. It supported a fence.

Then the forces of nature began their work. The post rotted and in time fell down, causing the fence to be spoiled. At the same time the tree grew, little by little, until it was large, sturdy and very strong.

What was the difference between the post and the tree? Well, one was dead and the other was alive! Being dead, the post grew weaker. Being alive, the tree grew stronger.

Now what about those of us who claim to be Christians? Are we like the post or the tree? If our religious qualities are dead, then we are surely growing weaker each year. If we are truly alive in Christ, then each year will find us stronger than ever before.

As Christians we have been made alive by the regenerating power of the blood of Christ. Afterward, real spiritual life in us is maintained by fellowship with God, with Christ and with the Holy Spirit (see 1 John 1.1-7).

- Leslie Diestelkamp

- > "I would rather live my life as if there is a God, and die to find out there isn't, than live my life as if there isn't, and die to find out there is."
 - > "Many people with money to burn will eventually burn with their money."
 - > "To look is one thing, to see what you look at is another, to understand what you see is a third, to learn from what you understand is still something else, but to ACT on what you learn is all that really matters."
 - > "He who kneels before God, can stand before anyone!"
 - > "If people knew as little about how to handle fire as they do about to handle the Bible, every town in the world would burn to the ground tonight."
 - > "The devil doesn't want you to be baptized because he knows you'll burn better dry." -- Marshall Keeble
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"A Kingdom Not of This World!"* (Text: John 18:33-37); Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing!*

GOSPEL MEETING 2015: Our Gospel Meeting is scheduled for July 19-24, with Jerry Crolus, of Conway, AR, preaching.