

Increasing faith

March 3, 2013

I. Review:

A. Faith comes from understanding the gospel

1. The gospel is the good news of God's promised blessing; the gospel is based on promise.
2. We are blessed because Jesus redeemed us from the curse.
3. The principle of reversal – Jesus became like us, lived a perfect life, and bore the penalty for sin on the cross, so that mankind can receive all of His riches and blessings both in this life and the one to come.

B. Lessons of faith righteousness

1. God expects mankind to respond in faith to the gospel (Heb 4:1-6).
2. Abraham responded to the gospel (Gal 3:6-9).
3. We need to study the Old Testament to understand principles of faith (Rom 10:16-17).

C. Definitions of Faith

1. Three Greek words

Pistis; primarily a firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing.

Pisteuo; to believe, to be persuaded, to place your confidence in, to trust

Pistos; In the active sense, it means trusting or believing

2. The Bible definition – Heb 11:1

Heb 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

a. Faith operates in the "now."

b. Faith is Assurance of things hoped for

Hupostasis = a standing under (literal meaning)

It means that which stands, or is set under a foundation. It is the quality of confidence which leads one to stand or endure under anything.

c. Faith is the Conviction of things not seen.

Elegchus = a proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested.

"that by which invisible things are proved and we are convinced of their reality." (Thayer)

3. The dictionary defines faith as a "trust, firm persuasion, assurance, firm conviction, confidence in another and another's word."

4. Charles Finney put it this way: Faith is "a receiving of Christ for just what He is represented to be in His Gospel, and an unqualified surrender of the will, and of the whole being to Him."

5. R. A. Torrey states, "To believe God is to rely upon or have unhesitating assurance of the truth of God's testimony, even though it is unsupported by any other evidence, and to rely upon or have unfaltering assurance of the fulfillment of His promises, even though everything seen seems against fulfillment."

II. Levels of Faith:

A. Our faith is to grow and increase.

Rom 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

2 Cor 10:15 ...as your faith grows, ...

B. There are 10 levels of faith listed in the Scriptures:

1. Weak faith – the word means "to be feeble and without strength, powerless, needy, or sick."

This is the beginning level of faith.

Rom 4:19 Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;

Rom 14:1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

2. Lacking faith – Paul prayed for the Thessalonians that what was lacking in their faith might be provided for them. The Greek word points towards a deficiency of resources; poverty, lack, or destitution

1 Thes 3:10 ...and may complete what is lacking in your faith...

3. Little faith – this word carries the meaning of "trusting too little." We have moved from infancy, but if we still struggle at times with doubt, we are at this level of little faith.

Mat 16:8 "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?"

Mat 14:31 "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

4. Seed faith – at this level, faith can now produce something. The word used here for seed refers to grain; such as a seed of wheat or corn. This seed is powerful and holds the potential of a full-grown plant or tree.

Mat 17:19-20 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" 20 And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

5. Increasing faith – we now enter the level of faith where growth is evident. This word literally means to "cause to grow or to increase," and it is used of plants, infants, multitudes of people, or of personal Christian growth.

2 Cor 10:15 not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, (NKJV)

6. Growing faith – Paul commended the Thessalonians for their growing faith. He uses a word in the Greek language that means to "grow beyond measure." It is the same word as level five, but with the Greek prefix huper. In the English language we would use the words super, extra, or special for the Greek word "huper."

2 Thess 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;

7. Rich faith – an incredibly descriptive word meaning, "abounding in resources, abundantly supplied, or abounding in virtues and possessions."

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith

8. Strong faith – Abraham had this kind of faith. The word means to be "endued with strength." At this level we are growing in faith that has endurance in its mix. This is where faith becomes invincible.

Rom 4:20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he (Abraham) did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,

9. Great faith – there are only two people in the Scriptures who were commended for great faith. They were both foreigners to the nation of Israel, one a Roman centurion and the other a Syro-Phoenician woman. They both impressed Jesus with their resilient faith on behalf of another. Great faith is usually mobilized on the behalf of others.

There are two definitions of great faith.

The Greek word used in reference to the Roman centurion described faith of "great quantity."

Luke 7:9 "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith."

Mat 8:10 "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.

In regards to the amazing woman whose daughter was delivered from a demon, a much stronger Greek word is transliterated, mega, meaning "greatest in intensity, extent, stature, rank, authority, and power; of great importance or excellence"

Mat 15:28 Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

10. Perfect faith – the apostle James describes perfect faith as belonging to one who is a doer of the word and exercises faith to change. It means to "complete something or to carry through thoroughly; to bring to an end; accomplish and fulfill." It is not enough to just confess faith. The definite test is the doing and performing of it, demonstrating faith in real-life situations. This is faith that is tested, perfected, and matured. This is our ultimate goal.

James 2:22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

James 2:21-24 example of Abraham:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

James 2:25-26 example of Rahab:

25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

C. Conclusion:

We can grow from weak faith to strong faith, from little faith to great faith, from lacking faith to rich faith, and from seed faith to perfect faith in the process of fulfilling the incredible destiny that the Lord has planned for our lives.