

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do,
do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

NOT JUST WORDS



THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, by reputation and in fact, is based on faith in Christ Jesus and belief of the written word of God. To be a Christian one must believe both: if one's faith is based on a Jesus not found in Scripture, then that faith is in vain, and one cannot believe God's word without believing as well in Jesus the Christ, who is the principal character from beginning to end. Both are essential components of Christian faith.

But faith does not stop there. It is based on more than just believing in the ancient atoning sacrifice of a Savior, and the words in an even more ancient book that speaks of Him. Faith is more than a sterile, determined belief-system—it is active and real, it is existential.



Christian faith changes the way one lives because there are experiential effects of faith. Extraordinary things happen to believers in Christ because faith is not one-sided. For example, you may love your car; you may even have faith in your car to get you safely from point A to point B. But that faith is utterly one-sided. Your car does not love you back, and your car does not behave differently toward you or its passengers because of the faith you have in it. It is not a relationship. It is a machine.

But the experience for a Christian who loves Jesus, who loves the word that tells of Him, and has an immovable faith in both, is very different. The faith and devotion of a believer in Christ begins and nurtures a relationship in which he experiences the love of Christ in return,

as well as the truth of God's written word. The book may tell of Jesus, but the believer experiences Jesus. The book may tell of the Holy Spirit, but the believer experiences the Holy Spirit daily in his life. This is what Jesus meant when He said,

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"
John 7:38

When Christians say the Christ-life is in them, they do not mean simply something mental or moral. When they speak of being 'in Christ' or of Christ being 'in them,' this is not simply a way of saying that they are thinking about Christ or copying Him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through them; that the whole mass of Christians are the physical organism through which Christ acts—that we are His fingers and muscles, the cells of His body.

C. S. Lewis

This is what the writer of Hebrews meant when he wrote,

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12



Faith changes one's perspective; it changes how one interacts with this world, and it changes how one reacts to the consequences of living in fallen yet redeemed flesh. And there is no better demonstra-

tion of this truth than a believer's funeral.

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

The "foolishness" of the word of the Cross was demonstrated in abundance at a recent funeral in our church. Of course, to most in attendance it was seen, in the light of the same word, as "the power of God."

At an event where the deceased was far too young, and had lived an exemplary Christian life; where not just the immediate family, but the entire church family was in pain over the loss; where, on a human level, there was every reason to shake our collective fist at God for what He had taken from us—with all that, the event was instead a symphony of praise and worship of God.

What makes the difference? What is so powerful that it can change mourning into song, grief into praise?

It is the power of God working in lives that know Him through His Son. It is the vibrant power of faith that knows Jesus not just by belief, not just by the printed word, but by the energizing experience of living with Him day in and day out. Through that experiential relationship the power of death is extinguished—not just in theory, but in fact—and the present power of eternal life in Christ is released.

