

Faith That Saves

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6).

What is faith? We often say, "I have faith" or "I'm saved by faith alone," but what do we mean when we say this? Are we living up to what faith really is? Hebrews 11 speaks of many men and women of faith; what was it about their lives that earned them the right to be known as people of great faith? It's important for us to understand what faith is because Heb. 11:6 tells us that *"without faith it is impossible to please God."* So, if we want to please God, in fact if we want to be saved, then we must have faith that saves because it is through our faith that we are saved. Eph. 2:8 says, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith."*

Heb. 11:1 tells us that *"faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."* Faith is an inner conviction which overflows into the life of Christians and results in a lifestyle of holy living and good works for the Lord.

Faith and holy living

It is through our faith that we believe in Jesus and are saved from our sins. Rom. 3:22 tells us that *"righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."* The word 'believe' means to commit to or to put trust in. When we commit our ways to Jesus, and put our trust in Him for the forgiveness of sins, we receive the Holy Spirit who empowers us to resist sin and to live a righteous life. In 1 Pet. 1:16, God commands us to live a righteous life where He says, *"Be holy, because I am holy."* It's very important that we follow this command because *"without holiness no one will see the Lord"* (Heb. 12:14).

Faith and works

A Christian's lifestyle includes both holy living and good works. Good works don't save us but rather, they are the result of being saved. James 2:18 tells us that someone may say, *"You have faith; I have deeds."* James' reply to this is, *"Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."* James is saying that faith is proven by its actions. The fact is, faith without good works (deeds) is a dead faith. James 2:26 says, *"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."* Good works, such as helping those in need, is a natural result of our salvation and part of a Christian's lifestyle. James 1:27 says, *"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress [that is, do good works] and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world [that is, keep oneself from sin]."* So, a Christian lifestyle includes both good works and holy living.

Living out our faith

When we sit on a chair, we have faith that the chair won't break. If we thought it would break then we wouldn't sit on it. This is like the story of a man who walked a tightrope over the Niagara Falls, pushing a wheelbarrow. When he got to the other side he asked the people if they believed that he could go across again with someone in the barrow. They said "Yes" but when he asked for a volunteer to get in the barrow, no one would do it. The people believed that it could be done but no one had the faith to do it. The fact is, we can't have absolute faith in material things like chairs and we can't always fully trust people because people and the things of this world can fail us but thankfully God never does. In Num. 23:19 we are told, *"God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"* We can trust God fully because He faithfully fulfils every promise He makes.

Jesus is our greatest example of faith and we need to look to Him for strength. Heb. 12:2 says, *"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."* Jesus willingly went to the cross with the absolute faith that God would raise Him from the dead. He had

perfect trust in God's promises and so can we. The Old Testament saints were commended for their faith because they believed against all odds. By faith Abraham believed God's promises and was even willing to sacrifice his son, believing that God would raise him from the dead (Heb. 11:8-19). Hebrews 11 is known as the Heroes Of The Faith chapter. It mentions many men and women who had a living, active faith which was proven by their actions. Even though they faced mockery, rejection, terrible persecution, huge enemy armies etc. they believed God and kept their faith and have gone on to their eternal rewards. They followed James' example where he said, "*I will show you my faith by what I do*" (James 2:18).

Finally

Faith that saves is an ongoing, active faith which leads us to repent of our sins and commit ourselves to living a holy lifestyle and to stand firm in the face of hardship and persecution. Our faith grows when we exercise it by believing God's promises and acting on them. Faith is like a muscle: exercise it and it grows stronger; do nothing and it becomes as weak as a baby. 2 Cor. 5:7 tells us that "*We live by faith, not by sight*" but faith is not blind. Even though we can't see what we believe in, there is no need for us to grope along like blind men as we have the Holy Spirit and the infallible Word of God to guide us in thought, word and deed. By faith we can believe every promise in the Bible and when we act on that faith God fulfils His promises to us and our faith grows. Amen.

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