

# FAITH vs. UNBELIEF

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***FAITH MEANS LISTENING TO GOD'S WORDS WITH AN ACCEPTING HEART, AND DEPENDING ON HIM TO EMPOWER YOU PERSONALLY TO OBEY HIS WORDS.***

***"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" Hebrews 11:1.***

## **WHY IS FAITH SO IMPORTANT?**

One cannot underestimate the importance of faith to the believer. Faith forms the foundation for the Christian's relationship with God, and his continuing walk with Him. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith," (Romans 1:16-17, New American Standard). The righteousness of God is revealed in the faith of the sinner who believes on the Lord Jesus as his Savior, and is made a new creature in Christ. The righteousness of God is also revealed in that believer's dependence on Christ each day. Thus, the righteousness of God is revealed from saving faith to living faith. "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).

1. We are justified by faith (made perfect in God's sight). (See Romans 3:28.)
2. We are saved from our sins by faith. (See Ephesians 2:8-9.)
3. We are sanctified and cleansed by faith. (See Acts 26:18.)
4. Our hearts are purified by faith. (See Acts 15:9.)
5. We have access by faith into God's grace. (See Romans 5:2.)
6. We can "move mountains" by faith. (See Matt. 17:20.)

## **DEFINITION OF FAITH**

Faith always starts with information from God. In response to that information, you need to accept what God says, and trust Him to give you all the power you need to obey Him. Satan uses two very popular misconceptions to attack the true concept of faith: (1) faith means a leap in the dark, and (2) faith means asking and receiving from God whatever strikes my fancy. A careful examination of Scripture will clarify the true nature of faith.

The Apostle Paul develops the true concept of faith in Romans 9:30-10:21. The larger context of Romans 9-11 deals with Israel's rejection, as a nation, of the Lord Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Law and the Prophets. Paul makes it clear that God has not rejected His people, and that He has a plan for them (Romans 11). Paul wants to explain the nature of their present unbelief.

### ***Romans 9***

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

## **Romans 10**

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

*(Faith always begins with knowledge. God had clearly revealed the facts that the flesh and blood Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Messiah promised in the Law and the Prophets, and that He was, and is, the divine Son of God. The majority of Israel would not accept this information.)*

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

*(They not only fail to recognize the facts about the Lord Jesus, they refuse to depend on God to empower them to please Him. Those who seek to establish their own righteousness must find the power in themselves to do the work. Faith means coming to the place where you admit "I don't have the ability in myself to do anything that will really please God. But 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me!'" (Philippians 4:13).)*

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

*(The term translated word in verse eight is rhema (HRAY-mah). The more familiar term logos emphasizes the message conveyed by words, while rhema emphasizes the actual words that form spoken or written sentences. Rhema pictures "black letters on white paper." Faith finds it's content in the clearly revealed will of God. Faith begins with clear statements from God that can be quoted and written down.)*

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

*(Faith begins with God clearly revealing His will in language that you can hear and/or read. Once you know God's will, you must accept it as the truth, or reject it. Human beings can get very sophisticated about their rejection. They often don't like what God has to say, but rather than reject it out right, they "rationalize" the truth away. By contrast, faith accepts what God says, regardless of the implications.)*

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

*(The term that Paul uses in verse seventeen for word is rhema. Once again Paul stresses that faith must begin with knowledge of God's will, a knowledge expressed with words that can be heard and/or read.)*

## **EXAMPLES OF FAITH**

The book of Hebrews offers many illustrations of faith. “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith,” (Hebrews 11:7, New International Version). Noah did not build the ark because of a personal whim or fancy. God spoke *rhemas* to Noah. God gave exact instructions, and Noah had no doubts about what the Lord expected him to do. Noah did not reject or rationalize away what God said, but simply accepted it, and depended on God to empower him, personally, to build the ark.

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going,” (Hebrews 11:8, New International Version). Abraham did not leave his home to travel to a distant land simply because he felt like it. God spoke *rhemas* to Abraham. Abraham accepted the Lord’s instruction as it was, and relied on his God to strengthen him to go the distance.

“By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised,” (Hebrews 11:11, New American Standard). God had spoken *rhemas* to the effect that Abraham would have a son by Sarah, and would raise up innumerable descendants through them. Sarah had a hard time with this promise. She had given up hope of bearing children. She had given her maid, Hagar, to Abraham to get a child by proxy. This was a form of rationalizing away the clear statement of God. Hagar bore a son, but he was not the son of promise. When the Lord again promised that she would bear a son, she rejected those words with laughter. Eventually she came to take the promise from God at face value, and trusted on God to give her the ability to get pregnant.

## **THE QUALITY OF FAITH VARIES IN INDIVIDUALS**

- We can have weak faith or strong faith. (See Romans 4:19-20.)
- We can have faith that is tested or untested. (See I Peter 1:7.)
- We can have little faith or great faith. (See Matthew 8:10, 26.)
- We can be lacking in faith or abounding in faith. (See I Thessalonians 3:10, II Thessalonians 1:3.)

## **FAITH MUST BE EXPRESSED IN ACTIONS**

C.H. Spurgeon said, “Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle; he that obeys God trusts God; and he that trusts God obeys God.” “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:17-18). In God’s hall of fame, those who had faith acted upon it. By faith Noah built an ark. By faith Abraham went out from his homeland. By faith Moses rejected the treasures of Egypt and chose to suffer affliction with the children of Israel (see Hebrews 11).

## **FAITH CAN BE EXERCISED FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS**

When a man who was suffering from palsy was brought to Jesus by four of his friends, we are not told about the faith of the man. Rather, we are informed that the faith of his four friends actually caused him to be restored. “And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Matthew 9:2).

## **HOW STRONG IS YOUR FAITH?**

1. Do you read Scripture, such as the commands of Christ, as opportunities to accept the words of God, and to rely on Him to empower you for obedience?
2. Do you memorize and meditate upon the *rhemas* God gives you?
3. Do you believe that God is living and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him?
4. Do you pray in generalities or make specific requests to the Lord?
5. Do you wait for God's provision or do you borrow money for things you think you should have?
6. Do you have examples in your life of God working supernaturally through your faith?