

Demonstrative Faith

Beyond the Belief of Demons

September 10, 2023

Today we're learning what *great faith* actually looks like!



But *first*: **Why isn't righteousness more appealing?** Two weeks back, we looked at Simon-Peter's *rising and sinking faith*; highlighted when he boldly walks on water, but freezes up midway to Jesus, and goes under. And *everyone* can relate who's ever walked on frozen water and heard a loud crack. And we related *that* to **the starts and stops of growth in righteousness. Stepping out. Fearing. Failing. Reaching out. Confessing. Growing. And then stepping out again.** And I said I once fell through the ice into the slough. I was about 12, by *myself*, and *treading on thin ice*. Thankfully I was *close to shore*, and I only *suffered embarrassment* and a *shocking plunge* into ice water on a *freezing cold day*. Trudging home in *wet, cold, heavy, clothes* was *brutal*. And once home, **it was even worse warming up.** Peeling off *clingy, mucky, clothing* with *frozen fingers*; and then *putting my hands under warm water*.

Ever submerge near-frozen fingers in warm water? *Stings*. Like *needles*. **Like putting our pride and sin under our Father's authority.** And *that's* why righteousness *isn't appealing* ... at *first*. **We gotta warm up to righteousness.** Cuz at first, **you just want to put your hands back in the cold to numb the pain of coming to life** – even though you know it'll kill 'em. Scripture compares a *drop in faith* to *frigidness*, saying:

The love of many **[believers]** will grow cold. – Matthew 24:12 NKJ

Because **sin freezes our receptors to the warmth of righteousness**, as it tempts us into stone cold indulgences of instant gratification. But we know better than to let our *fingers* freeze – so *what do we do* when we *don't want to do* what we *know we need to do*? **We push through!**

My son-in-law unexpectedly walked through my garage as I was battling an overwhelming project. And I *yelled out*, "I hate this! I don't know what to do." But he was in a hurry; so, without *slowing down*, he *yells back*, "Push through!" And I *did*. And I *won*. And I now give the same advice to those *facing a seemingly overwhelming challenge of faith*. **Push through the painful process of restoring life.** Cuz we know when we do, it'll *begin to feel good*. And then *really good*. And then *lukewarm* ain't gonna *cut it*. We need to *bring the heat*! Cuz **the same heat that brings the pain, brings pleasure!** Along with the *satisfied joy* that comes with *overcoming*.



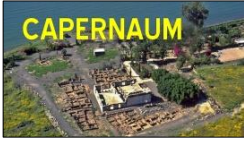
And **that's when returning to the cold loses all its appeal.** Because it *now* feels **great!** Same goes for **faith**. So, what does great faith *look like*? Well, **it's gotta go beyond lukewarm belief, and do the deeds of fired-up faith.** Jesus' brother *James* writes:



You [who believe in Christ] believe that there is *one God*. Good! [That's a great place to start; but let's face it] Even the *demons* believe *that*—and *shudder*. – James 2:19 NIV



They've got the *shivers!* But *how* does James *know* that? Well, just after his *friends* and *neighbors* try to throw brother Jesus off a nearby cliff, Jesus *moves* His *home office* and *headquarters* to Capernaum, where:



All those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the Christ, [i.e. Messiah] the Son of God!" – Luke 4:40-41 NKJ



You know the *one good* thing about *demons*? Their *theology!* So, **how does your belief go beyond the demons?** Well, they may believe that the *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit* are *One*, but that's just *book smarts*. **Demons don't submit to God's authority.** And *that's* the *difference* – *if* you *do*. **They will confess, but they won't concede.** And as Scripture makes clear, **they'll beg even as they refuse to bow in submission.** Remember that ol' Legion of demons?



The demons *begged* Jesus, "Send us among the pigs" – Mark 5:12 NIV

The demons not only *confess* Christ, they got a *huge* prayer group *goin'* here, beseeching Jesus! So, **what makes your declaration of faith any different from the demons?** There are *only two* possible answers: 1) **You act on your beliefs with God-honoring deeds;** or 2) **Nothing.** James writes:

What *good* is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have *faith* but has no *deeds*? ... faith by *itself*, if it is not accompanied by *action*, is *dead*. ... *Show* me your faith *without* deeds, and I will show you my faith by *what* I *do*. You *believe* ... Even the *demons* believe ... do you want *evidence* that *faith* without *deeds* is *useless*? ... As the *body* without the *spirit* is *dead*, so *faith* without *deeds* is *dead*. – James 2:14-26 NIV



You see, **belief must go beyond right-thinking to right-doing.** Which means *working* at getting our beliefs *beyond* our *head* and *heating up* our *heart*. Because, **beliefs that hide in your head are dead.**



Just before Jesus moved to Capernaum, He returned to His old neighborhood to give 'em the *truth*: that He's about to *usher in* God's *Kingdom*. And that's when they *usher Him* to the *cliffs* to give *Him* the ol' *heave-ho!* But, just before *that*, He returns to the *Galilean Jews* in *Cana* ...

... where He had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain *royal official* [from **Capernaum**] whose son lay *sick* at *Capernaum*. [And] When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in *Galilee* from *Judea*, he went to Him and *begged* Him to *come* and *heal* his *son*, who was close to death. "Unless you people [the **Jews**] see *miraculous signs* and *wonders*," Jesus told *him*, "you will never *believe*." – John 4:46-48 NIV

Believe what? Because the begging official *obviously* believes He can *heal* his son. So, what is it they *refuse to believe*, that *shouldn't* require *signs and wonders*? **His identity. His authority. And His mission.** Know why they *don't*? They *don't* know His Word. Know why they *don't*? They *refuse to hear it, learn it, and believe it.* And **you can't believe what you don't know.** He later says:

"I have [prophetic] testimony [in Scripture] weightier than that of John [the Baptist]. For the very work that the Father has given Me to *finish*, [He didn't come to *abolish the prophets*, but to *fulfill* them (Mat 5:17)] and which I am *doing*, *testifies* that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me has *himself* testified *concerning* Me. [But] You have never *heard* His voice nor *seen* His form, [in His Word] nor does His Word *dwell* in you, for you do *not believe* [the prophetic testimony of] the One He sent. You diligently *study* the Scriptures because you think that by [having] them [in your head] you possess *eternal life*. [But] These are the *Scriptures* that *testify* about Me, [and you gotta have Me in your heart!] yet you *refuse to come* [to submit] to Me to have *life*." – John 5:36-40 NIV

They didn't *need* the *miracles* cuz they *had* the *prophets*. But we *can't believe* what we *don't know*.

He said to [the two on the road to Emmaus], "How *foolish* you are, and how *slow of heart to believe* all that the [OT] *prophets* have *spoken*!" – Luke 24:25 NIV

For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy. – Revelation 19:10 NIV

[Because] The *Spirit of Christ* [himself] who was *in* [the prophets] ... *testified beforehand* the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. – 1 Peter 1:10-11 NKJ

Know who *wasn't* slow of heart? The *despised, half-Jewish Samaritans*. Just before *returning* to the *Galilean Jews* in *Cana*, He *encountered* the Woman at the well, and:



Many of the Samaritans from that town *believed in Him* because of the *woman's testimony* ... And [then] because of *His words* many more *became believers*. [And] They said to the woman, "We no longer believe *just because* of what you said; now we have *heard* [His Word] for *ourselves*, and [so] we *know* that this man *really is* the *Savior* of the world." – John 4:39-42 NIV

Those *despised, half-Jewish Samaritans* heard God's voice, saw His form, and embraced His Son; because **belief is a verb**, because **faith is an action**. It's not enough to just *know* the *truth*. *Even* the demons *know* the *truth*. **We must put our pride and sin under its authority.** You see:

The *Galileans* welcomed Him. [because] They had *seen* all [the *miraculous signs and wonders*] that He had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast. – John 4:45 NIV

And so, **the Galileans' belief was based on His blessings**, whereas **the Samaritans' faith was grounded in His Word**. So which is more *true* for you? "Sometimes I don't *care* about *His plan*; I just want Him to do *my will*. Save my *child*. Save my *marriage*. Save my *job*. How could He say *no* to *any* of *those*?" I don't *know*. But He *sometimes does*. **Ever beg?** I *have*. **Ever bargain?** I *have*.

Ever threaten? You *have*? That's *terrible!* I'd *never* ... well ... okay, I *have*.

The royal [Capernaum] official [at Cana] said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus replied, “You may go. Your son will live.” [And] The man *took* Jesus at His *word* and [took *action* and] *departed*. [Even though Jesus didn’t *come*, as he’d *asked*; but] While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. ... *Then* the father *realized* that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So *he* and *all* his household [finally, actually] *believed*. – John 4:49-54 NIV

In what? **His identity, His authority, and His mission.** Go to any craft or country store and you’ll see *signs* that say: Believe. “*Good!*” As *James* would say. But *in what?* Well:

To all who *received* Him, to those who *believed in His name*, He gave the *right* to *become* children of God – John 1:12 NIV

But, **what’s it mean to “believe in His name”?** Because, as Jesus *famously* said:

“I will do *whatever* you *ask* in My name, so that the *Son* may bring *glory* to the *Father*. You may ask Me for *anything* in My name, and I will *do* it.” – John 14:13-14 NIV



“Well that’s not true. I’ve tacked His name onto many prayers that didn’t take.” Notice the *condition*: “so that the *Son* may bring *glory* to the *Father*”. **He’s not saying He’ll bring God glory by granting our wishes;** but that whatever we *ask* so that He may bring *glory* to our *Father*, He’ll *absolutely do* when it *absolutely will*. **Asking “in His name” is like saying, “Stop in the name of the law.”** A good cop wouldn’t ask for something *selfish* and *dishonoring* like, “Give me your *money* ... in the *name* of the *law*.” That’s an *abuse* of their *granted authority*. Likewise, **to believe in Jesus’ name is to bow to His identity, authority, and mission;** which takes *our* belief beyond the *demons* ... and the *craft stores*. Those Samaritans *embraced* it. *Then* the Galileans *questioned* it. And *then* His old neighbors *rejected* it. And *then* He moved to Capernaum and met *another official*: a Roman Centurion, whose *faith* is *praised* when *he* asks Jesus to *come* and *heal*. *Virtually identical requests. Vastly different responses.* Why? Well, because when ...

[The Elders of the Jews] *begged* [Jesus] earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was *deserving* – Luke 7:3-4 NKJ

The *centurion* [knowing Jesus’ *identity*] replied, “Lord, I do not *deserve* to have you come under my roof. But [knowing Jesus’ *authority*] just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For [knowing Jesus’ *mission* in *submission* to the *Father*] I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. ... [And] When Jesus heard this, [public declaration of His *identity, authority, and mission*] He was *astonished* and said to those [Jewish elders] following Him, [who’d “begged Him earnestly” saying the man *deserved* it] “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in *Israel* with such *great faith*.” ... Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! It will be *done* just as you *believed* it would.” – Matthew 8:5-13 NIV

So, what does great faith look like? *That guy* ... in a *bathtub*.