**Acting on Faith**

*2 Corinthians 5:7*

**Introduction**

1. Paul was confident about possessing the resurrection body and forever being with the Lord because he walked by faith (**cf. 2 Corinthians 5:6-8**).
   1. He could have allowed his physical plights to alter his way of living – **cf. 2 Corinthians 4:7-12**
   2. Instead, he looked by faith to the unseen, and lived for that instead of physical comfort – **cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18**
2. Walking by faith is a fundamental aspect of discipleship. It is the only way we can be pleasing to God and do His will.
3. The actions we take from day to day cannot be impulsive if we wish to please God.
   1. Impulsive living acts on urges of the flesh – **cf. Galatians 5:16-17**
   2. Our actions instead must be directed by the will of God.
   3. The world says, “Do what you feel is right,” but faith says, “Do what God says is right.”
4. Faith is a constant choice. When situations arise which offer various paths we must always seek the correct path by faith.
5. Conditioning Ourselves to Act on Faith
6. Faith is not the normal or natural choice according to the world. Therefore, we must condition ourselves to make our decisions by faith.
   1. **1 Peter 4:4** – Those of the world thought it strange that the Christians of Peter’s audience did not act in the immoral ways of society.
   2. Like the false teachers Peter addressed, most are ***“presumptuous, self-willed,”*** and are ***“like natural brute beasts” (2 Peter 2:10, 12***).
   3. However, Christians are those who are directed by God’s will, and live as those who are created in His image – not like animals. (Don’t act on what is “natural,” but what is spiritual.) (**cf. Romans 8:5-8** – spiritually minded)
   4. Really this conditioning process is an effort to change what our initial impulse might be – **cf. Romans 12:1-2** – it is renewing our mind to think differently. (Then we will be acting on the IMPULSE OF FAITH.)
7. Acknowledge God
   1. **Hebrews 11:6** – acknowledging God is the essence of our faith.
      1. Not only to believe in His existence, but to seek out the implications of such – diligently seek Him.
      2. **Acts 17:27** – He manifested Himself in creation to be sought after by men.
   2. Dwelling on the knowledge of God’s existence helps us fathom the realities of our own existence:
      1. Thoughts about God lead to contemplations about who man is – **Psalm 8:3-5 (**created in God’s image – **Genesis 1:26**)
      2. Thoughts about God lead to contemplations about how small man is before God – **Isaiah 40:22** – like grasshoppers before Him.
   3. Our dwelling upon the existence of God will allow us to maintain the perspective that there is One greater than us who created us to serve Him – **Ecclesiastes 12:13** – this will help us act on faith.
8. Acknowledge God’s Power
   1. God answered Job’s questioning with descriptions of His unmatched and unfathomable power – **Job 38:1-11**
      1. Job’s conclusion – **Job 42:2**
      2. God’s power is displayed in nature.
   2. God’s power is displayed in Bible history – **Psalm 135:5-13** – history of God delivering Israel.
   3. The focus on God’s power will help us act on faith – **Matthew 19:26** (speaking about rich men obtaining salvation)
9. Acknowledge God’s Character
   1. He cannot deny Himself – **2 Timothy 2:11-13** – I.e. he cannot act contrary to His word.
   2. He has continually acted to secure our trust in who He is, and how He consistently acts – **Hebrews 6:16-18** (concerning hope, as Abraham is given as an example)
   3. This includes how He acts in punishment or reward toward those who respect His word or not – Instruction to Israel – **Deuteronomy 7:9-11** – God is trustworthy, and consistent. He will do what He promised.
   4. Such will help us act on faith – **Proverbs 3:5-6** – we trust in Him and He directs our path.
10. Acknowledge God’s Word
    1. **Romans 10:17** – this is the very basis of our faith.
       1. We know God as He is revealed in His word.
       2. We know God’s will as He reveals it to us.
    2. Meditating on God’s word allows us to walk contrary to the way of the world – **Psalm 1** – this results in spiritual success.
       1. We do not seek ungodly counsel, but divine counsel.
       2. Then we act on such – which is what meditation is geared toward.
    3. Such will help us act on faith – **Psalm 119:105** – His word lights up the correct path.
11. When we consistently acknowledge God, His power, His character, and His word then our actions will be based on these matters. We will be acting on faith, and nothing else.
12. Acting on Faith During…
13. Temptation
    1. Realizing what temptation is – **James 1:13-15** – temptation is a pull by our own desires away from God led by Satan.
       1. Note: The desire is not sin. Temptation is not sin.
       2. **(v. 15)** – sin happens when that desire conceives. (I.e. when one acts on the desire.)
       3. It is knowing something is wrong, but doing what you wish anyway – **Galatians 5:17**
    2. Realizing what yielding to temptation brings – **James 1:15** – Sin and death.
       1. Paul’s discussion of his past self before Christ shows he did not fully grasp this – **Romans 7:15**
          1. “For what I am doing (ACCOMPLISHING), I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do (PRODUCE).”
       2. If we comprehend what we accomplish by succumbing to temptation we are more likely to avoid it.
    3. Realizing there is an escape – **1 Corinthians 10:13** – God provides a way out.
    4. Realizing that way of escape is made known through watchfulness, prayer, and God’s word:
       1. Jesus’ instruction to His disciples – **Matthew 26:41** – enter into = open the door to sin.
          1. Instruction before – **Matthew 6:9, 13** – model prayer.
       2. Jesus used God’s word when tempted **– Matthew 4:3-11** – “it is written” must be our thought, and reply.
    5. Acting on faith during temptation is a choice we must make to fight, resist, and draw near to God – **James 4:7-8** – then the Devil will flee.
14. Doubt
    1. We must not act on the urge to “give in” when doubts arise. We are often faced with the arguments of skeptics, and our actions are even questioned by those who claim to believe in God, but we must not stop living faithfully.
    2. Realizing what doubt is – **Matthew 14:28-33** – when Peter joined Jesus walking on water, but then sunk.
       1. **(v. 30)** – Doubt is caused by a lack of focus.
       2. **(v. 31)** – Doubt is an exhibition of “little faith.”
       3. When doubts arise we must not give in to them, but rather combat them by refocusing on the Lord to strengthen faith.
    3. Realizing that faith is a matter to be tested – **1 Peter 1:6-9** – the genuineness of our faith must be shown by endurance.
       1. When faith is tested WE FIGHT.
       2. Shield of faith – **Ephesians 6:16** – we don’t lower our shield, but persist in keeping it up.
    4. Realize that faith, as well as doubt, is a choice – **Mark 9:17-29** – concerning a man’s son healed of a mute spirit that the disciples of Jesus failed to cast out.
       1. **(v. 24)** – the man realized his struggle with full belief, but chose to pursue faith instead of giving in to doubt.
       2. **(vv. 25-29)** – Jesus will always lead us to faith if we but seek it and ask for it. (**cf. Matthew 7:7-8** – our desire must be to believe)
    5. Realize doubts come from questions that can’t always be answered, but God has supplied us with the answers we need – **1 Peter 3:15-16**
       1. Doubts of evidences – does God exist?
       2. Doubts of doctrine – what does God’s word teach?
       3. Doubts of morality – what does God say is right and wrong?
       4. Are we prepared with answers to eradicate possible doubt that those questions threaten?
       5. When doubts arise, we must not be lazy and give in to them, but acknowledge them and confront them. We must work toward faith!

**Conclusion**

1. In all areas of life we need to be acting on faith.
2. We need to deny the initial impulses we feel in our flesh, and pursue the will of God.
3. Those who constantly act on faith are those who constantly choose to do what God’s word says.