

Put A Back in FAITH: Hebrews 11:1-2, James 2:14-26

Put F Back in FAITH: Focus, Fight, Future

Intro: People leave the Christian faith for different reasons. Some may leave because they were never born of the Spirit. Some may leave because of intellectual doubts. Some may leave because they have secret sins and don't want to repent. *(There's a report that 35 million youth raised in Christian families will abandon their faith by 2050.)* I believe some youth leave the faith because they have no assurance and get bored. Their faith is unchallenged and unpracticed. They leave due to apathy. The world offers a lot of exciting competition, and a boring faith is unattractive. If you feel this way then you need to put some "A" back in your FAITH.

Assurance (not Apostasy)

Hebrews 11:1-2: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen 35 min. For by it the people of old received their commendation.*

Faith is confident assurance and conviction based on solid evidence. Evidence confirms what was not seen. A crime happened. Nobody saw the crime, but the evidence left behind reveals and confirms what happened. Fingerprints left behind reveal who did the crime. CSI - Crime Scene Investigation can recreate a crime scene enough to establish guilt or innocence.

This assurance needs to be experienced both objectively (rationally) and subjectively (emotionally). Assurance is rational and emotional certainty.

Objective rational certainty results from conclusions based on historical evidence which consists primarily of eyewitness accounts. John provides historical eyewitness evidence for rational assurance: 1 John 1:1-3. Peter provides objective assurance: 2 Peter 1:16-18. Luke provides objective assurance at the beginning of his gospel, Luke 1:1-4, and his account of the beginning of the church in Acts 1:1-3.

Luke 1:1-4: *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely*

for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

You can have emotional assurance and lack objective (feelings without facts). Apologetics will help provide rational certainty. Maybe this is your need?

Subjective emotional assurance results from the inner witness of the Holy Spirit: Romans 8:15-17: ¹⁵ *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”* ¹⁶ *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,* ¹⁷ *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.* When we are “born again” or “born of the Spirit” we receive the inner witness in our spirit that we are forgiven children of God.

You can have objective assurance but lack emotional (facts without feelings). Do you feel and hear the Holy Spirit speaking in your heart that you are a loved and forgiven child of God? If not, then something may be blocking that inner assurance. It could be doubts or Satan’s lies in your mind. It could be blocked by negative emotions like anger, bitterness, and resentment resulting from unforgiveness. It could be blocked by unconfessed sin, lack of true repentance, or an immature understanding of the gospel. I’ve had several Christian counseling courses, but I’m not a licensed Christian therapist. I do know that the heavenly Father wants all his children to have emotional assurance.

What is the meaning of assurance *of things hoped for* and conviction *of things not seen*? These two phrases are synonymous. The things we hope for are the things we have not or cannot see. This refers to events not seen in the past and events yet to be seen in the future.

PAST things not seen:

- Creation ex nihilo by the word of God, Hebrews 11:3: By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.
- Noah’s ark (Hebrews 11:7) – but you can see it in Kentucky!
- Every person and event mentioned in Hebrews 11.

➤ Life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. We weren't there to see the death and resurrection of Christ, but like any historical event it left behind evidence – an empty tomb, a burial shroud, and many post-resurrection appearances. We also have millions of believers all over the world who have experienced the risen Jesus Christ.

FUTURE things hoped for:

- Rapture prior to a great tribulation.
- Return of Christ in power and glory.
- Resurrection / Redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:22-25).
- Renewal of all creation – a new heaven and earth: *Winter Q Adult CE we will study Revelation.*

We have a firm assurance and conviction that all the past events recorded in the Bible happened; therefore, we can have a firm assurance and conviction that all the future events will happen as described in the Bible.

Put Assurance back in your faith. Objective rational assurance by studying the Word. Subjective emotional assurance by being filled with the Holy Spirit who bears witness with your spirit.

Action (not Apathy)

I think some people leave Christianity because they lack assurance, but also because they never put their faith in action. Remember, faith is a fight. Faith is not passive. Faith does not passively accept circumstances that are contrary to God's will. Faith doesn't shrug its shoulders and say "*Mei banfa.*"

Faith is active. Faith makes things happen. Faith in Jesus Christ releases you into a life of action. For impetus to put Action back in FAITH, James mentions doing good works, demons, Abraham, and Rahab.

James 2:14-17: ¹⁴ *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?* ¹⁵ *If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food,* ¹⁶ *and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?* ¹⁷ *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

Demons (2:18-19): ¹⁸ *But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.* ¹⁹ *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!*

Faith in God is not enough to save you. You must go beyond what demons know to be true. At least demons fear God! You must add the action of obedience to your faith.

Abraham (2:20-23): ²⁰ *Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?* ²¹ *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?* ²² *You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;* ²³ *and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.*

Abraham’s obedience was the Action in his FAITH.

Rahab (2:24-25): ²⁴ *You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.* ²⁵ *And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?* ²⁶ *For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*

Rahab’s obedience was the Action in her FAITH.

Their obedience was the action in their faith. The key to understanding this scripture is verse 22. Faith and works work together. Abraham’s faith was “completed by his works.” “Made complete” in the Greek text means to bring to completion or maturity. Faith is “made complete” or matured by its obedient actions. As a fruit tree is perfected by its fruits, so faith by its works; its obedient actions.

Analogy: Action is to faith as icing on a cake. What’s a cake without icing? It’s not complete until it has icing. 2:18: “But someone will say, ‘You have cake and I have icing.’ Show me your cake without icing and I will show you my cake with icing. Which cake is ready for a birthday party?” Cake and icing are inseparable. Faith and works are inseparable.

Action-Adventure

Faith put into practice is an action-adventure. This is my favorite movie category!

Every saint in Hebrews 11 is an amazing action-adventure story!

- Noah's flood was a adventure that altered the face of the earth (11:7).
- Abraham's journey to a promised land was a faith adventure (11:8-19).
- Joseph's life from slavery to powerful leader in Egypt was an amazing faith adventure (11:22).
- Moses' exodus from Egypt was amazing faith adventure (11:23-31).

God has an amazing action-adventure for you if you will add obedient Action to your FAITH. When I was a kid growing up in Western Pennsylvania, I never dreamed I would travel the world. I never imagined I would marry a girl from Hong Kong. I never imagined I would go on mission trips to the South Pacific, Africa, Central America, and the Middle East. I never dreamed I would go to Taiwan and share my testimony with prisoners. I know God has more action-adventures for me when I'm ready to act with obedient faith!

God has an action-adventure planned for each one of his faith children. What is yours? Are you ready to put obedient action back in your faith?

The greatest action-adventure story is the story of Jesus Christ told in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

- Christ was with A & E in Eden. Christ was with Noah. Christ appeared to Abraham. Christ was with Joseph. Christ appeared to Moses.
- Christ entered the womb of a virgin and was born... that's not the end of the story.
- Christ was crucified for our sins and we will remember his body and blood today... but that's not the end of the story.
- Christ was raised from death on the third day... but that's not the end of the story.
- Christ ascended to heaven with all power and authority... but that's not the end of the story.
- Christ will return in glory and create a new heaven and earth. That's where the Bible ends, but maybe that's not the end of the story! What is God's plan for eternity?