

FAITH

In the Old Testament the word 'faith' is only found once, Habakkuk 2:4,

"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."

This does not mean that 'faith' is not important in the Old Testament, the idea, even if the word 'faith' is not used, is very obvious, words like 'believe,' 'trust,' 'hope' which have a similar meaning, are often used instead. for example from the Old Testament:- Proverbs 3:5,6.

"5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

While in the New Testament the basic requirement of 'faith' is still a right attitude to God,

However, the word 'faith' is much more obvious in the New Testament, the word occurring many hundreds of times. This word is always associated with or centered upon Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world.

'Faith' is a condition where a person stops depending upon his or her own ability to obtain salvation by good actions, deeds, etc. instead they have a complete trust in the promises and action of Christ. For example Acts 16:30ff

"30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

"Believe (have faith) in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,"

'Faith' normally involves a condition, 'believe on' or 'believe in,' this is important. However, this does not always apply, James 2:19

"for even the devil's believe there is one God,"

John 5:24.

"19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."

The devil's belief does not involve 'any faith' and believing is not to their ultimate(final) benefit.

There is also another side to 'faith,' if you believe there is a God and what His Words say then this will produce 'faith'

John 5:24.

"24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

A person who really believes in God and His promises will act on that belief, and therefore has faith.

Faith is not accepting that the things, the facts, the conditions are all true but it involves believing and trusting in a Person, or very occasionally an object.

Faith is not just for a short period it is normally an attitude for ever. However, it is possible for a person to lose their faith in another human person or object if the circumstances change.

In the Gospels faith is often connected with healing, an example is Matthew 9:22

"22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."

But it can also be used in a wider sense, Mark 9:23;

"23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

A very strong in faith can use Matthew 17:20.

"20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

"Faith" is a basic characteristic of being a Christian, it demands a complete faith in the person of Jesus Christ. The factor of faith has always been characteristics of the people of God in Hebrews 11:1ff

"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 report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

The writer shows how it has applied to all the prophets and people mentioned in the Old Testament, he especially compares faith with sight.

"faith in things not seen," they accepted the promises of God without any visible evidence.

Let us now look at various acts of Faith.

Elijah

The main point is that for the True Believer and many others, God controls the situation they may be in, He may even use a Temptation to teach or test a Believer, however, you have failed if you allow the temptation to take place. God always knows how much you could stand and will always give evidence of a way away from the temptation.

Hebrews 12:6

"6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

God will often treat us as His personal children, needing teaching.

1 kings 17:1

"1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

King Ahab was a very evil man who was ruling Israel as their King, he had an even more evil wife, Jezebel. Elijah is bringing the message from God, as the nation had turned away from God and needed punishment. Jezebel hated any who were prophets of God and killed them, so Elijah was taking his life in his hands to take the message from God that there will be no rain or dew until God says so.

God will often not tell us the next step, look at the Words of God to Paul following his vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus,

Acts 9:6

"6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Noah

Or Noah when he was given the instructions to build the ark, it had never rained before on the earth.

Hebrews 11:7.

"7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

Genesis 6:11-14

"11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. "

Yet Noah, now worked upon the ark for 120 years, until God new it was finished and instructed Noah and his family to enter by the one and only door with the animals, then God sealed the door and it started to rain.

Abraham

Hebrews 11:8-10.

"8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Genesis 12:1-4.

"1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. 4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."

God told him to go to the Promised Land, but not how to get there, Abraham, in faith made the journey, with this instruction came a great promise of the future greatness of his dependents.

Sarah

Hebrews 11:11-12

"11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable."

Returning back to Elijah, where he received the second command.

Elijah had been given the message but God had not told him what happens next, but because of the faith and trust Elijah had in God he delivered the message as instructed.

1 Kings 17:2-6

"2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, step by step, saying,

3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

5 So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook."

Then God gave Elijah the next part of the message. And the word of the LORD came unto him,

Apparently King Ahab could not find this brook, he had been searching in all the countries for Elijah, God hide it from him. This Brook was a quite place where God was preparing Elijah for future event on Mount Carmel, 18:20-40. However, this was still some way ahead.

The brook was a very quite place just God and Elijah. Over time, with no rain, the brook turned into just a trickle of water, this was when God gave Elijah his next command.

1 Kings 17:7-9

" 7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

What do we find about the action of faith:-

1) We must be willing to be where God wants you, Elijah was by the brook and being fed by ravens each day. This bird is a scavenger, so where did the meat come from.

2) Do not try to work out what God was going to do next, because it was not what Elijah could have guessed, a journey to Zarephath where God had provided a widow to keep Elijah.

So what was the purpose of the act of faith

It was all part of the plan of God, He knew what the future held for Elijah, so He had to prepare him for the great battle at Mount Carmel. God may take us through various acts of faith until we reach the point He wants us to be, in one day a great battle for Him.

