

From Faith to Faith or, the Exercise of Faith in Trying Times

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These are difficult times. However, for believers in Jesus Christ, we have the great resource of faith in our God, who is faithful. "Many a man claims to have unflinching love, but a faithful man who can find?" (Prov 20:6 NIV). It's sad to read the apostle Paul's prophecy of wretched attitudes and habits "in the last days" (2 Tim 3:1): "For men will be lovers of themselves...blasphemers...unloving... slanderers...traitors..." (vvs. 2-4). The consequences to society are disastrous. We want to look at subjects of faith, being faithful, and faithfulness.

I. The Just Shall Live by Faith

The Christian life is meant to be **a faith-based life**. Without faith we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). Believers are to function within communities that live by faith, helping each and every believer to be persons that live by faith.

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

Rom 1:16-17 – For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from **faith to faith**; as it is written, "**The just shall live by faith**" (NKJV). → Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by his faith."

Heb 11:1, 3, 6 – 1 Now **faith is the substance of things hoped for**, the **evidence of things not seen**. 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. → 6 But **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.

Hebrews 11:1 and 6 states the essential nature what we call faith. We are told **first** that faith is "the assurance or substance of things hoped for," i.e. the firm assurance that God will do what He has promised to do (v.1a). In the **second place**, we are told that faith is "the conviction or evidence of things not seen," i.e. the conviction that God's Word is true (v.1b). In the **third place**, faith believes that "God is" (He exists) and "is a rewarder" of those who seek Him (v.6). The philosophy "I'll believe it when I see it" is the opposite of faith. Faith is visionary trust in God to perform what He has promised.

Just what is faith? Faith means "abandonment to Jesus" or yielding to the ways of God. Faith is the total response of the human personality to the divine command. Note the Hebrew and Greek meanings of "faith."

Hebrew: "Faith" (**'e mu nah**) means literally ***firmness***; figuratively ***security***; or moral ***fidelity***. The "action definition" of the Hebrew *word root* is "firm" or "firmness" (Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible (pg 170-171). To be "firm" is to remain *steadfast* and solid; it requires resolve. The ancient pictograph (Hebrew letters in picture form) shows a picture of a liquid such as water or blood, together with a picture of a seed representing "continuance." Combined--these symbols mean "**blood continues**." In general terms, it means that each species (kind) continues by passing its blood to the following generation, from parent to children. It also conveys the idea of strength (firmness) through the blood.

Greek: “Faith” (*pistis*, noun; *peitho*, verb) at its core-meaning means to be persuaded referring to that in which one’s trusts. Faith is a unique capacity graced in the life from God (Eph 2:8); the basic power by which a believer is enabled to live a selfless life to the glory of God. Faith is simply trusting in something or someone; the belief that what someone has told you is correct. Faith is God’s warranty guaranteeing the fulfillment of the revelation He births within receptive believers. God has placed within the human makeup the ability to believe, a divine impulse, an impulse that is enlivened when one hears the Word of God, either by the divine revelation of God’s voice or hearing the word of truth, either by public preaching or the testimony of another believer (Eph 1:13; Acts 1:8).

II. God’s Faithful Faithfulness

There is one glorious promise regarding faithfulness—not our faithfulness, but the faithfulness of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. In fact, I want to call it God’s faithful faithfulness. On a practical level, God who is the author of faith is the source of our ability to exercise faith, both in Him and in the daily elements of living.

a. **First, God is the Author of Faith.** God by his very nature moves in faith. His first faith-action was to create the heavens and the earth and establish the power of light (Gen 1:1-3). Then he proceeded with the vision of faith-action to create man and woman in His image and likeness (1:26-28). On a practical level, God who is the author of faith is the source of our ability to exercise faith, both in Him and in the daily elements of living. “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5 NKJV).

b. Gen 1:1-3 – 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light (NKJV).

Gen 1:26-28 – 26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (NKJV).

Gal 2:20-21 - 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 (NKJV).

c. **Second, God Is Faithful – His Conduct toward Humans.** In His conduct toward humans, God is faithful and “keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” (Gen 7:9 NKJV; repeat of Deut 7:9). Even if people are faithless, “God remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:13).

Even if we fail in trial or temptation, “God is faithful” to “make a way of escape” that we may be “able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13). Paul said that because “God is faithful,” his own very words were “not yes and not,” but “yes,” due to the fact that “all the promises of God” in Christ are “YES” and “AMEN” (2 Cor 1:18-20). God will sanctify us completely, when our whole spirit, soul, and body are yielded to Him, because “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thess 5:23-

24). Paul wrote that “the Lord is faithful who will establish you and guard you from the evil one” (2 Thess 3:3).

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

1 Peter 4:19 – “Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to **a faithful Creator**” (NKJV).

1 John 1:8-9 – “8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, **He is faithful** and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (NKJV).

d. Third, God Is Faithfulness – His Character in Himself. In His essence as revealed in His character, God is faithfulness itself.

In Psalm 89 David repeatedly exclaimed of God, “Your faithfulness is known to all generations” (Ps 89:1) “established in the heavens” (89:2), and praised “in the assembly of the saints” (89:5). David declared that “faithfulness surrounded God Himself” (89:8, 24), and rejoiced that God’s faithfulness would not fail him (89:33).

On one hand, even as God in faithfulness will bring afflicting chastisement when his children sin (Ps 119:75), on the other hand, God as “the faithful God” would “keep covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep His commandments (Deut 7:9; cf Ps 105:7-8; 119:90-91). Jeremiah in Lamentation 3:23-24 rejoiced that God’s mercy was “new every morning,” and “great is **Your faithfulness**.” Jeremiah also said, “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I hope in Him!”

e. Fourth, God’s Faithfulness Feeds Our Faithfulness. David said, “Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and **feed on His faithfulness**” (Ps 37:3). God in His faithfulness hears and answers our prayers (Ps 143:1), faithfully renews His mercy every morning (Lam 3:23-24), and grants His counsel of old, counsel that is “faithfulness and truth” (Isa 25:1).

Paul addresses the issue of unbelief in Romans 3:3-4: “For what if some do not believe? Will their unbelief make **the faithfulness of God** without effect? 4 Certainly not! Indeed, **let God be true but every man a liar**.”

Hebrews 10:23 exhorts: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for **He who promised is faithful**” (NKJV). Those who “suffer according to the will of God” should “commit their souls to Him...as to a faithful Creator” (1 Pet 4:19).

Lastly, in our humanity we may sin, but as 1 John 1:8-9 says: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, **He is faithful** and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” NKJV

Gal 2:20 NIV - I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Faith is God’s warranty guaranteeing the fulfillment of the revelation He births within receptive believers (Heb 11:1).

Four Stages of Faith

First Stage: Faith	Believing God
Second Stage: Faithful	Serving God
Third Stage: Faithfulness	Reflecting God
Fourth Stage: Visionary Faith	Representing God

Rom 1:8 – To the Christians at Rome, Paul wrote: “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that **your faith is spoken of** throughout the whole world.”

1. Faith: Full Persuaded → Believing God

Faith is the same as the concepts to trust or to believe. They are all the same in Greek (*pisteuo*). **Faith is** believing, putting confidence in, being persuaded of. What we believe shapes what we do. Faith is not just something one acknowledges. If I believe something, then it will shape me. Faith is the self-surrendering acknowledgment that has a pragmatic impact leading to moral commitment.

Abraham is known as the father of faith. Faith is critical to the Christian life. Abraham is not only the Father of the circumcised, but of all those “who walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised” (Rom 4:12).

Rom 4:12-13 – And the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in **the steps of the faith** which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. 13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through **the righteousness of faith**.

Rom 4:16-17 – Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of **the faith of Abraham**, who is the father of us all.

Rom 4:19-20 – And **not being weak in faith**, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was **strengthened in faith**, giving glory to God (NKJV).

Gal 3:5-9 – 5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the **hearing of faith**? — 6 just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' 7 Therefore know that only **those who are of faith** are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles **by faith**, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed. 9 So then **those who are of faith** are blessed with believing Abraham.

Cremer's Theological Dictionary defines faith as involving four things: (1) **Conviction**: a full and convinced acknowledgment of God's saving revelation or truth, belief in the mind; (2) **Cleaving**: a demand on the person who acknowledges the object of faith, entering into personal fellowship and surrendering to God, the surrender of the heart; (3) **Confidence**: a behavior of unconditional and yet perfectly intelligent and assured confidence, involving the obedience of the will; and, (4) **Commitment**: a firmly relying trust, that leads to a self-surrendering, a personal surrender of one's will to do the will of God. Thus, faith is a firm relying trust or confidence cherished by firm conviction.

Martin Lloyd Jones: "Faith always has the element of **assurance, certainty and confidence** ... and evidential value substantiating the thing we hope for ... with faith, there is no strain or

tension; rather, it has the element of assurance and confidence in it ... **if there is strain or tension** ... trying to persuade yourself to keep from doubting, **you can be quite sure that it is not faith**. Faith is not natural, faith is spiritual. You cannot command faith at will, faith is always something that is *given-inwrought* by God; ... therefore, if you want to be a man of faith, it will always be the result of becoming a certain type of person" (M. Lloyd Jones, *Romans*, Ro 4:18-25).

Faith operates in the realm of simplicity. Faith must grow. The Scriptures teach levels of faith: (1) "**no faith**" (Mark 4:40); (2) "**little faith**" (Matt. 8:26); "**obedient faith**" (Rom. 1:5); "**great faith**" (Mark 8:10); and "**complete faith**" (James 2:22).

Rom 14:22-23 – "**Do you have faith?** Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for **whatever is not from faith is sin.**"

1 John 5:4-5 – "4 For whatever is **born of God** overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — **our faith**. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (NKJV).

Faith is an inner spiritual and volitional ability to believe and respond to the promises of God. It is a way of thinking, an attitude of mind and heart that gets results. It is not magic, mere imagination, or human effort. Faith is saying "YES" to God. Faith is the ability, within every human being, to respond to someone; to things that we are convinced are real, genuine or true.

Homer Kent Jr: "Faith is the divinely given conviction of things unseen" (*Hebrews*, p 217, quoting Theological Dictionary of the NT, Vol 2, p. 476).

F. F. Bruce: "Faith is the organ which enables people to see the invisible order" (*Hebrews*, p. 279).

Martin Luther: "Faith is a lively, reckless confidence in God."

Augustine: "Faith is to believe what we do not see and the result of your faith is to see what we believe."

Martin Luther (1483-1546): "Faith is **a living, bold trust in God's grace**, so certain of God's favor that it would **risk death a thousand times** trusting in it. Such confidence and knowledge of God's grace **makes you happy, joyful and bold** in your relationship to God and all creatures. The Holy Spirit makes this happen through faith. Because of it, **you freely, willingly and joyfully do good** to everyone, serve everyone, suffer all kinds of things, love and praise the God who has shown you such grace. Thus, it is just as impossible to separate faith and works as it is to separate heat and light from fire! Therefore, watch out for your own false ideas and guard against good-for-nothing gossips, who think they're smart enough to define faith and works, but really are the greatest of fools. **Ask God to work faith in you**, or you will remain forever without faith, no matter what you wish, say or can do." (An excerpt from "*An Introduction to St. Paul's Letter to the Romans*," *Luther's German Bible of 1522*).

W.H. Griffith Thomas (Genesis, 55): "Faith always pre-supposes revelation." He also said, "Faith is always a response to a divine revelation" (*Hebrews*, 143).

W. Hendriksen: "Faith . . . both in its initiation and every step of the way, is Spirit given . . . faith is *God given*" (*Galatians*, 197).

2. FAITHFUL: Sanctification and Stewardship → Serving God

Faith and faithful are connected. A person being faithful is totally dependent upon ones faith. The very word “faithful” means “full of faith.” Every child of God should be “faithful.” To be “faithful” is basically to be trustworthy, true, and someone who can be relied on. It also refers to those who have kept the Faith and trust in the Promises of God. Are you “faithful”? Are you trustworthy? Can you be relied on? Are you standing on the promises of God with a staunch faith, being faithful?

a. Faithfulness in the Old Testament

1 Sam 2:35 – Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever.

Ps 78:8, 37 – And may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God. 37 For their heart was not steadfast with Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant.

Ps 101:6 – My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me (NKJV).

b. Faithfulness and Stewardship

1 Cor 4:2 – Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful (NKJV).

Heb 3:1-2, 5 – 1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. ... 5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant...

Matt 24:45-46 (cf. Lk 12:43-43) – 45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing (NKJV).

Matt 25:21 – His lord said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord (NKJV).

c. Faithfulness among the New Testament Believers. God’s leaders and ministers are called to the necessity of being faithful. To be a faithful minister may be one of the highest accolades.

Eph 1:1 – “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus.” Cf. Col 1:1-2 – “the faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse” (NKJV).

2 Tim 2:2 – “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (NKJV).

1 Cor 4:17 – TIMOTHY: “my beloved and faithful son in the Lord” (NKJV).

Eph 6:2; Col 4:7 – TYCHICUS: “a beloved brother, fellows servant and faithful minister.”

Col 1:7 – EPHAPHRAS: “our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister” (NKJV).

Col 4:9 – ONESIMUS: “Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you.

1 Peter 5:12 – SILVANUS: “our faithful brother as I consider him” (NKJV).

A simple verse is **3 John 5-6**: “Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, 6 who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well.” This is an example of practicing faith. Faithfulness is in fact an act of faith. If we are going to obey the Lord, then we will need our faith. We do these things because we believe and trust the Lord.

3. FAITHFULNESS: Character → Reflecting God

Faithfulness is a rare gem. Moses was such a man. The rare quality of faithfulness—firm and reliable commitment to one’s convictions and responsibilities in accordance with God’s Word and leading—is proved in practice rather than proclamation. May God help us to be faithful servants, for it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor 4:2). It is quality, not quantity, of service that God measures. Faithfulness, not fruitfulness, is required.

A message years ago: There are four staggering demands upon biblical faith. (1) **forsaking all for God** (Gen 12:1-5; Heb 11:8), (2) **leaving all for God** (Gen 12:5-14), (3) **finding all in God** (Gen 15:1; Rom 4:16-17), and (4) **yielding all to God** (Gen 22:16; Rom 14:17, 20-24).

2 Chron 31:18 – “And to all who were written in the genealogy — their little ones and their wives, their sons and daughters, the whole company of them — for in their faithfulness they sanctified themselves in holiness” (NKJV).

Ps 5:8-9 – “Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face. 9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open tomb; they flatter with their tongue” (NKJV).

Gal 5:22-23 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (NKJV).

We sometimes hear that character is not connected to a person's gifting. This is usually used when one is thinking about a Christian leader falling into immorality or getting divorced. We must see that **character problems are faith problems**. Rigorous standards should be used to help us make proper decisions when our feelings are confused.

J.R.R. Tolkien: Fellowship of the Ring: “You can trust us to stick to you through thick and thin – to the bitter end. And you can trust us to keep any secret of yours – closer than you yourself keep it. But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone, and go off without a word. We are your friends, Frodo. Anyway: there it is. We know most of what Gandalf has told you. We know a good deal about the ring. We are horribly afraid—but we are coming with you; or following you like hounds.”

Joyce Meyer: “Faithfulness is not doing something right once but doing something right over and over and over and over.”

Someone said: God does not require a man to have one talent, three talents, or five talents. He only requires that a man be faithful with whatever he has been given.

Faithfulness is one characteristic of what the Apostle Paul calls the "fruit" of holy spirit. Paul refers to various qualities as a singular fruit because there is only

Charles Price, *The Real Faith*: "We have made faith a condition of mind, when it is a divinely imparted grace of the heart ... we can receive faith only as he gives it ... you cannot manufacture faith, you cannot work it up ... you can believe a promise, and at the same time not have the faith to appropriate it ... genuine, Scriptural faith is not our ability to 'count it done,' but is the deep consciousness divinely imparted to the heart of man that it is done, ... it is the faith that only God can give ... do not struggle in the power of the will ... what a mistake to take our belief in God and call of faith ... Christ, the living word, is our sufficiency. (Logos/publications).

4. FAITH – Visionary Faith → Representing God

Leadership is seeing with the eyes of faith and following through on what one sees. Mature faith is a leadership dimension, because faith projected enables other to follow in the faith vision projected.

Hab 2:2-4 –2 Then the Lord answered me and said: "**Write the vision** and **make it plain on tablets**, that he may run who reads it. 3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. 4 "Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but **the just shall live by his faith**. NKJV

Without a written vision, many people will introduce differing, even conflicting visions of the future, as well as injecting confusion and conflicting paths of how to get there. Strategic thinking allows for these differences to surface, to become visible, and to be resolved. The strategic discussion process allows for differences to surface, or even to be exposed, and for future strategy to be set so that pro-active agreement can occur.

Heb 11:1-2 – "Now **faith is the substance of things hoped for**, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony" (NKJV)

Heb 11:8-10 – 8 **By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out** to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. → 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises.

THE FAITH PYRAMID

