
What is Faith

Radio Message by Dwight Porter, D.D.

Faith is one of the most misused, abused and misunderstood words in the Bible. Its importance is evident when God says it is impossible to please Him without the exercise of it. "But without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE HIM for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6) Mark it down, if you are not pleasing God in obedience you have no faith. If your course of action is displeasing to Him, you lack faith.

Faith automatically produces OBEDIENCE. The Bible is filled with such examples. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Hebrews 11:7) "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, OBEYED, and he went out, not knowing whither he went." (Hebrews 11:8)

THREE MAIN PARTS

1. KNOWLEDGE - Faith is not a blind leap into the dark. It is based upon declared facts. We believe only that which is heard and understood. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." (Hebrews 11:6)

2. ASSENT TO KNOWLEDGE - We trust God to do that which he has promised. We first must know His declarations of purpose. (found in the Bible) and trust Him to do as declared in His intentions. We trust Him to have sufficient resources and power to deliver that which He has committed Himself to do. "...that he is a rewarder" Heb. 11:6.

3. APPROPRIATION - That which he has promised, (knowledge) we believe Him to do, (assent) for us personally, (appropriation). "... A rewarder of the man that diligently seek him" Heb. 11:6. This third step is the most neglected and difficult exercise. It is easy to hear facts with comprehension. We can declare Him to be capable and willing to keep His commitments. But when it comes to trusting Him to do it for yourself, it is another matter.

The exercise of faith means good-bye to all ability within ourselves. Self-sufficiency vanishes when God must do the work. His plan and purpose for our lives takes over when we believe him. Faith is a wild abandonment from all personal ability to please God. No man, religion, or philosophy will substitute for His work within us. Appropriation is the one practice that keeps most people from possessing the declared provision of God's Grace. Man will never do what only God can do. Faith rests upon God's promises that we have nothing to do with in his provision or possession. Faith is the means through which the Grace of God operates in our eternal behalf. Genuine faith allows God to impart His power to us without forcing His intentions upon us.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

The Bible is filled with examples and demonstrations of faith. We know the automatic consequences of its exercise. Demonstrations of these three aspects of faith are listed for us over and over. Notice their evidence in Paul's facing

death by ship wreck. "But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, to, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" Acts 27:21-25.

KNOWLEDGE - an angel told him to fear not, God has given you all them that sail with you. ASSENT - It shall be. APPROPRIATION - as it was told me. Notice his conclusion followed his declaration, "I BELIEVE GOD."

A clear picture of unbelief and its consequences is located in Mark 4:37-40. "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have NO faith?" Here we learn a lack of faith automatically produces fear. God's perfect love casts it out with of its consequences. (1 John 4:18, 19)

SOURCE OF FAITH

The Bible is clear and plain as to where faith comes from and how it is communicated to us. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17)

One of the finest churches in the New Testament was NOT KNOWN by its Sunday school attendance, missionary pledge or number of buses. Their faith that produced action was known the world around. "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your FAITH TO GOD-WARD is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing." (1 Thess. 1:8) The explanation for their faith is found in chapter 2, verse 13. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the world of men, but as it is in truth THE WORD OF GOD, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Faith is produced by the Holy Spirit and is classified as part of the Fruit of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, FAITH." (Gal. 5:22) Faith is one of the Spiritual gifts. "For to one is given by the Spirit the Word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another FAITH by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:8, 9)

Faith must be given to us since it is required by God and we are saved by Grace, not faith. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8, 9) "That not of yourselves" forever does away with concept of faith being meritorious. It cannot be produced by us because of these words, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Faith is not a commodity of exchange with God. He is under no obligation to us because of our faith. All of His promises were made in Grace long before we arrived on this earth. Faith simply appropriates that which He has previously provided for us. Faith is part of the GIFT mentioned in the above verse, Ephesians 2:8. "It is the gift of God."

Faith is our possession because of our position IN Christ. Ephesians 1:1, 3, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of

God, to the Saints which are at Ephesus and to the faithful IN Christ Jesus: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings IN heavenly places IN Christ.” “And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS.” (II Tim. 3:15)

OBJECT OF OUR FAITH

This is a very plain statement and probably a frustration to your intellect, but I must remind you of it. WE BELIEVE FACTS. We believe the Gospel, which consist of facts completely removed from us. In fact, we had absolutely nothing to do with them. God’s provision is in Christ, who died for sinners, was buried and rose again. (I Cor. 15:3, 4) It is completely accomplished on the outside of us. We had nothing to do with it. If we refuse to believe God’s provision, we make Him a liar. Need I stop and warn you that God deals harshly with unbelief? An entire nation of people were kept out of the promise land with their bodies rotting in the wilderness. Why? Unbelief! God’s promises of judgment are just as real as His promises of blessing.

Acts 16:31 is the most misquoted verse in the Bible. It is used out of context again and again. We seem to have the impression that this verse is for everyone. Not so! “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” At close observation of the context you will discover the person asking for direction was trembling, prostrate on the ground having already admitted his lost condition in Repentance. Only to the person in such a condition was this Truth conveyed. He was to trust upon the work of another person completely outside and beyond himself.

Eighteen times in the Bible we find the Saviour alone. Three hundred and seventy-five times we see Him listed as LORD. It is impossible to just meet Jesus (His human name). The jailor was instructed to believe in the Lord, Master, and Ruler. A little mampy-pamby Jesus will not suffice. He is the sovereign Ruler of the Universe. You cannot meet any other kind of a Saviour. No other one exists.

We believe in a LIVING PERSON. We must get beyond His teaching and work, trusting in Him. “But as many as RECEIVED HIM, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:12) “Come unto ME, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) Remember the admonition by Jesus Christ to the woman at the well? He wanted her to believe in His person. “Woman, BELIEVE ME.”

HIS FAITHFULNESS

Everything God requires of us is provided in His Son. We believe in His faithfulness, not ours. We are not saved by our faith. We are declared Righteous by a Holy God on the basis of the Faithfulness of His Son, not because of anything we do. “Even the righteousness of God which is by FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.” (Romans 3:22) “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the FAITH OF CHRIST, and

not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Gal. 2:16) “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise BY FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST might be given to them that believe.” (Gal. 3:22) “I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, who lived for me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20) “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the FAITH OF HIM.” (Eph. 3:11, 12) And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through THE FAITH OF CHRIST, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Phil. 3:9)

What confidence and rest is our portion when we stop depending upon OUR faith and rest upon the faithfulness OF Jesus Christ. The only work God accepts is that of His Son. Your works and mine are as filthy rags. We rest upon the Person God is well-pleased with, The Lord Jesus Christ.

If you need faith to be communicated to you, saturate yourself with the Word (the Bible) that communicates it. Trust is an easy exercise when by revelation you see a GREAT GOD in the Scriptures. It becomes easy to believe Him.

You must believe God is who He claims to be and Christ is who He claims to be. I am the sinner He says I am. God is able and willing to rescue me from sin with all of its consequences of damnation and hell. Christ has already met all the Holy demands of His Righteous Father in my eternal behalf. I will allow Him to become my personal Saviour. Will you? Do you trust Him to rid you of sin? You must appropriate the Provision of God completely outside and beyond you. Trust in the faithful. Work of Christ in your personal behalf and the work of His Power will make you a new creature, with His Holy Spirit coming in to transform your life, empowering you for serving Him Who died for you.

My Christian friend, will God keep His promises to you made known in your Bible? Keep your Bible closed and the enticements of his world will lead you into complacency and self-sufficiency. Do not live below your possessions and privileges IN Christ.

Will you believe God? Will you rest upon His Word? If so, let me know as I want to look forward to rejoicing with you throughout all eternity in the Saviour’s presence.

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