

Living Faith

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Hebrews 11:1-2 “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see. 2 For by it the people of old received God’s commendation.” NET

Here we have a clear definition of Faith. That is being convinced and sure of what we cannot see but are hoping for. We are sure and are convinced of the resurrection of Christ from the dead and his and His return.

Romans 1:16-17 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith, just as it is written, *“The righteous by faith will live.”* NET

So important is faith for salvation that the Apostle Paul here quotes the Old Testament prophet Habbakuk 2:4 Saying “The Just shall live by faith”. Both Jews and non Jews (Greeks). For Paul faith becomes a permanent lifestyle for the Christian which taps into the power of God. When people live by faith it has a real effect on them and for the world. For through faith the righteousness of God is revealed. Faith is necessary for people to live a life pleasing to God.

Hebrews 11:6 “Now without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” NET

For those of us who desire to live a life pleasing to God faith is mandatory. But what is faith? Faith is believing and doing what God tells us. If God tells me something in His word and I believe it then I have faith.

Romans 10:17 “Consequently faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the preached word of Christ”. NET

Back in the days before the invention of the printing press bibles were rare and very expensive. The average person who probably couldn't read anyway only heard the word of God when it was preached to him at church. Today the hearing of the word can also be the reading of the word. Here Paul says that if we believe what we hear from the word of God then we have faith. The Christian faith then comprises belief in all the doctrines that are taught in the bible.

James 2:14-19 “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can this kind of faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm and eat well,” but you do not give them what the body needs, what good is it? 17 So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead being by itself. 18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe that—and tremble with fear.” NET

The apostle James adds an important practice to biblical Christianity. He makes the point that the demons believe the word of God as well as many Christians. The real difference between demons and genuine Christians is in putting those beliefs into practice. James is describing Living Faith. A faith that is defined as believing what God tells us and doing what God tells us. Being zealous of good works.

James 1:21-22 “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” NASB

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A deceived Christian is one who only believes the truth that he hears but does not do those things that the bible tells him to do. This defines two types of Faith. A living faith and a dead faith.

Living Faith = believing what God tells you + doing what God tells you .
Dead Faith = only believing what God tells you

Jesus compares living faith with dead faith.

Matthew 7:24-27 “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, but it did not collapse because its foundation had been laid on rock. 26 Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, and it collapsed—it was utterly destroyed!” NET

A Christian who has a living faith that believes the word and does what it says will survive the days of trial that will come. While a Christian who only believes the word but does not do what it says will meet with disaster in a big way. The Living Faith that comprises believing the word of God and doing what it says is clearly taught in Hebrews 11. Many examples are given of Old Testament characters who had this living faith.

Hebrews 11:7 “By faith Noah, when he was warned about things not yet seen, with reverent regard constructed an ark for the deliverance of his family. Through faith he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.” NET

Noah was told by God that He was going to destroy the earth with a flood. It had never rained before so Noah trusted God and believed what he was told. He built an ark as he was instructed to do by God. If he had only believed and not done as he was told he would have drowned in the flood with the rest of humanity. But because he both believed and did as he was told this living faith saved him and his family from certain death. Satan wants people to believe that obeying God is a “works trip”. Was Noah on a “works trip” when he built the ark? No. He built the ark because he had faith. He believed and did what God told him. This is defined as Righteousness by faith.

Hebrews 11:29 “By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.” NASB

Israel and Egypt found themselves at the Red Sea. God parted the sea and Israel was told to march through the sea to escape the pursuing Egyptian army. Israel believed what God told them and did what God told them and all were saved. The Egyptian army on the other hand tried to follow. They believed they could do it too. They marched into the parted sea and all were drowned. Israel had faith while the Egyptian army did not have faith. Both Israel and Egypt believed and acted on that belief. The one difference was that Israel was told to go into the sea while Egypt was not. Israel was given the word of God while Egypt was not. With the word of God missing it was not possible for Egypt to have faith. This teaches us a major lesson. We are never to presume to do anything in the Christian life without a clear indication from the word of God.

This leads us to examine a major deception of Satan. In order to bring about our down fall Satan wants us to believe what God has not told us.

Jesus on the temple tempted to believe what God had not said.

Matthew 4:5-7 “Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the highest point of the temple, 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, ‘*He will command his angels concerning you*’ and ‘*with their hands they will lift you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.*’” 7 Jesus said to him, “Once again it is written: ‘*You are not to put the Lord your God to the test.*’” NET

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Here we have the second temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Satan takes Jesus up to the top of the temple and tempts Him to jump off to test His faith in God's protection. Satan quotes from the bible in order to accomplish his plan. But it is a trick. Satan misquotes the bible. He presents a false doctrine. He misquoted psalm 91:11-12

Psalm 91:11-12 “For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways. 12 They will bear you up in their hands, That you do not strike your foot against a stone.”

The underlined part is the bit that Satan deliberately left out. According to this verse God's protection is provided to those who walk in God's ways. Tempting God by jumping off a temple to certain death is not walking in God's ways therefore one cannot expect God to intervene. By leaving this part out Satan hoped that Jesus would jump to His death. But Jesus knew the bible and was able to counteract this false teaching with a true quote from scripture. Satan tried to get Jesus to believe what God had not said and to act on it. ie a counterfeit faith.

Old Testament example of King Uzziah

2 Chronicles 26:16-23 “But once he became powerful, his pride destroyed him. He disobeyed the Lord his God. He entered the Lord’s temple to offer incense on the incense altar. 17 Azariah the priest and eighty other brave priests of the Lord followed him in. 18 They confronted King Uzziah and said to him, “It is not proper for you, Uzziah, to offer incense to the Lord. That is the responsibility of the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who are consecrated to offer incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have disobeyed and the Lord God will not honor you!” 19 Uzziah, who had an incense censer in his hand, became angry. While he was ranting and raving at the priests, a skin disease appeared on his forehead right there in front of the priests in the Lord’s temple near the incense altar. 20 When Azariah the high priest and the other priests looked at him, there was a skin disease on his forehead. They hurried him out of there; even the king himself wanted to leave quickly because the Lord had afflicted him. 21 King Uzziah suffered from a skin disease until the day he died. He lived in separate quarters, afflicted by a skin disease and banned from the Lord’s temple. His son Jotham was in charge of the palace and ruled over the people of the land. 22 The rest of the events of Uzziah’s reign, from start to finish, were recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. 23 Uzziah passed away and was buried near his ancestors in a cemetery belonging to the kings. (This was because he had a skin disease.) His son Jotham replaced him as king.” NET

Here is an interesting true account of unfaithfulness to the Lord. King Uzziah had faith and was blessed by God and because he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord he became a powerful king. He remained blessed by God provided he faithfully continued to believe and follow God's commands. But he let pride get the better of him. He thought that because he was the king and that God had blessed him greatly that he could do what ever he wished. So he comes to worship God as was his custom only this time he ignores the priests and decides to do their job himself. He had not been given the office of priest and it was contrary to the word of God for him officiate in the temple. He believed what was contrary to the bible and acted on that belief. This is Satan's counterfeit of faith. When he was confronted by the priests for his unfaithfulness, rather than acknowledge his wrong doing, he became angry at the priests for daring to question him and his authority. Leprosy, a symbol of sin and the greatest curse in the Old Testament, breaks out on his forehead ending all argument. This is the end result of attempting to worship God deliberately contrary to the word of God. Counterfeit faith, Satan deceiving us into believing and doing contrary to what God has said with disastrous consequences. It is vital that we know as much as we can and worship God correctly. God overlooks our unwillful lack of knowledge, the curse was put on Uzziah only after he rejected the word of God as spoken by the priests and he tried to justify his actions.

So it will be with us if we have a counterfeit faith. If we deliberately believe and do contrary to the word of God.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 “For I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time for me to depart is at hand. 7 I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith! 8 Finally the crown of righteousness is reserved for me. The Lord, the

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righteous Judge, will award it to me in that day—and not to me only, but also to all who have set their affection on his appearing.” NET

At the end of his life Paul was able to say that he had kept the faith. What he meant by this is he had continued to believe the truths that God had told him and also did every thing that God has asked him to do. This was done in spite of all the opposition that he received from evil men both inside and outside of the church.

1 Timothy 4:1 “Now the Spirit explicitly says that in the later times some will desert the faith and occupy themselves with deceiving spirits and demonic teachings,” NET

The devil wants Christians to renounce their faith so as to lose their salvation and to discourage others from becoming Christians. One of the methods mentioned here is doctrines of demons. A twisting of the word of God in order to deceive Christians into believing and doing what God has not told them. Satan's most successful deceptions in this area come from within the Christian churches.

2 Peter 2:1 “But false prophets arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. These false teachers will infiltrate your midst with destructive heresies, even to the point of denying the Master who bought them. As a result, they will bring swift destruction on themselves.” NET

Speaking of the false prophets who plagued ancient Israel with their lies the Apostle Peter says that this will also be the lot of the Christian church. False teachers; whether they are ministers, theologians or lay people; will secretly bring in destructive heresies that are designed to lead us away from what God has commanded us. These agents of Satan write and teach false doctrines and have them presented to the church and to the world as though they are truth. Many people become deceived because they accept their ministers explanations of the scriptures without searching the scriptures for themselves. Even some versions of the bible are loaded with heresies in the margins written as bible notes. Thus the word of God and the deceptions of Satan become printed on the same page. And because people read the bible notes instead of the text of the bible itself many are easily deceived. It is important that every Christian read and understand the bible for themselves asking God for direction and enlightenment.

Acts 17:11-12 “These Jews were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they eagerly received the message, examining the scriptures carefully every day to see if these things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, along with quite a few prominent Greek women and men.” NET

When Paul and Silas went and preached the gospel in the city of Berea they went to a synagogue and found the people open to the truth. They received the truth but they searched the Hebrew scriptures daily to check on the trustworthiness of what Paul was saying. Luke, the author of Acts, commends the Bereans for this as an example for us to follow. It is imperative that we compare what we are taught with the word of God to see if we are being taught the truth or if we are taught falsehoods.

Hosea 4:6 “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” NASB

The knowledge of the truth is considered so important that God says that a lack of knowledge of it is fatal. God's condemnation of WILFUL ignorance is not given to people who do not understand but His condemnation is reserved for those who do not want to know the truth. There is a big difference between those people who cannot know the truth for whatever reason. Maybe because they have not got access to the bible or because they cannot read or are mentally disabled etc. And those people who have the opportunity to learn but are not interested. Not wanting to know the truth is an evidence of unconversion. It was lack of knowledge of the bible that sent Christianity into the doctrines of Romanism. It was the discovery of the bible by the Protestant reformers that led the way back to biblical Christianity. Without the knowledge of the bible all western Christianity would belong to the church of Rome.

“The position that it is of no consequence what men believe, is one of Satan's most successful deceptions. He knows that the truth, received in the love of it, sanctifies the soul of the receiver; therefore he is constantly seeking to substitute false theories, fables, another gospel. From the beginning, the servants of God

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have contended against false teachers, not merely as vicious men, but as inculcators of falsehoods that were fatal to the soul. Elijah, Jeremiah, Paul, firmly and fearlessly opposed those who were turning men from the Word of God. That liberality which regards a correct religious faith as unimportant, found no favor with these holy defenders of the truth.” The Great Controversy. Pacific Press Publishing Association. p520. (AD 1888).

“There is an alarming indifference in regard to the doctrines which are the pillars of the Christian faith. The opinion is gaining ground, that, after all, these are not of vital importance. This degeneracy is strengthening the hands of the agents of Satan, so that false theories and fatal delusions which the faithful in ages past imperiled their lives to resist and expose, are now regarded with favor by thousands who claim to be the followers of Christ.” The Spirit of Prophecy vol 4 pp 46-47. Pacific Press Publishing Association. 1884

“It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light, and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought, and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help, we are to form our opinions for ourselves, as we are to answer for ourselves before God.” The Great Controversy. Pacific Press Publishing Association. p598. (AD 1888).

Acts of the Apostles, p 564: “Through faith, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed... Prayer is heaven’s ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads... For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christ-like temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised we may ask; and the promise is, ‘Ye shall receive’”.

Bible doctrines can be placed into two categories. One category is the knowledge of God and salvation. The other category is knowledge of certain doctrines to enable us to avoid deception by satanic agencies. The table below is a suggestion with some important doctrines in each category.

<i>Knowledge of God and salvation</i>	<i>Knowledge to avoid deception</i>
The gospel	Rebellion and activity of Satan
The resurrection	Spiritualism
Teachings of Christ	State of the dead
High priestly ministry of Christ	The second advent of Christ
Heavenly sanctuary	The three angels messages (Rev 14:6-12)
Living by the Spirit of God	The antichrist
The law of God	The mark of the beast
Creation	Biblical talking in tongues

Conclusion.

1. A living Faith is believing and doing what God has told you.
2. A dead Faith is only believing what God has told you but not doing it.
3. Satan's counterfeit of faith is believing and doing what Satan wants you to think that God has told you.
4. Those people who say that doctrine is not important are agents of Satan

In living a life of faith it's important that we:

1. Know as much of the truth as we can and do what God tells us.
2. Pray to God daily in the name of Jesus for the indwelling Holy Spirit
3. Flee from temptation
4. Exercise our talents for the glory of God.

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