

# The Theory of Faith and the Practice of Faith

## 1 Samuel 8:1-9

Life Group Discussion – May 27th, 2018

Hannah had dedicated Samuel to the Lord when he was born, and he had served Israel faithfully all his life. However, Samuel's sons were unwise and unfaithful. They were judges in the land but were caught accepting bribes for their own gain. After seeing this, the Israelites pleaded with Samuel to set a king to rule over them.

**When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice. (1 Samuel 8:1-3)**

There are two reasons why Samuel's sons were not like their father in honesty and integrity.

First, Samuel was so busy that he prioritized Israel over his family.

Many pastors are unsure of how to raise their children. Ministry takes up so much time and energy that the remaining time is not enough to guide and lead their families. Of course there are many instances of pastors who do raise their families well, but for a majority of those in ministry, it becomes very difficult to balance both the church and their children.

Second, we can make a calculated guess that Samuel's wife was not as faithful to the Lord as Samuel was. This was also the case with Eli and his wayward sons. The Jewish society was a matriarchal one, and it would have been one of the responsibilities of the mother to raise her children in faith and guidance. Just like how Samuel traveled all over Israel and shared the word of God to the Israelites, his wife should have been doing the same for their children.

These two reasons are why Samuel's sons gave in to their temptations, received bribes, and stepped down from their position as judges, leading to Samuel's humiliation.

After all this transpired, the Israelites cried out for a king.

**Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." (1 Samuel 8:4-5)**

When the Israelites asked for a king, they were purposefully betraying God and turning away from Him. This is because God had promised to lead them only, but they instead wanted someone else to give them guidance. They believed that God was not enough and wanted a king to put their trust in.

When we trust in the Lord, then whatever situation we encounter there will not be fear because we understand that He promised us that He would be more than enough to lead us. God is telling us to raise our level of faith.

One of the reasons why God may not lead us on a peaceful and safe path in our life is because He wants us to experience a deeper level of faith with Him that would only be possible when we experience difficulties. But we often times would rather have the safer and more peaceful road now than a stronger and deeper faith with God later.

This is the difference between the theory of faith and the practice of faith.

Theoretically, we know that God is our king and that He will guide and protect us, but in actuality when we face persecution and hardship, we turn away and show a sinful side of ourselves.

Our lives are filled with contradictions. We hear God's words and we know that we need to dedicate our entire lives to Him but in practice we have failed again and again spiritually.

So what are we supposed to do then? The answer is to be more diligent in prayer and in living within the word of God.

We tend to move away from God when bad things happen and when we sin we turn away in shame and embarrassment. But do not have that response because it is not from God. He tells us that when we fail (not if we fail!) that He is waiting to pick us up and is ready to start again.

**"And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake**

**you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. (Deuteronomy 28:1-6)**

God promises that when we faithfully follow His voice, He will bless us with more of Him.

But how are we as people able to follow God's word 100 percent of the time? Even though we try to live by faith, all of us have weaknesses and fall short.

This is why we need good habits. Time that we waste and time that is spent being lazy are habits that will form and lead us away from God.

When we think of Abraham, it makes sense that he would not move away from the land that God promised him, even in the famine. But in practice, it becomes much harder for us not to move away toward something that seems easier when things get difficult.

Sometimes it feels like the good habits we form when it comes to prayer and the Bible are a waste when we could be doing something more productive, but there is nothing in this world that will benefit you in a greater way than forming these habits. There will be bad things that happen, but our habits will decide if we grow closer to God from it or if we turn away from Him.

The famine was severe where Abraham was so he decided to go to Egypt to find an easier path. What happened when Abraham went?

**When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." (Genesis 12:11-13)**

Abraham was scared and his pride as a man and a husband were lost when we went into the land of Egypt.

This was one of the great regrets for Abraham because he thought in theory that his faith would be strong enough when in practice, he quickly abandoned what the Lord had promised and grew in fear of man.

The hardships in life may seem like they can easily be fixed by our own methods, but it is connected with our souls.

Satan has always and will always try and make us as scared and worried as possible. He will try to make every unpleasant thing as real as possible and will try to persuade us to try every method possible except toward Jesus.

My brothers and sisters,  
Even though the world will continue to change, and even though our situations will always change, the word of God will never change.

Our practice must become the same as our theory of faith. Even though there are difficulties today, we understand that God is preparing us for something greater tomorrow. The only way we will connect our theory to our practice is by following good habits - to pray without ceasing and go after God's word.

I hope that we can be a church that connects the theory of our faith with the practice of it.

## SHARING-----

1. Even though Samuel was a man that was used powerfully by God, his sons turned away toward the world. Talk about the two reasons why this happened, and which one speaks to you the most.
2. Our theory and practice of faith will always meet together. Talk about a time when your theory of faith collided with a difficult situation and God helped you grow. In other words, when was a time when your theory of faith and practice of faith worked together to grow closer to God?