



# **Faith Principles**

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# FAITH PRINCIPLES

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## Faith is a Gift from God

### INTRODUCTION

It is essential that God's people learn to live by faith. The Scripture is explicit that without faith it is impossible to please God. Every approach we make to God and every action of our lives must be on the basis of faith. (Heb 11:6; Rom 14:23). There is no room for a spiritual life built on a foundation of human effort or good works. The just live by faith (Rom 1:17) and anything other than this is a return to bondage (Gal 5:1). It is faith, which gives us victory over the world. (1 John 5:4).

The Early Church faced great challenges in the area of faith and it is not surprising that this is still so. Satan knows that if God's people discover the tremendous power of faith in God, their lives and ministries will be revolutionised.

Hebrews 11:33 declares that the Old Testament saints "through faith obtained promises", and it is clear from John 14:14 and 15:7-8 that promise-obtainers glorify God. Many people are "prisoners of hope" (Zech 9:12) and have never learned to express true faith, and receive God's blessings.

Today much confusion exists regarding the exercise of faith. Many people get frustrated because they see little result from their attempts to believe God. This has resulted in a backlash of negativity in the Church, or the manifestation of cold and deliberate unbelief.

On the other hand, there is considerable false teaching on faith which has caused much presumption.

This series of studies on the Principles of Faith will seek to impart a tried and tested, and balanced perspective of this vital Christian attribute.

Faith is a gift from God, and in considering this basic aspect of faith there are a number of observations to be made.

### FAITH IS NOT NATURAL TO MAN

There are numerous things, which look like faith, and may be confused with it. There are substitutes for real faith, which are really humanistic. That is, they are man generated and do not need God in order to achieve their end. The Bible

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makes it clear that God gives faith to man (Rom 12: 3) and the fact that the unregenerate man does not have true faith is also emphasised by 2 Thessalonians 3:2, “all men have not faith”. Only the converted receive faith from God and anything else, regardless of how dynamic it may appear, is not the quality, which the Bible calls faith. Mind over matter, mental exercise, auto-suggestion, positive thinking, good feelings or other such techniques are not faith but pseudo-faith.

### VARIOUS KINDS OF FAITH

There are basically four types of faith.

1. Natural faith. Faith of a purely rational nature – based on experience and factual knowledge. Without it no farmer would plant seed (James 5:7). This faith is actually a process of logical reasoning.

It is this element which is generated by the natural man to accomplish many outstanding things – the soaring vision of the architect, the success and financial empires of the business tycoon, the discoveries of the inventor, the courage of the intrepid explorer, etc. This kind of faith is often confused with true faith because of its apparent achievement – including the ability to transform a weak and negative or unsuccessful person.

However the motive power of this type of faith is the mind and not the spirit. It is a product of the soul life of man and is common to the believer and unbeliever. The power of positive thinking is an ability the natural man can develop apart from God and is therefore not a spiritual quality.

It has no ability to transform the unregenerate nature of man, or provide a basis for fellowship with God. While it is not evil, and has a very necessary function to perform in our lives, it must never be allowed to become a substitute for true faith.

2. Spiritual faith. The second type of faith is often called “saving faith”. It is a gift of God and is imparted to the repentant sinner at the moment of conversion. (Eph 2:8-9). It is a supernatural ability to believe what natural faith cannot or will not believe. (1 Cor 1:18-24; Rom 1:16-22). It goes beyond the logical process of the mind to grasp and trust what cannot be perceived except by the spirit of man. This is the kind of faith, which the Christian lives by. This “ordinary” level of faith is imparted to every repentant sinner and is the foundation of our whole Christian life and true fellowship with God. (Rom 1:17; Heb 11:6). This kind of faith is allied to two other types of faith to make an unbreakable bond of supernatural ability. These two categories of faith are:

(a) faith – the fruit of the Spirit, and

(b) faith – the gift of the Spirit.

3. Faith – the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). This kind of faith can be more correctly understood as “faithfulness” (RSV) or “fidelity” (NEB). It is both the product of spiritual faith and the support of it. While it is possible to develop and use spiritual faith without faithfulness, it will inevitably be flawed. This kind of faith is expressed in character and conduct and is that part of spiritual faith which concentrates on the development of progressive sanctification in the believer.
4. Faith – the gift of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:9). This is a special impartation by the Holy Spirit of a supernatural ability to suspend or transcend natural laws. It impregnates the believer with ability to operate in the realm of special types of miracles. This kind of faith is occasional and is dependent on the initiative of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:11). It is really a supernatural amplification of the faculty of spiritual faith.

(In this Subject no. 2, on Spiritual Faith, will be our primary emphasis.)

## **HOW WE RECEIVE FAITH FROM GOD**

God gives us His faith to live by (Rom 1:17; 12:3) and this fantastic quality is imparted to us in the instant of conversion. Faith to be saved, like repentance, is a gift of God (Acts 11:18; Eph 2:8-9). Salvation is not the adoption of a concept or culture. It is the reception of a person, and not an intangible idea or feeling, e.g. Luke 19:9 – Jesus said to Zacchaeus, “This day is salvation come to your house”. However it was the person of the Saviour who had come.

Note John 1:12 and Galatians 4:19.

In the moment of conversion we avail ourselves of both a divinely imparted ability to repent and believe co-incidental with the decision to receive Jesus as the Lord of our life. In receiving Him we receive all that is in Him.

Colossians 2:10 (LB) says, “So you have everything when you have Christ”. Colossians 2:2 (LB) also says, “God’s secret plan now at last made known, is Christ Himself”. In Him live all the hidden and the mighty untapped treasures of wisdom and knowledge”.

Galatians 2:16 and 20 clearly shows us that the faith we are living by is not our self-generated positive attitude, but the very faith of Jesus Himself, and not merely our belief about Him. The very fact of receiving Christ incorporates His faith in us. Ephesians 1:3, Acts 3:16, 24:24, 26:18, and Galatians 3:7 all indicate this same wonderful truth. Note the comparison of 1 John 5:4 which states that faith is the victory which overcomes the world and John 16:33 in which Jesus said He had overcome it.

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Luke 18:8, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Ephesians 4:5, 1 Timothy 4:1, Galatians 5:10, Jude v3, 20, and Acts 14:27 all show that “faith” is the dynamic of Christian life and not merely adherence to a system of religion or code of beliefs.

2 Peter 1:1 shows us that this faith is imparted to us through the gift of salvation or the act of God, which makes us righteous.

Actually in this process of conversion we have received the spirit of faith. (2 Cor 4:13). Galatians 3:23 also shows us that faith “comes” to us and is not a natural part of our lives. NB. Romans 10:17 “Faith cometh ...”.

There are some very important aspects of this truth, which need to be clearly grasped in order for that divinely imparted faith to be effective.

1. When you were born again you received all the faith you will ever have. In other words you will never need more, or receive more, than you already have. The limitless ability of Jesus is at work within you. (Eph 3:17, 20).

While there may be special manifestations of the “Gift of Faith” for special purposes, your spiritual faith cannot be increased in quantity. Since you have Christ you have all that is in Him now.

2. The expressing of your faith will increase with experience and use. The more you use it, the stronger it becomes.
3. The search for faith is destructive because it is an expression of unbelief in what we have already received.
4. When we confess or acknowledge that we have the faith of God (Mark 11:22 margin) it is released and becomes active. (Philemon v6).
5. Faith is now a faculty of the re-born human spirit, which is united with the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 6:17. Note Acts 6:5; 2 Cor 4:13).

# Faith is a Function of the Redeemed Human Spirit

When people are born again, their spirit which was formerly dead to God (Eph 2:1) begins to function again, and its various faculties are restored to a correct operation, energised and directed by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 6:17, 20; John 3:6).

Note that the first part of 1 Corinthians 6 deals with spiritual authority. Then the subject changes to that of fornication. The emphasis of this chapter is that we must glorify God in our spirit, and live by faith instead of mixing human methods or motivations with our spiritual faculties. This is spiritual adultery. The redeemed have a totally new motivation and a new “modus operandi”. We do not work as the world does – manipulating, pulling strings, etc. We live by faith in Almighty God and are enabled to move mountains in His name and live beyond ourselves in the miraculous dimension, thus glorying God. (1 Cor 6:20; John 14:13; Heb 1:6).

## LIVING OUT OF OUR SPIRIT IN THE REALM OF FAITH

With many people “faith” is a hit or miss affair. Often when we “feel” it, nothing happens, and on other occasions when we “feel” nothing, God works mightily on our behalf. We can be confused wondering either what we did wrong or even what we did right. Without a correct understanding of the various parts of man’s nature we will not be able to exercise the faculty of faith consistently or effectively. Man is made up of 3 major parts – Spirit, Soul and Body.

BODY When this area of our life dominates, our faith is affected by the desires, feelings or needs of the flesh, and there is a concentration on circumstances, symptoms or visible effects. The body does not, and cannot live in the unseen and visionary realm of faith. If it does not see or feel the thing, then it cannot believe. (John 20:25). The body is motivated by the immediate and the temporal interpreted by its 5 senses.

SOUL The mind of man is not the source of faith – it is instead the area of logic, willpower or emotions. It is in this area that pseudo-faith is generated. The soul must be carefully controlled if the person is to truly walk by faith.

SPIRIT It is from this area that true faith is expressed. The redeemed spirit of man contains three primary parts and it is by the development and expression of these faculties of the spirit that the faith received as a Gift from God is released.

These faculties are: Fellowship, Intuition and Conscience.

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Fellowship Through a development of our love for God and the building up of the spiritual relationship there comes an increased confidence in God's ability. Just as love in the marriage union promotes trust and confidence in the other partner's willingness and ability to meet our needs, so our communion with God enables us to trust Him. Galatians 5:6 declares that "faith works by love". It is common to see new converts in the first flush of their new relationship with God so trusting and receiving so much, while more "established" believers seem to find it hard to receive blessings from God. Often times it is because the religious observances are maintained but not the closeness of a personal relationship with the Lord.

A worshipping and loving relationship with God will also bring an increased confidence in God's integrity.

Doubt is really casting a question on God's integrity, which is the strategy of Satan seen in Genesis 3:1 – "Hath God said?"

God is sovereign. He is totally in control of all things and a total confidence in His purpose and integrity will promote real faith. An acceptance of His sovereignty will assist rather than inhibit the release of our faith.

Intuition The spiritual man has access to another source of knowledge than that gained by the five senses of the body or through the analytical or deductive powers of the mind.

This other kind of knowledge is by revelation and is the very foundation of the New Creation life. It is by this that we are able to receive Jesus as Lord. Note Matt 16:15-18, Jesus said that "revelation" is the rock on which His Church is built.

Out of our fellowship with God there comes an understanding or revelation of God's purpose and strategy. The special "word" or "Rhema" from God, which is the trigger of our faith, comes to us through this spiritual faculty of intuition. (Note also 1 Cor 1:21; James 3:15-17).

Conscience In our faith walk with God it is the conscience which is the arbiter and not our mind or common sense. 1 John 3:21-22 and Romans 9:1 both show that the conscience bears witness to the truth and judges what is right rather than merely condemning for anything wrong. When we then move in faith, the conscience will either check us or approve us.

The activities of these three areas in the redeemed human spirit as they relate to the release of our faith can be summed up as:

(a) Fellowship – worship

- (b) Intuition – waiting on God
- (c) Conscience – wholeness

It is essential to recognise what is spiritual and what is soulish so that we will operate in true faith and not a humanistic substitute. Those who settle for soulish techniques will miss out on the true release of faith.

Presumption is one of the major hazards of those who attempt to live by faith and Jesus was tempted to this sin by Satan (Matt 4:6). It is the attempt to obligate God to our desires without first establishing God's intention and timing regarding that particular thing.

Psalm 37:4 tells us that if we will live in communion with God we will receive revelation in the matter of our faith, i.e. God Himself will give us the desires of our heart or He will put His plans in our heart. He will show us what to desire or believe for. (Note also Rom 8:26).

1 John 5:14-15 sums up this aspect of faith. The release of our faith depends on the confidence that we have developed in God Himself and this can only come about by our fellowship with Him.



## The Place of the “Rhema”

The Bible declares that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom 10:17). This verse has confused some who have thought that the genesis of faith in us is from learning Bible facts or quotations when it is really describing how unbelievers are born again. It shows us again that faith is a gift from God and that unregenerate people receive the impartation of divine faith when they hear the Word and receive Christ.

It is clear that not all of those who are well versed in the Scriptures are “faith people”. Some of the most negative and unbelieving Christians are Bible experts. In fact, some unregenerate people have a mental understanding of the Bible but are not saved and have no spiritual faith.

Romans 10:17 shows us the facet of revelation through the intuitive part of our spirit which triggers or starts the response of faith in us.

### RHEMA AND LOGOS

In the original Greek of the New Testament there are two different words which are normally translated “word”. One is “logos”; the other “rhema”. At times the two words are used interchangeably. Yet each has a distinct special significance of its own.

The full meaning of “logos” extends beyond a word that is spoken or written. It denotes those functions, which are the expression of a mind. The authoritative Greek Lexicon of Liddell and Scott defines “logos” as “the power of the mind which is manifested in speech, reason”.

In this sense “logos” is the unchanging, self-existent “Word of God”. It is God’s counsel, settled in eternity before time began, due to continue on into eternity long after time has run its course. It is of this divine “logos” that David is speaking in Psalm 119:89 when he says, “Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven”. Nothing that happens on earth can ever affect or change this word that is eternal in heaven.

On the other hand “rhema” is derived from a verb meaning “to speak”, and denotes specifically “a word that is spoken” – something that occurs in time and space.

In Romans 10:17, when Paul says that “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the WORD of God”, he uses the word “rhema”, not “logos”. This agrees with the fact that he couples “word” with “hearing”. Logically, in order to be heard, a word must be spoken.

The Holy Spirit takes the very words that meet our needs at that moment and imparts His life to them. They become “rhema” – something we can “hear”, like a living voice, God Himself speaking to our spirit personally and directly. As we hear His word, faith is released in our hearts.

This agrees with Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 3:6, “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”. A part from the Holy Spirit, there can be no “rhema”. In the Bible, the “logos” – the total counsel of God – is made available to me.

But “logos” is too vast and too complex for me to comprehend or assimilate in its totality. “Rhema” is the way that the Holy Spirit brings a portion of “logos” down out of eternity and relates it to time and human experience.

“Rhema” is that portion of the total “logos” that applies at a certain point in time to my particular situation. Through “rhema”, “logos” is applied to my life and thus becomes specific and personal in my experience.

In this transaction between God and man by which faith comes, the initiative is with God. This leaves no room for arrogance or presumption on our part. Indeed, in Romans 3:27 Paul tells us that boasting is excluded by the law of faith. It is God who knows – better than we do – just that part of the total “logos” will meet our need at any given time.

By His Holy Spirit He directs us to the very words that are appropriate and then imparts life to them, so that they become a “rhema” – a living voice. At this point the response required from us is “hearing”. To the extent that we “hear”, our faith is released.

Ephesians 6:17 says “to take the sword of the Spirit which is the word (‘rhema’) of God”. W.E. Vine commenting on this says, “Here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual Scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need, a pre-requisite being the regular storing of mind with Scripture”.

Matthew 4:4, in the literal translation, says “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word (‘rhema’) which is continually proceeding out of the mouth of God”. This tells us that the “revelation” rock on which Jesus has built His Church is still current. God is still inspiring His people with faith ideas. (Matt 16:17-18).

## **TWO KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE FACULTY OF INTUITION**

There is knowledge, which is gained through the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. Even our Bible knowledge can be at this level – that of learning, logic and indoctrination.

However, there is another kind of knowledge – Revelation knowledge, by which God will impart direct to the human spirit, through our faculty of intuition, things