

Understanding “Living Faith”

“The Just Shall Live by Faith (Romans 1:17)”

I. The Foundation for New Testament Faith

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)”

“We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)”

The charity and benevolence of God leads New Testament believers place to their trust in Him and to grow in confidence as they follow His Word.

The foundation for “Living Faith” launches God’s children on an unending journey of walking with God in “Spirit and Truth”.

“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 Jn. 1:7-9)”

II. Possessing God Pleasing, Living Faith

A.. What is the Bible’s simple definition for having faith?

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)”

Can one’s faith only be private, if it’s defined to possess substance and evidence to be seen? The definition of faith in Heb. 11:1 and the Great Commission of Christ to “*go and make disciples*” in Matt. 28:19 speaks of a public, God pleasing faith.

B. What is the most important byproduct of Christian faith?

“But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (Romans 4:5)”

Righteousness is accounted to those who believe in God’s power to save!

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16)”

Paul writes in Romans 13:14 “*put on the Lord Jesus Christ*” which equips believers to live vibrant, fruitful, lives which demonstrate the righteousness of Christ accounted to God’s children.

C. What happens when one doesn’t walk closely with God in living faith?

“for whatever is not from faith is sin. (Romans 14:23)”

Unbelief produces foolish and harmful “thoughts, words and deeds (unrighteousness)”.

“For the foolish person will speak foolishness, and his heart will work iniquity: to practice ungodliness, to utter error against the Lord... (Isaiah 32:6)”

D. What do Christians place their faith in?

- a) Mark 11:22 *So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God."*
- b) Galatians 3:26 *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*
- c) Romans 3:25 *whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed*
[note: place trust in God's atonement for sin]
- d) Romans 10:9 *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

E. How many "faiths" are there for the body of Christ (church)?

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 4:4-5)"

In all things, we trust in Christ! *"To live is Christ, to die is gain (Phil. 1:21)"*

"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. (James 1:6)"

F. How does one take hold of and increase one's faith?

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)"

God breathes upon His Word planted in the hearts of His children (Eph. 1:13).

"No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3).

One opens up their hearts to growing in Christ and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Gal. 5:22-23)"

NOTE: Remember in the process that "faith" is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Eph, 2:8, 1 Cor. 12:9).

III. Scriptures that Separate Living Faith from Dead Faith

James 1:17 *"Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."*

Visible substance and evidence is produced through one's living faith. (Heb. 11:1)

James 2:19 *"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!"*

Unlike demons one lives to confess "Jesus is Lord and is resurrected". (Romans 10:9)

John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

Born again believers become a new creation, prepared to face God. (2 Cor. 5:17)

Acts 1:8 *"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, one becomes an Ambassador for Christ!
(2 Cor. 5:21)

John 12:42-43 *"The Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."*

In conclusion, living faith produces a change of heart and mind that leads a person to live anew from its Seed planted and watered in their heart (Eph. 1:13). As one draws close to the Lord, living faith becomes one's new "breath of life" (sustenance) and marks their lifestyle. They fear God NOT man.

IV. Blessings that Living Faith Grows from Within

Romans 3:28 *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."*

Increased faith increases one's confidence in the finished work of Christ. One's obedience springs forth from knowing the goodness of God, not trying to earn it!

Romans 5:1 *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Now supernatural peace that passes understanding accompanies our daily activities as one grows in their ability to trust God as their Lord and Savior.

1 John 5:3-4 *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whoever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."*

The Lord Jesus' first love and victory over death is what faith births one into as it makes them overcomers of this fallen, temporary world. Faith increases as they abide in and keep His commandments of love. *"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (John 15:10)"* Walking with God blesse one's soul as they learn to walk in love is to obey Him!

Acts 15:8-9 *"God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith"*

Everyone who calls on the Lord is saved (Romans 10:13), acknowledged by God as He pours out of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts and blessed through its sanctifying work. The work of the Spirit purifying the soul transforms us as we surrender to His work.

James 5:15 *"And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."*

Healing is received: spiritually through hearts forgiven, mentally through walls of unbelief torn down and physically through bodies mended. Our prayers stand upon faith in Christ forever the same; and His stripes release the power of His life-giving blood. *"Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8)." "By His stripes we are healed (Isa. 53:5)"*

1 Peter 1:9 *“Receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.”*

The greatest blessing of faith that is alive in one's heart will always be the salvation of one's soul. We should never forget or stop thanking God for saving our soul through His gift of faith through His grace (Eph. 2:8).

We look upon others with a heart that desires them to receive the fullest measure of faith, the goal of the salvation of their souls because this is the focus of living faith. We look with the eyes of a heart that knows God's hand remains upon His redeemed. *“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand (John 10:28).”* As one's faith and blessings increase, they keep themselves from developing spiritual pride!

V. Doubt Busters, Overcoming the Enemy of Faith

Unbelief is defined in the Old Testament as foolishness. Faith, unbelief's opposite, is spoken of in the Psalms as moving one through the fear of the Lord into the wisdom of God. *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Proverbs 9:10)”*

The fear of God is life-giving. It elevates humanity's fear from man to God so they will seek after the Creator and His understanding about why we were created. We overcome doubt as we seek after God (Matt. 6:33). We should never doubt who God is and who He has created us to be. This has been written down for us, highlighted in the blood of Jesus, so we can overcome doubt in God and His Word.

A. James 1:6-8 *“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”*

To doubt what Scripture says about God's benevolence is at the heart of double mindedness because it questions God's lovingkindness, mercy and new covenant for humanity during its real life predicament of living in a fallen, sinful world.

To seek after more understanding is how one's God given wisdom grows. Approaching God as one who prays “Lord help me to know You and understand Your ways more” is different than fostering doubt in one's heart. The faith journey is not about forming opinions, changing opinions and being led by opinions; it is about unpacking God's truth for living by faith!

B. Ephesians 4:13-15 *“Until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ”*

We must be mindful of the doctrine (teaching) that we are being guided by in churches and Christian fellowships. Doctrines that are like opinions, will keep us like children who have no authority and are weak and vulnerable to be tossed to and fro.

The knowledge of the perfect man, the stature of the fullness of Christ and the unity of the faith leads one to speak the truth in love and grow in all things in Christ. This pursuit of wisdom stands on God and His Holy Word. This is the unchanging and effective teaching (doctrine) that keeps one from unstable, double mindedness!

Be careful to make one's life about majoring in the majors, the Kingdom of Heaven coming to earth, not the minors as one seeks truth! Lifting tradition and religious practices above the teaching of Scripture aligns one with the trickery of men and deceitful plotting. These can look good and put on a good show of being close to God but are far from God's heart (Matt. 6:33)!

C. Hebrews 10:36-39 *"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 'For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."*

Every task we have taken to heart is like a race which requires endurance to finish. The task of living by faith and following Jesus into the next life is no different. Doubt comes in to take the wind out of the sails of those in the race to keep faith alive in Christ until this life's conclusion.

When one is overcome by doubt, one blocks the God-pleasing place for the faithfulness of Christ to land in one's heart. God desires to plant and water His Word in the heart of His children so that they may endure the testing of the race of faith and receive the fullness of His promise.

Endurance keeps one's heart open for God to plant and water His Word and Spirit to produce fruit. The pleasure of God is to bring faith into hearts, increase it and be fruitful (Eph. 2:10).

D. Matt. 14:30-31 *"But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'"*

The fear of man causes people to panic and strong hearts of faith to turn into wax and melt. This is why Solomon wrote in Proverbs 9:10 about fearing the Lord above all things.

The fear of God kicks the door wide open for being disciplined directly by Christ (1 John 2:20-21). speaks of the anointing of being an overcomer of the fear of man. This anointing leads to knowing all truth through one's personal relationship with Jesus who overcame man's sin and death.

As one places God, through the fear of Him, above all challenges, they maintain a healthy respect for and awe for God above the challenges they face. Faith in the Good Shepherd's abilities, leads to attaining greater wisdom and intimate knowledge of God.

E. Habakkuk 1:2 *'O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" and You will not save.'*

The enemy attacks souls and bombards hearts with "false evidence appearing real (fear)" as we struggle to keep our faith in this fallen world. Seeing so much suffering either personally or in the world can cause the faithful to wonder "if there is a God, how can this happen?"

However, the more we fear God, the more we grow in understanding and in our ability to discern the truth about the situations we are facing. Above all, we rest in the eternal goodness of God, our hope and future, His plan and purpose.

"Brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:19-23)"

VI. Experiencing Doubt Destroyers

What are some things you would like to experience to have all doubt 100% removed? Think about this and write down 3 things for yourself. Here are 3 examples I wrote down: 1) experience the presence of God; 2) witness a miracle; AND 3) see God changing my life in a way that goes beyond my strength.

What would happen if you never experienced some of your doubt destroyers?
Would your faith decrease, increase or stay the same?

A. Here are 3 stories which point to doubt destroyers that occurred to people in the Bible.

1. Luke 16:19-31 → A dream or brush with death, a radical conversion of a family member...
(note: The Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus)
2. Matt. 8:5-13 → A personal prayer answered on behalf of a loved one who's elsewhere...
(note: The Story of the Centurion and His Servant)
3. John 20:24-29 → "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" ...
Develop a deep trust in God's Word and celebrate the miraculous testimonies of others in the body of Christ!
(note: The Story of Doubting Thomas)

Miracles, angelic visits and other supernatural events are wonderful blessings and strengthen one's faith. However, there are other ways sometimes through others to experience doubt destroyers.

B. We read Bible stories to observe other ways to eliminate doubt other than waiting for a miracle to happen in one's life to destroy doubt. What are some other ways to overcome doubt?

Walking in "living faith" brings many personal experiences of God's presence and power as one trusts in the Lord to grow us into the role of being a servant/leader in the body of Christ. Our supernatural experiences are short lived while our lifestyle of "living faith" is continuous and leads one to experience life through the eyes of God, lovingly moving heaven to earth in the hearts of those around us.

From the time one awakes surrendering each day to the Holy Spirit. Read the Bible, pray and look throughout the day to being a partaker in the ministry of the Gospel. One looks for opportunities to see the manifestation of heaven coming to earth presenting themselves.

C. Final comments about Doubt Destroyers that refers to the list first written above:

These are 3 commonly found doubt destroyers in the body of Christ that help all to overcome doubt:

1. Receiving the gift of the presence of God, through receiving with open arms the Gospel and the Holy Spirit into one's heart when they are saved (Acts 19:1-6).
2. Becoming Kingdom of Heaven minded and observing others turning from chasing after sin to following Jesus as they become a new creation like you have in Christ.
3. Experiencing God leading one to do things they never thought they could do as God gives them new abilities and strength. For example: to pray in public and to witness to others about Jesus. These are just a couple of common experiences. Many will share about learning to play an instrument and being bold and confident to do things that they use to be afraid to do.

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18)"