

Chapter 6 - Walking by Faith - Part II

6.1 Introduction - Recap of Part I

Let me remind you of our key verse for this section:

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

We have seen that faith is having complete trust in God. We looked at various attributes of God, and when we realize who God is and what He is, it seems foolish not to trust Him. Faith is that which always glorifies God. Perhaps a good way to explain this is to look at the opposite of faith, which is unbelief. One can understand that there is nothing so insulting to God as not to believe Him. If unbelief insults God, then believing Him surely pleases Him; faith surely glorifies Him - believing and trusting God simply and solely because He **is** God.

6.2 Faith in the Old Testament

We stated that the word *faith* occurs only rarely in the OT. But other words having a similar meaning are frequently used in the OT such as *believe*, *trust* and *hope*. Examining the use of these words in the OT will assist us in our understanding of the concept of faith.

- a. **Believe** When we have faith, we believe. While the word *believe*, like the word *faith*, is not found often in the OT, but one verse is of the utmost importance:
Gen 15:6 *And he (Abram) **believed** in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*

- b. **Trust** Throughout the OT, having faith in God is frequently described as trusting in the Lord.
Job 13:15 *Though He slay me, yet will I **trust** Him.*
Ps 34:8 *Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who **trusts** in Him!*
Prov 3:5 ***Trust** in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.*
Prov 29:25 *The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever **trusts** in the Lord shall be safe.*
Isa 26:3 *You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he **trusts** in You.*

- c. **Hope** Biblical hope should always be understood as overwhelming confidence.
Ps 147:11 *The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who **hope** in His mercy.*

Jer 17:7 *Blessed is the man who **trusts** in the Lord, and whose **hope** is the Lord.*

So faith involves belief, trust and hope. Believing is an intellectual process, involving the mind. Trusting is more of an emotional process, involving the heart. And hoping, particularly having a confident expectation of a future event, can be regarded as involving the soul.

When a certain lawyer asked Jesus the question, “*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” The answer given was to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself (Lk 10:25-28). Here we see the involvement of the mind, the heart and the soul. I think it is fair to say that to love God this deeply requires a genuine and deep faith in Him. So not surprisingly we see all these aspects of faith at work in this passage of Scripture.

6.3 The Strength of our Faith

We saw in Part I that Abraham’s faith was strong, that he *was strengthened in faith* (Rom 4:20). Jesus said that Peter had *little faith*, because he doubted and sank into the water (Matt 14:31). So there are obviously degrees of faith; some have strong faith, others have weak faith. Some have much faith; others have little faith. But even if our faith is weak, note that it is still faith, real faith. It is not unbelief. And irrespective of how much faith we have, our faith can be strengthened, as was Abraham’s. We all want to have more faith; like the apostles, we all want our faith to be increased.

Lk 17:5 *And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.”*

It is surely true that some degree of faith has been given to all of us by God. Some people find it easy to exercise their faith. Others are more prone to doubt. But no matter how much faith we have to start off with, there are things that we can do to strengthen our faith.

6.4 Strengthening our Faith

- a. **Focus on God** The first thing we need to do to strengthen our faith is to focus on God, and not on our circumstances or problems. We need to strengthen our understanding of who God is. As we described in Part I, one way of doing this is to focus prayerfully on God’s attributes. The verses of Scripture describing God’s attributes, given in Part I, will help us to focus on God, and realize who He is and what He can do.

- b. **Knowledge of God** The most important factor in faith is always our knowledge of God. This means thorough and deep knowledge of the Bible, and through it of God.

If you want to have strong faith, read your Bible. Go through it regularly from beginning to end. Concentrate on the revelation that God has given of Himself and of His character. Read the prophecies God has revealed, and see how His promises have been fulfilled, and are being fulfilled.

See God's hand at work as history unfolds. Read the stories of the great heroes of faith. That is the way to develop strong faith. It is generally a process and it normally takes time. Above all, it means having a personal knowledge of God; praying, spending time in His presence, waiting upon Him, abiding in Him. Note the inspiring words of Paul in this regard:

Phil 3:7-10 *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the **knowledge** of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may **gain** Christ and be found **in Him**, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through **faith** in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by **faith**; that I may **know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings***

How can reading the Bible increase our faith? Note the following passage:

1 Thess 2:13 *For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.*

As Paul points out, the Bible – the Word of God – **effectively works in you who believe**. And one of the things it accomplishes is to strengthen our faith.

- c. **Apply our Faith** The next thing we can do to strengthen our faith is to regularly **apply** the knowledge we have gained about God through studying the Bible. Jesus said, “If you **know** these things, blessed are you if you **do** them.” (Jn 13:17) This can surely be applied to faith. Note also the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matt 7:24-27 *“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, **and does them**, I will liken him to wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the wind blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, **and does not do them**, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the wind blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”*

Clearly, Jesus expects us to apply our knowledge of God's Word. A mere theoretical knowledge that never ventures out upon what it knows and believes will never be a strong faith. So in addition to our knowledge about God and of God, there must be the application of that knowledge. The disciples in the boat during the storm were terrified, and the boat was filling with water. But Jesus was asleep.

Lk 8:24f *And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was calm. But He said to them, "**Where is your faith?**"*

The disciples clearly had faith, but Jesus was disappointed that they weren't exercising their faith. You have faith, but where is it? Why do you not apply it to this very situation in which you find yourselves? The disciples were looking at the waves and the water instead of focusing on God. *But He said to them, "Where is your faith?"* So in addition to our knowledge of God there is the vital and important element of the application of what we know. It is when we are challenged, when we are facing difficulties, when we are facing the storms of life, that our faith needs to be applied. In times like this, instead of being terrified by the circumstances, we need to look to God, and all that He is and all that He does for us, and strengthen our faith. We need to live **above** the circumstances, not be **under the circumstances**.

In Mk 11:22, Jesus said to His disciples, "*Have faith in God.*" Hudson Taylor felt that a better translation would be "*Hold on to the faithfulness of God.*" And this is what we do when we exercise our faith – the focus is never on us and our faith, but rather on God and His faithfulness.

Heb 10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*

6.5 The Full Assurance of Faith

The NT uses the term **full assurance** at least three times – *full assurance of knowledge* (Col 2:2); *full assurance of hope* (Heb 6:11); and in Heb 10:22, *full of assurance of faith*.

Heb 10:22 *let us draw near with a true heart in **full assurance of faith** ...*

As we study God's Word, and grow in our knowledge of God, we become more and more assured that our trust in God is fully justified. We all need to strive for the *full assurance of faith*, so that we *can walk by faith, and not by sight*.