

Faith

***“It is impossible
to please God
without faith.”***

**—Hebrews 11:6,
New Living
Translation**

THE DESIRE OF EVERY

footstep follower of the Master is to please God. Hence it should be profitable for us as Christians to give consideration to the subject of faith

so that we may understand better what it is, and what it accomplishes in our lives. We may prosper according to worldly standards, in fact we may “gain the whole world,” but without faith in God and making his will the guiding principle in our lives, we are certain to lose everything, even life itself.— Luke 9:25

Our faith is “the victory [Greek: means of success] that overcometh the world,” declares the Apostle John. (I John 5:4) The worldly spirit is primarily a self-seeking one. It is God’s will that Christians be unselfish, willing to sacrifice their own interests for the benefit of others and for the glory of God. Only fully developed faith in God and in the wisdom and ultimate triumph of divine love will enable us to turn away from the ways of the world and the flesh and yield ourselves completely to the divine will.

To the physically blind who sought to be healed, Jesus said, “According to your faith be it unto you.”

(Matt. 9:29) Spiritual vision also depends upon faith. In fact, spiritual health along all lines depends upon, and is in proportion to, the degree of our faith in God and in his promises. For this reason, we should pray for an increase of faith, and for the determination to accept the experiences which divine wisdom permits us to have in order to promote the increase for which we have asked. The Apostle Peter explains that our faith is precious, like the gold that is refined in the fire. (I Pet. 1:7) God develops our faith through fiery trials, but we have the assurance that he, as the great Refiner, will not permit us to be tried beyond that which we are able to bear.—I Cor. 10:13

A DEFINITION OF FAITH

What then is that faith without which we cannot please God, and with which we can overcome the world, and that will enable us to rejoice even in the severest of trials? The Apostle Paul answers this question saying, “Faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope, and a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see.” (Heb. 11:1, *Weymouth New Testament*) It is the Scriptures which provide the “well-grounded” basis of things for which we hope, and thus give us a firm “conviction” that even the yet unseen things in our lives are being directed by God. This is the essence of faith.

The worldly-minded person may say, “I can have faith only in those things which I can see,” but that does not fit the definition given to us by Paul. By faith the Christian not only understands that which he sees, but more importantly, is able to look upon

and have full confidence in the unseen things of God. Thus, faith, based upon the solid assurances of the Scriptures, is the foundation of all that for which the Christian hopes.

In religious practice, the so-called faith of many is often no more than mere credulity. Credulity, as opposed to faith, is belief based simply on the word of another, without any substance or evidence to back it up. We may believe what someone says simply because it agrees with our view of things, or because it sounds pleasing to our ears—that is credulity, not faith. On the contrary, we may be incredulous merely because we do not wish to believe something that does not appeal to our way of thinking. The point here is that belief to the extent of true faith cannot exist where there is no appreciation or understanding of its basis.

To have faith, our opening scripture says, one must first of all “believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.” (Heb. 11:6, *NLT*) If, to the reasoning mind, there is evidence that God exists, then it is equally reasonable to suppose that he is interested in his intelligent creatures here upon the earth. Such reasonable thinking is in full harmony with the Bible and with God’s plan therein set forth. Thus is provided to us a good foundation for belief that the promises contained in the Scriptures are indeed the promises of God.

Faith in God’s promises, through having a “conviction” of their reality as part of the divine arrangement, leads us as Christians to walk in the narrow way of God’s will, in order that we may attain unto the unseen things of God—those things

which are “eternal in the heavens.” (II Cor. 5:1) Faith, then, is not a mere act of belief, but a daily attitude and mindset which promotes acts of service and sacrifice, and the development in one’s life of the fruits and graces of God’s Holy Spirit. Thus, faith is not a momentary event of belief, but a principle which leads to development and application throughout the life of a Christian.

Faith is not something which, only in an emergency or in desperation, we fall back upon as a last resort. Rather, it is a continuous, abiding necessity in order to attain spiritual growth, progress, and ultimately victory. Faith must be a factor in all our spiritual reckonings, causing and enabling us to set aside the earthly in order to attain the heavenly, impelling us to be “dead with Christ,” that we may also “live with him.”—Rom. 6:8; II Tim. 2:11

FAITH AMONG PEOPLE

Faith, that is, confidence, belief, and trust in others, has long existed in various ways among mankind, although it seems to be rapidly on the wane in the chaotic and perplexing world of today. Trust in one another’s word, in what we are told about things we have never known or seen for ourselves, has historically been at the foundation of all worthwhile human associations. It is a necessary factor in the relationship of children to parents, pupils to teachers, and employees to employers. Great is the importance of family faith; business faith; financial faith; and government faith. Indeed, it is the breaking down of faith along all these lines that is helping to bring the world to a state of ruin in these “last days.”—II Tim. 3:1-4

When one can no longer trust the word of another, they are said to have lost faith in that individual. Christian faith, then, is taking God at his Word—the Scriptures—and believing that his Word is trustworthy and reliable. As followers of Jesus, we must have this persuasion and confidence in order to enter the narrow way of sacrifice; and as we walk with God our conviction is deepened, because we have learned through repeated experiences that his Word never fails.

There are times when our faith may temporarily waver, but this is because we look away from the Lord, and begin to put our confidence in the flesh, either our own or that of others. However, we recall the words of King Solomon when he said of God, “There hath not failed one word of all his good promise.” (I Kings 8:56) There can be no valid reason for ever losing our confidence in God. It would be just as reasonable to suppose that the literal heaven and earth would pass away, as to think it possible that God’s Word might fail.

DIVINE ASSURANCES

God has given us wondrous tokens of the steadfastness of his Word. In Isaiah 45:23 we are assured by him of the ultimate victory of his cause among all men and are reminded of the reliability of his Word. He says, “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” This is evidently a reference to God’s oath-bound covenant with Abraham, that through his seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed.—Gen. 22:16-18

Paul tells us in Hebrews 6:17,18 that God confirmed the promise to Abraham with his oath because he was “willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel.” This, together with the fact that it is “impossible for God to lie,” means that we “have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” It is by the conviction of faith that we lay hold upon this hope, and how condescending on the part of God to be willing not only to give us his immutable word, but to bind that word with his oath.

THE BASIS OF POSITIVE CONVICTION

As already noted, it is only when we lose sight of God and his promises that our faith is not as strong as it should be. When we look to him, however, it is with full assurance that we are looking to one who not only has made promises, binding them with his oath, but who also is able to make good those promises. Paul says, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” —II Tim. 1:12

Like Paul, we know the one in whom we have believed, and this knowledge must be the basis of our abiding and increasing faith. What tragic experiences and sad disappointments have come to people as a result of trusting strangers! God, however, is not a stranger to those whom he has taken into his family. From the time these received their first inkling of knowledge concerning him, they began to trust him. The more they learned, the deeper became their confidence. Then, like Paul, they

were able to commit everything unto him. They knew that all the issues of their lives would have his loving, sympathetic attention, and eventually, in "that day," they would receive the promised "crown of righteousness" which the Lord has reserved for them that love and serve him faithfully.
—II Tim. 4:8

Giving ourselves wholly to God and becoming his children, we become acquainted with him as our loving Heavenly Father. As this personal, intimate relationship develops, it becomes a still firmer foundation for our faith. Day after day we learn to know God better. We experience his grace to help in time of need, and we note that whatever those needs might be, his grace is all sufficient and never failing. (Heb. 4:16; II Cor. 12:9) We see how God resolves the problems which are too perplexing for us, and removes the obstacles in our path which are too formidable for us to overcome. As we thus experience his tender, sympathetic care over us, and realize how easy it is for him to cope with the difficulties that, without his help, would overwhelm us, we exclaim with the prophet: "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee."—Jer. 32:17

This knowledge of God, gained through experience and by relying on his Word, is likened to having his "testimonies" in our hearts. (Ps. 119:11) Having our Heavenly Father's testimony in our hearts means that our confidence in him will be so firmly established that we will not be liable to give ear to the various seductive voices, nor yield to the

flesh-pleasing influences which seek to draw us away from the pathway of true and abiding faith in the divine will for us.

WHAT WE RECEIVE THROUGH FAITH

Only by noting the scriptural testimony relative to the things which faith makes possible in the way of blessings from God, are we able to realize the extent to which the floodgates of divine love are opened up to fill our lives with all the fullness of God. How our own hearts respond with the desire to show appreciation to those who trust us, and who have confidence in our integrity. By contrast, how few throughout all the ages have truly believed in God. Eve was deceived into doubting the integrity of the Creator's word, and mankind since then has likewise been deceived. It is no wonder that Jesus said, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." (Luke 15:7) True repentance, must, of necessity, be based upon belief in God, and what rich blessings he bestows upon those who please him by believing and trusting fully in him.

The many villainous slanders against God and his character will be dispelled when the Messianic kingdom is established, and then the knowledge of his glory will fill the earth. (Hab. 2:14) Faith in God, even then, will be necessary for those who are pleasing to him, but the exercise of confidence and trust will be made much easier by the abundant manifestations of God's love and power. These will no longer be hidden by superstition and the teachings of men but will be clearly understandable to the human mind. Until then, and while darkness

has continued to cover the earth, God has been specially blessing and rewarding those who believe in him and his Word by inviting them to cooperate in the outworking of his plan.

Abraham, the father of the faithful, was called the "Friend of God." (James 2:23) How could anyone be a friend of another without having full confidence in him? Abraham believed in God, thus establishing their friendship. An even more intimate relationship exists between God and his children during this age. We enter this blessed family upon the basis of our confidence in the integrity of God's Word. He accepts us upon the basis of his provision in Christ and our covenant with him. The only thing that can destroy this blessed relationship is our own unfaithfulness, because God is never unfaithful.—Rom. 8:16,17; I Cor. 1:9

In order to comprehend in more detail some of the many blessings that are ours through faith, we here note just a few of the specific things mentioned in the Scriptures and declared to be made available to us upon the basis of belief.

Remission of sins: "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43) Life itself depends upon this blessing of the remission of sins.

Justification: "By him all that believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:39) All the rich blessings of divine friendship and sonship are dependent upon our being justified.

Sanctification: "To open their eyes ... that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith." (Acts 26:18) The Word of truth is the sanctifying

medium in our lives, but its effectiveness depends upon our faith in it, and in the God who inspired it, as well as in his Son whom he has commissioned to execute it.

Salvation: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” (Acts 16:31) Christ’s death, the basis of salvation for the whole world, avails nothing to us as individuals apart from our faith in its divinely declared efficacy.

Life: “These [things] are written, ... that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:31) What value would there be in the Scriptures if we were to turn away from the words of life as though they were but an idle tale of an irresponsible dreamer?

The Holy Spirit: “That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (Gal. 3:14) Through his Spirit God guides us, comforts us, strengthens us; but to receive that Spirit requires faith.

Hope, joy, peace: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” “We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1,2) Believing fully in God’s ability to care for us, we have the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”—Phil. 4:7

Answers to prayers: “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.” (James 1:6) Without faith our prayers are no more than empty words, but through faith they are the means of opening the windows of heaven that there may be showered upon us all the rich blessings of divine grace.

Sonship: “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:26) The bestowing upon us of this great privilege of sonship depends upon our faith.

Additionally, the Scriptures reveal that we live by faith. (Gal. 2:20) We stand by faith. (Rom. 11:20) We quench the darts of the Adversary by faith. (Eph. 6:16) We fight the Christian warfare by faith. (I Tim. 6:12) We resist the Devil by being steadfast in faith. (I Pet. 5:9) We become grounded and settled by continuing in the faith. (Col. 1:23) We become spiritually strong through faith, as illustrated in the experiences of Abraham. (Rom. 4:20) We abound in the blessing of the Lord through faith. (II Cor. 8:7) We grow in faith and because of faith.—II Thess. 1:3,4

FAITH WHICH IS PLEASING TO GOD

Various terms are used in the Scriptures to describe a faith that is pleasing to God. In I Timothy 1:5 the apostle speaks of having a “faith unfeigned.” This is faith that is genuine, and not merely a profession. An unfeigned faith would be one that is demonstrated by works consistent therewith. An insincere faith would be dead so far as having any influence with God is concerned.—James 2:17-20,26

Jesus said to Peter, “O thou of little faith.” Because of Peter’s smaller measure of faith at the time of this experience he was fearful of perishing after having at first walked on the water toward the Master. (Matt. 14:28-31) Peter’s “little faith” grew mightily, however, so that later he was able to suffer joyfully even unto death. Faith, then, can grow and increase in the Christian life. As faith increases, wavering decreases, and we become “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”—Eph. 6:10

The growth of faith in the life of Peter points out the importance of the Holy Spirit’s power and

influence in the life of a Christian. As such, it requires that we clarify the setting of the above experience. Prior to the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit had not been poured out upon the Lord's followers. Hence, in Peter's experience, because it took place before the death and resurrection of Jesus, he did not have the advantage of the Holy Spirit's begetting power to increase his faith when walking upon the water. Such unwavering faith came to Peter following Pentecost, and it can also be ours if, after having fully consecrated ourselves to the Lord, we take advantage of the divine power and influence of the Holy Spirit in our life.

So important is the principle of faith as the means by which we keep in close fellowship with God and are able to please him, that his plan is spoken of as "the faith," and our "most holy faith." (Jude 1:3,20) These expressions are calculated to embrace all the promises and instructions given by God in which we have faith. Our reliance upon these promises, and our obedience to his instructions are the means by which our faith in God is demonstrated. Without the understanding of his will and plan, we have no basis for a justifying faith. We might believe that there is a God, but it is only when we demonstrate our confidence in him by relying upon and obeying his Word, that we are said to have a genuine faith.

A GIFT OF GOD

Paul explains that God's grace, or favor, is a gift from him which enables us to exercise faith in his divine arrangements and promises for the eventual blessing of all the families of the earth. (Eph. 2:8;

John 6:65; Gen. 22:18) The apostle asserts that “all men have not faith,” especially in a future hope for all mankind. (II Thess. 3:2) In their current fallen condition, the faith of many is very limited as to God’s eternal purpose for the restitution and recovery of all that was lost in Eden. (Acts 3:20,21; Luke 19:10) However, when we understand and appreciate that the scope of God’s plan encompasses a hope for all, then we can get the full meaning of Paul’s words concerning divine grace, and that we have nothing whereof to boast.—Eph. 2:9

The exercise of faith in all the various experiences of life, whether blessings or trials, depends upon our assurance of the gift of his continued grace. We have already noted the wonderful way by which God assures us of the integrity of his Word, and how his oath-bound promises guarantee that those who put their trust in him shall never be ashamed. However, let us note additionally some of the inspired testimonies of his holy prophets and apostles respecting God’s faithfulness as a promise-keeping God.

To the Israelites Joshua said: “Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed.” (Josh. 23:14) David wrote: “Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.” “Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. ... O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?”—Ps. 36:5; 89:2,8

The Apostle Paul says: “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son.”

(I Cor. 1:9) “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ... to bear.” (I Cor. 10:13) “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” (I Thess. 5:24) “The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.” (II Thess. 3:3) “He abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”—II Tim. 2:13

In these various testimonies of God’s faithfulness, we are assured of his intention and ability to care for us in trial and temptation; to protect us from the Adversary; to extend mercy to us in our weaknesses; and to faithfully carry out all his promises on our behalf. Having been called to the fellowship, or partnership with his Son, God will enable us, through Christ, to render acceptable service as we endeavor to do our part as co-laborers with him. Surely, we have a firm foundation for faith.

FAITH IN GOD’S PLAN

It is of fundamental importance that we exercise faith in God’s willingness and ability to care for us. It is equally important that we have faith in his entire plan of salvation, and that it will ultimately work out to his glory and to the blessing of all who ultimately believe. Paul speaks of this latter faith, saying, “In faith we perceive that the ages have been so thoroughly adjusted by God’s command, that not from things then manifest the things now seen have come to pass.”—Heb. 11:3, *The Emphatic Diaglott*

What a true statement this is of the manner in which God’s plan of the ages has been developing. Nothing occurred in ages past by which one then living could have determined the many details of what future ages would bring forth. Only God knew

the end from the beginning, and the entire outworking of that plan has been according to his commands. The word that has gone forth out of his mouth has not returned to him void, but is accomplishing all that he pleases, and is prospering in the things to which he sends it.—Isa. 55:11

Especially now, as we near the end of this present age, it is the privilege of the consecrated to see in one glorious panoramic view the entire scope of God's plan of the ages. Indeed, we also can comprehend things yet to come, the "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21) What a glorious vision faith thus brings before us. May our conviction and confidence in it never waver. Let us more faithfully demonstrate our faith by enthusiastically cooperating with God in that part of his plan which he entrusts to us, as his ambassadors in a dark and bewildered world.—II Cor. 5:20; Phil. 2:14,15

True faith in God's plan precludes the making of unbending plans of our own, either for ourselves or for others. If our faith is pure and simple, we will take the Heavenly Father at his word, and we will know that his way for us, and for everybody else, is best. We will rejoice that all of God's plans and purposes show forth his infinite wisdom, justice, love and power. In this, we can safely and confidently trust while we look to him for the strength that will enable us to be "faithful unto death."—Rev. 2:10