

Devotion 5
Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Thursday, Week 1

So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. (2 Corinthians 8:6)

There is a Peanuts cartoon that has been run so many times year after year that it is easily the most famous. Lucy is holding a football so that Charlie Brown can kick-off. Charlie Brown is expressing his doubt that Lucy won't yet again yank the ball away at the last moment. Yet, after Lucy promises one more time that she won't do this, Charlie Brown believes her, runs up to kick the ball . . . and Lucy promptly yanks it away, with the result that Charlie Brown ends up flat on his back yet again. What is it that Charlie Brown doesn't get? Actions that back up a promise. "Actions speak louder than words." That's it. "Actions speak louder than words."

"Do it now, Jim." I don't know how many times my mother said that to me as I was growing up. "I've got to get some homework done." "Do it now, Jim." "I know I need to get the yard done before Dad gets home." "Do it now, Jim." "Don't worry, mom, I'll get my room cleaned up." "Do it now, Jim." What she was trying to teach me was that words and good intentions are one thing, but only if action is taken do the words and intentions amount to anything. In short, "actions speak louder than words."

Why do we need to be reminded of this? It is because of our sinfulness. It is why Lucy doesn't live by her word—and we can relate to it. It is why my mom always had to remind me, "Do it now, Jim." It is why these wonderful Corinthian Christians who had made a commitment had to be reminded to complete "*this ACT of grace*" by lifting up the example of their brothers and sisters at Macedonia who "through great trial, poverty, and joy had been led to give in rich generosity;" "had pleaded for the privilege of giving;" and had been led to give "themselves first to the Lord," and then "beyond their ability."

God willing, the Holy Spirit has been working in our hearts through these devotions to create within us convictions, attitudes, and intentions to do just as the Macedonian Christians did. Now it's our turn to take action. "Actions speak louder than words." Even though some excellent, unique, and timely ideas for giving might be presented through our ministry expansion stewardship campaign, they will do us no good unless we act on them. Once again, "actions speak louder than words."

God didn't just talk about saving us. NO, he took ACTION, and, "*when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law*" (Galatians 4:4-5a). And he hasn't stopped working, "*for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*" (Philippians 2:13). Actions do speak louder than words. And the God who acted once and for all for us on the cross is the one who is at work in us, enabling us in our Christian giving not only to will but to act according to His good purpose!

Prayer: Dearest Jesus, You know my sinfulness. You know my temptation to have the greatest intentions in my Christian giving yet to never quite get around to acting on them. Help me not only to hear Your words but to keep them—and act on them in my life of stewardship. Amen!