



The Lion of Judah



“Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”

(Revelation 5:5)

GROWING IN FAITH

Introduction

Many Christians believe that you **either have faith or you don't**. However, the Bible is very clear that we can have **varying amounts** of faith -- from **none** to being **“full of faith and the Holy Spirit”** as Scripture says about the great martyr **Stephen**:

- Some Biblical citations that show faith is variable are:
 - ⇒ In **Luke 17:5** the disciples asked Jesus -- *“Lord, **increase our faith**”*
 - ⇒ In **1Th 3:10** the Apostle Paul wrote that he was, *“praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is **lacking** in your faith.”*
 - ⇒ And in **2Thess 1:3** Paul further stated, *“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because **your faith grows exceedingly**,*

So, an important objective of every Christian should be to **grow in faith** -- but **how?** We'll do so by establishing a **Biblical perspective** on these questions in three steps:

1. First, we need to understand **what faith is**
2. Second, we must know **how to acquire it** in the first place
3. Finally, we'll learn how -- and why -- to **grow in faith**

1. What is it?

Interestingly, I found that the **word faith** appears only **twice** in the OT NKJ translation (**once** in KJ) -- while it is used **243 times** in the NT -- something's going on here!

- In fact, there was **no Hebrew word** that translated directly into “faith” -- everything was based on obeying the **Law** (i.e. a **rules-based** instead of a **faith-based** theology)
- The concept in the OT is one of **faithfulness** or “emunah (em-oo-naw’) which literally means **firmness, stability, steadiness** -- as in:
 - ⇒ **1Sam 26:23**: *May the LORD repay every man for his righteousness and his **faithfulness***
 - **righteousness** in Hebrew is synonymous with **faithfulness**
 - Most often, the OT speaks of the **faithfulness** of the Lord, as in:
 - ⇒ **Deu 7:9**: *Know that the LORD your God, He is God, **the faithful God** who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments*
 - ⇒ **Psalm 119:90** -- *Your **faithfulness endures** to all generations;*
- In the OT, the concept was one of **being faithful to** something, namely the **Covenant or Law** -- those who kept the God's laws were deemed faithful -- and, of course, **God was** -- and is -- **forever faithful** to His **Covenant**

However, in the NT, “**faith**” is a word -- and a principle -- more along the lines of *having faith in* something, namely **Jesus Christ**

- This corresponds to the primary difference between the OT and NT -- i.e., in the OT people lived **under the law**, whereas in the NT we **live** -- and are **saved** -- through **God’s grace** as demonstrated in the **sacrifice of His Son** for our sins
 - ⇒ **Galatians 3:23-26** -- *But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. [i.e. made right with God]. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*
- In the OT, **faithfulness** was an **external** concept -- but in the NT it is an **internal reality** -- faith literally **becomes alive** in us -- and this **transition** is best seen in the Book of **Habakkuk** where the prophet looks forward to the NT
 - ⇒ **Hab 2:4** -- *For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.*

The NT word **faith** comes from the Greek word “*pis’-tis*” which means **conviction of a religious truth** or, more specifically, **reliance upon Christ for truth and salvation**

- **Literally** it means to be **persuaded** of something as in the Apostle Paul’s **proclamation** in:
 - ⇒ **Romans 8:38** -- *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
 - ⇒ **Martin Luther** defined faith this way -- “Faith is living a **well-founded confidence** in the **grace of God**, so perfectly certain that it would **die a thousand times** rather than **surrender its conviction**.”
 - Faith is more than mere **intellectual agreement** -- it is believing with the **heart and soul**

The **primary meaning of faith** is seen in its relationship to the **invisible God**

- ⇒ **Hebrews 11:1** -- *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*
 - Thus **faith is not found** in the things **of the world** but rather in the things of the **spiritual realm**

Thus, faith is:

1. A **firm conviction** producing a full **acknowledgment** of God’s revelation or truth -- and it is **not** reliance on our **mental capacity** to figure things out
 - ⇒ **1Cor 2:5** -- *that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God*
2. A personal **surrender** to Christ
 - ⇒ **Romans 12:1** -- *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*
 - ⇒ When the great missionary **John Patton** was translating the Bible for a South Seas island tribe, he discovered that they had **no word for faith**. One day a native who had been running hard came into the missionary's house, flopped himself in a large chair and said, "It's good to rest my **whole weight** on this chair."
 - “That’s it,” said Patton. "I'll translate **faith** as 'resting one's **whole weight on God**.'"
 - And that’s what **full faith** leads to -- resting entirely in the arms of our Lord and Savior

3. Faith results in **conduct** that is **consistent** with such a **surrender** to Christ

⇒ **2Cor 5:7** -- *For we walk by **faith**, not by sight.*

⇒ And if we are walking by faith, then our **conduct and deeds will reflect our faith** because... "**faith without works is dead..... according to James 2:20**

- **Billy Graham said-- "Faith and works are like inhaling and exhaling. Faith is taking the Gospel in; works is letting the Gospel out**
- Or as **Paul Harvey** said, "if you **don't live it, you don't believe it**"

2. Why should we want more of it?

Since we must be **persuaded** to have more faith, we need to know what the **benefits** are:

⇒ **Proverbs 28:20** -- *A **faithful man** will abound with **blessings**, But he who **hastens to be rich** will not go **unpunished**.*

⇒ **Lamentations 3:22-23** -- *Through the Lord's **mercies we are not consumed**, Because His **compassions fail not**. They are new every morning; Great is **Your faithfulness**.*

- And **thank God** for that, because **without His mercy** this world would have long ago been **destroyed**

The **first appearance** of the word **faith** in the NT is actually an **admonishment** by Jesus over a lack of faith as evidenced by worry

⇒ **Matthew 6:30** -- *"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, **O ye of little faith**? Therefore **do not worry**, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*

- **Worry is a symptom of less than full faith -- but full faith yields freedom from worry!!**

⇒ **George Muller** -- *"The **beginning of anxiety** is the end of faith and the **beginning of true faith** is the **end of anxiety***

Full faith also leads to **miraculous healings** -- as when the woman with the **12-year flow of blood** fought through the crowd to touch the **hem** of Christ's **robe**

⇒ **Matthew 9:22** -- *Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; **your faith has made you well**."*

- **miracles happen through faith!**

Even a **little faith goes a long way** -- When the disciples asked why they had been **unable to cast out demons**, Jesus answered:

⇒ **Matthew 17:20** -- *"Because of your **unbelief**; 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**.*

- We can have an **impact** in the world around us **through our faith** -- that's how **miracles happen** -- though it is **not we** who are doing it **but God** -- to Him be the glory & honor & praise

Jesus **re-emphasized** this point when He **rebuked the fig tree** for having **no fruit** and it **withered** away. When the **disciples** asked how did it wither away so quickly, Jesus answered:

⇒ **Matthew 21:21** -- *"Assuredly, I say to you, **if you have faith and do not doubt**, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but ... whatever things you ask in prayer, **believing, you will receive**."*

And when Jesus **calmed the great windstorm** and the disciples were **amazed**, He told them:

⇒ **Mark 4:40** -- "*Why are you so **fearful**? How is it that you have **no faith**?*"

- Imagine **being with Jesus** day after day, miracle after miracle, and still **not being full of faith** -- that's human nature for you

We are also **justified, sanctified, purified** and **saved** by **faith**

⇒ **Acts 26:18** -- *sanctified by faith in Me.*

⇒ **Acts 15:9** -- *purifying their hearts by faith*

⇒ **Romans 3:28** -- *a man is justified by faith*

⇒ Jesus said to the woman who **anointed His feet** with expensive oil -- "*Your **faith** has saved you* -- **Luke 7:50**

- Paul **summarizes** all these benefits of faith in **Romans 5:1-2** --

⇒ *Therefore, having been **justified** by faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have **access by faith** into this **grace** in which we stand, and **rejoice in hope** of the glory of God.*

It is **by faith** that Christ comes **alive** within us:

⇒ **Ephesians 3:17** -- *...that Christ may **dwell** in your hearts **through faith***

Faith also **binds us together** in **unity** into the **Church**, the **Body of Christ** until, as Paul writes in:

⇒ **Ephesians 4:13** -- *we all come to the **unity of the faith** and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the **measure** of the stature of the **fullness of Christ**; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may **grow up** in all things into Him who is the **head**; Christ Jesus;*

Faith is also an **important component** of the **armor** of God:

⇒ **Ephesians 6:16** -- *above all, taking the **shield of faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the **wicked one**.*

But **most importantly** of all, **without faith** we **cannot** please God

⇒ **Hebrews 11:6** -- *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***

Faith certainly has a lot of **benefits** so we should really desire to have more of it -- but how we **get more faith**?

3. How do I get it?

Very easily -- it is a **gift** available to **everyone** simply for the **asking**

- We get the **first portion** of it **when we are saved** -- i.e. **saving faith**

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

This **gift**, however, is only the **start** -- it is as if God has planted the **seed of faith** in our hearts -- then it is up to us to **nurture** and **grow** it

⇒ **Romans 12:3** -- *God has dealt to each one a **measure of faith**.*

Faith is both a **fruit of the spirit** as well as a **spiritual gift**

⇒ **1Corinthians 12:1** *But the **manifestation of the Spirit** is given to **each one** for the profit of all: ⁸for to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, to another the **word of knowledge** through the same Spirit, ⁹to another **faith** by the same Spirit...*

⇒ **Galatians 5:22-23** – *But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, **faith**, ²³Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

In order to **grow** the seed of faith into a **full portion**, we must **grow in holiness** and **closeness to God** in order to provide the **right environment** in which **full faith can exist**

⇒ **Romans 12:6** -- *Having then **gifts differing** according to the **grace** that is given to us, **let us use them.... in proportion to our faith***

- the **greater our faith**, the more **abundantly** we are **endued** with the **gifts of the Spirit**

Where do we find **more faith**? **Look to Jesus** we are told in the Scriptures which **refer to Jesus** as:

⇒ *the **author and finisher** of our **faith**. **Hebrews 12:2***

As our **faith grows**, we become of **more use** to God, as the Apostle **Paul elaborated** in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians, **5:7**

⇒ *having hope, that as your **faith is increased**, we shall be greatly **enlarged***

Just as the Corinthians needed to **increase their faith**, so do we -- but **how**?

4. How do I grow it?

The primary principle is one of **unlearning**, for it is the **mind** which gets in the **way of faith**

- **Reason** is of the natural world -- the world that **Satan** has turned into one of **suffering and death**

⇒ **Proverbs 14:12** -- *There is a way that **seems right** to a man, But its **end** is the way of **death**.*

- **Faith** is of the **spiritual realm** -- and often **doesn't make sense** in the natural world -- which is just the way Satan wants it to be

⇒ **2Tim 3:15** -- we must become*wise for salvation through faith*

- That's why the way of **faith** is a **mystery** to us

⇒ **1Tim 3:9** – *holding the **mystery of the faith** with a **pure conscience**.*

- **Purity** is a **precondition** for having a **full portion** of faith

The **mysteries** of the **spiritual realm** are only understood **through the Spirit** within us --

- they are mere **foolishness** to the natural mind which **cannot comprehend** the larger picture that exists **outside** the dimensions of **space and time**

⇒ **1Cor 2:14** -- *But the **natural man** does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are **foolishness** to him; nor can he know them, because they are **spiritually discerned**.*

It is by **faith** that we **understand** what we **cannot see**

⇒ **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**.*

⇒ **Joseph Roy** -- “A true Christian is a sign of **contradiction** -- He or she is a person who **believes** the unbelievable, **bears** the unbearable, **forgives** the unforgivable, **loves** the unlovable, becomes **weak** to be strong, and **finds love** by giving it away.”

- No, it **doesn't make sense** does it -- until one **experiences** it and sees how **real** and **wondrously** it works!

That's why the Apostle Paul **warns** us in **1Tim 1:12** -- not to:

⇒ *give heed to fables and endless genealogies [Mormons??], which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.*

We must **peel away the layers** of worldliness and come to **childlike faith**

- the **more childlike** we approach God, the **more faith** we have
- ⇒ **Matthew 18:3** -- *Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*
- ⇒ **Oswald Chambers** – “**Faith** is the **inborn** capacity to **see God** behind everything, the **wonder** that keeps you an **eternal child**”

Our faith must also be **nurtured** spiritually, just as we **feed** and take care of our **physical** bodies

- In the **spiritual** realm, our **food** is the **word of God**
- ⇒ **Luke 8:11** – from the parable of the sower -- *The seed is the word of God.*
- ⇒ **Romans 10:17** -- *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*
- And we **water the seed** with the **living water** that we receive through the **Holy Spirit**
- ⇒ in **John 4:14** -- Jesus says -- “*the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.*”

But don't think you have to reach your **full potential of faith right away** -- that can be a **daunting prospect** that may **prevent** people from even **starting** down that path

- **Growing in faith** is a **process**, so **start small** and work from there:
- ⇒ **Luke 16:10** -- *He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much;*

We must **not only** seek to **grow** it, but we have to also look out for **losing** some of it -- or **all** of it

⇒ **1Tim 1:5-6** -- *from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.*

- This is a **significant danger** because it generally happens when we're **not paying attention spiritually**, getting too **caught up** in world things -- even the so-called “**good**” things
- ⇒ **1Tim 6:10** -- *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

It is especially hard to “**keep the faith**” when **difficulties** come our way and **times are tough**

- ⇒ A **weak faith** is **further weakened** by catastrophes whereas a **strong faith** is **strengthened** by them
- What must we do when we're **under attack** by the **slings and arrows** of this world, is to **cling hard** to our **faith** -- or else it will begin to **erode away**
- ⇒ **1Cor 16:13** -- *Stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong*

- And it is **not just the enemy** who tests our faith with trials -- **God does too**. Why?

⇒ **James 1:3** *knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*

⇒ **1Peter 1:7** -- *the genuineness of your faith.... is tested by fire*

- So don't be **surprised**, for you **will** be tested

In **answer** to the disciples' request to **increase their faith**, Jesus responded with **another reference** to the **mustard seed**

⇒ **Luke 17:6** -- *"If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.*

⇒ And then he concluded in **v:10** -- *"So likewise you, when you have **done all those things** which you are **commanded**, say, 'We are **unprofitable servants**. We have **done** what was our **duty** to do.'"*

- In other words, **doing things for God** is our **duty** and does **not produce faith** but rather is a **product of faith**.

To **grow in faith**, you must **hunger and thirst** for the **Spirit** to **fill you** to **overflowing**

⇒ **Matthew 5:6** -- *Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst** for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*

- No **ands, ifs or buts** -- they **shall** be filled -- what a **promise!**

We are told that in the **end times** -- which we are well into -- that more and more people will **lose their faith**

⇒ **1Tim 4:1** -- *Now the **Spirit** expressly says that in **latter times** some will **depart from the faith**, giving heed to **deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons**,*

The **more faith** we have, the **less** of the **old worldly you** lives on

- We want to become as the Apostle Paul, living **completely** by faith

⇒ **Galatians 2:20** -- *"I have been **crucified with Christ**; it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by **faith** in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

We must **hold on to our faith** at all times because our appointed time might come at any moment --

⇒ We must follow the advice of **1Tim 6:12** -- *Fight the good **fight of faith**, lay hold on **eternal life**,*

- And believe me, **it is a fight**, for this is where the **spiritual warfare** between God and Satan is fought -- **within every heart and soul** of every believer

Conclusion

When **Jesus** was **baptized** in the river by **John the Baptist** the **Holy Spirit** descended upon him -- and **remained** upon Him -- that's the key word, **remained**

⇒ **John 1:32** -- *And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the **Spirit** descending from heaven like a dove, and He **remained** upon Him.*

- Through Jesus' **conquering of life** in the natural world, He has **enabled** the Holy Spirit to **remain** here for **each and every one of us**

⇒ in **Matthew 28:20** Jesus says -- *I am with you always, even to the **end of the age**.*

The truly great thing is that we **may stray** from the faith -- **far from the faith** -- many, **many steps** away -- but it is always just **one step back** through **repentance** and **Godly sorrow**, for

⇒ **2Tim 2:13** -- *If we are **faithless**, He remains **faithful** -- He cannot deny Himself*

- God is the **same today** as He was **yesterday** and will be **tomorrow**

We must always remember, that **Satan can only kill** the things of this world, but **not our Spirit** which comes from God

⇒ **1John 5:4** -- *For whatever is **born of God** overcomes the world. And this is the **victory** that has overcome the world; **our faith**.*

Jesus Himself tells us in **Revelation 2:10**

⇒ *Be **faithful until death** and I will give you the **crown of life***

When all is said and done, I want as **much faith as possible** so that the Lord can say of me:

⇒ ***Well done my good and faithful servant.*** Matthew 25:21

Prayer for Increased Faith

- Thank **God** for the **seed** of faith
- Thank **Jesus** for the **living water** to sprout the seed
- Thank the **Holy Spirit** for **helping** us **nurture** and **grow** our faith
 1. Those who have **not yet accepted** this **gift**, simply open your hearts right now and **let Jesus in**
⇒ **Forsake** the sins of this world, **accept** Christ as your **savior** and the **Lord** of your life
 2. Those who have **strayed** or whose faith has **eroded** with the cares of this world
⇒ **Humble** yourselves and **repent** with **Godly sorrow** and He will be **faithful** to **resuscitate** and **refresh** your faith
 3. Those whose faith is **not yet filled** to overflowing, **cry out** to God from the **depths of your heart and soul** and **ask Him** to **fill you with His Spirit**
⇒ And then **listen carefully** to what He tells you to do, for it is **only** through your **trust and obedience** that your faith is **tested and increased**

There is **not a one of us** who doesn't fit into one of these **three categories**

- We can **never have enough** of God -- we can **always use a refreshing** of His Spirit
⇒ So **pray, and pray, and pray** until you have a "**full measure**" of **faith**