

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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FAITH EXEMPLIFIED

In regard to the meaning of the word *faith*, it has already been declared in these studies that it is the act of taking God at His word and responding accordingly. See Issue No. **SB105**. And while there are other applications of the word "faith" in Scripture, this is its most important usage and meaning. There can be no faith until God has made a declaration, and the declaration must be specifically in regard to the matter concerning which one is going to take Him at his word.

There are far too many who think that faith is a long lever that we can use to pry things out of God. It is believed that if a man can lay hold of that mysterious thing called "faith" that he can get God to bless with success every wild scheme and project that he sets out to accomplish. When they fail they usually whimper the childish excuse that they did not have faith enough, intimating that if they had worked up a little more faith they would have succeeded.

I think that one of the funniest things I ever saw was a short news reel of a man who claimed he was able to walk on water. All he needed he said was enough faith and he could do it. So, after spending a night in prayer and with the news camera recording it on film, he stepped off the dock and "kerplunk" he sank to the bottom of the lake. As they pulled him out, spitting, blowing, and coughing he was able to gasp out these memorable words: "I didn't have faith enough."

The facts are that it was not faith that he needed. What he needed was a word from God that told him to walk across the lake. If he had this, he could have walked across the Atlantic, if that had been what God told him to do. The faith that is spoken of so often today in religious circles is not the faith that is set forth and exemplified in the Bible. When Christians of all persuasions use the word "faith," they seldom if ever use

it in the Biblical sense. Furthermore, they want nothing to do with it unless they are sure they can get something out of it, and they steadfastly refuse to submit to the truth that the only ground of faith is what God has said.

When a thing is abstract in character it is often difficult to define and make it plain to others. In doing so we must give examples for clarification and as an aid to revealing the truth. This the Bible has done over and over as it exemplifies faith in order to teach us what it is all about.

The first such example is seen in Adam. He had sinned and he knew that in God's sight he was naked, but his attempts to clothe himself were of no avail (Gen. 3 :7). He still felt his nakedness and confessed it (Gen. 3:10). However, there came to him a message of hope and promise from God. This spoke of One who would be the seed (offspring) of the woman. Since there was only one woman in existence, the truth was quite clear. So Adam laid hold of this faint bit of truth, took God at His word and responded in harmony with it. He gave his wife the name "Eve," because he believed on the basis of what God had said that she was the mother of all living (Gen. 3:20). This was a fitting response to the word that God had spoken, and it was a complete act of faith. It brought joy to God, and He rewarded it by clothing Adam and Eve with "coats of skins," giving them divinely provided garments procured by the shedding of blood. Thus the first sinners were "saved by faith" and made fit for Gods presence. The importance of this is established in the great declaration: "**And without the shedding of blood there is no remission**" (Heb. 9:22).

The next great example of faith is seen in Abel. Even though born of fallen parents, he and his brother Cain both possessed "**the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world**" (John 1 :9). In Hebrews 11:4 we learn that it was: "**By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh.**" This declaration, when considered in the light of Romans 10: 17 which tells us that, "Faith comes by hearing," forces upon us the logical conclusion that Abel was acting upon a direct revelation from God.

We can further conclude that Cain and Abel together had inquired of God asking what they could render to Him for all His benefits (Psa. 116:12), and were informed by Him that He would receive from them a blood sacrifice. Abel took God at his word and responded accordingly, and thus obtained witness that he was righteous. His brother Cain ignored what God had said, made an offering which he felt was just as good and far more aesthetically attractive, and his offering was rejected. His offering had no connection with anything God had said. All works of faith must flow out of some word that God has spoken. From this we learn that there is such a thing as a

sinner placing the death of another between himself and the consequence of his sin. Christ is our substitute. He died for our sins in harmony with the Scripture.

The faith of Enoch is a little more difficult to understand when we seek to connect it with acting upon a revelation from God. Nevertheless, true faith was there, it was a reality in his life, and it resulted in his translation so that he would not experience death. Even before his translation there was evidence that he pleased God (Heb. 11:5). And out of this fact comes the important revelation to which all should give due heed, that: **"Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him"** (Heb. 11 :6).

Therefore, it is evident that Enoch had faith, and this fact causes us to desire to know how this came about, since faith comes by hearing. One clue is found in his history. In Gen. 5:21,22 we learn that at the age of 65 Enoch became the father of a boy, to whom he gave the name of Methuselah, and from this point forward he walked with God for 300 years. At the age of 365, he was removed from the earth and did not see death.

The second and conclusive clue to his faith is found in the name given to his son. This is formed of the Hebrew elements, which we can best express in English as being *meth-u-SHLCH*, which means "die-will-send," or, more fully, "When he is dead it will be sent." The reference is to the flood, the deluge that came in the days of his grandson Noah.

The divine revelation that God gave Enoch concerning the flood to come, led him to memorialize this revelation in the name he gave to his son, and the contemplation of this divine visitation resulted in his walking with God for the rest of his days upon earth. The chronology seems to indicate that Methuselah died in the year of the flood. The deluge followed his death. He had taken God at His word and responded accordingly.

The faith of Noah is much easier to understand. He had received direct communication from God concerning the flood that was to come, and had also been given instructions concerning the building of an ark that would carry him through it to safety. In the record of the heroes of faith we are told: **"By faith Noah, being warned (*krematizo*, informed or apprised) of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir to the righteousness which is by faith"** (Heb. 11 :7). This was indeed a simple example of faith. Noah took God at His word and responded accordingly. All the faith he needed was that like a grain of mustard seed. It was easy to have this faith when God had spoken directly to him.

We now come to the greatest exemplification of faith set forth in the Bible—a faith that was possible because God had spoken. When God told Abraham to get out of his country, separate himself from all his kinsmen, even from his father's house, and go to a land that He would show him (Gen. 12:1), he went out, without knowledge of where he was going (Heb. 11:8). However, when he made his initial move, we see his father Terah leading the procession, and with them Lot, a grandson of Terah and nephew of Abraham.

These men knew that God had spoken to Abraham, for he certainly would have told them of the divine message in order to explain the radical move he was making. But neither Terah nor Lot had any word from God that told them to leave the land of Ur, so their acts were not acts of faith. They were going along hoping to get in on a good thing, which would have been right, unless they professed to be making the move in relationship to God and at His command. All acts done in relationship to God must be acts of faith, based on God's Word, for if they are not, then they are sin, no matter how good or proper they may appear to be. (See Rom. 14:23). We should all be careful about claiming some act of ours to be an act of faith unless we have some word from God concerning it. Such an act could be sin in His sight, even though a good and great work in the judgment of men.

It was by faith that Abraham made his home for a time in a land that had been promised to him, living as if in a foreign country. He had the faith to wait on God, something that his descendants are somewhat unwilling to do today. And, most important of all, it was by faith that he, when put to the test, offered up Isaac, God taking his willingness to do so for the actual deed (Heb. 11: 17). This act would have been the most grievous sin, even the very thought of it, if God had not said: "**Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt offering**" (Gen. 22:2). Therefore, when we read in James 2:21,22 that Abraham was "**justified by works,**" let us remember that the work it is referring to was that of taking God at His word and responding accordingly. There is no conflict between Paul and James.

If we should pray, "Lord increase our faith," and our request be sincere, we would in reality be asking for greater ability to take God at His word and respond accordingly. And if God saw fit to answer this prayer, He would lead us into His word and generate us to see truth on almost every page which we could either take or leave alone. A multitude of direct statements would challenge the honesty and sincerity of our appeal for greater faith.

For example we would read that "**God made man of the dust of the earth.**" This being a direct word from God as to man's origin, can we take Him at His word and

think accordingly, or will we be thrown into a seizure of doubt the next time we come upon an article in *Reader's Digest* that claims to present absolute evidence of man's evolutionary origin. Can we maintain our faith in spite of the almost daily assaults that are made upon it, some which are so subtle that we fail to recognize them. Yet we yield to them and think accordingly.

What happens when you read the words of Christ that: "**This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent**" (John 6:29). Can you take Him at His word and think and do accordingly?

End - Issue No. SB109