

EVIDENCE

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1)

When I a boy back in the 1930's, cigarette manufacturers touted the testimony of doctors regarding the health benefits of smoking. As a young preacher in the 1950's the “evidence” was mounting that smoking was not healthy. Today the case is clear. The evidence proves that smoking is not good for your health.

Our text indicates that “faith” is evidence. Let’s see if there is any “evidence” that this is true.

Some years ago it was my privilege to journey to the jungles of Ecuador with Steve Saint. We went to the very place where his father, Nate Saint, died as a martyr on January 8, 1956. We were accompanied to that spot by the very men who killed him. At one time sociologists considered them the most violent tribe on earth. 60% of the deaths within the tribe came when they killed members of their own tribe. Today their lives have been transformed. Today they are kind, loving, generous, and Christian. This is “evidence” that needs to be considered.

Dr. Catherine Hess, after studying drug addiction programs, states that “faith based” Teen Challenge is the best she knows of. Dr. John Howard, member of the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug abuse, agrees and states: “Of all the programs reported to the Commission, the most successful is the religiously based program conducted by Teen Challenge.”

The late Clyde Thompson earned the moniker of being the “Meanest Man in Texas”. He was sentenced to death age in the electric chair the age of 19. After his death sentence was commuted he gave his heart to Christ and became a Christian. After spending more than 28 years in prison he was paroled and spent the rest of his life selling Bibles. The transformation of his life is undeniable. While secular people have a vested interest in down playing the influence of faith, faith based programs in prisons have transformed thousands of lives.

Yes! There are many stories from the Dark Ages about the cruelty of those who were supposed to be Christians. You must remember, however, that faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom.10:17). During the Dark Ages the common people were forbidden to have copies of the Bible. William Tyndale translated the Bible into English and wanted even the lowly plow boy to have a Bible of his own. He was burned at the stake in 1536 for such a “crime”. His last words were: “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes”. In 1611, King James finally “authorized” the Bible to be made available to the citizens of his kingdom.

It would be easy to find millions to testify about the transforming power of faith in their own personal lives. For some reason, however, the lack of faith doesn’t seem to make the world a better place in which to live. Julian, the Emperor of Rome, became an apostate to the Christian faith. Will Durant in the *Age of Faith* (p. 17), reports that Julian tried to make pagan priests kind and considerate. He even wanted them to share their own food and clothing with others. It didn’t work! Historian Philip Schaff observed that Julian’s efforts were like “*galvanizing a decaying corpse, or grafting fresh scions on a dead trunk, sowing good weed on a rock or pouring new wine into old bottles, bursting the bottles and wasting the wine*”.

But let us make the search for “evidence” more personal. For all who feel that there is no “evidence” that faith is good, please tell us where you want to live where there is no faith. When you find such a place, then have the integrity to move there and “enjoy” the company of people without faith. Don’t forget N. Korea. They have a phenomenal percentage of unbelievers!