

HOW TO GROW IN FAITH

Intro

- a. Man of power of the hour after 30 years.
- b. What is faith? We are saved by faith, walk by faith, live by faith.
Therefore supremely important to find out what it is.

Read Romans 4: 1-5; 16-22

TRUE OR FALSE

1. Faith, in and of itself, is an important virtue that deserves great reward.
2. Faith is believing something without evidence.
3. Faith is the basis of our salvation, the reason why God accepts us.
4. Faith is a spiritual force we manipulate to produce whatever we need.
5. Faith is a spiritual experience to help us feel better about ourselves.

Definition: Faith is trusting God to keep his promises. See verse v.21

Does not mean believe without evidence.

1. Faith: Both simple and profound. Child vs adult.
2. If God didn't want us to understand it deeper, we would not have these chapters. Heb.11, James 2

Faith, by itself, has no inherent value, possesses no merit, is not a good work and deserves no reward.

Compare 4:1-5 w/ V.16

1. Works deserve reward/ Grace is undeserved favor/Therefore works is not the appropriate vehicle for righteousness.
2. Something needed which deserves no reward in and of itself. V. 16.
3. If it were a good work, it would have to be rejected on the same grounds that works are rejected.

FAITH IS RATIONAL: NOT believing something without evidence. V.21 "God is able."= Knowledge of God.

Bad definitions here.

1. Faith as defined by Encarta Dictionary: "belief in, devotion to, or trust in somebody or something, especially without logical proof."
2. Skeptics Definition – "to assume something **true** without any evidence and/or in the face of evidence to the contrary."

Creation and Conscience is adequate evidence to show his existence and attributes. Those attributes of eternal power and deity are adequate grounds for trusting him.

Atheism and skepticism in general is the most morally and intellectually dishonest stance anybody could take.

Like an empty box: Content is the value. Morally neutral.

FAITH IS BASED ON A PROMISE FROM GOD

"Faith is trusting God to keep his promises."

Exegete 16-22

1. V. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God,
2. Key= PROMISE
 - a. Hearing from God via Word
 - b. Principle embodied
 - c. Spirit draws analogy with our circumstances or persons
 - i. Not reading into it what is not intended. = Abusing, not using, God's word.

FAITH IS DIFFERENT FROM HOPE

Hell would be tolerable.

Abraham HOPED to have a son. Didn't seem possible.

Hope is a vague expectation that good things might happen in the future.

Businessman, "I have faith God will prosper...etc." What promise?

Pattern of growth:

PROMISE

PROVING

POSSESSION

FAITH ITSELF IS NOT OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

No 4= Faith is not the basis of our salvation. The righteousness of Christ is. Faith is the means by which we receive him.

ROBE ILLUSTRATION

Misunderstanding: *Abraham believed God and this was credited to him as righteousness.*

Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. I Cor. 1:30

In Chapter 3 Paul is saying faith is the means by which the righteousness of Christ is communicated. In Chapter four he is explaining why works is not an appropriate means. So he uses a short cut language here.

See 3:22- *This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

FAITH IS ACTIVE NOT PASSIVE

Some people phlegmatic. – Can't stand them.
V. 20 Gave glory to God

Social activism- some Christians called to it. "Just pray and sit back."
2Chron.7:14 *if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*
Result: A mess.

Rom. 10:17- Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

Does not mean if you read the Bible a lot your faith will grow. (Maybe so. But that is not what this verse means. It means Obedience to what God tells you to do will cause your faith to grow. But knowing what God wants you to do is based on what he says in his word.

FAITH IS NOT A MYSTICAL SPIRITUAL FORCE TO MANIPULATE TO GET WHAT WE WANT

Kenneth Copeland: *Faith is a powerful force. It is a tangible force. It is a conductive force.*

Copeland: *Faith has the ability to effect natural substance.*

Charles Capps: *Faith is the substance that God used to create the universe, and he transported that Faith with His words... Faith is a spiritual force.*

THIS IS OCCULT MIND SCIENCE. IT IS GNOSTIC PAGANISM, NOT CHRISTIANITY and those who teach such nonsense are not ministers of Christ.

Beware of whiskey in milk bottles= Bible TERMINOLOGY

GOD IS NOT LIMITED TO YOUR FAITH. **SERGIO**

Eph. 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

NOT A RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OR MYSTICAL FEELING MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOURSELF.

See Romans 3 – If faith makes you feel good about yourself, then it is not faith you have. It is self-centeredness and pride. Genuine faith focuses on Christ, not self.

SUMMARY:

1. Faith is trusting God to keep his promises.
 - a. We get promises from God via his word
 - b. The Holy Spirit leads us to these promises and shows us the analogy between the principle in his word and our situation and shows us what we can expect if we trust God. External and internal- the evidence part and the experience part.
2. The promises of God turn hope into faith.
3. Faith is a relationship concept, based on evidence and reason, because the evidence for God's existence and attributes is adequate and it makes sense to trust him.
4. Faith is active, not passive.
5. Faith is not a mystical spiritual force. Christ is the power.

EXAM

1. Is faith, in and of itself, is an important virtue that deserves great reward? No. Christ in and of himself and who is in us by faith, is all the virtue we need and he deserves great reward.
2. Is faith is believing something without evidence? No. It is based on concrete evidence about God and his sovereign power to keep his promises. It is the end product of a pattern of logic which stems inescapably from the data about Him.
3. Is faith is the basis of our salvation, the reason why God accepts us? No. Christ himself, in all his righteousness, is the basis and faith is the means by which we receive him.
4. Is faith is a spiritual force or law we can manipulate to produce whatever we need? No. Christ is the spiritual power given to us and he can't be manipulated.

5. Is faith is a spiritual experience to help us feel better about ourselves?
No. It may be a spiritual experience but it will make you feel worse about yourself and better about Christ.