

# Faith

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Faith in a power or purpose beyond this life usually only occurs when we are faced with trials, our own weaknesses, or mortality itself. We could not control the fact that we were born into this world, nor change the fact that we will eventually die. During our time here, it is easier and more natural for human beings to have faith in what can be seen or controlled by our own means. However, faith by its very definition is having a firm belief in something that can't be proven or explained solely in physical terms. This would include belief in past events that we did not personally witness as well as future events that are prophesied but have not yet been fulfilled.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 1:1; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; cf. Heb. 11:23).

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible (Heb. 1:3; cf. Job 38:4; Rom. 1:20-21).

As many things are outside our control, it makes exercising faith a challenge for any human being unless they have assistance from Almighty God (Jn. 14:26). Trusting that God's word is true and completely reliable has been integral to faith from the time of Adam until today,

For by it (faith) the elders obtained a good testimony. ... <sup>4</sup>By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. <sup>5</sup>By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, 'and was not found, because God had taken him'; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. <sup>7</sup>By faith Noah, **being divinely warned of things not yet seen**, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. <sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; <sup>10</sup>for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. <sup>11</sup>By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised (Heb. 11:2, 4-10; emphasis added; Ed. note in parenthesis).

**These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them** and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. <sup>14</sup>For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. <sup>15</sup>And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup>But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them (Heb. 11:13-16; emphasis added).

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, <sup>18</sup>of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' <sup>19</sup>concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received

him in a figurative sense. <sup>20</sup>By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau **concerning things to come**. <sup>21</sup>By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. <sup>22</sup>By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. <sup>23</sup>By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command (Heb. 11:17-23; emphasis added).

Like these forefathers of faith, understanding God's law and believing in His plan for the reconciliation of all creation through the death and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ, is essential to exercising true faith in those things that are unseen or unfulfilled in our lifetime (see study: What Was Christ's Gospel Message?),

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, <sup>25</sup>choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, <sup>26</sup>**esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward**. <sup>27</sup>By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; **for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible**. <sup>28</sup>By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them (see study: The New Covenant Passover Sequence). <sup>29</sup>By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned (Heb. 11:24-29; emphasis added; Ed. note in parenthesis).

From the exodus of the nation of Israel until the time of Christ's death and resurrection, the Levitical priesthood was responsible for administering God's law and commandments. One of their jobs involved the sacrifice of clean animals. These were meant to remind the Israelites about the serious consequences of sin and served as a temporary substitute pointing to the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which would make it possible for sin to be forgiven once and for all. When Christ died, this temporary animal sacrificial system ended (cf. Mt. 5:17; Heb. 10:4) along with the Levitical priesthood that administered it. The priesthood of Melchizedek, with Jesus Christ as the new High Priest (cf. Gen. 14:17-20; Ps. 110:1-4; Heb. 2:17; 3:1-4; 9:11-28) and mediator (1Tm. 2:3-6), has been responsible for carrying on God's work since 30 C.E., even though the animal sacrificial system continued until 70 C.E (see study: Who Was Melchizedek?). Anyone trusting in the temple system today does not have the faith in Jesus Christ that is necessary for salvation. Because many "gentiles" believe that Christ died to provide forgiveness for their sins, they are able to fully participate in the Body of Christ (Ac. 14:27; 15:9; Rom. 10:11-13; Gal. 5:5-6).

Some also claim righteousness through the physical lineage of Abraham, but this is not what is required for salvation (Rom. 4:9-22; cf. Gal. 3:6-9, 14, 16-19, 28-29; cf. Php. 3:3-4). It is through faith in Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ (Ps. 89:35-37; Gal. 3:16), that the opportunity to join an even larger spiritual family has been made possible. All who are led by God's spirit and obey His word (Mt. 4:4) will come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Christ's past work as well as his present role as head of God's church.

Some may consider faith in Christ's role as Messiah and the fact that he has already come once as a sacrifice to cover the sins of all creation as a relatively easy concept to grasp. However, the mystery of his role has been a stumbling block to many (Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:27; 2:2; Ac. 20:21; Rom. 9:30-33), and was particularly difficult for a

practicing Jew in the 1<sup>st</sup> century because obedience to the temple ordinances, including animal sacrifices that were administered by the Levitical priesthood, was central to the society at that time. Addressing changes to any of these ordinances presented a challenge for members of the early church. That is one of the reasons we see a great deal of controversy in the New Testament dealing with Christ's sacrifice and the effect it had on the nation's traditions. In Romans 10, the apostle Paul commented on the attitude of those Jews who chose not to pursue righteousness by faith but by their own means, through the system of the animal sacrifices and circumcision. Nevertheless, it was Paul's hope that one day they would understand God's truth and be saved (Rom. 10:1), even though they were a part of a nation with a long history of not trusting God, but rather their own ways - being a disobedient and obstinate people (Ps. 78:8; Rom. 10:17-21).

Faith is established by trusting and obeying God's word (cf. Rom. 3:31). Every other work, no matter how righteous it might appear, is of little consequence by comparison when it comes to an individual's salvation (Jas. 2:14-26). Obeying various aspects of God's law, including the weekly Sabbath, New Moons, and feast days, requires faith. For instance, having trust that by approaching your employer to request days off work to worship God or, if you have your own business, inconveniencing your customers/clients by not being open/serving during God's Holy Days, you will not be left utterly destitute and unable to feed or clothe yourself or your family.

It is by keeping these days that we step outside the regular routine and demands of life to focus on our relationship with Him. It is a way to prove to ourselves that we trust God, which is a prerequisite to understanding God's plan for mankind as outlined in His Holy Day sequence. Each of the Holy Days picture various aspects of Christ's role in the reconciliation of sinners to their heavenly Father (see studies: God's Holy Days; cf. Heb. 11:1),

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is (i.e. that He exists), and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it (demon) out?' <sup>20</sup>So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you (Mt. 17:19-20; cf. 21:21; Mk. 9:17-29; Lk. 9:38-44; Ed. note in parenthesis).

God's Holy Days are also regular reminders of the need to focus on our spiritual commitments to Him. Our spiritual relationships, like our physical ones, must be maintained on an ongoing basis. Likewise, as in any healthy relationship, prayer is a critical form of regular communication. It requires having absolute faith that God hears our requests (in Christ's name and according to God's will; cf. 1Jn. 5:14), and that we trust God will respond to whatever we pray for (Ps. 37:3-5; Mt. 21:22; Jn. 11:22; 14:13; 15:16; 16:23; cf. Jas. 1:5-6; 5:13-15); even though the answer may not come when we want or be exactly what was expected, or desired at that time (cf. Jas. 4:1-3).

Part of our constant spiritual growth also requires that we examine and test ourselves to ensure we remain in the faith (2Cor. 13:5), with humility (cf. Prov. 20:6), knowing that every member can fall into unbelief and away from the spiritual body, or branch, that God placed us into (Rom. 11:17-21; 12:3; 1Cor. 12:18; 2Tim. 2:22).

Do you have faith? Have *it* to yourself before God... (Rom. 14:22a).

In times of weakness, we all benefit from the prayers, support, comfort, edification and encouragement of others (Ac. 14:22; 16:5; Rom. 1:11-12; 2Cor. 1:24; Phl. 1:25; 1Thes. 1:1-4; 3:1-13; 2Thes. 1:3-4, 11; 2Thes. 3:1-2; 1Tim. 1:4). This can strengthen and heal those who are trial worn (Prov. 13:17; Prov. 25:13).

Nevertheless, some who are led to understand certain truths from God may ultimately resist and the faith and understanding they had will gradually be removed (Lk. 19:26),

Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; <sup>9</sup>but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was (2Tim. 3:8-9).

Sadly, many also fall away (Ps. 12:1; 1Tim. 4:1; 5:11-15; 6:10-11, 20-21; Heb.4:1-2; 10:38; cf. 1Sam. 2:34-35; Lk. 3:8).

Even though we all wax and wane when it comes to faith, God the Father as well as His son Jesus Christ are consistent and faithful toward those who have repented of sin. When our faith is weak, we can find strength and help by genuinely seeking assistance with difficulties we are facing (Mt. 8:23-26). God will assist in our efforts to obey His truth (1Cor 1:9; 2Cor 1:18; 1Pet. 4:19; Rom. 3:3; cf. Dt. 7:9; Ps. 40:10-11; 71:22; 88:11; Ps. 89:1-8, 24, 33; 92:2; 98:3; 119:75; 143:1; Hos. 11:12; 25:1; Lam. 3:23; Isa. 11:5; Isa. 49:7; 2Tim. 2:13; 1Thes. 5:24; 2Thes. 3:3; Heb. 11:11; Rev. 19:11; Ps. 119:86-97, 138).

Again, each individual must exercise genuine faith in God throughout their lives (Php. 2:12-18; 2Tim. 1:5; Heb. 10:22). This will be a shield from the attacks of the Adversary (Ps. 5:8-12; Eph. 6:16; cf. 1Thes. 5:8).

Creating doubt in God's word is a common tactic used by Satan and the fallen host to undermine faith. Doubt, fear, and preoccupation with the cares and concerns of this life can cause us to be distracted from God's way of living. If this occurs, our faith and commitment to God will diminish (Mt. 14:27-31; Mt. 16:5-11; Mk. 4:38-40; 11:22-23; Lk. 8:23-25; 1Tim. 1:18-20).

Mankind as a whole suffers because they doubt God, or question his existence altogether, and prefer to make choices that are contrary to His law and commandments (cf. Prov. 23:28). Sadly, the fruits of this can be seen in the decline of the world around us (Mt. 17:17; Mk. 9:19; Lk. 9:41).

And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith (Dt. 32:20).

However, if we have erred against God during the course of various trials, we can come before Him, through His son, to ask forgiveness with a humble and repentant attitude, having faith that we will be fully forgiven, healed, and restored (Mk. 2:3-11; Lk. 5:18-24; 1Jn. 1:9). In seeking this forgiveness from Him and re-dedicating ourselves to serving and obeying Him, God will forgive all that we have done (Lk. 7:44-48; Ac. 26:15-18), and remove our sins as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).

Yet, even with the promise of forgiveness following repentance, we must not become sluggish in our commitments,

For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. <sup>11</sup>And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, <sup>12</sup>that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Heb. 6:10-12; cf. Mt. 24:45; 25:21, 23; Lk. 12:42-47; 16:10-12; 19:17).

Or lose faith,

Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. <sup>14</sup>Let all that you do be done with love (1Cor 16:13-14; Eph. 1:12-15; 6:23; 2Tim. 1:13; cf. Hos. 6:4).

But be patient and vigilant, resisting the Adversary,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world (1Pet. 5:8-9; cf. Rev. 2:19; 13:10; 14:12).

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

Enduring and continuing to fight the good fight,

But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: <sup>33</sup>partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; <sup>34</sup>for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. <sup>35</sup>Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. <sup>36</sup>For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: <sup>37</sup>For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. <sup>38</sup>Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." <sup>39</sup>But we are not of those who draw back to perdition (destruction), but of those who believe to the saving of the soul (Heb.10:32-39; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1Tim. 6:12).

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2Tim. 4:7).

We must teach and hold fast the truths that God has given us (Rev. 2:13), and set the right example to others through our conduct and faith in Him,

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (Heb. 10:23; cf. Rev. 2:13; Hos. 2:18-20).

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, <sup>12</sup>teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup>looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Ti. 2:11-13).

This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men (Ti. 3:8).

Then he said to me, 'These words *are* faithful and true.' And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. <sup>7</sup>'Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book' (Rev. 22:6-7).

'I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?' (Lk. 18:8; cf. Mic. 7:2).

In short, faith is trusting that God's word is reliable and should be obeyed for everyone's benefit and happiness. In contrast, the Adversary teaches that God's word is unreliable and that mankind should not have faith in it, or obey it. Therefore, there are two ways of living and mankind as a whole has been following the latter for its entire history.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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