



You Can Have
**Living
Faith**

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Introduction

“When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Our world is experiencing a crisis of faith. Few people place much faith in the future. Many have no faith their marriages will survive, that political leaders will honorably serve their country or that education will prepare them adequately for the challenges ahead. Faced with the difficulties of everyday life, many people simply

have no confidence that they will see a better tomorrow.

In a burned-out, tuned-out and turned-off world, sentiments like “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer” and “Nothing ever turns out right” clutter our thinking.

At the same time, many people view the values and promises of the Bible as judgmental



Even for professing Christians, religion is often superficial. Many lack a basic knowledge of the teachings of the Bible or their denomination’s beliefs.

and archaic. The popular approach is to accept and validate all opinions, no matter what they are. But the same people don’t realize that such an approach inevitably produces doubt, which undermines faith. We may not deny the existence of God, but, because of the materialism, humanism and moral relativism of the world around us, we convince ourselves that God is not involved in human affairs. We see through a prism that leaves God out of the picture.

Even for professing Christians, religion is often superficial. Many lack a basic knowledge of the teachings of the Bible or their denomination’s beliefs. Far too many have come to believe that every aspect of life is simply a matter of personal choice and that nothing matters beyond their feelings. Instead of relying on God, they trust only themselves to solve their problems. Then, because emotions are so subjective, people are left confused and grasping for anything that offers hope.

Religious unbelievers

Pollster George Barna commented on America's Christianity: "I am quite confident you will agree that Americans are religious people. Personally, I am less persuaded that we are truly a Christian people, regardless of our self-perceptions" (George Barna, *The Index of Leading Spiritual Indicators*, 1996, p. xvi).

Confirmation of the superficiality of faith is to be found in the fact that, although 90 percent of Americans say they pray, many are unsure that their prayers make any difference (*National & International Religion Report*, May 17, 1993). "What we have witnessed in the latter part of the twentieth century is the growing secularization of a self-described religious people," the pollster commented (pp. 2-3).

Are churches helping solve this problem? The results of a survey of 11,122 people across six Christian denominations indicate that churches are not doing their job when it comes to inspiring faith among their members. Only a third of adults surveyed said they have a life-transforming relationship with God and are dedicated to serving their fellow man



("What Makes Faith Mature?" Eugene Roehlke-partain, *Christian Century*, May 9, 1990, pp. 496-499).

If the United States, said by some to be the most religious Christian-professing nation, is having such problems, what does that tell us about the rest of the world? Lack of faith—that is, of an active, living trust in and

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relationship with God—is a widespread problem affecting every nation and virtually every individual.

When it comes to faith, does God encourage or accept a divergence of approaches? Is it true, as many believe, that many paths lead to God?

Jesus Christ pointed us in *one* direction: "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (John 4:23). Our worship of God must be a reflection of *truth*. Although worship involves feelings and emotions, God expects us to understand *how* and *why* we

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worship Him. Only by understanding these concepts can we develop the sure, unshakable faith spoken of in the Bible.

A perpetual problem

Generations come and go, but chronic problems persist. Lack of faith has been around a long time. Nearly 2,000 years ago Jesus spoke a parable that illustrated our need to have and practice living faith. He described a widow who was having difficulty obtaining justice. She persevered in her quest for righteous judgment, however, and eventually the judge decided to help her because he grew weary of her constant pleadings (Luke 18:1-5).

Jesus used this example drawn from everyday life to illustrate



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God's promise to intervene on behalf of people of faith: "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily" (verses 7-8).

Although Christ gives assurance that God will answer His people's prayers, do you have faith that He will answer yours?

Understanding and living according to God's instructions will inspire faith in God and His promises. Faith helps us make sense out of our troubling and confusing world. It gives us the confidence we need to move forward with our lives. And, as we will see, it is vital to eternal salvation in the Kingdom of God.

When Jesus Christ concluded His parable, He asked a question with profound implications for all of us: "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (verse 8).

Faith is all too rare today, but it can be developed in us if we understand the keys to faith. In the following pages we'll see what the Bible says about how you can have living faith.

What Is Faith?

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1, New International Version).

Do you see much faith in the world around you? Much of society today is secular-oriented and virtually devoid of faith. Since most people don’t read the Bible, they don’t know much about the true God.

Many are not even sure there *is* a God. Others, although they believe in Him, don’t know what kind of God He is. This situation shouldn’t surprise us. After all, it’s impossible for people to have living faith in a God they don’t know or even know much about.

What about you? Have you thought about—do you *know*—what God is able and willing to do for you?

The God of the Bible tells us that we *can* come to know and develop a relationship with Him. We can know what He has planned for us and our families in this life and in the future. We can rest assured that He wants good things for us. His Word tells us that “godliness is profitable for all things, having *promise of the life that now is* and of *that which is to come*” (1 Timothy 4:8, emphasis added throughout).

Not only can we come to know God, to believe *in* God, but—much more—we can learn to *believe* God.

There is a huge difference. Many people believe *in* God. They assume He exists, although they probably haven’t given His existence much thought. But God is not real enough to them, and this lack of reality affects what they think and do.

To *believe* God, on the other hand, is to have faith that God *can and will do for us whatever He has promised to do*. The Bible tells us that the ancient patriarch Abraham “believed God” and explains that “he did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to [and would] perform” (Romans 4:3, 20-21).

God expects us to *act* on this trusting belief. He requires that we have *living faith* in His existence, power and promises.

Faith isn’t some magical ingredient. It does, however, lead to a confident attitude toward God. Faith motivates our minds to the assurance of God’s power and will to act in our lives. Faith becomes more than a mental conviction as it grows into a commitment—not only to trust God to involve Himself in our lives but, with His help, to do His will. We can rest assured

that God’s will does not include frivolous or unproductive behavior—only, as we saw above, “godliness [that] is profitable for all things.”

God’s Word elaborates on living faith. It assures us that “the just shall live by faith” and “we walk by faith, not by sight” when we repent of our sins and begin to live dedicated, godly lives directed by our Savior (Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7). People who live by faith as followers of Christ and members of God’s Church are “believers” in Him (Acts 5:14; 1 Timothy 4:12).

God’s Word has a good reason for calling them *believers*.

In the New Testament the Greek word for *faith* is, in virtually every instance, the same word for *belief* (see “The Meaning of the Word ‘Faith’” on page 9). Although translators choose whether “faith” or “belief” is intended based on



Much of society today is secular-oriented and virtually devoid of faith.

their understanding of the context of each passage, the meaning is usually much broader than either word alone.

Defining faith

Even in modern language, to believe in someone, something or some cause is *to have faith in* or *trust* that person, thing or movement—to believe it is true, just and worthy of one’s support and involvement. In the same way, to have faith as it is defined in the Bible is to fully believe in—to have complete trust in—someone (God), to believe in and act on the truth of His Word (the Bible) and to live for the greatest of causes: salvation for all who believe in the coming Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15).

Faith *is* belief. But let’s not make the age-old mistake of thinking that if we believe *in* God—that is, that He exists—we therefore have faith. Many hold to this mistaken idea. They say they believe in God; therefore, they think, they have faith.

To believe in God is only the starting point of faith. But believing in God does not necessarily involve conviction or commitment to Jesus Christ and God the Father. Belief in God is profitable, but incomplete. As

the apostle James noted: “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons [fallen angels] believe—and tremble!” (James 2:19). We obviously must go beyond the level of belief exhibited by demons.

If we want to better our lives, our model for living faith should be Jesus Christ. His life is the perfect model of faith. Throughout His human years Jesus displayed perfect, living faith and motivated others not only to believe *in* God, but to go beyond that by *believing what God says*—trusting Him, even to the point of *doing as He says*.

Indeed, many biblical figures provide wonderful examples of living faith—the kind of belief required for salvation. Living,



First we must believe God exists. That is, we must accept the existence of the Almighty Creator of the universe as revealed in the Bible. Then we must believe God will ultimately reward those who humbly, obediently seek Him—trusting the promises He makes in the Bible.

active faith is confidence that God can and will intervene in our lives to the point of doing whatever He tells us. We can have this kind of faith. We can believe God too! If we do, He will intervene for us as well.

Genuine, active, powerful, living faith in the God of the Bible is hard to imagine in our cynical, secular society. But we can experience it and the other great blessings from God to which it leads.

Faith is evidence

Hebrews 11, known as “the faith chapter” of the Bible, defines faith this way: “Now faith is the substance [realization, confident assurance, solid ground] of things hoped for, the evidence [conviction, reality, proof] of things not seen” (verse 1). Faith is our assurance of things we cannot yet see.

The remainder of Hebrews 11 identifies real people who long ago lived examples of faith. They believed God to the point of obedience even to death, confident that He would deliver them or resurrect them to eternal life in His Kingdom. They trusted God’s promises. Faith gave them assurance to carry on.

NASA

Such faith is not mere wishful thinking—a pie-in-the-sky feeling that everything will be all right. This faith is a deep conviction that God deeply cares for us and will *always* act with our best interests at heart.

Each of us *can* have this kind of faith. In fact, we *must* have it if we wish to honor and love God. As this same chapter of the Bible states, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (verse 6).

This verse describes two aspects of necessary faith. First we must believe God exists. That is, we must accept the existence of the Almighty Creator of the universe as revealed in the Bible. Then we must believe God will ultimately reward those who humbly, obediently seek Him—trusting the promises He makes in the Bible.

Right understanding leads to action

It’s evident that many people don’t have the genuine faith described in the Bible since they do not believe or practice what Jesus said: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Most people can’t even name more than a few of the Ten Commandments. Some assume Jesus lived the commandments *for* us so we wouldn’t have to. Others believe what we do doesn’t matter that much as long as we have feelings of “love” toward everyone.

Indeed, many people cling to misconceptions about Jesus’ message, the gospel or good news. Our Savior, who came preaching “the gospel of the kingdom of God,” instructs us to “repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). Yet many have never understood the true gospel Jesus

The Meaning of the Word “Faith”

Many people think of “faith” as either a feeling or a collection of ideas that represent one’s convictions. Although both of these concepts involve elements of faith, the full definition is much broader.

The New Testament Greek word translated “faith” is *pistis*, the same word also rendered “belief.” It basically means “firm persuasion” and “conviction based upon hearing.”

Notice the definition from a respected Bible dictionary: “The main elements in ‘faith’ in its relation to the invisible God, as distinct from ‘faith’ in man, are especially brought out in the use of this noun and the corresponding verb,

pisteuo [“believe”]; they are (1) a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgment of God’s revelation or truth, e.g., 2 Thess. 2:11-12; (2) a personal surrender to Him, John 1:12; (3) a conduct inspired by such surrender, 2 Cor. 5:7. Prominence is given to one or other of these elements according to the context” (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 1985, “Faith”).

Faith is trusting belief, conviction and conduct based on a right relationship with God. It is not static, but grows in strength and depth as we nourish that relationship with our Creator throughout our lives.

taught. A flawed understanding produces a faulty faith.

Since faith involves diligently seeking God (Hebrews 11:6), we must base our faith on a correct understanding of His Word. (If you'd like to know more about the truth of the message Jesus taught, be sure to download or request a free copy of our booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.)

Changing our lives to stop disobeying God and start obeying Him—what the Bible refers to as *repentance*—is based on the conviction that He will intervene in our lives and ultimately grant us eternal life. Faith, which includes understanding and action, is required for salvation. After all, God

Faith Puts the Law on “Firmer Footing”

A comment by the apostle Paul that many lift out of context and misinterpret is Romans 3:28: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith *apart* from the deeds of the law.”

What did he mean by “apart from the deeds of the law”? Was he saying that one who follows a pattern of life that is apart from—or contrary to—the teachings of the law is pleasing to God?

Let's carefully follow his reasoning. Paul was referring to initial justification upon repentance and faith—God considering us righteous on the basis of faith prior to works of obedience. But only a few verses later he asks and answers a crucial question: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (verse 31).

The New Revised Standard Version renders Paul's powerful words: “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” The New English Bible translates Paul's meaning even more clearly: “Does this mean that we are using faith to undermine law? By no means: *we are placing law itself on a firmer footing.*”

Biblical scholar Dr. Brad Young explains: “The words ‘place on a firmer footing’ is a far better translation of the meaning of the words in Greek. The Greek term *histemi*, ‘stand’ or ‘place on a firmer footing,’ is the equivalent of the Hebrew word *kijem*, ‘cause to stand’ or

‘make to stand through proper interpretation.’ Paul desired to place Torah [the law] on a firmer footing through faith” (*Paul the Jewish Theologian*, 1997, p. 97).

Paul is in complete agreement with how the Bible defines sin—that sin is disobedience to God's law (1 John 3:4). He explains that “by the law is the knowledge of sin”—it tells us what sin is (Romans 3:20). He summarizes the matter in these words: “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12). And in explaining that faith in Christ is needed to be forgiven of sin, he shows that the law is still valid.

The validity of the law, however, does not take care of the problem that people will not obey it. God lamented of ancient Israel, “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29).

Yet under the New Covenant, a new mind and heart (that comes through the indwelling faith of Christ through the Holy Spirit) makes true obedience possible (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13; Galatians 2:20). Faith thus enables obedience!

(This sidebar was adapted from our free book *The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God's Law*. Be sure to request or download it to learn more about the relationship between grace, faith and works.)

will not give eternal life to someone who does not believe or obey Him. Such a person would bring misery on himself and others for all eternity. Faithlessness is hopelessness.

Faith includes humility

Having faith means understanding that God is great and, by comparison, we are small. Such humility is a rare commodity in our modern, pride-filled world. To come to believe that God is all-powerful and that we desperately need His help is actually comforting.

The ancient Greeks believed—had faith—that the world was supported on the shoulders of Atlas, one of their gods. If we refuse to have living faith in God by not submitting to His will, we attempt to be our own Atlases trying to hold our personal worlds on our own shoulders in an exhausting and fruitless endeavor. That way ultimately leads to frustration and misery because, on our own, we don't know how to live happy, productive lives or find the way to eternal life (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12).

Having faith, on the other hand, is knowing with absolute conviction that the same God who holds our planet in its orbit wants to guide our personal world as well. Such living faith gives us peace of mind, confidence and hope of an eternal, bright future.

Faith, works and grace

Simply saying “I believe” without making accompanying life-altering changes is not sufficient. Acknowledging God's existence does not magically produce a right relationship with Him. As already noted, Jesus commands us to repent (Mark 1:15). (For a better understanding of repentance, be sure to download or request our free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.)

Repentance doesn't just happen. It requires effort and commitment. Living faith must be nurtured and spiritually fed and built. Jesus cautions us against the danger of false faith—faith that is immature and incomplete: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but *he who does the will of My Father in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21).

But what about Paul's statement in Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God”? Did Paul preach a faith that did not involve a need for obedience?

Not at all. This passage shows us that God's grace—His undeserved favor toward us—is a gift through faith. It includes unmerited forgiveness of sins through accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who died in our place. And it leads ultimately to our salvation in God's Kingdom. But it is simply wrong to assume that, since grace is a gift, no *actions*—good

works demonstrating a repentant heart and faith in action—are needed (see James 2:14-26).

The truth is that while our salvation comes through God's gift of grace, His grace includes not just pardoning past sins but helping us develop faithful obedience throughout our lives. God does not forgive us of sins just so we can keep on sinning as a way of life. He wants us to change. Thus, we must have *living* faith that produces good works, not an empty, inactive faith. Again, this is possible only with God's help.

The Bible tells us salvation is by God's grace and is not *earned* by good works "lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9).



Although his fellow apostles told him of meeting the resurrected Jesus face to face, Thomas refused to accept their statements. In spite of the evidence reported to him, he didn't believe His Master had risen from the grave as He said He would.

No amount of obedience will cancel out our past disobedience. Only the blood of Christ can provide atonement for our sins. Moreover, efforts to persist in obedience on our own would prove futile. God's grace operating through faith is what enables us to walk in good works (verses 8, 10). (See "Faith Puts the Law on 'Firmer Footing' on page 10.)

The danger we face is that our faith will die if we neglect our salvation by not living a life of obedience to God (Hebrews 2:1-3). That is why the apostle Paul wrote, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Of themselves, works will not earn us salvation. But the book of James makes it clear that faith, if unaccompanied by works, is dead—utterly useless (James 2:17, 20, 26; see also "The Book of James: An 'Epistle of Straw'?" on page 13).

As a faithful elder in the Church and the half brother of Jesus Christ, the apostle James wrote: "Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely *listen* to the word, and so deceive yourselves. *Do what it says*" (James 1:21-22, New International Version). He adds, "The

man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but *doing* it—he will be blessed in what he does" (verse 25, NIV; compare Romans 2:13).

True, living faith requires much more than words. It requires commitment and evidence of that commitment. James asks this rhetorical question, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?" (James 2:14, NIV). He shows that mere words are useless when someone needs food and clothing (verses 15-17).

James cited the example of faithful Abraham to show that "his faith was made complete *by what he did*" (verses 21-22, NIV). Indeed, obedience through faith leads to greater faith and obedience, as we'll see more about later.

Our faith lives when we respond obediently to the love of Christ by keeping His commandments (John 14:12-15). We are not saved by grace through inactive faith.

Living faith among the faithless

After Jesus Christ was resurrected, His disciple Thomas said he wouldn't believe Jesus had come back to life unless he could see the nail

The Book of James: An "Epistle of Straw"?

Martin Luther, founder of the Protestant Reformation, referred to the book of James as an "epistle of straw." Frustrated by religious leaders who claimed this book supported their mistaken ideas that people could buy their salvation through monetary gifts to the church, Luther uttered his ill-advised phrase. Consumed in the debate, he went beyond a proper understanding of the Scriptures and dismissed James' statements that works are a necessary evidence of faith.

Many people today misapply Luther's words, not understanding the circumstances behind them. Martin Luther's life was one of dedication and chaste behavior. But his zealous words and arguments are sometimes taken out of historical context to excuse undisciplined lifestyles.

Jesus Christ expects actions—works—from us: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father

in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

At the same time Jesus is also described as our merciful High Priest (Hebrews 2:17). Works and grace go together. James, a younger half brother of Jesus, wrote his epistle in harmony with Jesus' actions and instructions. He not only wrote about works (James 2:14-26) but addressed grace (James 4:6) and Christ's "compassionate and merciful" nature (James 5:11).

The Bible is consistent and plain in its teaching that salvation is a gift from God. But, even though it is a gift, something we cannot earn, we are expected to obey God if we are to receive that gift (see "Is Belief All That's Required for Salvation?" beginning on page 34).

Paul wrote, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith," and we are "created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Ephesians 2:8, 10, NIV). James summarized this concept simply and concisely, telling us that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

marks in His hands and feel the spear wound in His side. He wanted tangible, visible proof that Jesus had been resurrected. Christ reassured

Many of the Wonderful Things That Happen Through Faith

Faith is vital to the entire Christian life—from first understanding who God is up through salvation and eternal life. Here is a partial list of verses that lay out what is accomplished in our lives *by faith* or *through faith* or when we *believe*—fully place our trust in God the Father and Jesus Christ (emphasis added throughout).

We understand that God is the Creator through His Word. Hebrews 11:3: “*By faith* we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

We have access into God’s grace. Romans 5:2: “. . . Through whom [Christ] also we have access *by faith* into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

The Word of God works in us. 1 Thessalonians 2:13: “. . . The word of God, which also effectively works in you who *believe*.”

We are made wise for salvation. 2 Timothy 3:15: “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation *through faith* which is in Christ Jesus.”

We are redeemed through Christ’s blood, receiving forgiveness of sins. Romans 3:24-25: “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 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” (compare Ephesians 1:7).

We are justified—reconciled and made right before God. Romans 3:28: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified *by faith* apart from the deeds of the law” (speaking of initial justification, but deeds follow to remain justified—see Romans 2:13; James 2:14-24).

We are saved from past sins. Ephesians

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

We are raised into new life following baptism. Colossians 2:12: “. . . Buried with Him [Christ] in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him *through faith* in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

We receive the Holy Spirit. Galatians 3:14: “. . . That we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*” (see also John 7:39; Ephesians 1:13).

We become God’s children. Galatians 3:26: “For you are all sons of God *through faith* in Christ Jesus” (see also 1 John 5:1).

Christ dwells in our hearts. Ephesians 3:17: “. . . That Christ may dwell in your hearts *through faith*; that you, being rooted and grounded in love . . .”

Our hearts are purified. Acts 15:8-9: “God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit . . . purifying their hearts *by faith*.”

We are sanctified—set apart. Acts 26:15-18: “And He said, ‘I am Jesus . . . I now send you [Paul] . . . to open their eyes . . . that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified *by faith* in Me’” (see also 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

We stand accepted among God’s elect. Romans 11:5, 19: “Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace . . . Because of unbelief they [disobedient Israelites] were broken off, and you stand *by faith*” (see also 2 Corinthians 1:24).

We establish God’s law—its validity to us and the ability to keep it. Romans 3:31: “Do we then make void the law *through faith*? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the

Thomas, by providing those tangible proofs, that God and His plan of salvation were real and encouraged him to believe (John 20:24-29).

law” (see “Faith Puts the Law on ‘Firm Footing’” on page 10).

We obey God. Hebrews 11:8: “*By faith* Abraham obeyed . . .”

We are made righteous—in line with God’s law. Philippians 3:9: “And be found in him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law [that is, vainly attempting to obey God’s law on our own], but that which is *through the faith* of Christ, the righteousness which is of God *by faith*” (KJV, see also Romans 3:21-22).

We live our lives to God. Hebrews 10:38: “Now the just shall live *by faith*; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him” (see also Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11).

We live yielded to Christ in us. Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live *by the faith* of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (KJV).

We conduct ourselves as God directs—not according to our own perception. 2 Corinthians 5:7: “For we walk *by faith*, not by sight.”

We come confidently before God. Ephesians 3:12: “. . . In whom [Christ] we have boldness and access with confidence *through faith* in Him.”

We receive what we pray for. Matthew 21:22: “And whatever things you ask in prayer, *believing*, you will receive.”

We expect and experience miracles. Matthew 17:20: “For assuredly, I say to you, if you *have faith* as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you” (see also Mark 9:23).

We are healed. Acts 3:16: “And His [Jesus’] name, *through faith* in His name, has made this man strong . . . Yes, *the faith* which comes through Him *has given* him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (compare Mark

5:34; James 5:15).

We are filled with joy and peace. Romans 15:13: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *in believing*.”

We enter God’s rest—His Sabbath in anticipation of the future rest of God’s Kingdom. Hebrews 4:3: “For we who *have believed* do enter that rest . . .” (see all of Hebrews 3-4 and our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God’s Sabbath Rest*).

We have courage to endure trials and receive God’s promises. Hebrews 11:33-34: “. . . Who *through faith* subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong . . .”

We overcome the world. 1 John 5:4: “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our *faith*.”

We inherit the promises of God. Hebrews 6:12: “. . . That you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who *through faith* and patience inherit the promises.”

We are kept by God’s power for salvation. 1 Peter 1:5: “. . . Who are kept by the power of God *through faith* for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

We ultimately receive salvation. 1 Peter 1:7-9: “. . . That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet *believing*, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, *receiving the end of your faith*—the salvation of your souls.”

We are given eternal life. John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes* in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (see also verse 15).

We know this apostle by what has become his nickname, Doubting Thomas. Although he had seen Christ perform miracles, he still had doubts in the back of his mind. Although his fellow apostles told him of meeting the resurrected Jesus face to face, he refused to accept their statements. In spite of the evidence reported to him, he didn't believe His Master had risen from the grave as He said He would. As it turns out though, other apostles also had doubts even after this (Matthew 28:17).

Will we be like Thomas or these other men trying to come to grips with the supernatural, doubting the testimony of the many credible eyewitnesses to the resurrection and miracles of Jesus Christ—and even what we ourselves may have seen of God in our own lives? Will we believe and have faith in God and His promises? Sadly, living faith often escapes our grasp, and doubting comes all too easily (James 1:6-8).

In many ways, modern society seems set up to undermine proper faith. Educational systems, mass entertainment and news media are overwhelmingly secular and undermine godly principles and the Bible. Over generations we have gravitated toward the material while excluding God. Everything—science, philosophy, history—is reduced to physical phenomena.

The result is predictable and obvious. Few know what God expects of us. Fewer still trust Him to guide or be involved in their lives. Is there no living faith, no spiritual hope for us, our children and grandchildren?

Although the development of living faith in an age of doubt and materialism is difficult, the Bible promises that some will have this precious commodity when Christ returns (Revelation 14:12). We must bear in mind that just because something is difficult to come by doesn't mean it is impossible—especially with God. In fact, living faith *is* possible and within our grasp. Says Paul, “He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32, NIV). And the entire process of salvation leading to that end requires faith (see “Many of the Wonderful Things That Happen Through Faith” beginning on page 14).

God gave us the Bible to provide hope and instruction through the examples of others (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6; 2 Timothy 3:16). By studying their experiences, we can see real-life examples of faith in action, which will help us to build faith as well.

In the next chapter we will consider the lives of men and women who, with God's help and encouragement, developed living faith.

Examples of Living Faith

“Now these things became our examples . . .” (1 Corinthians 10:6).

We are fascinated by the stories of other people. People like to hear other people's reactions to challenges and tribulations. This is obvious when we notice the enormous appeal of inspirational magazines and newspaper stories. When we learn how other people have succeeded, we are encouraged that we can triumph as well.

Because God inspired the Scriptures so “that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17), we should regularly study His Word, the Bible. No other book has this same divine approval. The Scriptures contain numerous success stories written for our benefit. The Bible is a record of people who faced challenges and difficulties. Even though they lived long ago, their stories are preserved as timeless examples for us.

Writing to the church in Corinth in the first century, the apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians of important events in Israel's history 1,500 years earlier (1 Corinthians 10:1-10). He wrote, “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come” (verse 11).

The examples Paul referred to are not archaic accounts concerning irrelevant issues. They are genuine. The Bible doesn't varnish its heroes or sanitize its sinners. It is a record of real people with real experiences—good, bad and everywhere in between. Though the time and circumstances varied, these people dealt with frailties, fears, hopes and desires like those we face throughout life.

Knowing that the people of the Bible experienced needs and sorrows can comfort and reassure us (Romans 15:4). Seeing the results of their decisions helps us learn from their choices.

Let's examine some of the positive examples in the Bible that should encourage us.

The example of Abraham and Sarah

After Abel, Enoch and Noah had lived their lives of faith (Hebrews 11:4-7), God called a man named Abram, whom He renamed Abraham (Genesis 17:5). Abram's life, with that of his wife Sarai, renamed Sarah

(verse 15), deserves our attention because he was “the father of all those who believe” (Romans 4:11). Scripture recognizes Sarah as an outstanding example for wives (1 Peter 3:6). Hebrews 11, noted previously as “the faith chapter,” honors both as people of faith.

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:8-10).

In an early account involving Abraham, we note his obedience. When God asked him to move out of his native country to an unfamiliar land, “Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him” (Genesis 12:4).

One of Abraham’s outstanding traits was his firm belief in God’s promises. Even though Abraham was childless, when God told him he would father an heir and his descendants would become as numerous as the stars in the sky, Abraham “believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

Sarah similarly set an example of faith: “By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised” (Hebrews 11:11).

What was the result of Abraham’s and Sarah’s faith? Even though they were old, with Sarah past the age of childbearing (Genesis 18:11), “the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and . . . Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him” (Genesis 21:1-2).

Abraham and Sarah faced many



When God asked him to move out of his native country to an unfamiliar land, “Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him.”

other difficulties. Sometimes their faith wavered. Fearful for his life, Abraham twice made a misleading statement, claiming Sarah was his sister (she was his half sister) instead of his wife (Genesis 12:13; 20:1-3). When Sarah heard that she would bear a child, she laughed at the idea of

someone her age giving birth (Genesis 18:9-12).

Abraham and Sarah weren’t perfect, but their lives are shining examples of people growing in faith and confidence in God’s promises. They tried to do what God asked as they faithfully waited for Him to fulfill His promises. Because they lived and died by their convictions, “God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Hebrews 11:13-16).

King David’s example

Hundreds of years later, another man of faith arrived on the scene. Much has been written about David, both as a young man and



As a youth facing the giant Goliath, David had faith that God would help him.

later as king of Israel. In general, his life exemplified living faith in God.

As a youth facing the giant Goliath, David had faith that God would help him, stating, “The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:37). God called David “a man after My own heart, who will do all My will” (Acts 13:22).

Like David, each of us must face our Goliaths, lions and bears—the challenges and trials that can overwhelm us. Just as God protected and delivered David, so can we enjoy God’s protection. God certainly has the power to intervene for us if we trust in Him and do as He says. God does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), so we can be confident through faith in His power to help us.

Three Jewish lads and a fiery furnace

You have probably read of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego (Daniel 3). These three young men—whose actual Hebrew names were Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Daniel 1:6-7)—put their lives on the line when they chose not to bow before King Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image. Doing so would have been a violation of the First and Second Commandments (Exodus 20:1-6). Refusing to bow to the image also meant they would be thrown alive into the king’s fiery furnace.

Notice their inspiring response to their last opportunity to bow to the image and save their lives: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to

answer you in this matter . . . Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not

Our Faith in Christ or His Faith Within Us?

Many newer translations of the Bible render certain verses written by the apostle Paul to say that we are to live by our faith IN Christ—whereas the earlier King James Version translated these to say that we must have the faith OF Christ. Just how should these verses actually be translated—and why is this important?

The translation issue

A few of these instances are found in Galatians 2. Verse 16 in the original King James Version states that we are justified—made right with God—by having the “faith OF Jesus Christ” and the “faith OF Christ” (emphasis added throughout). The New King James Version translates these phrases as “faith IN Jesus Christ” and “faith IN Christ.” Which version is correct?

To understand, we’ll have to go into some grammar and translation issues. In the original Greek there is actually no word for “of” or “in” in the phrases. Rather, the question revolves around the case ending of the name. There is no question that the genitive or possessive case is used here in the original Greek. In English we would typically designate this with *apostrophe s*—that is to say, “Christ’s faith,” faith that belongs to Him.

But there is controversy over whether the *subjective* genitive or *objective* genitive is intended. Is Christ in these phrases the object of faith—that is, the faith belongs to Him because it is directed TO Him (from us)? That would justify the translation “faith IN Christ.” Or does it belong to Him because it is inherent within Him—the faith He Himself has? This would mean that “faith OF Christ” is the proper translation—and that, seemingly, His faith is somehow instilled into us.

“Not I, but Christ lives in me”

Let’s look now at verse 20. As rendered in

the original King James Version, Paul wrote, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by *the faith OF the Son of God*, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” The italicized words are rendered in the New King James Version as “faith IN the Son of God.” A literal translation from the Greek would be “God’s Son’s faith”—but the subjective/objective question applies here too.

Helping us is the context. Paul is writing of Jesus living within and through him (by the Holy Spirit) instead of him just living his own life. So in then summing this up by saying he lives by faith involving Christ, it would be illogical for Paul to mean his own faith in Christ. It makes much more sense contextually for him to mean that Christ’s faith operates within him as Christ lives His life within him. Remember his point: “. . . yet not I, but Christ . . .”

We should therefore understand Paul’s parallel phrases only four verses earlier, in verse 16, to likewise mean “faith OF” Christ. And it makes sense that parallel construction elsewhere should be viewed the same way. Thus, Romans 3:21 should say “faith OF Jesus Christ,” and Philippians 3:9 should also read “faith OF Christ,” as the original King James Version translates these.

Even the New King James Version translates Revelation 14:12 as stating that Christians have “the faith OF Jesus” (though that’s because “faith” here is viewed by the translators as the belief system and not the belief itself—yet both derive from Him).

Faith toward Christ and help to believe

Of course, we certainly do need to have faith IN Christ. Paul himself stated in Acts 20:21 that we must have “faith toward our Lord

serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Daniel 3:16-18).

Rather than violate their commitment to obey God, they put their lives

Jesus Christ” (parallel to “faith toward God” in Hebrews 6:1). Paul’s wording clearly refers to our faith directed TO Christ. We must believe in who He is and what He has done for us as well as all that He teaches through the whole Bible.

Of course, even here we are not truly alone in our efforts. For God helps us to have faith. We are like the man who cried out desperately to Jesus, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24)—and the apostles who implored Him, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). Indeed God will help us to have faith even before we are spiritually converted through the Holy Spirit.

However, just our own belief in God and Christ is not enough to bring us in line with God’s way and ultimately lead us to salvation. We must have the “faith OF the Son of God.” Jesus is expressly stated to be “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). So our faith is obviously from Him.

Jesus’ own faith—or building up ours?

But what does this actually mean? Does Jesus really give us His own faith—putting His own trusting belief into our hearts and minds? Or does He build *His degree* of faith within us over time—a development process wherein He strengthens our own faith (which is thus His by authorship)? We should understand that both aspects are at work in the life of a true Christian.

Some advocate solely the latter. If a man said he was going to attain the “strength of Samson,” no one would think he meant that Samson’s own strength would somehow be given to him. They would just think he was speaking of become *as strong as* Samson—probably over time. Likewise, receiving “the faith of Christ” is taken by some to mean only developing, over time, as much faith as Christ had or has. And indeed, it is true that our thinking is transformed over time to be like Christ’s—including in what we believe.

But there is more to it than that. For in a person obtaining the “strength of Samson,” it would not be because Samson lived within and through him. With the faith of Christ, the matter is quite different.

When a person receives the Holy Spirit after repentance with faith and baptism, God the Father and Jesus Christ supernaturally live in that person through the presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:23; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 John 3:24)—Christ as the active agent to live through the person, as we saw in Galatians 2:20. His thoughts and actions direct our own supernaturally to the degree we yield to Him. Thus we exhibit His character, experiencing a measure of faith as fruit and a gift of God’s Spirit (Galatians 5:22, KJV; Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 12:9). Indeed, we experience “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Yet we should recognize that when God gives us supernatural help through the Spirit to see as Christ sees and act accordingly, we should not view this as Christ having and exercising faith *for us* or *in place of us*. Rather, He lives *through us*—bringing transformation to our own minds over time so that we ourselves gradually come to think and live more and more like Him. Thus, there is supernatural intervention and empowerment by Christ, but this is transformative of our own being through a process of conversion—a process that requires our own ongoing cooperation.

And in this way, *Christ’s* faith becomes *our* faith. As the apostle John stated, “This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4). It truly is ours as well.

Again, we must certainly have faith IN Christ. But on top of that, the faith OF Christ being established and built within us is the only way that we can remain in God’s way of life over the course of our Christian lives and receive eternal salvation.

in His hands. They did not know whether God would intervene to save their lives or not. They knew God *could*, but they didn't know that He *would*. Regardless of the outcome, their living faith convicted them to put God first—a principle Jesus also emphasized during His earthly ministry (Matthew 6:33).

As an example of His power, God intervened to spare their lives. Even though He allowed them to be tied up and thrown into the furnace, the blazing heat didn't affect them at all (Daniel 3:25-27). They walked out unharmed.

Although our tests may not be as severe, they can seem just as difficult while we are facing them. The example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego reminds us that God can and does intervene in the lives of those who trust Him (Psalm 37:4-7; 118:6-8; Proverbs 3:5-6).

Reflecting on these examples

A principle of faith in the preceding examples is *obedience*. Godly belief inevitably leads to *doing*. This is why we read in James that faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26). Living faith comes by doing what

Enemies of Faith

Have you ever wondered why we don't see more evidence of faith? Jesus Christ identified four tendencies that undermine faith in statements where He chided others with the phrase "O you of little faith." These are:

- **Worry.** Jesus said God would take care of our needs, cautioning: "Do not worry . . . Now if God so clothes the grass of the field [splendidly], which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more cloth you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry . . . But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:25-33).

- **Fear.** While on a boat in the middle of a storm, the disciples woke Jesus and pleaded that He save them from drowning. He answered, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He rebuked the sea and it immediately grew calm (Matthew 8:23-26).

- **Doubt.** Peter saw Jesus walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee and asked if he could do the same. Jesus invited him to join

Him, and Peter, too, began walking on the water. "But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid" and began to sink (Matthew 14:30). Christ "stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'" (verse 31).

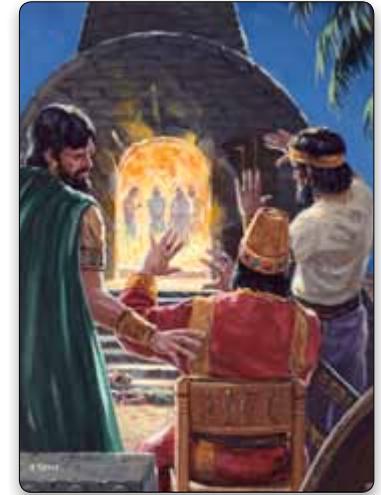
- **Human reasoning without spiritual understanding.** Jesus warned His disciples, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6). He was cautioning them against the wrong *teachings* of these religious leaders (verse 12), but the disciples initially thought He was talking about the physical leavening of bread since they had not brought any bread with them (verse 7). Jesus responded, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?" (verse 8). He then said that they wouldn't have missed His point if they'd kept in mind that He could miraculously provide physical bread if there was a need, having done so to feed thousands on two occasions (verses 9-11).

God says is good and right and being willing to accept whatever results may come from our actions.

The examples and testimonies of the men and women we read about in Hebrews 11 show us we can believe God. He does not lie (Titus 1:2), and, as our loving, faithful Father, He delights in providing for us. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

God the Father and Jesus Christ have made promises to mankind about Their love, protection and faithfulness (Psalm 33:4; 37:28; 97:10; Proverbs 2:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:3). These promises are sure.

Some may conclude that these examples in Hebrews 11 do not apply to the average person. They may assume that these people



Even though God allowed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego to be tied up and thrown into the furnace, the blazing heat didn't affect them at all. They walked out unharmed.

were so spiritually strong that faith was an easy matter for them. But the reality is that our faith is built over time.

And living, saving faith is not something we work up on our own. Rather, it comes through God's Spirit. Faith is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22, King James Version), which God gives us when we repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38). (For more information about these subjects, request or download our free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.) God begins the process of reconciling us to Himself by calling us (John 6:44) and leading us to repentance (Romans 2:4).

The faith God gives us, however, must be nurtured and developed. We are warned against neglecting our salvation (Hebrews 2:3) and quenching God's Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). God expects us to have faith, and our works (efforts in doing God's will) show that we have it (James 2:20). We have a responsibility to make sure our faith grows (2 Peter 3:18).

Of course, this is not by ourselves either. Just as God empowers us to have faith through His Spirit, so He also plays a vital role in the *ongoing development* of our faith. Again, we cannot create faith or make it grow

entirely on our own. In fact, the Bible tells us we must have “the faith of Christ” (Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9, both King James Version). (See “Our Faith in Christ or His Faith Within Us?” on page 20.)

As we noted in the previous chapter, believing in God means more than mere acknowledgment of His existence. Faith involves a relationship with God that deepens and matures over time.

When It Seems God Doesn't Hear or Answer

Few attitudes are more disheartening and destructive to faith than the notion that God doesn't hear our prayers, doesn't answer or doesn't care. It is easy to come to such conclusions when God doesn't respond when or how we want.

The apostle Paul was a man who could have concluded that God doesn't listen to people. After all, he urgently pleaded with God to intervene for him in a chronic trial. But God refused to grant Paul's request.

Does this mean Paul lacked faith? Of course not. However, there is a deeper lesson for us in Paul's life of living faith.

Paul's grievous trial

Notice Paul's account of this trial: “There was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me” (2 Corinthians 12:7-8, New International Version).

What was this trial, this messenger of Satan, that tormented Paul? Comments in Paul's writings hint it may have been a problem with his eyes.

To Church members in Galatia, Paul wrote: “As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me . . . I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me” (Galatians 4:13-15, NIV). Writing about his illness, Paul said that some of the members there would have given him their

own eyes if that could have helped him.

At the end of his letter to the Galatians he writes, “See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!” (Galatians 6:11, NIV).

Perhaps Paul had to write using large letters because that was the only way he could see the words he had written.

Several years later Paul wrote the Corinthians that he had pleaded with God on three occasions to have his “thorn in the flesh” removed. We shouldn't read into this that Paul simply mentioned the problem in prayer to God. The implication is that he fervently asked God to deliver him from the trial, no doubt with fasting and heartfelt prayer (2 Corinthians 11:27). He wanted this hindrance removed so he could continue to spread the gospel effectively and care for the congregations God had raised up through him.

God's answer to Paul

Paul could have concluded that God had not heard his pleas. But this is not the case. God simply gave Paul a different answer: “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Whether God directly spoke these words to Paul or whether Paul gradually came to this understanding of God's will isn't clear from the Greek wording. What is clear is that Paul came to a deeper spiritual understanding that strengthened his faith and commitment.

Paul came to see that the credit belonged to God the Father and Jesus Christ rather than to himself and that his weakness drew him closer to

More examples of living faith

Several other, lesser-known biblical figures demonstrated faith in God. Their examples are also inspiring and show that God does not show partiality (Acts 10:34). All of us, no matter what our circumstances, can develop living faith.

Matthew 8 contains two excellent examples of faith. First, a leper was

that source of power and strength. He stated: “I am therefore happy to boast of my weaknesses, because then the power of Christ will rest upon me. So I am content with a life of weakness, insult, hardship, persecution, and distress, all for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (verses 9-10, Revised English Bible).

Paul's experience stands as an important spiritual lesson for us. Sometimes God's answer for us is “no” or “not yet.” God never intended our physical bodies to last forever. In this era, He has allotted us a physical existence of about 70 years (Psalm 90:10). He is far more concerned that we develop righteous character and a trusting relationship with Him that can last for eternity. He wants to resurrect us to eternal life in a glorious, immortal spirit body not subject to weakness, illness and death (1 Corinthians 15:40-44, 50-54).

In the meantime, Paul understood that God in His love will never allow us to fall into trials greater than we can endure. “God is faithful,” Paul wrote, and He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. “But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10:13, NIV). That is, He will give us the help and strength to endure or change circumstances so we will not have to bear the full weight of the trial or all that would happen if it were allowed to run unimpeded.

Submission to God's will

Paul was not the only one who learned that living, trusting, abiding faith is more important than physical health and longevity. Even Jesus, knowing that He faced a cruel death only hours away, prayed, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me” (Matthew 26:39). As

any person would not, Jesus did not want to suffer through hours of horrible pain and agony. But He acknowledged a greater purpose for His physical life, concluding, “Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Jesus Christ, the perfect example of faith, knew the importance of following the Father's will above one's own will.

God knows what is best for us in the long run, even if it may conflict with our short-term wants and desires. As Peter tells us, “[Cast] all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). Paul says we should be “confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). Because God works within us from a broader perspective to build faith and character, He doesn't always answer our prayers in the way we desire.

Some were delivered, some not

The Bible's “faith chapter,” Hebrews 11, tells us that at times “women received their dead raised to life again,” but that “others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword . . .

“And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (verses 35-40).

God does not always answer our prayers to our immediate satisfaction and instantly deliver us from our trials. But He will always do what is best for us.

healed after saying to Jesus, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean” (Matthew 8:2-3).

In another case, Christ offered to go to a Roman officer’s home and heal his servant. The officer’s faith in Christ’s healing power was so strong that he knew Jesus didn’t have to be physically present for the servant to be healed. “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed,” he told Jesus (verse 8). The centurion’s faith impressed Jesus so much that He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! . . . Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you” (verses 10-13). The officer’s servant immediately recovered.

In another example a woman who had “a flow of blood” for 12 years approached Jesus to ask for healing (Matthew 9:20). She believed all she needed to do was touch Jesus’ clothing. Jesus responded by saying, “Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well” (verse 22). This woman, too, was immediately healed.

Still another example of faith occurred when two blind men came to Christ for healing. He asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They responded, “Yes, Lord.” Jesus touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be to you.” The men’s blindness was healed (Matthew 9:28-30).

As we have seen, many examples of faith during Christ’s life dealt with healing. Even in modern secular society in which God is often overlooked, life-and-death matters command our attention. Although we may seek the best medical service possible, our lives are still ultimately in God’s hands. As the apostle Paul said, “In Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

Scripture tells Christians, when they fall ill, to call the elders of the Church to receive prayers and anointing with oil as a symbol of God’s Holy Spirit (James 5:14-15). While God uses human servants in this work, we must never forget that it is He who actually performs the miracle of healing.

When we seek God this way as He instructs, we should trust in faith that He will intervene for us and heal—yet still recognize that He, knowing what is best for us and others, may choose to not heal immediately. Perhaps there are lessons we or others may yet need to learn. (This does not, however, mean that we should resign ourselves to His not intervening. Rather we should persist in prayer, expecting Him to act speedily unless He has an important reason for not doing so.)

In many circumstances it is also wise to seek medical advice and help. There is nothing wrong with seeking professional care when we are sick. Luke, the traveling companion of Paul and author of the Gospel of Luke

and the book of Acts, is called “the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14). And Jesus Himself acknowledged the need for physicians in caring for our health (Matthew 9:12). The use of medicine is also spoken of approvingly (Proverbs 17:22).

But in any medical treatment, we must still look to God as our Healer—placing ultimate trust in Him and not in doctors or physical remedies. The Bible gives us the negative example of Judah’s King Asa in this regard, who “became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians” (2 Chronicles 16:12). As always, ultimate faith and trust must be in God alone.

And again, when we do trust in God for healing and deliverance from various trials, while He will often immediately intervene there may be times that He does not for our own or others’ good. (For more on this, see “When It Seems God Doesn’t Hear or Answer” beginning on page 24.)

Though the resurrection to come is a sure biblical promise, we must remember that this life is temporary and that trials and even dying are part of it (1 Corinthians 15:22; Acts 14:22; Hebrews 9:27). In comparison, our faith bears eternal significance. This is why Paul affirmed, “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7) and “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

At the end of the faith chapter, Hebrews 11, we find that we, too, can share in the future promised to these outstanding examples of faith: “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (verses 39-40).

We can share being “made perfect” with these remarkable people of faith. The next chapter will help you understand how this can take place.

Growing in Faith

“The just shall live by faith”

(Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

In the previous chapters we saw the Bible’s definition of faith. We considered examples of faith in action in the people of God. We learned that we must have faith to receive God’s gift of salvation. In our faithless age (Luke 18:8), how can we develop living, active faith?

Don’t be discouraged if you think you lack faith. Sometimes people who profess belief in God are deeply ashamed when a crisis occurs and they find their faith is weak. This may happen to you. But don’t despair. The Bible shows that even men and women of powerful faith struggled at times with faith-testing challenges.

The Bible relates their anguish as they wrestled with their trials. Hebrews 11:34 tells us that “out of weakness [they] were made strong.” These men and women grew in faith through the crucible of challenges and—at times—setbacks and failures.

Jeremiah’s example

The prophet Jeremiah was just such a man. He was one of the people listed in the faith chapter who suffered “chains and imprisonment” (Hebrews 11:36; compare Jeremiah 37:15-16). Jeremiah’s captors not only imprisoned him, but they lowered him into a “dungeon”—an abandoned cistern that was deep with mud at the bottom (Jeremiah 38:6). This was the third time Jeremiah was imprisoned and the most harsh. His situation was so dire that he nearly died (verse 10).

Jeremiah’s undeserved imprisonment was the culmination of a long period of abuse he suffered at the hands of his own people. God had called him to prophesy and warn the people of Judah that, because of their sins, their kingdom would fall to foreign invaders. Rather than repenting and heeding God’s warnings, the people turned on Jeremiah and hated him. They tried to assassinate him (Jeremiah 11:19, 21). They accused him of treason; they arrested him, brought him before the king and imprisoned him.

In the face of such determined opposition, Jeremiah struggled spiritually. He had not wanted to prophesy in the first place (Jeremiah 1:4-8). He voiced his misgivings and essentially accused God of forcing him to be a prophet (Jeremiah 20:7). At one point he decided he would no longer speak God’s word (verse 9), yet he found his convictions compelling him to con-

tinue. As his struggle continued, he wished he had never lived (verse 14).

Jeremiah’s life was an endless struggle. His was not the smug, sunny faith of a man impervious to doubt. The Bible instead records the all-too-human battle of a troubled and sometimes weary man. But Jeremiah triumphed through faith in God. He cried out to His Creator: “Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved . . . You are my hope in the day of doom” (Jeremiah 17:14, 17).



God delivered Jeremiah from the dungeon and from death. Today we recognize Jeremiah as a great Hebrew prophet. More important, he gained the approval of God and awaits the resurrection of the righteous. Jeremiah’s life was not easy, but his faith matured throughout his trials.

Many other men and women of the Bible who professed faith in God cried out when their belief wavered in difficult times. Choosing to obey and serve God will lead to difficulties that challenge our faith. Paul tells us that “all who desire to

live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). We need to go to God asking for His help to build a loving, trusting, faithful relationship with Him that will enable us to endure such trials.

Jeremiah’s captors lowered him into a “dungeon”—an abandoned cistern. His situation was so dire that he nearly died, but Jeremiah triumphed through faith in God and was delivered from the dungeon and from death.

You may find yourself like the father who came to Christ with a severe problem: His son was demon-possessed, and the father wanted Christ to heal him. When Jesus told him “all things are possible to him who believes,” the man knew his faith was weak. In his anguish and tears he cried out to Christ, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:23-24).

Jesus did not condemn or refuse to help the man whose faith was weak. Nor will He turn us away when *our* faith is weak. But there is something we should do under these circumstances.

Grow in faith

God expects us to grow in faith. It is crucial that we grow in faith,

because it is impossible to have a relationship with God without it (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is one of our most precious possessions and a key to everything important. It is because we have faith that we can receive the commendation and approval of God. Those whose examples of faith are recorded for us in Hebrews 11 were “commended for their faith” in God (Hebrews 11:39, NIV).

Because they had faith, God will resurrect them at the return of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:50-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16). Faith is a crucial key to the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

As discussed earlier, we cannot muster up faith on our own and determine we will never doubt or question again. Instead, true, living faith emerges as a result of a maturing relationship with God. Let’s notice what we can do to strengthen this most important of all our relationships.

Vital importance of prayer

We begin our journey to living a life of faith by *asking God for it*. It is His will that we have faith, and He is willing to give it to us (Luke 11:9). We should pray to God for faith, and we should pray for it often (Luke 18:1). Prayer for faith should be an integral and regular part of our lives.

How Faith Empowers Obedience—and More Faith

In the book of Hebrews, *disobedience* is equated with *disbelief* (see 3:18-19). How are these two so closely related? We saw earlier in this booklet that, as the apostle Paul explained in Romans 3:31, faith enables God’s law to stand (see “Faith Puts the Law on ‘Firmer Footing’” on page 10). But why is this so—how does it work?

Think about this. If you absolutely and totally believed everything God has said, would you really continue to break His law? Here’s an analogy. Let’s say you pick up a bottle that you *know* to be filled with poison that will cause terrible pain and death in a few minutes. Unless you’re trying to commit suicide, how likely would you be to take a drink?

God tells us that sin leads to suffering and misery—and ultimately death—but that His way of life will bring the greatest happiness and most wonderful existence possible. When we are in a mindset of absolutely believing what

God says, we adhere to His way—fearing to “drink the deadly poison.”

At other times, we may “know” God’s way is right, but we sometimes forget how absolutely *real* He is and that He’s *right here with us*. Consequently, we don’t take His warnings seriously. We may think that instant, fleshly gratification will make us “feel better”—and so we end up giving in to temptation. But notice that a major culprit here is *disbelief!* If we really and truly believed God—being utterly convinced that He, in Spirit, was always right here with us—we would know better and act accordingly.

But for physical human beings beset by weakness of the flesh and Satan’s negative influences, such absolute faith lies out of reach on our own. Humanly, there is always going to be some doubt. That’s why we must have a transformation of mind through the Holy Spirit—which is itself a gift of God by grace

Many scriptures show that we need to maintain daily contact with God (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3; 2 Corinthians 4:16). King David, to ensure a close relationship with God, prayed three times every day (Psalm 55:16-17). The prophet Daniel similarly prayed three times daily (Daniel 6:10).

Prayer, along with study of the Scriptures, is a vital part of conversation with God. It is a way of expressing our love, as well as our concerns, to Him. This heartfelt communication with God increases faith.

Prayer also results in God responding to us. Notice this promise from Scripture: “You will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 4:29).

If we devote ourselves to earnest prayer and ask for faith, God will not refuse us. He wants to give us spiritual gifts just as a loving parent wants to feed a hungry child (Luke 11:11-12). Jesus promised that whatever we asked in His name God would grant to us (John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23).

Read the Bible regularly

In prayer we talk to God. When we read the Bible, we let God talk to us through His Word.

through faith.

Through giving us the Holy Spirit, God the Father and Jesus Christ enable us to miraculously share in Their sure perspective when it comes to how we should live. And the Holy Spirit also empowers obedience and increasing faith to obey even more.

Here’s how it works. When we purpose to obey God—impossible to fully do on our own—we step out in faith, knowing that we are not “flying solo.” We know that to the degree we yield to Christ living in us through His Spirit (Galatians 2:20), *He* keeps the law in and through us. Of course, we must *believe*—and also make an effort ourselves.

This effort would get us nowhere without Christ’s help. But if we make no effort at all, He will not just drag us along and force us to do right. We must cooperate in partnership with Him. As Paul writes, each of us must “labor, striving according to His working which works in [us] mightily” (Colossians 1:29). Only this will produce ongoing obedience to God’s commandments in the full spirit and intent.

This is living faith—faith accompanied by

righteous works. God initially declared the patriarch Abraham righteous on the basis of his faith (Genesis 15:5-6). Yet the apostle James explains of Abraham’s later obedience, “Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” (James 2:22).

A synergism exists between faith in God with His way of life and our commitment to doing godly works. Every time we take the leap of faith to obey God and are successful through Christ living in us, the more faith we will have to obey in the future. Indeed, nothing succeeds like success!

In the words of Paul, “The righteousness of God [alignment with His way, His law] is revealed from faith to faith [that is, ever-increasing faith]; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Romans 1:17).

The next verse in James 2 says that this perfecting of faith through works is actually how “the Scripture was *fulfilled* which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’” (verse 23). May this be said of us too!

The Bible tells us that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Let us remember what faith is. In its simplest form, faith is believing God will do what He says He will do (Romans 4:20-21). To know what God says to us, we must read the Bible, God’s revealed words to man. It tells us how He wants us to live. It tells us what He will do for us. It includes many accounts of His dealings with and intervention for individuals and all mankind.

As you regularly read the Bible and pray, you will grow in faith in two ways. First, you will learn what God promises. He makes promises you can claim. Second, the inspiring stories of the Bible will reassure you and help strengthen your faith.

Speaking of the Holy Scriptures, Paul said, “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4, NIV). As our hope increases, our faith increases. The two are intertwined. (Download or request our free booklets *Is the Bible True?* and *How to*

Understand the Bible. They can help you learn more from your study of the Bible, strengthening and building your faith.)

Obey God

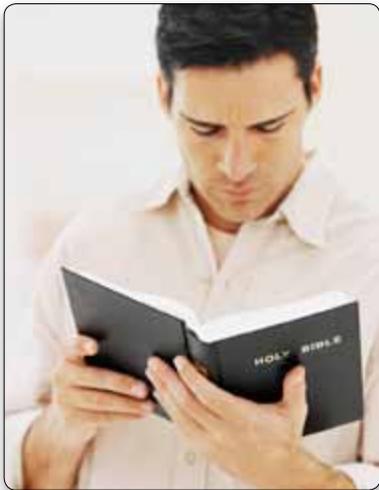
Another necessary step to grow in faith is to *do what God says*. We must heed His commands.

Many people do not have a proper understanding of obedience. On the one hand, some think they can earn eternal life by their deeds. They fail to understand that salvation is God’s undeserved gift to us (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8) and that we could never earn this

To know what God says to us, we must read the Bible, God’s revealed words to man. It tells us how He wants us to live.

priceless gift by our own efforts. At the other extreme are those who want God to accept them just as they are and have no intention of making any changes in their lives.

Heartfelt obedience is a statement—an expression—of faith. It is *empowered* by faith—being, with the help of God’s Spirit, our grateful response to all that God has done and promises He will yet do for us as



well as the way of life we now want to live (drawing near to God and becoming more like Him). Jesus promised that any who obey Him will enjoy a special bond with Him and the Father: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (John 14:23).

This shows us we can grasp the reality of the presence of Jesus and the Father if we obey Them.

The link between obedience and faith is evident throughout the Bible. If we have faith, it should be evident by our conduct. (See “How Faith Empowers Obedience—and More Faith” beginning on page 30.) The faithful men and women of the Bible had this in common.

However, heartfelt obedience to God requires a good understanding of His law. To learn why God gave us His law and to



A bricklayer knows a wall doesn’t spring up in a moment. He must build it a little at a time, brick by brick. In the same way, we develop and enrich our faith through frequent, regular contact with God.

understand the fundamental principles found in the Ten Commandments, download or request your free copy of the booklet *The Ten Commandments*.

You’ll walk with God

If you live a life of prayer, studying the Bible and obeying God, you will develop a close relationship with Him. As you walk with God, your faith will grow. To walk with God is to have deep faith. Enoch and Noah are two examples in the Bible described in just such terms (Genesis 5:22; 6:9).

Walking with God means a daily relationship with Him of earnestly and consistently seeking His will. When you live a godly life, walking with God with a pure heart, you grow in faith.

Frequent, regular contact with God is essential because faith is a by-product of godly living. Faith increases over time. A bricklayer knows a wall doesn’t spring up in a moment. He must build it a little at a time, brick by brick. In the same way, we develop and enrich our faith through frequent, regular contact with God.

When your faith is tested

Everyone who has faith is tested. The Bible says such tests of our faith, which is “more precious than gold,” are necessary (1 Peter 1:6-7). Although gold will ultimately perish, our faith will forever be a part of us

Is Belief All That’s Required for Salvation?

Is belief all that God requires of us for salvation? Some, reading Acts 16:31 and Romans 10:9, think that’s the final word on the subject. But we must look at *all* the Bible says on the subject to come to a proper understanding.

Certainly belief in God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son, as They are described in Scripture, is crucial. As Hebrews 11:6 tells us, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” So belief in God and having living faith in Him is vital to pleasing God and receiving His gift of salvation.

And salvation is God’s gift by grace, as Ephesians 2:8-9 explains. It is His gift, unearned and undeserved on our part. No one will ever be able to boast that he or she has earned or deserves the gift of eternal life.

But it doesn’t stop at simple belief and grace. We can do things—or *not* do things—that disqualify us from receiving that wonderful gift from God.

The fact is, the Bible shows that God sets certain conditions for receiving salvation. Some conditions *enable us* to receive that gift, and other conditions *disqualify us* from receiving it.

To use an analogy, if someone offered to send you a \$100 bill if you would send him a self-addressed stamped envelope, he would be offering you a gift. Simply believing that he would send you the money would not actually get you the money. And if you failed to send the envelope, you likewise would not receive it. You might complain, but you still would not receive the gift because you had not met the conditions. On the other hand, if you sent the

required envelope and received the \$100 bill, you did not *earn* the gift. You simply met the necessary conditions. The fact that conditions are attached makes it no less a gift.

Since Jesus is the author of our salvation, let’s examine a few of His statements that tell us what we must do to receive that gift of salvation—eternal life.

What must we do?

In Matthew 7:21 Jesus says, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but *he who does the will of My Father in heaven*.” Jesus made it clear that merely acknowledging Him as Lord and Master—saying “Lord, Lord”—is not sufficient. To inherit the Kingdom, we must *do something*. We must *do the will of the Father*, as He clearly stated.

Jesus wants us to understand that there is more to receiving eternal life than just belief or mental acceptance. Our conviction that He is our Savior must be more than just a warm, comforting thought or intellectual concept. Jesus warns that simply calling on His name or recognizing Him as “Lord” is not enough.

At one point a wealthy young man asked Jesus how he could receive eternal life. “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” the man asked (Matthew 19:16). Christ’s reply, in verse 17, might shock some who think obedience to God’s law is unnecessary. Jesus responded, “If you want to enter into life, *keep the commandments*.”

Jesus didn’t answer that nothing is required other than believing in God or in Him. He told the young man that he must *obey the commandments of God* to receive the gift of eternal life.

when we are resurrected at the return of Jesus Christ.

Trials and problems are not pleasant. When they hit us, they may at first seem terrible, traumatic and even devastating. But trials are opportunities to build faith and grow spiritually.

As the apostle James points out, belief is pointless unless it is backed up by action and obedience: “You believe that there is one God. You do well. *Even the demons believe—and tremble*” (James 2:19).

He goes on to explain that faith—belief and trust in God—and obedience go hand in hand: “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that *faith without works is dead*? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” (verses 20-22).

James thus explained that works of obedience as a result of our faith maintain our relationship with God and lead to *greater* faith and obedience, as God requires.

Baptism and laying on of hands

Jesus gave another condition for God’s gift of eternal life in Mark 16:16: “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Water baptism—by full immersion—is a symbolic act representing the death of our old self and the beginning of a new life of serving God and striving to avoid sin (Romans 6:1-23).

Baptism is also followed by the laying on of hands by Christ’s ministry, which allows us to receive God’s Holy Spirit and truly belong to Him (Acts 8:17; Romans 8:9). Unless we surrender our lives to God through baptism and the laying on of hands to receive His Spirit as instructed, we fail to meet—whether knowingly or unknowingly—His prerequisites for receiving His gift of salvation. To those who would brush aside these and other plain biblical instructions Jesus replies, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and *do not do the things which I say*?” (Luke 6:46).

In Matthew 10:22 Jesus listed another condition we must meet to receive God’s gift of

salvation: “He who endures to the end will be saved.” We can lose out on salvation if we fail to endure to the end. Once we have committed ourselves to obeying God and surrendering ourselves to Him, we must stay the course to the end and not look back (Luke 9:62; 1 Corinthians 9:27).

Free, but not cheap

You may have heard the expression, “Salvation is free, but it isn’t cheap.” God’s gift of life to us cost Jesus Christ *His* life. He, the very Son of God, willingly surrendered His life so that we might receive God’s wonderful gift of eternal life.

But He expects us to surrender our lives in return: “If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me” (Luke 14:26-27, New Living Translation, 1996).

Our love for and commitment to Jesus Christ and God the Father must be more important to us than any other relationship. Each of us must be willing to bear his “cross,” to faithfully follow Jesus even through life’s most difficult challenges.

Verses 28-33 carry that thought, warning us to consider carefully that accepting the gift of eternal life comes at the highest cost we can imagine. “So no one can become my disciple *without giving up everything for me*” (verse 33, NLT, 1996).

As Jesus Christ gave His life for us, we must be willing to give our lives to follow Him!

To better understand this commitment, and the wonderful rewards it brings, request or download our free booklet *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

When the guards cast Daniel into the lions' den (Daniel 6), he didn't know what his physical fate would be. He had been commanded to pay idolatrous homage to a man. He refused. Although he didn't know what would happen to him, he knew the only right thing was to obey God, even if it meant his death. He refused to compromise, and God saved him from the lions.

However, before God delivered him, Daniel had to put his trust in God. He knew that, even if God did not deliver him from the lions right then, God would nevertheless deliver him ultimately, as his future with God was assured for eternity.

Anyone who decides to follow Christ will eventually face tests. You may be asked to compromise with the truth God reveals in His Word. The genuineness of your faith may be tested in such a moment of truth. How will you fare?

As we have learned, God is kind and understanding toward our weaknesses, but He nevertheless requires that we go forward in faith. In times of testing we must seek His wisdom even more earnestly. We must pray for Him to show us His will.

We should seek wise spiritual counsel (Proverbs 24:6). Then, with His courage and faith within us, we should move forward.

Since God may allow smaller trials to fall on us to prepare us for bigger trials that lie ahead, we should daily strengthen our faith. If we do not practice trust in God until a major crisis arises, we will find the going much more difficult.

Living a life of prayer, Bible study and humble obedience to God clarifies and strengthens our faith. We can't always choose the time in our lives for a faith-testing crisis, but if we seek God now we can be much better equipped when such a test arises.

Faith in the promise of the Kingdom of God

Like the prophet Daniel, we should have faith and hope in the promise of the Kingdom of God and all it entails. The Kingdom of God is the eternal realm that Jesus Christ will establish on earth at His return. It will supersede all other earthly governments and last forever (Daniel 2:44).

The saints—the servants of God—will rule forever in that Kingdom (Daniel 7:18). Any sacrifice we are called on to make for that future reward will pale in comparison to the greatness and magnificence of the reward God has in store for us (Romans 8:18). (To better understand the awesome truth about the Kingdom of God as Christ taught, be sure to download or request your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.)

We will inherit the Kingdom in the resurrection to eternal life at Christ's return (1 Corinthians 15:50-52). Our belief in this coming

Kingdom is, in itself, an act of faith. This is because we do not now see the Kingdom of God, but God tells us it will be a reality. To inherit a future of such magnitude and glory calls for us to live by faith.

A life of faith may require that we, at times, step into uncomfortable situations. We may find ourselves in circumstances in which we can no longer be assured of our customary comforts. Even our personal safety may be threatened. In such times we must stay focused on the Kingdom of God. After all, "faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1, NIV).



Before God delivered him, Daniel had to put his trust in God. He knew that, even if God did not deliver him from the lions right then, God would nevertheless deliver him ultimately.

Our faith takes its stand based on the sure Word of God, which stands forever: "All flesh is as grass . . . But the word of the LORD endures forever" (1 Peter 1:24-25). The people of faith whose stories the Bible preserves for us took their stand on the Word of God. They believed God.

God promises a better reward (Hebrews 11:40) for those who devote their lives to seeking the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). Even though this life has its pleasant moments, Paul kept the proper perspective: "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8, NIV).

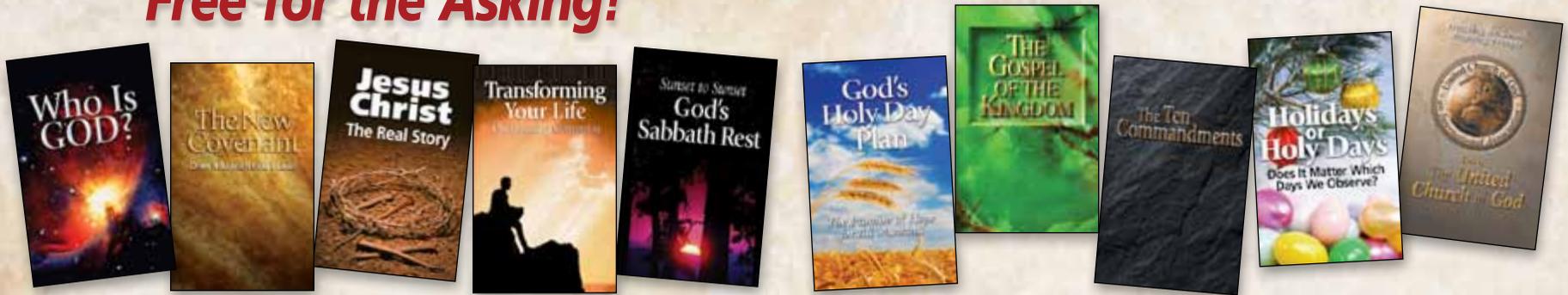
God promises us eternal life at the resurrection. In the meantime, He will comfort us when serving Him brings painful sacrifices (2 Corinthians 1:3-5). Maintaining a clear vision of the magnificent future and remembering God's promise of comfort help us develop living faith.

The calling to a knowledge of and faith in the Kingdom of God is a precious one. Not everyone is called to understand or receive it in this age (Luke 8:10).

Understanding these truths of God is a gift from Him. If you understand them, God is calling you to participate in His great plan. To claim this gift you must act on it. Follow the advice of Hebrews 6:12 and "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Begin now to develop the living faith that will see you through the trials of this life and into the coming Kingdom of God!

Free for the Asking!



Does the Bible Really Say That?

There's much in the Bible that you rarely see taught or discussed in most churches—and much that people assume is in the Bible but really isn't!

You need to discover what Scripture says *for yourself*. And don't take our word for it—look it up in the pages of your own Bible and *prove for yourself* what it really teaches!

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