

The Faith Required for Salvation!

FAITH

What is the biblical definition of faith? Exactly what kind of faith do we need to please God — to live the obedient, overcoming Christian life outlined in the Bible and be born as glorified members of God's great, universe-ruling Family?

First, we must understand that this faith is not the power of positive thinking — trying to improve and overcome by just thinking positive thoughts.

Many people also make the mistake of confusing faith with emotions. They try to work up faith, which to them means an emotional feeling. But these feelings are not the evidence of having faith. They are in the class of what can be seen, heard, tasted, smelled or felt — in other words, they are physical.

Faith is a *spiritual* matter — not physical. Let's understand God's definition of the kind of faith required for salvation.

1. Are Christians to "walk" — live their lives — by faith? II Corinthians 5:7, Romans 1:17.

2. Should they seek and look forward to obtaining promises and rewards that are not seen? Colossians 3:1-2. Did Paul elsewhere verify that Christians seek after the real, but unseen, eternal rewards and promises of God? II Corinthians 4:18.

3. Do the above scriptures confirm God's definition of faith found in Hebrews 11:1?

Faith is the "substance" — or more accurately, the assurance or confidence — "of things hoped for." Before you receive what you hope for, you already have it in substance, and that substance — that assurance or confidence that you shall possess it — is faith. Faith is your evidence that you shall have what you do not yet see. This faith is based on the sure promises of God, which are recorded in the Bible.

4. Is it possible to please God without this kind of faith? Verse 6.

As this verse explains, faith toward God is our absolute recognition that He exists, and our belief that He blesses us according to His promises as long as we sincerely strive to serve and obey Him. This faith is *acquired*. You cannot cause yourself to have this kind of faith through autosuggestion or any other self-help

technique! (More about the source of this faith a little later.)

5. Must obedience to God accompany one's faith to make it alive and acceptable to Him? Romans 3:31, James 2:14-26.

6. How does one demonstrate his faith? James 2:18. What does one's faith become if not accompanied by works? Verses 17, 20, 26.

Many professing Christians have a dead faith. Faith to them is merely belief in Christ's existence and His sacrifice for the sins of mankind. They do not understand that there is something God requires them to *do* to make their faith alive and active!

Traditional Christianity believes that Jesus lived a good life for us — that He obeyed God's law in our stead. However, the Bible makes it crystal clear that having faith does not excuse us from obedience to God.

This is a great mystery to those who do not understand. God requires us to follow His law of love — His way of life as spelled out by the Ten Commandments — to be saved (Matthew 19:16-19). Yet we are unable to do so of ourselves. So, many have concluded that God sent Jesus to obey Him for us and thereby excuse us from obedience to God. Nothing could be further from the truth!

7. Did Noah express living faith when he obeyed God's command to build the ark? Hebrews 11:7. Was there any physical evidence that a great Flood would come? Same verse. (Notice the words "things not yet seen.")

Noah had trust and confidence that the invisible God would perform what He promised. And he proved his faith by his works. Faith and obedience went hand in hand to produce living faith.

8. Did God find Abraham to be "faithful" — full of faith? Nehemiah 9:7-8. Did Abraham have living faith? Genesis 26:5, Hebrews 11:8-10, James 2:21-24.

Abraham proved his faith by his works. Therefore God promised to greatly bless him and his descendants (Genesis 22:15-18). Abraham is an outstanding example of the kind of faithful obedience God requires.

One of the most thrilling examples of living

faith recorded in the Bible is that of Daniel's three young friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had erected a great golden image and ordered everyone to worship his idol at certain designated times. Those who refused were to be thrown alive into a fiery furnace (Daniel 3:3-6).

9. What did Nebuchadnezzar do when Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego informed him that they would not worship his idol? Verses 19-23.

What would you have done had you been in their shoes? Would you have said, "Well, I have no choice but to bow down to this image — I have to do it or be killed"? Or perhaps you might have excused yourself thus. "I don't think God would be fair if He punished me for bowing down before this idol when He knows I'm forced to do it."

Yes, it's easy to use human reasoning to excuse disobedience to God. But God isn't looking for chances to punish us. He is, rather, looking for opportunities to save us through faith in His power.

These three young men knew that "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). By faith they knew God makes it possible for us to obey Him.

Notice that God allowed them to go beyond the point of human help. No one could help now but God. He had to see that they would not only be willing to say they would go all the way, but He allowed them to go all the way before He saved them from the trial. God expected them to go that one step further — to back up their words by their actions.

10. To his amazement, what did the king find when he looked into the furnace? Daniel 3:24-25. What did Nebuchadnezzar say to the three men when he saw them and an angel from God walking around in the midst of the fire? Verses 26-28. Notice the words "delivered His servants who trusted in Him" in verse 28.

This is an astounding example of living faith — a faith that trusted God to make it possible to obey His law.

God tells us through Paul that He will never test us beyond what we are able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Yet it would seem that if anybody ever came close to the breaking point, these men probably did. But they did not break in this trial because they had absolute faith in God. And the God they faithfully obeyed did intervene to save them!

11. Is the faith through which we are to please God and receive salvation a gift from God? Ephesians 2:8. Is this faith an attribute of God's Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22. Whose faith, in reality, is it? Revelation 14:12.

In Revelation 14:12 is a description of the

true Church of God. Those in God's Church have the "faith of Jesus." It is not just *their* faith *in* Him, but *His* faith placed in them and acting in them!

12. Did Paul plainly state that Christ lived in him? Galatians 2:20. How did Christ live in him? Philippians 2:5, Romans 8:9-10.

Jesus Christ dwelt in Paul through the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of God from Christ implanted in Paul's mind the faith of Christ — the same faith that can be in your mind. That faith — the very faith of Jesus Christ — will enable you to live a life of obedience to God as did the apostle Paul and all the other righteous men and women of God.

If we were able, of ourselves, to supply the faith to obey God, our obedience would be self-righteousness, which to God is but "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Our righteousness must be through the faith of Christ. Yes, Christ's faith, not our own!

13. What must one do to receive the Holy Spirit and very faith of Jesus Christ? Acts 2:38. Must one be willing to obey God? Acts 5:32. And must a person first show faith toward Christ before he or she can receive His faith? Acts 20:21, Romans 1:17.

God will give His Spirit and the resulting faith of Christ only to those who meet these prior conditions.

Yes, it does take our own faith to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. But that faith does not save us. It is only when the Spirit of God comes into our minds that we receive the saving faith of Christ. And it all comes as a free gift from God. We could never earn it.

Jesus is the source of living, active, dynamic faith. And if Christ is in us through God's Spirit, He imparts His own faith to us, which makes our spiritual obedience and ultimate salvation possible.

(For an in-depth study of the kind of faith required for salvation and how to receive it, request a copy of our free booklet *What Is Faith?*) □



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