

Faith for those God has Called and Chosen

By **Bob Thiel, Ph.D.**

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Cover: Feet on shown on water as a representation that Christians should walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). The back cover shows the Sea of Galilee. The Apostle Peter was called and chosen and even walked for a while with Jesus on water (Matthew 14:25-31). Despite the walk, Peter only had a little faith then, and Jesus admonished him that he should have more faith.

Faith for those God has Called and Chosen

By Bob Thiel, Ph.D.

***What is faith? Can faith be
increased?***

***Is faith just a feeling? Does faith
nullify the law?***

***Many talk about faith, but do they
really have it?***

***Millions lack the faith to receive
answers to their prayers.***

***Often this is due to lack of
understanding what faith really is.***

***Can you handle reading and doing
what the Bible teaches about faith?***

Faith for those God has Called and Chosen

Do you know much about faith? Do you know how important faith is?

Jesus said, that along with mercy and judgment, faith was one of the weightier, more important, matters of the law (Matthew 23:23). His disciples realized that faith was important.

One day:

⁵ ...the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5, NKJV except where indicated elsewhere: though the *What is Faith?* booklet, quotes from the KJV, without separate notice).

Instead of actually telling them how to increase their faith, Jesus suggested that they had only a little.

But in other parts of the Bible, Jesus and others gave more details about how faith could be increased. This short booklet will discuss several, but not all, aspects of faith. The NKJV of the Bible, for example, has the English word 'faith' 243 times in the New Testament (twice in the Old) and the word faithful 53 times in the NT (and 32 in the OT).

Show Faith By Doing, Not Just Claiming to Believe

Paul wrote:

⁷ "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

In practical terms, this means that we live God's way of life even when we have trials and temptations, when things seem almost hopeless, or when others try to deceive us. Paul also wrote:

³¹ "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31).

Furthermore, James wrote:

¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²² Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? (James 2:17-22).

Thus faith goes beyond just believing. Living faith includes action that God approves - living as Jesus did and as He wanted His followers to do. Not only keeping the Sabbath or God's Holy Days when it seems difficult, but to tithe, avoid pagan holidays like Christmas, and to be honest in a dishonest society. Also, to love those who do not love you (Matthew 5:44-48). Abraham's faith was shown by obedience in works and how he lived his life, not in the manifestation of miracles from his prayers. Abraham had living faith. It takes faith to live God's way in this world.

Jesus taught:

⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

We are not saved by works, but by faith:

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Notice the Bible shows that although we are saved by grace, even that is the gift of God. Also notice that we were created in Christ Jesus for good works.

What is the Bible Definition of Faith?

The Bible gives a definition of faith:

¹ Now faith is the foundation of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ² For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible...⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him " (Hebrews 11:1-3,6, modified NKJV).

Author's Note: The preceding was modified as the KJV and NKJV translate the Greek word hypostasis as substance but it literally means under (hypo) stability (stasis) or foundation. Hence, faith is the underlying stability that God's people are to have.

Do you really believe that God is rewarding those He has called and chosen, those who seek Him? If so, how does that affect your life?

The Greek word most commonly translated in the New Testament as faith is πίστις, which is transliterated into English as *pistis*. *BibleSoft* defines it to mean:

πίστις **pistis** (pis'- tis) persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ

for salvation; abstractly, constancy in such profession; by extension, the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself: (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

By system of truth, at least one minister felt that it included the concept of the work, and since Christians are part of the work of God, it is fair to say that faith is part of the work. And it certainly does take significant faith at times to do the work. Notice something that Christians are told to do:

³...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3)

Jude is writing to Christians, those who have been called and chosen (1 Corinthians 1:26-28; Matthew 22:14). We are not just to have faith, but promote it (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20). That is what we in the *Continuing* Church of God are striving to do.

The Called and Chosen are to be Faithful

While close to all truly in the churches of Christ (Romans 16:16b) believe that they have been called and chosen, all should realize that they are also to be faithful.

When Jesus returns, notice who is with Him:

¹⁴... He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful. (Revelation 17:14)

We who are called and chosen need to remain faithful. We are not just to obey God, we need to have faith that His ways are best for us.

Notice two other passages of scripture:

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. (Romans 8:18-19)

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

When things go wrong, we need faith to endure to the end. It sometimes takes faith to realize that all things work together for our good.

Faith vs. Feeling

Many confuse feelings with faith. While the faithful should have a godly confidence, faith is not really an emotion to be temporarily worked up.

Now, it is true if Satan is bothering one, immediate action should be taken:

⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:7-8)

⁵..."God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." ⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷ casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. ⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. ¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have

suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Peter 5:5-10)

And taking those biblical actions should increase faith.

But that is not the same as some type of emotional session to temporarily make someone feel that they have faith.

In his *What is Faith* booklet the late Church of God leader Herbert Armstrong wrote:

WHY People Lack Faith

And now, very briefly, WHY don't we have FAITH, and how may we get it, and how may it be increased? So many say, "Well, I have no impression -- I have no feeling, no conviction -- that I shall get the answer."

They want to wait until they get a certain CONVICTION, a certain FEELING, a sort of assurance they can FEEL - before they really believe they shall have the answer.

But THAT is not faith!

That is FEELING!

Your feeling, your convictions, your impressions, has absolutely not one thing or the other to do with FAITH. FAITH HAS ONLY TO DO WITH GOD'S WORD! The one question is, Has God promised it in the Bible? If He has, then probabilities, possibilities, feelings, convictions, impressions, have nothing whatsoever to do with it. God has a thousand ways we know nothing of, of answering and providing whatever He has promised. We don't need to see HOW He is going to do it.

And that's another thing - He almost never will do it the WAY we expect. So don't try to figure out how it is

possible for God to do it. You are trusting in SUPER-NATURAL POWER! Then BELIEVE in that power. God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. What He has promised, He will perform; but He will do it HIS way, and in HIS TIME. Leave all that to HIM and just TRUST HIM. Rely upon His word.

God's GIFT

And let us remember, FAITH is the GIFT OF GOD. So many think that everything else that comes from God is His gift, but the FAITH required to receive these things is something we ourselves must somehow work up, or strain and strive for. But we have to just relax and TRUST GOD, even for the FAITH by which we receive everything else! (Eph. 2:8).

In Revelation 14:12 is a description of the true Church of THIS DAY. Those in this Church have the FAITH OF JESUS. Notice, the FAITH OF JESUS! It is not just our faith in HIM, but His faith--the very faith with which He performed His miracles--placed in us and acting in us. How can you get it? Draw closer to God. Get to know God. Surrender all the way to HIM, and do His will. And then PRAY. YOU get to know Him in PRAYER. We are too close to the material things. Through PRAYER, much more prayer, you can come closer to GOD and the spiritual things. And what a happy, joyous experience it is, once you have really done it!

Faith is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8), but it is a gift that Christians can develop. Not through emotional appeals, but through living as Jesus lived and trusting God to see us through tests and trials. Feelings can be deceptive, faith is true.

The Just Shall Live By Faith

Christians are chosen to become rich in faith:

⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? (James 2:5)

The Bible, in three places teaches the just shall live by faith.

The first time is Habakkuk 2:4:

⁴ Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

The contrast between the proud and the just indicates that the faithful are not among the proud, but among the upright. The proud have too much faith in themselves.

Paul wrote:

¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." ¹² Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them. (Galatians 3:11-12)

This last verse shows that while the law is not faith, the faithful will keep it.

In Romans 1:17-19, the Apostle Paul wrote:

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

Regarding righteousness of God, Psalm 119:172 states:

¹⁷² My tongue shall speak of Your word, For all Your commandments are righteousness.

Hebrews says this about some of the just that were faithful:

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵ And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

So the faithful, while living God's way of life on Earth, are focused on the hope of their future reward with God. They "seek first the kingdom" (Matthew 6:33). But also on Earth they keep the commandments:

¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. (Revelation 14:12)

But it is not always easy to be part of the faithful. The expression 'patience of the saints' indicates great difficulty at that time. But with the faith OF Jesus, which God grants, we can do endure. Sometimes we have to endure that which seems unfair (1 Peter 1:12-16) and/or for a very long period of time (2 Peter 3:8-9). Do not succumb to bitterness (cf. Hebrews 12:14-15; Ephesians 4:13).

Notice something the Apostle Paul wrote:

²⁰ And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of

God, who loved me, and delivered himself for me.
(Galatians 2:20, DRB)

We need to have the faith OF Jesus to have Him live His life in us. If this were not possible, the Bible would not teach that!

Recall that the Bible ties faith in with hope, “faith is the foundation of things hoped for.” Hope is something that we need to have:

¹⁵ And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. ¹⁶ And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. (Acts 24:15-16 1 KJV)

Not only is hope to be exercised, so essentially is faith. One exercises faith by living by it. And this is not simply a 'blind faith.' Notice that the Bible teaches:

²¹ Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. ²² Abstain from all appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 KJV)

The Bible teaches that one should be able to prove that there is a God:

²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, (Romans 1:20)

Of course, we must also look beyond the physical:

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at

the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

By living according to faith, one also helps prove that the commands and instructions in the word of God are true - Christians do not simply have a blind, illogical, or emotional faith. Faith is real - it is *the substance of things hoped for* (Hebrews 11:1).

Much of the Old Testament was Written for Our Example-- What is the 'Faith Chapter' of the Bible?

The Bible says that much of the Old Testament was written for our example:

¹ Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷ And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Corinthians 10:1-12)

Notice that in the Old Testament, many were walking by sight. But as Christians, we must have faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). In the New Testament, some of those examples are highlighted again.

Let's go back to Hebrews 11, which is often called the 'faith chapter' in the Bible and see all of it:

¹ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ² For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. ⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

⁷ By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he waited for the

city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

¹¹ By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand, which is by the seashore.

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵ And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," ¹⁹ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three

months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. ²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. ³¹ By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

³² And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³ who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

³⁹ And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, ⁴⁰ God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

These are not just stories. These are examples to us. We need to have the faith to do what God wants even when we feel overwhelmed or discouraged. Faith often takes courage.

Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote:

¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)

The called are to have faith and the examples of those before us should help. When I read some of the lies on the internet about me, or if you learn of some of them, remember what Jesus and Stephen the martyr said:

¹¹ "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12)

⁵¹ "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? (Acts 7:51-52)

Jesus is saying that the examples of those who went before us should help us understand what happens to us today. And Stephen made it clear that religious leaders often would not listen to God's prophets.

God Will Provide What We Need IF We Put Him First and Have Faith

Many who are not called and chosen worry about many matters. Jesus said that His followers do not have to be like that:

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

²⁵ "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

²⁸ "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹ and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

³¹ "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:24-34)

Do you have faith in God's promises? Jesus said there were those of little faith. Do you want to be considered that way by Jesus?

The late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote related to this in his *What is Faith?* booklet:

The Importance of CLAIMING a PROMISE

I remember one time several years ago when my two sons came to me and asked me to do something for them - I don't remember now what. They were then around seven and nine years old. I do remember I didn't want to do it.

"But, Daddy, You PROMISED," they said, "and you've GOT TO KEEP YOUR PROMISE."

And then I remembered I had promised. Well, what do you think? Do you think I could break a promise when my two sons came to me and put it like that? No, and if you'll just as boldly tell God HE has promised and then CLAIM that promise as applied to your case and TRUST God to keep it and quit worrying about it - quit trying to work up faith - just RELAX, and let God take over from there - leave it with Him - let Him do it - He'll do it, every time!

I know whereof I speak, because I've put what I'm now telling you to the test not once, but literally hundreds and thousands of times, and God has never failed to keep His promise once. I've seen the answers come so often and so frequently that I expect the answer when I ask! God promises to supply every need - that if we'll seek first the Kingdom of God and His RIGHTEOUSNESS - which is right doing - He will provide every material need (Matt. 6:33).

Relying on God is a matter of faith. But most do not really do that, including most who claim to be Christian.

Faith Comes By Hearing the Word of God from Those God Has Sent to Preach

Faith is a foundational doctrine:

¹ Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God (Hebrews 6:1)

Where does faith come from?

Paul wrote:

² Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Galatians 3:2).

Paul also wrote:

⁶ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way...⁸ "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach)...¹³ For "whoever calls on 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 unless they are sent? As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" ¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

¹⁸ But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:

"Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world." (Romans 10:6,8,13-18).

He then said that part of Israel's problem was disobedience (vs.21). So Paul makes it clear that for people to have faith, they need to listen to the preachers God has sent. These preachers must be true to the word of God (vs.17). Since hearing comes "by the word of God," this article, most of the sermons, and most of the other information we in the *Continuing Church of God* put forth extensively quotes the Bible, the word of God. For faith, followers of Jesus also personally need to study the word of God (cf. Acts 17:10).

The importance of preaching and the word of God is confirmed in the following account from the Book of Acts:

¹⁰ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. ¹² Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men" (Acts 17:10-12).

Searching the scriptures daily is, thus, also helpful in increasing faith. However, some feel that is all they need to do.

Assembling Together Can be Helpful

Paul was inspired to write:

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

Many, sadly, have erroneously concluded that this means that they should simply read the Bible on their own, never try to

assemble with others (when possible), and not support any church. They seem to have overlooked the fact that Paul, one of the preachers God had sent, reminded them to continue to obey what he taught, and that that was essential for them to be able to work out their own salvation:

¹³ Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:13)

Furthermore, the New Testament also teaches:

²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Although in this Laodicean time (Revelation 3:14-22), some erroneously seem to feel that they do not need the exhortation of others, they still have the obligation to exhort others, when they can. Otherwise they are being disobedient (the Bible suggest that the Philadelphians are better at 'holding fast,' Revelation 3:11, to this and other matters). Notice also:

⁵ Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; ⁷ To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints. (Romans 1:5-7)

Since obedience helps us receive faith, it is clear that disobedience hurts and even destroys faith.

Faith, Prayer, Actions and Fasting

Those who follow God are to pray and not give up:

¹ Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, ² saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. ³ Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' ⁴ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, ⁵ yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"

⁶ Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷ And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? ⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8)

Notice that Jesus is indicating that there may be truly few with faith when He returns. We are to cry out to God even when circumstances do not seem to support it. Will you be among the few truly faithful when Jesus returns?

Notice that Jesus' disciple Peter had trouble with faith:

²⁵ Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.

²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸ And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

²⁹ So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was

afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. (Matthew 14:25-32)

Jesus expected Peter to walk by faith and not sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). But although Peter had some faith, he needed more. Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18), and Peter did not have that then.

Notice something that Paul wrote to Timothy:

²² Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22)

Notice that faith is tied in with those who call on God with a pure heart - truly converted Christians!

Prayer and fasting are tools to help with faith, and even Jesus' disciples had problems with faith. Notice the following:

²³ Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23).

Yet the disciples themselves had failed to have enough belief/faith to cast the particular demon in Mark 9 out. This apparently perplexed the disciples:

²⁸ And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast him out?"
²⁹ So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting (Mark 9:28-29).

Since all things are possible for those that believe, and the disciples were not able to cast out that particular demon, Jesus explained that prayer and fasting were lacking then.

How Else Might One Increase Faith?

Jesus alludes to another way to increase faith. Notice the following:

⁵ And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."

⁶ So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. ⁷ And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? ⁸ But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? ⁹ Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. ¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" (Luke 17:5-10)

Jesus is basically saying that if you only do what you are required to do, that will not increase one's faith enough to make one a profitable servant. So, for those who are called and chosen, Jesus expects them to do more than they have to. In practical terms, this is more than not doing bad, but doing more good.

Twice the Book of Psalms teaches:

¹⁴ Depart from evil and do good; (Psalm 34:14)

²⁷ Depart from evil, and do good; (Psalm 37:27)

For a physical example, it is not just enough to avoid eating unclean animals, as God says:

² Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, (Isaiah 55:2)

God does not just say avoid that which is specifically forbidden. As far as doing good food-wise, most people in the West should eat more fruits and vegetables and less processed foods. I have also noticed that eating processed foods is a problem in the East as well. Actually, I was shocked when I saw how much processed foods were eaten in Malaysia when we went there for the Feast of Tabernacles.

In our lives, we must do more than try to avoid sin, we need to do good.

Notice what the Apostle Peter wrote:

⁸ Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. ¹¹ Let him turn away from evil and do good; (1 Peter 3:8-11)

The called are to do good and love.

The late Herbert W. Armstrong used to teach that the Church of God goes forward on its knees. Basically meaning that God will provide His blessings on us and open more doors for us if we pray and are close to Him. While heathen do pray, prayer for Christians should help demonstrate our faith.

Have Faith In God and Forgive

Christians are to have enough faith in God to forgive. The Bible records:

²⁰ Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. ²¹ And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." ²² So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. ²³ For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. ²⁴ Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. ²⁵ "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. ²⁶ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses." (Mark 11:20-26)

Notice that Jesus said to have faith in God, to believe, to pray, and to forgive. Thus, believing, praying, and forgiving seem to be important to faith.

Trust God and Accept His Correction

Those called by God need to trust Him and accept His correction:

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. ⁸ It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. ⁹ Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine. ¹¹ My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; ¹² For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Proverbs 3:5-12)

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

It takes faith to trust God and believe He is faithful when you face tests and trials - especially if some of them last years.

Is not God the Father of Christians? Notice Jesus' words:

⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. ¹⁴ "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:9-15)

We are to forgive and want God's will to be done. However, we do not always live that way, so notice what the Book of Hebrews teaches shortly after the 'faith chapter':

⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable

fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

¹² Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:7-13)

It takes faith to do that.

Faith and the Law

Does faith nullify the law? Some Protestants seem to teach that, but what did the Apostle Paul write about that?

²⁷ Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ²⁹ Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, ³⁰ since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. (Romans 3:27-31)

Christians are justified by faith after they repent. But since Christians are not to continue in sin, we help establish the law. Notice also the following:

¹ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:1-4)

Here is more that Herbert Armstrong wrote in his *What is Faith?* booklet:

Again, Ephesians 2:8-9: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." But those who quote this text so freely to teach the doctrine of "no works," never tell you that the same inspired Scriptures say also:

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ... Even so FAITH, if it hath not works, IS DEAD, being alone ... I will show thee my faith BY my works. Thou BELIEVEST that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, AND tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works IS DEAD?" (James 2:14- 20).

There is no contradiction here!

Rather, by putting all the scriptures on the subject of "Saving Faith" together, we learn that there are TWO KINDS of faith. And the kind so blindly trusted in by the majority of this day is nothing but a DEAD faith--and a DEAD faith never will save one soul! Notice! James 2:20:

"Faith without works is DEAD"--just a DEAD faith.

James continues:

"Was not Abraham our father JUSTIFIED by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how FAITH wrought with his works, and BY WORKS was faith made

perfect?.. You see then how that **BY WORKS A MAN IS JUSTIFIED**, and not by faith only" (James 2:21-24).

Then are we saved by works instead of faith?

No, never! We are saved by **FAITH!** But faith functions with our works and **BY WORKS** our **FAITH** is **MADE PERFECT!** That is **LIVING FAITH!**

Why do we even need salvation? Because we have **SINNED**, and the penalty of sin is **DEATH!**

But how have we sinned? What **IS** sin, anyhow?

"Sin is the transgression of **THE LAW**," is God's answer (I John 3:4).

"Yes." answers the victim of modern fables, "But we are not under the law today, but **UNDER GRACE!**" Why certainly! "What then?" asks the inspired Paul, "shall we **SIN** [transgress the **LAW**] because we are not under the law but under grace?" And Paul's answer is. **GOD FORBID!** (Rom. 6:15). And again, "Shall we continue in **SIN** [transgressing the **Law**] that grace may abound? **GOD FORBID!** How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2).

The Law has a penalty--**DEATH**. It claims the life of the one who transgresses it. The Law has power to take the life of the transgressor. It therefore is more powerful than the sinner--and is **OVER** the sinner, holding a claim on his life. It is the **SINNER** who is **UNDER** the law. But when the sinner **REPENTS** of his transgression, and accepts the sacrifice of Christ as payment of the penalty of the Law, then he is **PARDONED--UNDER GRACE--**the Law no longer stands **OVER** him, claiming his life. Those who are still sinning are still **UNDER** the Law! And those who, through repentance, obedience and **FAITH** have turned from disobedience and are, through

faith, KEEPING the Law, are the only ones who are UNDER GRACE!

God's Spiritual Mirror

Let us understand it! "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." No, certainly not! That scripture is 100% true, and there is no contradiction! You cannot be justified BY the deeds of the Law--not at all!

WHY? The last half of this same verse gives the answer--why do most preachers never quote it? "For By the law is the KNOWLEDGE of sin" (Rom. 3:20). THAT'S WHY!

The purpose of the Law is not to forgive, to justify, to wash away, to cleanse. Only THE BLOOD OF CHRIST can do that! The purpose of the Law is to tell us what sin is — to define it, to REVEAL it - so we can quit it. Sin is the transgression of the Law - that's what sin IS.

All women ought to understand this. In every woman's handbag is a little mirror. She knows what it is for. Every little while she takes out this mirror and steals a glance at her face. Sometimes it reveals a speck of dirt. And we might truthfully say, "by the use of these mirrors are no dirty faces washed clean." You women understand what we mean! But do you throw your mirrors away because by them your faces are not washed? Of course not - what a silly question it seems, when applied to a MATERIAL case! And if we ask you WHY your faces are not washed clean by your mirrors, you answer:

Because by the mirror comes the KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIRT."

God's LAW is His spiritual mirror. We look into it. and see the dirt on our hearts! But by looking at the Law, or

keeping it, no dirt is WASHED from our hearts - only Christ's BLOOD can do that. By the Law comes the KNOWLEDGE OF SIN!

Listen to James explain it!

"But be ye DOERS OF the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect LAW of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a DOER of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:22-25).

Is It Possible to Keep the Law?

"But," argues the "no law" deceiver, "no man can keep the Commandments. It is not humanly possible. Since FAITH has come, we keep no law - faith has made it VOID."

Thus even "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of LIGHT. Therefore it is no great thing if HIS MINISTERS also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness--for such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of CHRIST" (II Cor. 11:13-15).

"Do we then make void the law through faith?" comes the question in inspired Scripture - and the answer: "GOD FORBID: yea, we ESTABLISH THE LAW!" (Rom. 3:31).

Yes, faith establishes the Law! By keeping it, is faith made PERFECT!

Yet, can we keep the Commandments? Is it possible? Satan's "No Law" deceivers say No!

What is the PLAIN TRUTH?

A man came to Jesus and asked how to be saved. The Saviour Himself replied,

"If thou wilt enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS" (Matt. 19:17). "When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God, all things are possible" (verses 25-26).

There is Christ's own answer! With men it IS impossible - utterly impossible to really KEEP His Commandments. But - here's the blessed truth - WITH GOD, it is possible, even to keep His Commandments. Do you begin to see? IT TAKES FAITH - faith in the power of GOD! And, just as your own diligent effort coupled with faith makes faith perfect, so faith coupled with your effort makes PERFECT OBEDIENCE! The two go hand in hand. And you cannot have the one without the other!

A LIVING FAITH - the only kind that will SAVE - is an active faith - one that TRUSTS GOD to make it possible to OBEY HIM - to live the true Christian life - to KEEP His blessed Commandments!

Think! Could a just God command men to do what is IMPOSSIBLE to do? Or can we conceive of Jesus as a smart-aleck young man who knew more than His FATHER, and who did away with His Father's Commandments? How absurd! Yet this is the popular conception today! ...

We are not justified BY THE LAW - we are justified by the blood of Jesus Christ! But this justification will be given only on condition that we REPENT of our transgressions of God's Law - and so it is, after all, only the DOERS of the Law that shall be JUSTIFIED (Rom. 2:13).

Hopefully, that helps many understand that while we are saved by grace, we are to strive to live as Jesus taught and obey the laws of God. Although I have referred to some of those scriptures above, I felt that Herbert Armstrong's explanation was valuable at the risk of partial repeat.

Concluding Comments on Faith

Increasing faith takes a lifetime. Sometimes it seems quite difficult. There are so many aspects of it, that they cannot be covered in a short paper. But from the Bible we see that those called of God had faith and lived by faith.

We see that faith is the substance of things hoped for. We see that faith came by hearing the word of God from the preachers that God sent. We see that the faithful searched the scriptures to be sure that the preachers were of God. We see we are to have the faith of Jesus.

We also learn that the faithful were obedient, that they did not forsake the assembling of themselves together, that they exhorted one another, that they prayed, and that they fasted.

Faith is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8) and an important aspect of the law (Matthew 23:23). The just are to live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11).

God promises to reward those who have the courage to exercise faith and overcome their fears, but not those who do not:

⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly,

unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:7-8)

The Bible shows that the faithful have demonstrated their faith by keeping the commandments and otherwise doing what God wanted them to do, even while living in an ungodly world.

By believing God and living as He instructs, your faith can be increased. Please strive to be one that really has faith when Jesus returns.

The Continuing Church of God has congregations and scattered supporters around the world. We strive to teach all things that the Bible teaches in accordance with the commands of Jesus (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

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