

080319

I. My Notes... WWC message 8/4

II. Series: Active Faith

a. Title: An Active Faith is Obedient

b. Text: James 2:17-18; Heb. 11:8

c. Quote: "You express love by obedience." - Jack Hyles (Pastor)

III. Introduction

a. We are beginning a new series today. I have been thinking a lot about evidence. You know, those reasons, those things, that are part of our life (whether past or present) that drive us to certain decisions. Very often, choices are made on the evidence that is right there, in the moment. Making choices and decisions are a part of life. Think about it, the way life happens – things occur, with all kinds of twists and turns, and beginnings – restarts - ends. This requires us to make choices and decisions in each step of our journey.

b. Throughout my journey I have had times where I have been ok with obedience and others where I have been outright disobedient. (1) I remember going on a field trip to watch a symphony orchestra play. The auditorium wasn't very full and those I was with jumped from seat to seat, were disruptive and irritating to those who were in attendance, I sat in my seat and paid attention, I enjoyed the performance. After the performance the conductor came up to me and said how nice it was to see a young man that knew how to behave... (2) When I was working for my stepdad, I was very rebellious. I didn't like being told what to do and I am sure that I was a difficult employee. Constant criticism and berating contributed to my attitude and actions. One time, I was told to go out and clean the back lot.

So, I figured I would show him... I got down on the ground and began to pick up and clean every single square inch. After a couple of hours my "boss" came out and wondered what was going on. I told him I was cleaning – following his directions. In a moment of sanity, he asked me what I liked doing, what I liked about working. He was sincerely trying to help and teach me. I didn't have a good answer and just started an argument. I was very disobedient and disrespectful. It did nothing to help our relationship or show my faith.

- c. I have gotten a little better at understanding obedience and living it. Our lives and lifestyles speak to what we believe and how our faith impacts our daily life. I suppose, the thought becomes – what does it mean to live obedient? What should I be doing, in daily life, to live my faith – what actions show that I am a believer? The motivation for this series comes from this passage. *"Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense? I can already hear one of you agreeing by saying, "Sounds good. You take care of the faith department, I'll handle the works department." Not so fast. You can no more show me your works apart from your faith than I can show you my faith apart from my works. Faith and works, works and faith, fit together hand in glove."* **(James 2:17-18 MSG)**. Having a growing faith in a relationship with Jesus Christ is revealed by our actions, the choices we make in daily life. It is about showing God's love and grace. People say, my efforts – the things I do – show that I'm a good person and that is enough. Believers should be saying, my faith shapes my choices and my efforts are a result of the love and grace of the Lord God. In the life of a believer, actions and belief go hand in hand.
- d. Last week, I spoke about finding joy in the circumstances and situations that life brings us. No matter what, we can find joy. After the service was over, I got a message from Marilyn (she is a very good friend and follows us online). I have her permission to share this. She told me about the "miracles" she and Jeff (her husband) had seen in some recent circumstances. Her father is

deteriorating, he is dealing with some age-related illnesses, the specifics aren't the issue. She shared how doors opened for her father to have a place for care and how her Dad, who was very prideful, made the difficult choices so that this care would be possible. Doors opened and things fell into place so he will be taken care of. The real state agent has the house on the market and Dad has allowed his car to be sold. In all this, there was peace – joy – and reminders to all of God's love and provision. Marilyn and Jeff are doing their best to be obedient, to live by God's standards in honoring both Father and Mother. It can be challenging; it can be difficult. Especially since it is putting their life plans on hold. But they are making a choice and seeing some wonderful, daily, miracles. It is a reminder of God's love and care, each day.

- e. Jesus taught about the way we should live our faith. *"In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."* **(Matthew 5:16 NLT2)**. This is our purpose. It communicates God's love and brings Him the glory and honor that He is due. See our choice to be loving, our choice to show kindness and understanding, in the most difficult of times tells others that God's love is living "the better way". The Apostle Paul encouraged Titus – he was responsible for the churches in Crete – to, *"And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching."* **(Titus 2:7 NLT2)**. People are looking for examples to follow. Everyone seems to want a hero, someone to look up to and pattern their lives after. I can say this, God certainly wants leaders (that's' you and I) to be people of integrity, of accountability, and of grace. Believers must become an example to others. It is an absolute essential lifestyle. Words mean nothing without the behavior to back up the words. Actions speak so much louder than instruction/correction. When people see a life that is strong in faith and full of love, joy, peace, and righteousness,

they are far more likely to be open to a relationship with Jesus and to live a transformed life.

IV. Text

a. Hebrews 11:8 (CSB)

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and set out for a place that he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out, even though he did not know where he was going.

b. Abraham is a key figure in Genesis. He is the father of the Jewish people.

c. God told him to leave Ur of Chaldees and go to a place that He would later show him. Abraham's responsibility – his choice – was to listen to God or to do what He wanted.

d. He chose to obey what God told him to do.

e. Faith is always expressed in obedience to God. James tells us that a so-called faith that does not act in obedience to God is a sham.

f. Real faith is characterized by obedience

g. Real faith results in loving others and honoring the Lord God

V. Past Things

a. Throughout the OT there are reminders that the Jews (that God followers) must be obedient

b. In Genesis 26:5, God affirms His promise and blessing to Abraham as a result of his obedience

c. In Deut. 28: 1-2, 15 – there are blessings and curses as a result of obedience and disobedience

d. Eccl. 12:13 (this is Solomon's conclusion regarding life) reminds us, "This is the last word. All has been said. Have fear of God and keep his laws; because this is right for every man. (BBE)

e. And the Prophet Isaiah was told...

i. Isaiah 1:18-20 (CSB)

"Come, let us settle this," says the LORD. "Though your sins are scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are crimson red, they will be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

f. Proving one's faith can often be confused with behaviors

g. Following "the rules" can be the right intention but acting legalistic is the wrong demonstration. You know, cleaning every square inch of the back lot, is the wrong application

h. The scribes and Pharisees had made the law of obedience something entirely external. They had a form of godliness, but down deep there was no heart-felt obedience to God.

i. The obedience must not just be outward mechanical, robotic activities. It must come from those assurances and ideals we hold in our heart. Obedience isn't just an outward activity; it reaches to the depths of who we are. Those deeply personal and private places... in those things, those areas, we must live obedient

VI. Faith Life

a. Abraham chose obedience. And because of that the message of God's love and grace reached the entire world

b. When you and I choose obedience, God's love touches those in our circle.

- c. Love influences, it impacts
- d. The power of love transforms
- e. Just like disobedience changes life... **Romans 5:19 (CSB)**
"For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."
- f. Adam's disobedience brought sin into the world. What a heavy price to pay
- g. Jesus obedience brought salvation to the world. He cost God a great payment
- h. The result for those who choose to accept Jesus obedience... right standing with God.
- i. The way we live tells what we believe
- j. You might be thinking; I can't live by all those rules.
- k. Jesus didn't come to do away with the rules. In fact, He came to complete them. (see Matt. 5:17)
- l. **Romans 1:5 (CSB)**
Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles
- m. We received grace so that we can show God's love, we can tell others of His desire for an eternal relationship with us, and we can show this love in practical ways

VII. Last Things

- a. An active faith is an obedient faith. It means knowing who you are, in Christ, and choosing to live in a manner that honors and glorifies the Lord
- b. It is a choice. It isn't perfection – it's an issue of heart

- c. I'm sure that you've heard this story (in one way or another) before... But it fits.
- d. A man named Jack was walking along a steep cliff one day when he accidentally got too close to the edge and fell. On the way down he grabbed a branch, which temporarily stopped his fall. He looked down and to his horror saw that the canyon fell straight down for more than a thousand feet. He couldn't hang onto the branch forever, and there was no way for him to climb up the steep wall of the cliff.

So, Jack began yelling for help, hoping that someone passing by would hear him and lower a rope or something. "HELP! HELP! Is anyone up there? "HELP!" He yelled for a long time, but no one heard him. He was about to give up when he heard a voice.

"Jack, Jack. Can you hear me?"

"Yes, yes! I can hear you. I'm down here!"

"I can see you, Jack. Are you all right?"

"Yes, but who are you, and where are you?"

"I am the Lord, Jack. I'm everywhere."

"The Lord? You mean, GOD?"

"That's Me."

"God, please help me! I promise if, you'll get me down from here, I'll stop sinning. I'll be a really good person. I'll serve You for the rest of my life."

"Easy on the promises, Jack. Let's get you off from there, then we can talk."

"Now, here's what I want you to do. Listen carefully."

"I'll do anything, Lord. Just tell me what to do."

"Okay. Let go of the branch."

“What?”

“I said, let go of the branch.” Just trust Me. Let go.”

There was a long silence.

Finally, Jack yelled, “HELP! HELP! IS ANYONE ELSE UP THERE?”

- e. Demonstrate love and compassion, live by Godly standards, and trust God to work out the details we don't understand or can't see
- f. Let's Pray
- g. May the Lord guide you as you learn to continue to walk worthy of your calling. May your obedient steps continue to show others that an active faith is a kind and loving faith. And may grace sustain you in the moments of change and challenge
- h. Grace first... grace always
- i. Live simple, live practical, love eternally