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True Faith Is Based In God, And His Son, Jesus Christ

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True Faith is Based in God, And His Son, Jesus Christ

When we look at true faith, *Hebrews 11:1* defines it as:

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

We can say it a little different: “Now faith is the substance, the confirmation, the title deed of things hoped for, the evidence or the conviction of the reality of things not seen.” Faith is perceiving as fact what is not revealed to our senses. Faith means believing in advance what only makes sense in reverse. Faith can be a noun (approximately 240 references in the Bible), and it can be a verb which means to believe (another approximately 240 Bible references). However, whether it is a noun or an action, both mean a reliance upon Christ for salvation.

As we look more closely at faith, it has the following four aspects: (a) it saves, (b) it works, (c) it flourishes in community, and (d) it's meant to multiply. This is how faith opens up and unfolds. It is personal in our hearts, then it's manifested through its workings and the fruit of the Spirit, it's combined with a community or body of believers, and finally it's multiplied out beyond our community and into the world.

Faith Saves

Picture a kernel of wheat that a farmer takes and puts in the ground. All of a sudden, by God's providence and His divine intervention, it sprouts a root in a little shoot. You can't see it, as it's under the ground, but you know there's life there.

“For 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.” Eph. 2:8, 9

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Tit. 3:5

As we think about this root, that true faith, we think of the key elements that are involved when someone comes from a lost condition to life in Christ. First of all, it's a gift. It's not of our doing. It's not of works, not of our own striving, not of our own performance. Only God can do that. It's something we take, receive, and embrace, but it wasn't cheap. The God of the universe sent His Son, Jesus Christ, and He died for us. We can't really understand that He died for us until we understand that He died because of us. This is not cheap.

The object of our faith is God. God, through Christ, by the Holy Spirit, is the object. We need to think about the God of the universe. We need to think about the One who is able to save, who's able to create the world with His voice. He is the One that we have faith in. We see a contrast in *Romans 10:2* where the Jews had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Their zeal was on their law and their performance. Our part as we find life in this root is to hear, to receive, and to believe.

“But as many believe received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” John 1:12

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Let's look at the example of Abraham. In *Genesis 15:6*, Abraham was around 78 years old and God said, "And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it [God counted it] to him for righteousness." Paul talks about this root, this saving faith in Romans, when he said:

"What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. 4:1-5

When Abraham was called out of Horan at about age 78, God said "Look at the stars."

"And he brought him forth abroad and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." Gen. 15:5

Even though Abraham and Sarah were old of age with no child, God gave them this audacious, huge promise. And Abraham believed it. God saw that belief, that life in that belief and counted, or imputed, it for righteousness.

Faith Works

As we look closer at a little plant to see if it is alive, we see a shoot coming up. Eventually there's a head and there are more seeds, and there's more life in it. God knows the heart. We can't see the validity or the reality of the life and the root until we see the fruit or the works. As private faith and belief starts to become more public, as it works and grows, it's energized by the Spirit.

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

There is interplay between faith and works. Jesus is the basis of our salvation. Faith is the means of our salvation, whereas works is the evidence of our salvation. Picture the little plant of wheat. We see the plant coming up, we see it growing, and we see the health of it. Looking at James' perspective:

"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." Jas. 2:17-18

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Jas. 2:21

It seems a contradiction. Paul said he wasn't justified by works but by faith, and James seems to say the opposite. But, when we think about the fruit of the saving faith and faith that works, one of those fruits is in *Proverbs 3:5, 6* and that's trust:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

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Trust in this instance means “give thyself wholly to.” Abraham is also an example of trust. In *Genesis 22*, Isaac was already born and Abraham is now most likely closer to 100 years of age. God calls Abraham to take his only son and sacrifice him.

“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and calve the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him.” Gen. 22:3

This was the promise, the promised heir, and God said take him and offer him. Abraham rose up and did not tarry; he went to stretch forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. And God stopped him. A person’s faith, or lack of faith, is most apparent at the time of a crisis. This was a crisis and Abraham came through. There is a quote, “A faith that can’t be shaken is the faith that has been shaken.” How often is that true?

Abraham was faithful in that event, but he did not come out shining every time. Sometimes Abraham leaned on his own understanding (*Prov. 3:5, 6*) such as when he lied to Pharaoh about his wife, when he lied to Abimelech about his wife, when he offered Eleazar to be the heir, or when he went to Hagar to find an heir. While God said no, He still worked with him because He recognized the life in that seed and plant.

Faith Flourishes in Community

We are called individually to a faith in Christ, but we are called to work and labor collectively in community for Him.

“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Rom. 12:5

Salvation and church membership are two separate concepts, but they are not meant to be uncoupled. When converts are baptized, they obviously give a covenant to the Lord to live faithfully for Him, but they also enter a covenant relationship with the brotherhood, with brothers and sisters that they will connect with and work with. This relationship with the brotherhood is a powerful thing. Although we hear the term “our precious faith,” the term faith refers to something deeper than that.

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet. 1:1

In the scripture, faith is never depicted as a denomination or a church. It’s meant to be the core, Christian doctrine that we embrace and are supported by scripture. There can be a danger in elevating our brotherhood too highly, because it takes our focus off of Christ. It can lead to a pharisaical attitude like in *Luke 18:11* where the Pharisee looked at the publican and said “God, I’m thankful that I’m not like other men, just like this publican.” This attitude can create an elitist air about us.

However, there is also a danger in treating our brotherhood too lightly. When some people come to a faith in Christ, they do not want to be a part of a fellowship, a church, or tied into a body. They might become members of a brotherhood, but they don’t want to be connected. They don’t want to be engaged, involved, or assist, serve, and love others. It might be because they want flexibility or autonomy, but the cost is great. We know the power of community, of brothers and sisters working together, loving together, and praying for one another. There have been instances where brothers and sisters shared in the loss of loved ones by coming around to support and lift up their brethren. This brotherhood is something God has provided for us. It’s a beautiful picture of a wheat field with all the heads on the wheat plants just waving in the wind.

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Faith is Meant to Multiply

The wheat field is a beautiful picture of fruit for God, but it doesn't stop there. It's meant to be multiplied. We have faith as a mustard seed. But, it's not meant to stay there; it's meant to grow into a mustard tree.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add [or exercise] to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." 2 Pet. 1:5-7

We can get too comfortable in being in a body, a group, or in our churches. God wants us to stay connected to our brotherhood, but He wants us to use what He has given us to reach out and share with the many that do not know of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many are struggling and hurting and maybe have wandered. Jesus wants us to go retrieve them and bring them back. Jesus was a perfect example of exercising His faith as a rabbi in Samaria talking to the Samaritan woman a harlot no less. In public He talked to her and shared the truth of the gospel with her. He tells her in *John 4:14*:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:38

The world is covered by 71% water, but less than 1% is drinking water. And that drinking water is not evenly distributed throughout the world. However, we have the Living Water. It's also not evenly distributed throughout the world or throughout our communities. We are called to be wells to share it.

There are two seas in Israel. One is the Dead Sea and one is the Sea of Galilee. If we look at the Dead Sea, it receives from the north, but it never gives up anything. The water stays in it, and there's no life, fish, nor living organisms in that sea. It's dead. It's a little like the man that took his talent God gave him, and because of fear, he wrapped it up, hoarded it, and hid it. Contrast that to the Sea of Galilee or a life with God. This sea receives from the north and sends out water to the south. It's teeming with fish and life. This sea is like the man who took his five talents and traded them for five talents more. He multiplied.

This is the sequence: (a) saving faith, (b) personal faith that grows and is exposed to workings, (c) faith that works effectively in community and (d) beyond the community God's Word is multiplied. The time is ripe and in this time we need to be those living wells flowing out the truth of God, of true saving faith to those that are dying of thirst.