

# *Truth for Today*

## **The Bible Explained**

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## **What Does the Bible Teach about: Faith (belief)**

Welcome to Truth for Today, the Bible Explained. The title of the present series is: **What does the Bible teach about**, and the title of this talk is **Faith (belief)**.

If you have access to a Bible please turn to Hebrews chapter 11 vs.1-3 and v.6: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible ... And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. Habakkuk 2 v.4 tells us, Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.*

In the verses we have read faith is clearly the basis of the Christian's salvation, life and future. The word 'faith' means complete trust or confidence in someone or something. Words which could be used to replace the word faith are: trust, belief, confidence, conviction, reliance, dependence, hope and expectation.

Hebrews 11 is often named the **faith chapter** or the **hall of fame**, where many individuals are commended for their faith. The people mentioned are all Old Testament believers and have displayed faith in various ways. There are some names there that may surprise you. Let me pick out a few. Abel in faith offered a blood sacrifice which was acceptable to God. No doubt he had heard from his parents that an animal was killed to get skins to cover them because of their sin against God. Enoch walked with God in faith for 300 years, then God took him to heaven before he died. God warned Noah about the judgement that was to come; he believed God and took God at His word. Up until this time, it had never rained but Noah trusted God and built an ark in the middle of dry surroundings. That's what I call faith! Abraham showed great faith when he was told by God to offer up his son Isaac. Abraham believed that when he killed his son, God would raise Isaac from the dead. In Abel we see that only God's way of salvation is acceptable. In Abraham we see a picture of God the Father willingly offering up His son, the Lord Jesus, on the cross as an offering for our sins. Noah was a preacher of righteousness and in building the ark the world was condemned to judgement. Through Noah, God provided a way of escape from the judgement that was promised. Enoch's walk of faith is a picture of those who will be taken in rapture and will leave this world without dying.

In Acts 20 v.21 Paul tells the Ephesian elders that he was testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance towards God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation requires you to repent from your sins, and to accept and believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, and that, through believing, your sins will be forgiven. Faith is trusting and believing in what God says. When Jesus was here on earth, the Jews always looked for a sign, but Jesus wanted them to listen to Him and believe what He was saying. There was so much evidence in the life of Jesus as He walked on this earth that He was the Son of God but very few accepted this. It is the same today! Many are looking for tangible things and using this as an excuse not to believe in God. I was struck recently

when reading Hebrews 11 v.2 with the fact that you need faith to understand that the universe was made by the word of God. No wonder people make up other theories because they will not believe that God made the world in six days. Without faith, creation cannot be understood. For me, creation is the most evident display you should ever need if you have any doubt about there being a God. The appreciation of the wonders of creation often thrill my soul.

There are many examples in the Bible where the Lord Jesus recognises faith. Bartimaeus was at the roadside begging; he was blind. He could not see Jesus, but he heard that Jesus was about to pass by. Bartimaeus could have sat quietly, making the excuse that he could not see Jesus so how he could believe that He could heal him. Instead, Bartimaeus made sure that Jesus heard him; he cried out to Jesus. Jesus stopped and asked that Bartimaeus be brought to Him. Bartimaeus got up and cast aside anything that would hold him back and came to Jesus. Jesus healed him because of his faith. Bartimaeus never asked for a sign or if he himself could do something to heal his blindness; he had pure faith and believed who Jesus was and what He could do for him. Dear friend, don't let Jesus pass by you; cry out in faith and believe and your sins will be forgiven.

There was a centurion of the Roman army, a man who was in command of 100 soldiers. He had a servant who was paralysed and suffered terribly. He was a kind man and wanted to do something to help his servant. The centurion knew he could do nothing, but he believed that Jesus could. The centurion stopped Jesus one day and made it known to Jesus. Jesus offered to go to his house and heal his servant. The centurion was a very humble man and felt that he was not worthy to have Jesus in his home. The centurion asked Jesus just to say the word and he knew that his servant would be healed. Jesus was astonished by the great faith that this man had shown, and He healed his servant there and then. Luke 7 vs. 2-10.

Suffice to say that without faith you cannot have salvation. But, the Bible speaks about many features of faith and how it affects a Christian's life.

- 1 We are justified by faith.
- 2 The just shall live by faith.
- 3 Without faith it is impossible to please God.
- 4 A lack of faith brings doubt and fear.
- 5 Faith is the energy of the Christian life.
- 6 Jesus is the founder and perfecter of our faith.

## **1 We are justified by faith**

Galatians 2 vs. 19-20: *For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* Paul was making the point to Peter earlier in this chapter that as a Jew he was no longer bound by the law and the things of the law. They both knew that they could not be justified by only doing what the law said, they had believed in Jesus Christ. They had been and could only be justified by faith in Christ alone. But Paul went on further to say that his life was not his own; his life belonged to Jesus Christ. Paul had come to realise that the life he was living now and would live in the future was fully dependent not on the law or himself, but on the Son of God, who loved him and had given Himself for him. This continual experience that Paul had is something that all true believers can enjoy.

## **2 The just shall live by faith**

Romans 1 v.16, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of*

*God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.* We already read from Habakkuk 2 v.4 where it says, *the righteous shall live by his faith.* A true believer is saved by putting his or her faith in Jesus Christ and has become just or (righteous) in the eyes of God. This is not because of what they have done but because of their faith. Then the believer should trust the Lord for every step in his or her life from that moment onwards. I did say should! The reason I said that is because many of us think that we can continue in our own strength instead of living by faith.

### **3 Without faith it is impossible to please God**

Hebrews 11 v.6. There are only a few verses about Enoch in the Bible, so we must carefully consider what is written to understand what pleased God about him. Enoch lived 365 years and it is said of him that he walked with God 300 of those years. Walking with God for so long requires consistent faith. Every word, every footstep, every thought and every deed in line with God! Enoch lived in a godless age and it seems he was alone in his preaching. I believe Jude 1 vs. 14-15 gives us the biggest clue as to how he pleased God. I will read the verses: *It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* Enoch preached about the appearing of Jesus Christ. This is remarkable faith! Enoch must have believed that God would send His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world, that He would be rejected by mankind, put to death on a cross, brought back to life by God, ascend back to heaven, come back for every believer at the Rapture, then come with His holy ones (those who have believed) to judge the world and everyone who rejected His way of salvation in this evil world. Enoch had true faith. God told him about the future and Enoch took God at His word and told others what God said.

### **4 A lack of faith brings doubt and fear**

Luke 8 vs.22-25 is one of the best examples of where a lack of faith brought doubt and fear. Jesus got into a boat with His disciples. Jesus told them to set sail for the other side of the lake. During the trip, Jesus fell asleep and while He was sleeping, a great storm arose and the disciples, some whom were experienced fishermen, were afraid. The waves were coming into the boat and they thought that the boat would sink. Really! Looking back at this incident, it would not be wrong to think: why would the boat sink with Jesus in it? But listen to what you are saying, my friend. A true believer has Jesus living in him or her, yet often in times of trouble we have a lack of faith and do not trust Him! The disciples had Jesus with them and they had witnessed the miracles Jesus did, so they had no excuse. The disciples woke Jesus up and had the audacity to say, Do you not care that we perish? Of course, He cared! Jesus loved them and cared for them just as He does every believer. Jesus commanded the wind and the raging sea to cease and there was calm. Jesus turned to His disciples and said, *Where is your faith?* As we said at the beginning, faith is about believing and trusting in somebody. Dear fellow believer in Christ, you have trusted the Lord for your salvation so why not fully trust Him throughout your life? Remember the verse I have already quoted: *the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself for me.* The disciples discussed together who Jesus was. The Bible tells us He is the Son of God. In faith grasp this and fully believe what the Bible is saying and don't doubt! Thomas is an example of one who also had doubts; he did not believe that the Lord was risen from the dead. The Lord was very gracious with him and showed him the wounds in His hands and His side. Thomas worshipped the Lord and trusted Him from that moment onwards.

### **5 Faith is the energy of the Christian life**

Hebrews 10 vs.36-38 reminds us that the Christian life is like a long distance race; it requires concentration, patience, while faith is the energy that keeps us going: *For you have need of*

*endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, Yet a little while, and the coming One will come and will not delay; but My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.* It is interesting to note that these few verses come before all the examples of faith in chapter 11. This would speak to me in a way that there is no need to doubt: look at all the examples, will I ever have to go through some of the things they had to go through in faith? I like what Mr F. B. Hole says in his book: The opening words of Hebrews chapter 12 bring us face to face with the application to ourselves of all that has preceded in chapter 11. All these Old Testament heroes of faith are so many witnesses to us of its virtue and energy. They urge us on that we may run the race of faith in our day, even as they did in days before ours. But, we are also reminded that to run the race (or to live your life) effectively you must lay aside every weight. A long-distance runner never wears or carries anything that would hold them back. Weights would be things that would hold a genuine believer back, things that are not sinful but are a real hindrance to his or her Christian faith. Sin is also mentioned here as the main thing that will hold us back! It says, *sin which clings so closely.* Sin will entangle our feet and trip us up. Satan is always interested in shaking a Christian's faith.

## **6 Jesus is the founder and perfecter of our faith**

Hebrews 12 vs.2-3: *Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.* Faith requires action; the Bible tells us that if there are no works with your faith, it is dead. Have you ever run a marathon? I am told that it is an extremely difficult thing to do. If you have ever watched a marathon, you may have noticed that each person has a different running style. Some run with fleeting step while with others it looks like it could be their last step. Each person has a goal, something that motivates them to participate and complete the race. In the Christian marathon, the motivation is Jesus our Saviour who gave Himself for us and our eyes should be fixed on Him, the perfect example of faith. He is our goal, the object commanding our faith. We are all different and we will all face different issues in life. But looking to Jesus in faith provides us with the motive and energy we need for running and completing the race. Can I challenge older Christians who are listening? It is important to finish the race well, to get over the finishing line with your head held high.

I would like to finish with another quote from Mr F. B. Hole's book! We have heard Hebrews 11 spoken of as the picture gallery of faith, and the opening words of the second verse of Hebrews 12 as setting before us the great Master-piece which we find at the end of it. As we walk down the gallery, we can well admire the portraits that we see, but the Master-piece puts all the others into the background. No other than JESUS is the Author—i.e., the beginner, originator, leader—and Finisher of faith. The others displayed certain features of faith; flashes of it were seen at different points of their career. In Him a full-orbed faith was seen, and seen all the time from start to finish.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk in the series What does the Bible teach about Faith (belief) talk number 1102.

English Standard Version used unless otherwise stated.

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