

Book 2 of 2

Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 5	Faith of the Centurion	4
Chapter 6	Ways that people lose faith	11
Chapter 7	Admitting your faith	19
Chapter 8	Does faith cancel Judaism?	28
Chapter 9	The beginning and end of your faith	34

Forward

Recently, I was deeply impressed with the thought inspired by the Holy Spirit. The thought was: “You don’t ask the Lord for nearly as much as you should ask”.

Some believers are very considerate people, and want to help others as much as possible, and ask for little in return.

Well, the Lord does not care how much you ask of him. When it comes to seeking God, ask largely, and be filled with joy.

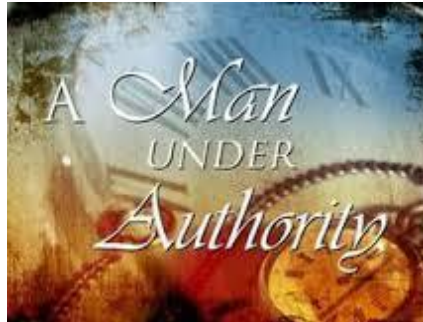
Develop an attitude of expectation. This is a part of faith. Your Faith will be tested. Yet, God’s provision is as large as your faith.

In this study, you will encounter many scripture that should increase your faith. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Being filled with the word of God, is a necessity.

On some Bibles, if you read 40 pages each day, you can read through the entire Bible each month. As Godly workers, we must know the Bible.

Chapter 5



Faith of the centurion

Luke 7:2

And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

A *centurion* was a Roman army officer in charge of 100 men. This man came to Jesus not as a last resort or magic charm, but because he believed Jesus was sent from God.

Apparently the centurion recognized that the Jews possessed God's message for mankind—it is recorded that he loved the nation and built the synagogue. Thus, in his time of need, it was natural for him to turn to Jesus.

The difference between faith and belief

Matthew 8:28

When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake in the land of the Gadarenes, two men who were possessed by demons met him. They lived in a cemetery and were so dangerous that no one could go through that area.

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When it isn't popular to believe

John 2:23-25

Because of the miraculous signs he did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many people were convinced that he was indeed the Messiah.

But Jesus didn't trust them, because he knew what people were really like. No one needed to tell him about human nature.

The Son of God knows all about human nature. Jesus was well aware of the truth of Jeremiah 17:9, which states, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.

Who can understand it?" Jesus was discerning, and he knew that the faith of some followers was superficial. Some of the same people claiming to believe in Jesus at this time would later yell "Crucify him!" It's easy to believe when it is exciting and everyone else believes the same way. But keep your faith firm even when it isn't popular to follow Christ.

Faith is strengthened by waiting.

Matthew 9:27-30

And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.

And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.

Son of David” was a popular way of addressing Jesus as the Messiah because it was known that the Messiah would be a descendant of David (Isaiah 9:7). This is the first time the title is used in Matthew. Jesus’ ability to give sight to the blind was prophesied in Isaiah 29:18; Isaiah 35:5; Isaiah 42:7.

Jesus didn’t respond immediately to the blind men’s pleas. He waited to see if they had faith. Not everyone who says he wants help really believes God can help him. Jesus may have waited and questioned these men to emphasize and increase their faith. When you think that God is too slow in answering your prayers, consider that he might be testing you as he did the blind men. Do you believe that God can help you? Do you *really* want his help?

Taking the final step in faith

Mark 6:52

For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

The disciples didn't want to believe, perhaps because

(1) They couldn't accept the fact that this human named Jesus was really the Son of God;

(2) They dared not believe that the Messiah would choose them as his followers—it was too good to be true;

(3) They still did not understand the real purpose for Jesus' coming to earth. Their disbelief took the form of misunderstanding.

Even after watching Jesus miraculously feed 5,000 people, they still could not take the final step of faith and believe that he was God's Son. If they had, they would not have been amazed that Jesus could walk on water.

The disciples did not transfer the truth they already knew about Jesus to their own lives. We read that Jesus walked on the water, and yet we often marvel that he is able to work in our lives. We must not only believe that these miracles really occurred; we must also transfer the truth to our own life situations.

There is no excuse for not believing.

Matthew 11:21-24

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you.

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell:

for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for thee.

Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom were ancient cities with a long-standing reputation for wickedness (Genesis 18-19; Ezekiel 27-28).

Each was destroyed by God for its evil. The people of Bethsaida, Korazin, and Capernaum saw Jesus firsthand, and yet they stubbornly refused to repent of their sins and believe in him.

Jesus said that if some of the wickedest cities in the world had seen him, they would have repented. Because Bethsaida, Korazin, and Capernaum saw Jesus and didn't believe, they would suffer even greater punishment than that of the wicked cities that didn't see Jesus.

Similarly, nations and cities with churches on every corner and Bibles in every home will have no excuse on judgment day if they do not repent and believe.

What to do when your faith falters.

Matthew 14:30-31

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. [31] And immediately Jesus

stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Although we start out with good intentions, sometimes our faith falters. This doesn't necessarily mean we have failed. When Peter's faith faltered, he reached out to Christ, the only one who could help. He was afraid, but he still looked to Christ. When you are apprehensive about the troubles around you and doubt Christ's presence or ability to help, you must remember that he is the *only* one who can really help.

Turning small faith into sufficient faith

Matthew 17:17-19

Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me.

And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, why could not we cast him out?

The disciples had been given the authority to do the healing, but they had not yet learned how to appropriate the power of God. Jesus' frustration is with the unbelieving and unresponsive generation. His disciples were merely a reflection of that attitude in this instance. Jesus' purpose was not to criticize the disciples, but to encourage them to greater faith.

Christ can increase your faith.

Matthew 17:20

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Jesus wasn't condemning the disciples for substandard faith; he was trying to show how important faith would be in their future ministry. If you are facing a problem that seems as big and immovable as a mountain, turn your eyes from the mountain and look to Christ for more faith. Only then will your work for him become useful and vibrant.

Despite doubts and questions faith works.

Matthew 17:22-23

And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

The disciples didn't understand why Jesus kept talking about his death because they expected him to set up a political kingdom. His death, they thought, would dash their hopes. They didn't know that Jesus' death and resurrection would make his kingdom possible.

Chapter 6



Ways people lose faith.

Matthew 18:7

Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Jesus warned the disciples about two ways to cause “little ones” to sin: tempting them (Matthew 18:7-9) and neglecting or demeaning them (Matthew 18:10-14).

As leaders, we are to help young people or new believers avoid anything or anyone that could cause them to stumble in their faith and lead them to sin.

We must never take lightly the spiritual education and protection of the young in age and in the faith.

Anything is possible with God

Mark 9:23

Jesus said unto him, if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

Jesus' words do not mean that we can automatically obtain anything we want if we just think positively. Jesus meant that anything is *possible* if we believe, because nothing is too difficult for God. We cannot have everything we pray for as if by magic; but with faith, we can have everything we need to serve him.

Faith is an attitude of expectation.

John 6:18-19

And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.

The Sea of Galilee is 650 feet below sea level, 150 feet deep, and surrounded by hills. These physical features make it subject to sudden windstorms that would cause extremely high waves.

Such storms were expected on this lake, but they were nevertheless frightening. When Jesus came to the disciples during a storm, walking on the water (three and a half miles from shore), he told them not to be afraid.

We often face spiritual and emotional storms and feel tossed about like a small boat on a big lake. In spite of terrifying circumstances, if we trust our lives to Christ for his safekeeping, he will give us peace in any storm.

The disciples, terrified, probably thought they were seeing a ghost (Mark 6:49). But if they had thought about all they had already seen Jesus do, they could have accepted this miracle. They were frightened—they didn't expect Jesus to come, and they weren't prepared for his help.

Faith is a mind-set that *expects* God to act. When we act on this expectation, we can overcome our fears.

Faith must be put to work.

Matthew 21:19

And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

Why did Jesus curse the fig tree? This was not a thoughtless, angry act, but an acted-out parable. Jesus was showing his anger at religion without substance.

Just as the fig tree looked good from a distance but was fruitless on close examination, so the temple looked impressive at first glance, but its sacrifices and other activities were hollow because they were not done to worship God sincerely (see Matthew 21:43).

If you only appear to have faith without putting it to work in your life, you are like the fig tree that withered and died because it bore no fruit. Genuine faith means bearing fruit for God's kingdom.

Use faith as a constant process

Mark 9:24

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

The attitude of trust and confidence that the Bible calls *belief* or *faith* (Hebrews 11:1, 6) is not something we can obtain without help. Faith is a gift from God (Ephes. 2:8-9).

No matter how much faith we have, we never reach the point of being self-sufficient. Faith is not stored away like money in the bank. Growing in faith is a constant process of daily renewing our trust in Jesus.

John 6:47

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

Believes as used here means "continues to believe." We do not believe merely once; we keep on believing in and trusting Jesus.

The religious leaders frequently asked Jesus to prove to them why he was better than the prophets they already had. Jesus here referred to the manna that Moses had given their ancestors in the desert. This bread was physical and temporal.

The people ate it, and it sustained them for a day. But they had to get more bread every day, and this bread could not keep them from dying. Jesus, who is much greater than Moses, offers himself as the spiritual bread from heaven that satisfies completely and leads to eternal life.

Faith is aided by prayer.

Mark 9:29

And he said unto them, this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

The disciples would often face difficult situations that could be resolved only through prayer. Prayer is the key that unlocks faith in our lives. Effective prayer needs both an attitude—complete dependence—and an action—asking. Prayer demonstrates our reliance on God as we humbly invite him to fill us with faith and power.

There is no substitute for prayer, especially in circumstances that seem impossible.

How much faith is necessary?

Luke 17:6

And the Lord said, if ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this Sycamine tree, be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

A mustard seed is small, but it is alive and growing. Like a tiny seed, a small amount of genuine faith in God will take root and grow. Almost

invisible at first, it will begin to spread, first under the ground and then visibly.

Although each change will be gradual and imperceptible, soon this faith will have produced major results that will uproot and destroy competing loyalties. We don't need more faith; a tiny seed of faith is enough, if it is alive and growing.

Having childlike faith

Hosea 10:14

Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.

Some say Shalman was Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; others say Shalman was Salmanu, a Moabite king mentioned in the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser. Shalman had invaded Gilead around 740 B.C. and destroyed the city of Beth Arbel, killing many people, including women and children. This kind of cruelty was not uncommon in ancient warfare. Hosea was saying such would be Israel's fate.

Luke 18:15-17

And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of

God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

It was customary for a mother to bring her children to a rabbi for a blessing, and that is why these mothers gathered around Jesus. The disciples, however, thought the children were unworthy of the Master's time—less important than whatever else he was doing.

But Jesus welcomed them, because little children have the kind of faith and trust needed to enter God's kingdom. It is important that we introduce our children to Jesus and that we ourselves approach him with childlike attitudes of acceptance, faith, and trust.

Faith results in changed behavior.

Luke 19:8

And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

Judging from the crowd's reaction to him, Zacchaeus must have been a very crooked tax collector. But after he met Jesus, he realized that his life needed straightening out. By giving to the poor and making restitution—with generous interest—to those he had cheated, Zacchaeus demonstrated inward change by outward action. It is not enough to follow Jesus in your head or heart alone. You must show your faith by changed behavior. Has your faith resulted in action? What changes do you need to make?

Wealth is not always a by-product of faith.

Mark 10:26

And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, who then can be saved?

The disciples were amazed. Was not wealth a blessing from God, a reward for being good? This misconception is still common today. Although many believers enjoy material prosperity, many others live in hardship.

Wealth is not a sign of faith or of partiality on God's part.

Chapter 7



Admitting your faith

John 12:42-43

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Along with those who refused to believe, many believed but refused to admit it. This is just as bad, and Jesus had strong words for such people (see Matthew 10:32-33).

People who will not take a stand for Jesus are afraid of rejection or ridicule. Many Jewish leaders wouldn't admit to faith in Jesus because they feared excommunication from the synagogue (which was their livelihood) and loss of their prestigious place in the community.

But the praise of others is fickle and short-lived. We should be much more concerned about God's eternal acceptance than about the temporary approval of other people.

Faith is life's central issue.

Luke 20:41-43

And he said unto them, how say they that Christ is David's son? And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The Pharisees and Sadducees had asked their questions. Then Jesus turned the tables and asked them a question that went right to the heart of the matter—what they thought about the Messiah's identity.

The Pharisees knew that the Messiah would be a descendant of David, but they did not understand that he would be more than a human descendant—he was God in the flesh. Jesus quoted from Psalm 110:1 to show that David knew that the Messiah would be both human and divine. T

he Pharisees expected only a human ruler to restore Israel's greatness as in the days of David and Solomon.

The central issue of life is what we believe about Jesus. Other spiritual questions are irrelevant unless we first decide to believe that Jesus is who he said he is. The Pharisees and Sadducees could not do this. They remained confused over Jesus' identity.

Can your faith withstand persecution?

Matthew 26:25

Judas, the one who would betray him, also asked, "Teacher, I'm not the one, am I?" And Jesus told him, "You have said it yourself."

It is never too late to believe in Jesus.

Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!"

But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you are dying? We deserve to die for our evil deeds, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

As this man was about to die, he turned to Christ for forgiveness, and Christ accepted him. This shows that our deeds don't save us—our faith in Christ does. It is never too late to turn to God. Even in his misery, Jesus had mercy on this criminal who decided to believe in him. Our lives will be much more useful and fulfilling if we turn to God early, but even those who repent at the very last moment will be with God in paradise.

Stages of faith

John 20:1

Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

The stone was not rolled away from the entrance to the tomb so Jesus could get out. He could have left easily without moving the stone. It was rolled away so others could get *in* and see that Jesus was gone.

People who hear about the resurrection for the first time may need time before they can comprehend this amazing story. Like Mary and the disciples, they may pass through four stages of belief.

(1) At first, they may think the story is a fabrication, impossible to believe (John 20:2).

(2) Like Peter, they may check out the facts and still be puzzled about what happened (John 20:6).

(3) Only when they encounter Jesus personally are they able to accept the fact of the resurrection (John 20:16).

(4) Then, as they commit themselves to the risen Lord and devote their lives to serving him, they begin to understand fully the reality of his presence with them (John 20:28).

Jesus' resurrection is the key to faith.

Matthew 28:6

He isn't here! He has been raised from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come; see where his body was lying.

Jesus' resurrection is the key to the Christian faith. Why?

(1) Just as he promised, Jesus rose from the dead. We can be confident, therefore, that he will accomplish all he has promised.

(2) Jesus' bodily resurrection shows us that the living Christ is ruler of God's eternal kingdom, not a false prophet or imposter.

(3) We can be certain of our resurrection because he was resurrected. Death is not the end—there is future life.

(4) The power that brought Jesus back to life is available to us to bring our spiritually dead selves back to life.

(5) The resurrection is the basis for the church's witness to the world. Jesus is more than just a human leader; he is the Son of God.

Faith is based on facts.

Acts 1:1-3

Dear Theophilus:

In my first book I told you about everything Jesus began to do and teach until the day he ascended to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions from the Holy Spirit.

During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time and proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. On these occasions he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

Luke says that the disciples were eyewitnesses to all that had happened to Jesus Christ—his life before his crucifixion (“suffering”), and the 40 days after his resurrection as he taught them more about the kingdom of God.

Today there are still people who doubt Jesus' resurrection. But Jesus appeared to the disciples on many occasions after his resurrection, proving that he was alive.

Look at the change the resurrection made in the disciples' lives. At Jesus' death, they scattered—they were disillusioned, and they feared for their lives. After seeing the resurrected Christ, they were fearless and risked everything to spread the Good News about him around the world.

They faced imprisonment, beatings, rejection, and martyrdom, yet they never compromised their mission.

These men would not have risked their lives for something they knew was a fraud. They knew Jesus was raised from the dead, and the early church was fired with their enthusiasm to tell others. It is important to know this so we can have confidence in their testimony.

Twenty centuries later we can still be confident that our faith is based on fact.

Jesus explained that with his coming, the kingdom of God was inaugurated. When he returned to heaven, God's kingdom would remain in the hearts of all believers through the presence of the Holy Spirit. But the kingdom of God will not be fully realized until Jesus Christ comes again to judge all people and remove all evil from the world.

Before that time, believers are to work to spread God's kingdom across the world. The book of Acts records how this work was begun. What the early church started, we must continue.

Holy Spirit marks beginning of faith.

Acts 1:5

John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

At Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) the Holy Spirit was made available to all who believed in Jesus. We receive the Holy Spirit (are baptized with him) when we receive Jesus Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit must be understood in the light of his total work in Christians.

The Spirit marks the beginning of the Christian experience.

(1) We cannot belong to Christ without his Spirit (Romans 8:9); we cannot be united to Christ without his Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17); we cannot be adopted as his children without his Spirit (Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:6-7); we cannot be in the body of Christ except by baptism in the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).

(2) The Spirit is the power of our new lives. He begins a lifelong process of change as we become more like Christ (Galatians 3:3; Phil. 1:6). When we receive Christ by faith, we begin an immediate personal relationship with God. The Holy Spirit works in us to help us become like Christ.

(3) The Spirit unites the Christian community in Christ (Ephes. 2:19-22). The Holy Spirit can be experienced by all, and he works through all (1 Cor. 12:11; Ephes. 4:4).

Share your faith no matter what the cost.

Acts 5:40-42

The council accepted his advice. They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go.

The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus.

And every day, in the Temple and in their homes, they continued to teach and preach this message: "The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus."

Peter and John were warned repeatedly not to preach, but they continued in spite of the threats. We, too, should live as Christ has asked us to, sharing our faith no matter what the cost. We may not be beaten or thrown in jail, but we may be ridiculed, ostracized, or slandered. To what extent are you willing to suffer for the sake of sharing the gospel with others?

God will help when your faith is under fire.

Acts 23:6-8

Paul realized that some members of the high council were Sadducees and some were Pharisees, so he shouted, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, as were all my ancestors! And I am on trial because my hope is in the resurrection of the dead!"

This divided the council—the Pharisees against the Sadducees— or the Sadducees say there is no resurrection or angels or spirits, but the Pharisees believe in all of these.

Why does God save us by faith alone?

Romans 3:28

So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

Why does God save us by faith alone?

(1) Faith eliminates the pride of human effort, because faith is not a deed that we do.

(2) Faith exalts what God has done, not what people do.

(3) Faith admits that we can't keep the law or measure up to God's standards—we need help.

(4) Faith is based on our relationship with God, not our performance for God.

Chapter 8



Does faith cancel Judaism?

Romans 3:31

Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

The Jews were proud to be called children of Abraham. Paul uses Abraham as a good example of someone who was saved by faith. By emphasizing faith, Paul is not saying that God's laws are unimportant (Romans 4:13) but that it is impossible to be saved simply by obeying them.

How much faith do you need?

Romans 4:5

But people are declared righteous because of their faith, not because of their work.

When some people learn that they are saved by God through faith, they start to worry.

“Do I have enough faith?” they wonder,

“Is my faith strong enough to save me?”

These people miss the point. It is Jesus Christ who saves us, not *our* feelings or actions, and he is strong enough to save us no matter how weak our faith is. Jesus offers us salvation as a gift because he loves us, not because we have earned it through our powerful faith.

What, then, is the role of faith? Faith is believing and trusting in Jesus Christ, and reaching out to accept his wonderful gift of salvation.

Why faith is key to Christian life.

Romans 5:2-5

Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of

highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to endure. And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation.

And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

As Paul states clearly in 1 Cor. 13:13, faith, hope, and love are at the heart of the Christian life. Our relationship with God begins with *faith*, which helps us realize that we are delivered from our past by Christ's death.

Hope grows as we learn all that God has in mind for us; it gives us the promise of the future. And God's *love* fills our lives and gives us the ability to reach out to others.

What is weak faith?

Romans 14:1

Accept Christians who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.

Talking about faith versus living it

1 Cor. 4:18-20

I know that some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will never visit you again.

But I will come—and soon—if the Lord will let me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people are just big talkers or whether they really have God's power. For the Kingdom of God is not just fancy talk; it is living by God's power.

Some people talk a lot about faith, but that's all it is—talk. They may know all the right words to say, but their lives don't reflect God's power. Paul says that the kingdom of God is to be *lived*, not just discussed. There is a big difference between knowing the right words and living them out. Don't be content to have the right answers about Christ. Let your life show that God's power is really working in you.

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Faith does not free us from obedience.

2 Cor. 5:9-10

Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Paul makes it clear that we should not disassociate ourselves from unbelievers—otherwise, we could not carry out Christ’s command to tell them about salvation (Matthew 28:18-20).

But we are to distance ourselves from the person who claims to be a Christian, yet indulges in sins explicitly forbidden in Scripture and then rationalizes his or her actions.

By rationalizing sin, a person harms others for whom Christ died and dims the image of God in himself or herself.

A church that includes such people is hardly fit to be the light of the world. To do so would distort the picture of Christ it presents to the world. Church leaders must be ready to correct, in love, for the sake of spiritual unity.

Why faith is superior to the law.

Galatians 3:19-20

Well then, why was the law given? It was given to show people how guilty they are. But this system of law was to last only until the coming of the child to whom God's promise was made. And there is this further difference. God gave his laws to angels to give to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people.

Now a mediator is needed if two people enter into an agreement, but God acted on his own when he made his promise to Abraham.

When God gave his promise to Abraham, he did it by himself alone, without angels or Moses as mediators. Although it is not mentioned in Exodus, Jews believed that the Ten Commandments had been given to Moses by angels (Stephen referred to this in his speech, see Acts 7:38, 53).

Paul was showing the superiority of salvation and growth by faith over trying to be saved by keeping the Jewish laws. Christ is the best and only way given by God for us to come to him (1 Tim. 2:5).

Paul lost his possessions, but not his faith.

2 Tim. 1:12

And that is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.

Paul was in prison, but that did not stop his ministry. He carried it on through others like Timothy. Paul had lost all his material possessions, but he would never lose his faith.

He trusted God to use him regardless of his circumstances. If your situation looks bleak, give your concerns to Christ. He will guard your faith and safely guard all you have entrusted to him until the day of his return.

The phrase “guard what I have entrusted to him” could mean:

(1) Paul knew that God would guard the souls of those converted through his preaching;

(2) Paul trusted God to guard his own soul until Christ's second coming;
or

(3) Paul was confident that, though he was in prison and facing death, God would carry out the gospel ministry through others such as Timothy.

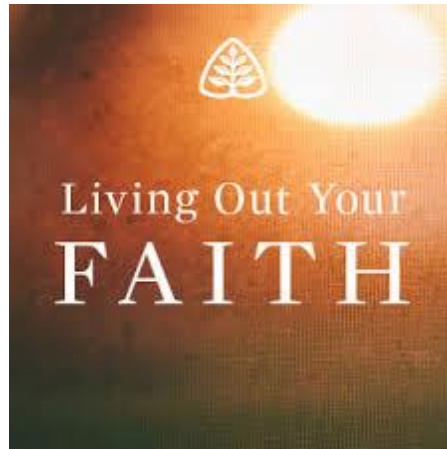
Paul may have expressed his confidence to encourage Timothy, who was undoubtedly discouraged by the problems in Ephesus and fearful of persecution. Even in prison, Paul knew that God was still in control. No matter what setbacks or problems we face, we can trust fully in God.

Faith combines assurance and anticipation.

Hebrews 11:1

What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see.

Chapter 9



The beginning and end of your faith

Hebrews 11:1

What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see.

Do you remember how you felt when you were very young and your birthday approached? You were excited and anxious. You knew you would certainly receive gifts and other special treats. But some things would be a surprise. Birthdays combine assurance and anticipation, and so does faith! Faith is the conviction based on past experience that God's new and fresh surprises will surely be ours.

Two words describe faith: *sure* and *certain*. These two qualities need a secure beginning and ending point. The beginning point of faith is believing in God's character—he *is* who he says. The end point is believing in God's promises—he will *do* what he says.

When we believe that God will fulfill his promises even though we don't see those promises materializing yet, we demonstrate true faith (see John 20:24-31).

Paul's view of faith versus James's view of faith

James 2:18

Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." I say, "I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds."

While it is true that our good deeds can never earn salvation, true faith always results in a changed life and good deeds. Paul speaks against those who try to be saved by deeds instead of true faith;

James speaks against those who confuse mere intellectual assent with true faith. After all, even demons know who Jesus is, but they don't obey him (James 2:19). True faith involves a commitment of your whole self to God.

James 2:21-24

Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was declared right with God because of what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

You see, he was trusting God so much that he was willing to do whatever God told him to do. His faith was made complete by what he did—by his actions.

And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, so God declared him to be righteous." He was even called "the friend of God." So you see, we are made right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.

James says that Abraham was “considered righteous” for what he *did*. Paul says he was justified because he *believed* God (Romans 4:1-5).

James and Paul are not contradicting but complementing each other. Let's not conclude that the truth is a blending of these two statements. We are not justified by what we do in any way. True faith always results in deeds, but the deeds do not justify us. Faith brings us salvation; active obedience demonstrates that our faith is genuine.

God will help us remain true to your faith.

1 Peter 1:5

And God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation, because you are trusting him. It will be revealed on the last day for all to see.

God will help us remain true to our faith through whatever difficult times we must face. The “last time” is the judgment day of Christ described in Romans 14:10 and Rev. 20:11-15. We may have to endure trials, persecution, or violent death, but our souls cannot be harmed if we have accepted Christ's gift of salvation. We know we will receive the promised rewards.

Never forget basics of faith.

2 Peter 1:12-13

I plan to keep on reminding you of these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth. Yes, I believe I should keep on reminding you of these things as long as I live.

Peter knew that he would die soon. Many years before, Christ had prepared Peter for the kind of death Peter would face (see John 21:18-19). At this time, Peter knew that his death was at hand. Peter was martyred for the faith in about A.D. 68. According to one tradition, he was crucified upside down, at his own request, because he did not feel worthy to die in the same manner as his Master.

Challenge your faith.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the special favor and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To him be all glory and honor, both now and forevermore. Amen.

Peter concludes this brief letter as he began, by urging his readers to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—to get to know him better and better. This is the most important step in refuting false teachers. No matter where we are in our spiritual journey, no matter how mature we are in our faith, the sinful world always will challenge our faith. We still have much room for growth.

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Holy Bible: King James Translation

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Additional comments and charts are taken from:

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