

This book, *Faith at Sea*, is very fitting for our fellow seamen who are ashore and at sea. Reading the testimonies of my fellow Christian seamen and how they encountered the Lord is very encouraging indeed. Thank you again, Bro. Martin, for your love to our seamen shown by publishing different Christian books for seamen to strengthen our faith in God.

I strongly recommend my fellow seamen to read this book, *Faith at Sea*. This will encourage us to move on and continue to “run the race” in our Christian life. The Bible says, “Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” You are a blessing to our seamen and to the world, Bro. Martin. God’s favor is with you, Brother!

– **Capt. Nestor M. Vargas**  
Fleet Manager  
Michaelmar Philippines, Inc.



This book proves that faith is one of the three great virtues which are mentioned in the Bible, along with hope and love. It also gives the seamen knowledge, as well understanding, concerning the truth that the just will live by faith. Along those lines, it enhances my appreciation of Bro. Martin’s pure motive in drawing the Filipino seamen closer to GOD. I am confident that he will go from glory to glory in his untiring effort in spreading the word and wisdom of GOD. Right knowing is right believing, and right believing is right being. Thank you, beloved Bro. Martin, for bringing us this book which I am sure will be of great help to our fellow Christians in their endeavor to have a deeper relationship with the Lord Almighty.

This book is guaranteed to strengthen our faith.

– **Capt. Guy Domino A. Macapayag**  
Former President/General Manager  
KGJS Manila

“Faith” is one basic word that would destine you to life eternal if biblically applied in your life. Rev. Martin Otto carefully wrote this book in the simplest way so that everyone who reads it and believes in Christ Jesus will be saved through faith. Faith is the key to heaven. This is a must-read book for all seamen in order to strengthen and deepen their relationship to God.

– **Bro. Vic Atanacio**  
Board Member & Consultant  
SCFS Philippine



I am indeed honored to be able to endorse this book, *Faith at Sea*. After ten years of close contact to seamen and their families, I can say that the subject of faith will always retain its relevancy as a guide to assist the seaman and his family to stay on course . . . First, for the seaman who struggles to deal with the emotional and physical needs for closeness and intimacy which are now hindered by long distances; or who is exposed to the risks involved in working at sea; or who is faced with challenges brought on by cultural adjustments or closely working with other colleagues. Secondly, for the families who are left behind and struggling with the reality of being a lone parent who has to fulfill the roles of both mother and father; and the children who have to cope with the absence of a parent during the critical phases of their childhood.

As anxiety increases, loneliness creeps in and doubts begin to erode one’s trust. Then Faith emerges and renews our RESOLVE. We hold on. The author’s purpose is not only to provide his readers with a roadmap—or should I say sea-map—to prevent drowning in the midst of life’s challenges, but he also offers well-balanced biblical and reality-based life lessons. This book is a must-read! Together let us sail on, or shall I say swim on?

– **Alfonso “Jong” Pablo, Jr.**  
Head, Crew and Family Relations  
Magsaysay Maritime Corporation



**FAITH**  
at *Sea*

MARTIN OTTO



Seamen's Christian Friend Society  
[www.scfs.org](http://www.scfs.org)

**Seamen's Christian Friend Society Edition**  
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*Published in the Philippines (2015) by  
OMF Literature Inc.  
776 Boni Avenue  
Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila  
[www.omflit.com](http://www.omflit.com)*

*in Germany (2017) by  
Reformatrischer Verlag Beese  
Friedensallee 76  
22765 Hamburg  
[info@rvbeese.de](mailto:info@rvbeese.de)*

*for  
Seamen's Christian Friend Society  
48 South Street, Alderley Edge  
Cheshire, SK9 7ES, England  
[www.scfs.org](http://www.scfs.org)*

ISBN 978-971-009-432-5

ISBN 978-3-944472-10-2

*Printed in Germany by CPI Clausen & Bosse, 25917 Leck, [www.cpi-print.de](http://www.cpi-print.de)*

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# Acknowledgements

The greatest help I have received while writing this book came from Marcy Schönke. She has already helped me with two other books (*Seafarers, a Strategic Missionary Vision*, and *Help, How Can I Overcome Temptations?*) that I wrote some years ago. Marcy, it is really wonderful how sacrificially you have helped me once again with this book! Without you I could have never presented the book to the publisher. Thank you for your time and sacrifice in putting this book into readable English!

I am also very grateful to several seamens who contributed to this book through their written emails. People like Hamish Boham, 3rd Officer on a cruise ship, Ireneo Pavia, Chief Engineer on a chemical tanker, Giovanni Daleon, the Chief Cook on a feeder ship, Silvino Nazam who actually asked me to write this book and Fritzgerald Abarca, who wrote about some interesting faith experiences. I was also glad to receive input from Romeo Agron, who only very recently came to faith in Jesus Christ. I am extremely grateful to Captain Danilo B. Bueno, who willingly shared his traumatic experience of being held captive by pirates for seven months, onboard his ship near Somalia. Finally, I am also very happy to share in this book a great testimony from Captain Federico Ricalde, who experienced sailing on the oceans in the midst of two huge typhoons approaching their ship. Thank you all for your willingness to share despite your difficult situations onboard.



Last but not least, I cannot forget to mention Michael Wilson, who was Director of the Seamen's Christian Friend Society for more than 20 years. Mike, you were always there to help me, answer questions, and give very helpful advice. I very much appreciate and value your friendship, practical help, your wisdom and your time commitment.

# Foreword

I have heard this said so often:

“I admire your faith; I just wish I could have faith like you.”

Whenever a person says this to me, it somehow places me on a higher platform and suggests I am better placed than they are to live a life of faith. But this is nonsense. Placing my faith in a living and loving God is a simple matter. But, before I took that step, I did have to clear away a lot of rubbish and many misconceptions.

For some of us, that initial step of faith is based on our emotions. For others, it can be more of an intellectual exercise. In reality, for most of us our experience is a combination of both. It is God’s Holy Spirit that convicts us of our need for a personal Savior, but each of us has a unique personality and a unique experience of life. So God’s Spirit will communicate with us just where we are, communing with our spirit and connecting with our emotions and intellect. The trouble is, some of us try to work too hard at this. As a result, we can become victims to the ups and downs of our emotions; and we might resist placing our faith in God until every aspect of the unknown becomes known. The result of this resistance is that we live our life in fear.

The good news, of course, is that God represents perfect love. And perfect love casts out all fear.





You would not be reading this book unless you were interested in the subject of faith. Perhaps you do have faith, but you feel it is often inadequate. Perhaps you want to have faith but feel you lack the strength and purpose to step out in faith. Or I wonder if you like the idea of having faith, but are fearful about the way a life of faith would change your life.

In this book, Martin looks at faith from every angle. He helps us to understand how faith helps us when we feel weak; and he also helps us to avoid being overconfident with the risk we place faith in ourselves rather than God.

Life for a seaman is rarely easy. There will be many times when the seaman feels he has let God down because of some sin in his life. If these feelings are not addressed, doubts and uncertainties can easily creep in and sometimes faith is lost. Martin addresses the aspect of feelings in Chapter 18. But be assured that God will never stop being in the business of forgiving sin. He wants the relationship between you and him to be fully restored. Have faith, he will always want to do this.

Is my faith strong? Well, I am confident in what I hope for. But there are still times of doubt. And when I doubt I know exactly where to turn for help—the Lord Himself. I have always been struck by the account of Jesus healing a boy possessed by an impure spirit in Mark 9:14–29. Jesus informed the boy’s father that anything is possible for one who believes. The father

responded, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief” (v23). The father had faith, and yet he was ready to acknowledge it wasn’t strong. So he asked Jesus to help.

My prayer is that, as you read this book, Jesus will answer your many questions about this strangely difficult aspect of life. But please don’t treat this as an academic exercise—ask God to help you overcome your doubts and uncertainties. He will surely answer your prayer.

– Michael J. Wilson  
Former Director  
Seamen’s Christian Friend Society

# Introduction

I can hear people asking now—“How dare he write a new book about faith, when the Bible is the ultimate book about faith?” Many books have already been written in order to explain things that are difficult to learn. Authors, pastors and theologians have tried to encourage people to have faith and now there’s a new book on the subject? What for?

Does this book really offer new insights? Well, this book doesn’t claim to have new insights in the area of theology, and it is not intended to reveal anything new outside of Scripture. I wrote it for a very simple reason: it is to encourage your faith. This book is for ordinary people like you and me, but it is especially dedicated to seamen—seamen who don’t have the chance to attend church because they are far away from their home churches. Seamen who are lonely and struggling in difficult and dangerous situations. Seamen who are at sea for six, eight or even 12 months, trying to earn a living. Many seamen consider faith as the only solution to the problems and circumstances they are dealing with in their lives. And they are right, because the Bible says in the book of Hebrews that nobody can please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6). And without God there will be no solution to the problems and difficult circumstances we face in our lives.

It was not really my plan to write another book, but the more I prayed and thought about it, and the more I

talked with seamen, the clearer it became to me that there is a need to provide seamen with concrete help. This book aims to encourage them in their walk with the Lord, as well as to stimulate them to have real faith that works in everyday situations, especially while they are onboard their vessels separated from their loved ones for a long time.

The final push for writing this book came through a Filipino seaman whom I met on a ship in Hamburg, and who had read my previous book, *Help, How Can I Overcome Temptations?*<sup>1</sup> He wrote and encouraged me with these words:

“I hope that there will be another book like the one I just read to deepen a seaman's faith in God and answer questions we have during times of loneliness, when we need guidance. . . . I am sure that many other sailors have been helped by your book on overcoming temptations, and have learned how to be a Christian by faith through God's grace . . . .”

Faith, according to an Internet definition is: “Confidence or trust in a person or thing: *faith in another's ability*.”<sup>2</sup> In another dictionary we find this definition: “Strong belief in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual conviction rather than proof.”<sup>3</sup> The Bible simply defines faith in Hebrews 11:1 (NIV),

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”<sup>4</sup>



In the New Testament definition we see that we are talking about something that is beyond our ability to understand. When we talk about faith we always talk about something that we cannot control with our intelligence or understanding. It is something that only works while we are connected with God Himself. It is this wonderful God, who manifested Himself through Jesus Christ, who wants to help us by His Holy Spirit so we can understand faith and practice it in everyday situations.

Before you begin reading this book, I want to invite you to pray to God for more understanding about this vital subject of faith. I am convinced that if we humbly ask God to show us what practical faith is, we will not have to wait long to receive more understanding and godly revelation. But, before you even start reading this book, I encourage you to turn to the best book ever on the topic of faith—the Bible itself. Since the Bible teaches us about faith and all the blessings that come through it, I have purposely used more than 250 Bible verses in this book to show you more about what faith is, and how you can grow in faith. If you forget everything I have written here but remember many of the wonderful Bible verses about faith, I am confident you will possess a wonderful treasure that you will never let go of. Human wisdom can never measure up to God's wisdom, which is so well-revealed and illustrated in the Bible. Without the help of God's Word you will never

grasp how deep faith is. The Apostle Paul said it well in 2 Timothy 3:16,

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching . . .”

I am aware that some people might have different opinions about a particular aspect of faith and its application, but I still trust that certain parts of this book will be helpful in showing more about faith in general, how it can change situations, and how one’s faith can even deepen and grow.

May our living God truly bless you while you are seeking to know more about faith. If you have any questions, or if you would like to share something with me by email, please feel free to contact me personally at the following address:

**[martin.otto@scfs.org](mailto:martin.otto@scfs.org)**

A grayscale photograph of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, large, dark, jagged rocks are scattered across the beach. The ocean is visible in the middle ground, with waves breaking against the shore. In the distance, a large ship is visible on the horizon under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is serene and somewhat somber due to the monochromatic palette.

PART 1

# What Faith Is







# What is Faith REALLY?

One of the great subjects in Christian and secular books is the subject of faith. We simply believe the world had its beginning when God created it. We believe that God created heaven and earth and that He made us as well. But if you consider these facts to be true, does it mean that you already have faith? What is the true meaning of faith? With that question in mind, other questions follow. Like, how can I be sure I have faith and not just a good feeling and a strong belief or conviction about a certain truth? It is obvious that my emotions cannot be the source of lasting peace, harmony and success because emotions can change from one situation to another, from one day to next. So, if I build my foundation on what I feel, I'm not sure I'll reach my goal, and I'll often be disappointed. We can conclude then that living by our emotions cannot satisfy us. Instead, we need something that is reliable and not shaky or wavering. We need faith!

We need real faith which is given to us as a free gift exclusively by God Himself. I'm sure you know people who have faith and practice faith. You want to have that same strong faith, for they seem to be so happy and so successful. And you envy them. You may have tried so hard, but somehow it did not work for you. "*Why? What did I do wrong?*" you may have asked yourself.

Have you given up on faith? I hope not. I would like to encourage you to think about the following explanations. But first of all, I want to show you what the Internet and some well-known authors say about faith. These are their definitions. Faith is:

- 1 Confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, idea, or thing.
- 2 Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence. See Synonyms at *belief, trust*.
- 3 Loyalty to a person or thing; allegiance: *keeping faith with one's supporters*.
- 4 Often **Faith** *Christianity* The theological virtue defined as secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God's will.
- 5 The body of dogma of a religion: the Muslim faith.
- 6 A set of principles or beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Alban Douglas defines faith like this:

"Faith is not the blind act of the soul; faith in God rests upon the best of evidence, the infallible word of God. Faith is trust in the God of the



Scriptures and in Jesus Christ whom he has sent, which receives him as Savior and Lord and impels loving obedience and good works. The faith that saves is a personal trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Neil T. Anderson says about faith:

“Faith is an action word. Faith without action isn’t faith. If we really believe God and his word, we will do what he says. What we believe determines what we do. If what we profess to believe doesn’t affect our walk [our life] or our talk, then we really don’t believe.”<sup>3</sup>

There are people who are convinced that their actions are done in faith but don’t always understand what faith really is. They presume to have faith, but in reality they are acting on their own presumption. Rose Mary Miller says:

“Faith and presumption look alike because both qualities are characterized by confidence, but faith begins in the recognition and acceptance of our total human weakness. It relies solely on God and his gracious willingness to empower us. Presumption on the other hand, is a reliance on human moral abilities and religious accomplishments, on visible securities. It ultimately relies on human will power to serve God and people. I came to see that a mix of presumption and faith produces a personal instability that surfaces in crises and major life transitions. Faith alone links life to God and his abundant fatherly grace.”<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, I would like to show what the Bible says about faith and also give some examples of how I experienced faith myself as something that really blessed my life. And thirdly, I want to share what seamen, your own colleagues who also work on ships, have experienced in their personal lives regarding faith.

It is interesting to note that the word “faith” is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 32:20 and in Habakkuk 2:4, we find the words *emun* and *emunah*. But according to the *Concise Bible Dictionary*,<sup>5</sup> faith is mentioned 245 times in the New Testament. Here is what the Bible teaches about faith. We can read in the book of Hebrews 11:1,

“Now faith is confidence that what we hope for and assurance in what we do not see.”

In the *New Living Translation* it states,

“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen. It gives assurance about things we cannot see.”

From this definition we discover that faith is something that is sure. This Bible verse talks about confidence and assurance, and not about doubt. I am convinced that you have often longed to be sure, but doubt can somehow blind you and create a mental block.

God’s very nature means that what He says and does is absolutely true. That makes Him completely trustworthy and faithful, so you don’t have to doubt Him.



In this world we desperately need confidence. Imagine that you plan to take a bus in order to visit a friend, but you see that the driver is drunk. You would never get on that bus. You want to be sure that the driver will take you safely to your destination. You want to have confidence in the driver. Faith in God means confidence, because God Himself is absolutely trustworthy and can be trusted. He is the only one who cannot lie and cannot cheat us. Dr. Douglas says:

“The principle of faith is the same as that which we act on in everyday life; we [buy] . . . milk and accept the tin [can] without looking into the tin to see whether or not there is milk inside, we believe the label. . . . All business is carried on by the principle of faith and confidence in others by relying on the [word] of others. The taxi driver doesn’t ask to see your money first; by faith he believes that you have money and will pay him at the end of the route. Faith in God is putting confidence in him and in his word; it is resting on the testimony of the individual involved, be he merchant, salesman, or the Lord himself.”<sup>6</sup>

Confidence is something that is often missing in our lives. People long to have confidence, and they treasure it when they have attained it. Yet many do not have this confidence, but rather they suffer from doubts. Whenever I ask someone where he will spend eternity, I often get the answer: “Maybe in heaven, maybe in hell.” In reply to that I say, “Your answer is not satisfactory. Let

me give some illustrations: If I said to someone: ‘Maybe your wife loves you,’ it would not make that person any happier because he would want to be sure that his wife loved him. If I said to another, ‘Maybe you will get your salary paid out,’ that person would not also be happy, because he would want to know for sure that at the end of the month he will get his salary”

Jesus wants to build confidence in our lives—but we need to have faith in God, and believe and trust what He says and does. When the writer of the book of Hebrews says, “Faith is confidence in what we hope for,” you might now ask what is meant by hope.

Often when the Bible speaks about hope, it speaks about eternity. When we wholeheartedly trust Jesus, when we put our faith in Him, we have a sure hope that we will spend eternity with God in heaven. Jesus says in John 14:6 (NLT),

“I am the way [to the Father or to heaven], the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

We can be 100% sure that what Jesus says, He will do—take us to His Father, to heaven. He is the only One who always keeps His promises.

In the second part of Hebrews 11:1 it says, “. . . and assurance about what we do not see.” We do not see heaven yet, we do not see the solution to our problems yet, we do not see the answer to prayers yet. So, it is



encouraging to read what we can learn from the Old Testament prophets in Hebrews 11:13,

“All these people were still living by faith, when they died. They did not receive the things promised, they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.”

The people of the Old Testament did not doubt for a moment, although they had not received the things promised. They were convinced that God would surely keep His promises. This is what practical faith is. It is so easy to believe when we receive something, but the Old Testament heroes only saw their answer from a distance, they had received nothing. Instead, they focused on God alone and believed that God would keep His promise.

I have heard stories about parents who had prayed that their children would turn to Jesus. Some prayed for many years and then they died without seeing any changes in the lives of their children. But other people testified that after the parents had died, the children came to faith in Jesus.

The book of James tells us in chapter 1:3–4,

“Because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

When we choose to walk by faith we will indeed experience God in a very powerful way, and we will mature in our spiritual lives. In the New Testament, we see an astonishing example from the Apostle Paul in Acts 27:23–25 when he was sailing on a ship. The ocean was very rough and there was little hope for survival. But, despite the terrible situation on the ocean Paul trusted God, and he said to the crew and other passengers on the ship:

“Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.”

In my own experience, there were situations where I have felt uncertain and helpless, but when I trusted God, there was blessing. One day, while I was driving home from the port of Hamburg, a thought suddenly occurred to me about a certain ship there, and suddenly, I felt as if a small voice was talking in my heart. “Martin, would you please visit that ship?” I decided that it was too late to visit the ship as it was already about 8 p.m. So, I continued driving towards my home. But again that small voice, which to me was clearly God’s voice, came again and asked me, “Martin would you please visit that ship?”





So, I turned around and started towards that particular ship. When I arrived I was greeted at the gangway by a seaman who told me that the ship would soon be leaving. Immediately, I wondered if I had really heard God's voice. Anyway, I asked for permission to come onboard to give booklets to the crew. It was granted, so I went to the crew's messroom<sup>7</sup> where seamen were drinking alcohol and making jokes. Again, I asked myself, "*Am I on the right ship? Am I where God wants me to be?*"

I left some booklets with the men and continued knocking on the doors of the seamen's cabins. When someone answered, "Come in," I slowly opened the door and was greeted by a Filipino seaman. I told him I just wanted to give him some literature about God. He immediately asked me if I had a Bible in Tagalog, a major language of Filipinos. I handed him a Tagalog Bible, and he was very happy because he had been looking for one for many weeks. We talked about some verses and after a while, I said goodbye and left the ship. A few weeks later the same seaman wrote to say how much he enjoyed my visit and how much he appreciated the Bible. He told me that by reading the Bible he had come to know Jesus Christ as his Savior. I was greatly encouraged because it had been worthwhile to trust and believe God, even though at that time I had doubts about what I was doing.

Of course, my most wonderful experience with faith took place when I became a true Christian. I was born

in a Christian family. My parents always tried to share the Word of God with us as best as they could. I learned a lot from my parents during my childhood. I saw faith working in them in a very practical way. Almost every day, before going to bed, my parents read something from the Bible. After several years, when I was older, I felt tempted to seek more of this world and its pleasures. I sought pleasure in music, sports and many other things.

But, none of these satisfied me. I just could not find inner peace and happiness no matter what I did. One day, while I was in France on holiday, I happened to hear a preacher who taught about Jesus and the need to know Him as personal Savior and Lord. I then realized that whatever I did I would never succeed until I came to Jesus and relied on Him for fulfillment. I also understood that my sins actually created a separation between me and God. I went outside to a beautiful forest, and got down on my knees and prayed this simple prayer:

*Dear Jesus, if You are God, please come into my heart and please forgive all my sins and cleanse my heart and help me to follow You.*

When I finished that prayer, immediately a tremendous joy flooded into my heart. It was a joy that I had never known before, a joy that only God can give. I knew then that Jesus lived in my heart. How did that happen? This is the miracle of faith. I put my faith in Jesus Christ and His grace alone. I trusted Jesus alone for my salvation,



and He really saved me. This is what is promised in Acts 16:31, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .”

In the letter of Paul to the Ephesians, we read in Chapter 2 verses 8-9,

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Paul made it clear that faith is what a person needs in order to be saved. Good works cannot save us from our sins. You can be the best and kindest person in the world, and you might even donate money to the poor, but if your sins are not forgiven, you will still go to hell. You need faith to call on Jesus and ask Him to forgive your sins. He is the only One who can forgive us. When Jesus has forgiven us, we are saved for all eternity.

It is written in 1 John 5:13,

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

When we exercise faith, God is always there supporting us. God never says, “I *might* give you . . .; I *might* help you . . .; I *might* be with you . . .” In this verse it says that if you believe in Jesus Christ, you can know that you have eternal life. It does not say that if you believe, you *might* have eternal life. No—it says that you *already*

have eternal life. God's promises are always 100% certain and trustworthy.



## **Here is how several seamen have tried to define faith:**

Silvino Nazam, a Filipino seaman said:

"Faith is almost like our immune system which is being attacked by earthly temptations and the devil's arguments and lies. . . . In order to remain in permanent contact with God, and to cultivate a relationship with Him, one needs to embrace God's teachings, and to accept Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior. We can't do that if we don't have the right kind of faith in Him. That is why we need to read the Bible and practice all of its teachings. We need to feed our spirits on God's food, so to speak, because God said that He never gave us a spirit of fear. That's why God also said that if we feel worried, all we have to do is to come to Him, and He will give us the peace and the rest that we need."<sup>8</sup>

Fritzgerald Abarca, another Filipino seaman wrote in an email:

"What does faith mean to me? Faith is making a choice to entrust one's salvation and life to Christ. And that is the best choice I ever made in my life.



Having faith and trusting God completely means leaving one's sinful life behind and having a godly standard for one's life. This is the most interesting part of my life of faith in Christ.

"Without this faith, I was a different man before: I never cared about many things which are very important to me now, such as life and relationships. Being the eldest of nine children in our family and a bread winner, I faced many hardships in order to help my family. I didn't even know what the purpose of my life was. I sometimes even thought that I only existed to help my family who suffered great need; and I told myself that I will only be able to die when my family starts living a better life. It didn't make sense but that is how I thought what my life was all about, to help my family and when that was accomplished, I could die.

"But it changed completely when I came to faith in Christ. I then realized that I was born to live for all eternity. God changed me into a new person. I now value life so much because I know that God wants me to experience life, and He wants me to love Him and love other people.

"Through faith, I discovered my purpose: to live with God. He taught me how to live my life, and He always encourages me through His Word, the Bible. I put my trust in Him to take over the control of my life. He also taught me to trust Him more in spite of fear, pain and terrible situations. He is making me into the person He wants me to be. God has complete control of my life.

“Furthermore, He has a good plan for my life which is better than my wildest dreams. He gives me everything that I need. He also knows the purpose behind everything which concerns me: even the smallest and most simple things.

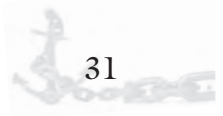
“For those of you who don’t have the kind of faith that I have, I hope that you will open your hearts to Christ. All you have to do is to accept Him completely and surrender everything to Him. I am sure you will experience a much better life than you have ever desired.”<sup>9</sup>

### Geovanni Daleon, a Filipino cook said:

“I had previously been Catholic since my childhood. During one of my 10-month contracts on a ship, I once read the Bible from cover to cover, but it had no great impact on my life. I just lived the way I wanted to, following my plans and desires. As a seaman who spent many months at sea, I had lost my way and lost faith in God because of loneliness, isolation and always trying to rely on my own strength.

“Then two years ago I met Volker Lamaack. He sold me a Bible for the computer, and gave me a Bible study course in my language, Tagalog. I read the course but found it boring and unnecessary. When I left the ship after finishing my contract, I left the Bible study booklet behind.

“Time went by until I came back to the same ship during the last week in March 2013. When I boarded this ship, I was suffering from depression and mental instability due to marital and family



problems back home. In the crew messroom I found a Bible correspondence course and tried to read it once more. I read up to Chapter 2 and found it so interesting that I continued reading a chapter a day. When I reached Chapter 7 I learned that Jesus Christ has been waiting and knocking at the door of my heart for a long time already. On April 7, 2013, a Sunday evening, I surrendered my whole life to Jesus Christ and confessed that I was a weak sinner, and I put my faith in Him as my Savior.

“In God’s providence I met Martin Otto a week later, and told him the story of my discovery and how I accepted Christ. He gave me a movie about Jesus Christ, a book, and a new study course. These things greatly helped my spiritual life.

“Since then, I’ve never been so happy and satisfied while on board ships. At the end of each workday I look forward to learning more from the Bible and learning how to be closer to God. I do not feel alone now as I know that God is always with me.”

“It is exciting to see that through faith, changes occurred in the lives of these three seamen. I had met each of these men before they dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ, and I had contact with them afterwards, too. It is so encouraging to see how faith can change a person. And not only that, it gave them hope and a perspective for their lives. What I saw in these men is the same thing that I have seen in many other seamen: faith is practical, not simply theoretical.”<sup>10</sup>

Romeo Agron, a Filipino Chief Engineer, experienced faith in the following way:

“For sometime my faith was just lukewarm. But because of the grace and blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is able to break the chains of bondage, my life was changed. When I received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, my life became peaceful. Before that, when I felt under pressure in certain circumstances, I was subject to outbursts of anger. I was also a chain smoker and womanizer. Life is both exciting and dangerous as a seaman, and I now believe a seaman must live by faith. For example, a seaman must have faith in his charts, in his engines and his captain. Every seaman knows the importance of a good captain, one who is skilled in navigation and who cares for his crew. The Bible calls Jesus Christ the captain of our salvation.

“Faith really changes our perspective on life as well as our character. I learned through the word of God that I can be effective in my own experience through faith. I have learned to kneel down and pray earnestly for strength and courage in order to face the real me, who used to have bad habits. It is for this reason that I have to walk by faith. And nothing is impossible with God through faith. I was saved through faith by His mercy and grace. Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.” I want to give glory to God, and to Jesus Christ, who is our Redeemer and Savior.”<sup>11</sup>





Ireneo Pavia, Filipino Chief Engineer explained his faith in this way:

“In the first place, I really didn’t know what biblical Christian faith was. I had never heard about it nor had anybody explained it to me until the day I started reading the Bible. It still took seven long years before I totally surrendered my life to Jesus Christ, the author and the perfecter of our faith. I started reading the Bible during my cadetship in 1980, but I came to know Christ and I received Him as my personal Savior and Lord on February 2007. Before that, when I read the passages about faith, I didn’t have any idea what they meant. The only thing I knew from reading the Bible was that I need to be saved from hell. And on the day before I was saved, I received the answer to my questions about heaven and hell.

“After the Bible study in the Philippine Seaman’s Mission Center in Manila on February 2007, a brother by the name of Tony Alvarez asked me the following question: ‘Brother, if the Lord took your life today, do you know where your spirit and soul would go?’ I answered, ‘Only God knows.’ Then he read John 14:6 and explained what it meant. From that moment on, the Lord opened my spiritual eyes so I could see and understand God’s love and the gift of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. Then I realized what I had to do was an act of faith, because ‘Faith comes by hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ’ (Romans 10:17). When God sent me back to work on board a ship, I was a month-old baby Christian. The only prayer

I'd prayed after receiving Jesus Christ as my personal Savior was this: 'Lord Jesus, when I come back on board, make me like Brother Tony Alvarez who shared your Word to his colleagues on the ship. Amen.' That's the only prayer I prayed.

"During the Bible study on the day of my conversion, Brother Tony Alvarez shared his personal testimony and how God used him on the ship. Sometime later, the Bible reminded me about all these things. In Hebrews 13:7 it says, 'Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Imitate their faith.' Even Paul said, 'Therefore, I urge you to imitate me' (1 Corinthians 4:16). If we continue reading and meditating on the Word of God and faithfully doing what it tells us to do, we can be useful instruments in the vineyard of the Lord wherever we sail. I then started sharing God's Word on every ship."<sup>12</sup>



# Is Faith Really THAT Important?

M. Farouk Radwan says:

“We need faith to be able to think positively. These days everyone seems to be talking about positive thinking but have you ever asked yourself why should a person think positively? What guarantee do you have in order to be optimistic and to expect the best to happen? Couldn’t the worse happen? Couldn’t everything go wrong? The only source where you can get a guarantee about the future is God and that’s why positive thinking that ain’t backed by faith is considered nonsense.”<sup>1</sup>

In Western countries like Germany, England, Holland, France, and USA, you find many people who say, “I don’t believe in God—I believe in myself!” Strangely enough, these same people start praying when forced to deal with great problems such as losing their job, or getting cancer, or losing a beloved family member. And when people have to face death, their self-confidence

disappears, and as a result, they begin thinking about faith in a new light. But, your situation may be different. You might be saying that a person doesn't really need to have much faith, but only needs to keep up certain traditions, be good, behave well, try not to harm anybody, and then everything will go well. And then, hopefully, God will also be pleased.

Is that so? I have witnessed this kind of attitude in many people's lives. In fact, many seamen have a deep desire to be good persons. They want to live good moral lives. Deep down they desire to be helpful, kind and friendly, hospitable, and they want to respect other people. Personally, I am amazed at the kindness and highly respectful treatment we port chaplains receive from many seamen. I actually learn a lot from my friends on ships.

Yet the question remains: Do good behavior and manners have the same value as faith? Can our good morals accomplish what faith can? Are moral attitudes and good works comparable to faith? Before we can try to answer these questions, we have to acknowledge that God also desires good works. But how should we do good works and when should we do them? If we only do good works in order to become better people, then what is God's role in the whole matter? God wants us to do good works, of course, but there's more to it: God wants us to focus on pleasing Him and making His glory shine above all else. He is the Almighty God who



created us, and out of gratitude we should give something back to God, and so we do good works.

But, we must remember that good works are not meant to save us from our sins. The Bible makes it very clear that good works can never save us. Ephesians 2:8–9 says,

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Twice Paul states that we are not saved by good works: “and this is not from yourselves . . . not by works . . .” Salvation is only possible when we place our faith in Jesus Christ.

This is one of the reasons why faith is so important. If we were perfect, sinless human beings, we probably wouldn’t talk much about faith. But since nobody is perfect and we are all sinful and do not achieve God’s perfect standard (*see* Romans 3:23), we desperately need saving faith. But, this saving faith is not found in ourselves or come from ourselves—it is a faith that God reveals to us and gives to us. He shows us the truth about our need: He shows us that we need Him. He gives us the grace to have faith. So everything comes from God alone. It is only by God’s grace that we can be saved. Jesus did everything for us on the cross of Calvary. Jesus paid it 100% for us, and we paid zero percent. And so, we cannot boast about our salvation—it is God’s absolute work of grace—nothing less.

Ephesians 2:10 says that we are saved for good works which God has already prepared for us to do. When we walk in God's ways, when we obey Him, we are doing the works that He intended for us to do. We are doing these works in a faith-based relationship with God. These works are never our own works or achievements. Instead, they are God's works because He prepared them for us to do before the world began. Coming back to our question: Is faith really all that important? Yes, it is all that important! Hebrews 11:6 states,

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Faith is the first step towards salvation; good works follow after we are saved from our sins. If Christ didn't save us from our sins, we wouldn't have any idea what God meant by good works. We would probably do works that were not the good works that God wanted. We have to keep in mind that God knows best which good works need to be done, and how they need to be done because He is the one who oversees the whole world in His godly wisdom.

Another reason why faith is so important is simply because God Himself asks us to put our faith in Christ. This should be the most important reason. Why? Because God wants to bless us and enjoy fellowship with us.



Let's look at the following Bible verses: In John 6:28–29 (CEV) we read,

“‘What exactly does God want us to do?’ the people asked. Jesus answered, ‘God wants you to have faith in the one he sent.’”

And again we read in 1 John 3:23,

“And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.”

Jesus requires faith from His people in John 14:1 where He says,

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.”

Then, in a conversation with the Apostle Peter, Jesus answered in Mark 11:22, “Have faith in God.”

We can conclude: Even if people do not consider faith that important, the very fact that God Himself asks us to put our faith in Christ should be important enough.

One issue that has been discussed over the centuries is the question of whether faith is more important than works, or if works are more important than faith. Or, perhaps they are equally important. Let us read James 2:14–26:

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’

“Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

“You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”





So, we can conclude that faith without works is dead. In other words, if we only have faith but works do not follow, our faith is just theoretical. Practical faith in Jesus, which means not only to believe but also to obey what Christ says, will automatically bring works with it—works that are prepared by God Himself (Ephesians 2:10). Andrew Murray puts it like this:

“First you have faith, as the root, planted and rooted in Christ Jesus. Then as its aim you have works, as the fruit. And then between the two, as the tree, growing downwards into the root and bearing the fruit upward, you have love, with the life-sap flowing through it by which the root brings forth the fruit.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, to answer our question about whether faith is really that important, we must look to Jesus and His earthly life. Jesus always put a strong emphasis on faith, as for example in Luke 18:8,

“However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Jesus was wondering whether He would find faith in people’s lives when He returned to earth. Another time Jesus did a miracle. The disciples were surprised that the winds and water obeyed Jesus. But Jesus only asked them, “*Don’t you have any faith?*” (Luke 8:25, CEV).

Even the apostles recognized the need to have real faith. They asked Jesus in Luke 17:5, “Increase our

faith!” In verse 6, Jesus answered, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.” So, from the above Scriptures we can see that faith is of utmost importance. And finally, in John 6:29 which we have already mentioned, Jesus says, “God wants you to have faith in the one he has sent” (CEV). In other words, this is what God expects and what He desires of His children: that they believe in Christ, that they obey whatever Christ says. This is faith in practice.

Yes, faith is important: real faith in God. And faith will always be there. If this world collapses, faith will not. Faith will remain as 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.” Why will faith always remain? Because it is something that comes from God Himself who is eternal, and so faith will always be eternal.



# Where Can I Find Faith?

In a world full of political chaos, economic uncertainty and hopelessness, you might ask: “Where can I find faith that is based on truth?” You really want to believe in something that is certain, something that will give you assurance, perspective and hope. Where can you find something you can lean on, something that is above and beyond any kind of crisis, problem and circumstance? People, TV and different religions can confuse you. On top of that, everybody seems to tell you something different. If you are from the Philippines, religious groups like Dating Daan and Iglesia ni Cristo will try to convince you on TV that their faith is the only right faith. But, where can you find a faith which offers absolute truth and certainty—a faith which will accompany you in this life and make sure you reach your heavenly destination?

First of all, everyone needs a firm foundation to build his life on. You may have received promises made

by people which are actually quite vague. If you look in the Internet, you will find a lot of people and organizations that promise you the very best you can imagine. But can you really trust their promises? Can human beings guide you to a faith which is trustworthy? And if you find somebody whom you feel is guiding you along the right path, how can you be sure that your freedom will be respected? How can you be sure that people do not want your money? Or your belongings?

Some people say that it is not so important to find the right faith, since “All paths lead to Rome.” And others say that all religions are the same because they all teach you to be good and not do bad things. Is that true? If you’re a seaman, I am sure you will disagree. If you’re the navigating officer, and you’re standing on the bridge of your ship, you’ll not say that all paths lead you to your next destination. You’ll check your chart and will sail the one exact path to your next port. If you don’t do that, your company will fire you for wasting a lot of time and money. So, there is just one path to take. There is also only one faith. Jesus says in John 14:6,

“I am the way, the truth and the life, nobody comes to the father except through me.”

Jesus made it very clear that He is the way we need to take if we want to go to God the Father. He is the way, if we want to reach heaven. Jesus was in a position to claim that because He is the Son of God. Can any human being say that? Certainly not, because without



exception, human beings have sinned, and so they do not live up to God's perfect standard (Romans 3:23). The right faith can only come from a person who is holy, sinless and perfect. Faith cannot come from an organization or religion. An organization or religion is never perfect because it is led by human beings who are imperfect. And if these organizations are not perfect, they cannot give us a faith that is perfect. For that reason we need a perfect person.

Neil T. Anderson says:

"First, faith depends on its object. The critical issue is what or whom you believe in . . . . The fact that Jesus Christ never changes makes Him eminently trustworthy and eternally faithful. Faith that is dependent upon God is faith that can enable you to do great things. Second, how much faith you have is dependent on how well you know the object of your faith. When we struggle with our faith in God, it's not because our faith object has failed or is insufficient. It is because we do not have a true knowledge of God and his ways."<sup>1</sup>

We learn from Jesus Christ. The Bible, which tells us about Jesus, says that He never sinned. Earlier, I spoke about a foundation that we need to have in order to find out what real faith is. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 it says,

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Jesus wants to be your foundation for life. He is the foundation of your faith! The Old Testament compares this foundation to a strong tower. Proverbs 18:10 says,

“The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.”

In Jesus we have a strong foundation, or as Solomon says, we have a strong tower that we can run to.

If we place our faith in Jesus Christ we will be safe. He protects us by His grace. Since Jesus is the only perfect person who ever lived on this earth, He is and will always be the model for faith. Hebrews 12:1–3 (NIrV) says:

“Let us keep on running the race marked out for us. Let us keep looking to Jesus. He is the author of faith. He also makes it perfect. He paid no attention to the shame of the cross. He suffered there because of the joy he was looking forward to. Then he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God . . . So think about him. Then you . . . won’t lose hope.”

It would be very helpful to study the life of Jesus and learn from His faith. (*See also* Chapter 8).

It is exciting to know that God has already prepared people for His message. In every human being there is a space, like a vacuum, which only God can fill. In John 1:9 it says,

“The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.”



That true light is Jesus. The only problem is we are in darkness because of our sins. When we begin to study the life of Jesus, we can see that His light starts shining on us, and it gets brighter and brighter. Then, our desire to know more of Jesus increases. In John 8:12 we read the exciting words of Jesus,

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Besides studying the life of Jesus, here is another way to attain faith. This is through hearing the words of God. In Romans 10:17 (NKJV) Paul says,

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

The Apostle makes it very clear by saying that faith comes by hearing. So, we need to train our ears to hear the Word of God. This is also the word about Christ, which can only be found in the Bible. Did you know that the Bible is the only book that is 100% trustworthy? Why? Because this book was inspired by God Himself. In 2 Timothy 3:16 it says,

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

God's inspiration of the Bible is confirmed in 2 Peter 1:21 (CEV),

"The prophets did not think these things up on their own, but they were guided by the Spirit of God."

God intended for you to hear, read and practice every message written in the Bible. By reading the Bible you will begin to learn what real faith is. The Bible is the ultimate source for attaining faith.

In the early days of the Christians, Peter confirmed that not only the Jews, but also the other nations should have faith in God. He said in Acts 15:7 (CEV):

"My friends, you know that God decided long ago to let me be the one from your group to preach the good news to the Gentiles [other nations]: God did this so that they would hear and obey him."

The message was preached, the other nations heard the message, and they believed when they saw the power of the gospel. I encourage you to read and hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus and to believe. You will not regret it!

The question of faith was also a question that moved John Newton while he was on a ship that was wrestling against a storm. He told the following interesting story:

"The great question now for me was how to obtain faith . . . I wished to gain assurance that the Scriptures were of divine inspiration and





a sufficient reason to exercise trust and hope in God. One of the first helps I received, as a result of my determination to examine the New Testament more carefully, was from Luke 11:13, (LB): And if even sinful persons like yourselves give children what they need, don't realize that your heavenly Father will . . . give the Holy Spirit to those who ask for him? . . . I found a Spirit spoken of which was to be given to those who ask for it. I reasoned thus: if this book is true, the promise in this passage is true likewise.

. . . He has promised here to give that Spirit to those who ask. I must therefore pray, and if it is of God, he will make good his own word. My purposes were strengthened by John 7:17 (NirV), Anyone who chooses to do what God wants him to do will find out whether my teaching comes from God or from me. I concluded that, although I could not say from my heart that I believed the gospel, yet I would for the present take it for granted. By studying it in this light, I would be more and more confirmed in it."<sup>2</sup>

What Newton is saying is: when you know little about the Bible and God you will have little faith, but when you know more about God and His word your faith will grow deeper.

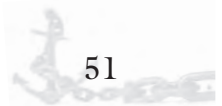


## Saving Faith

In the world today many people say they believe in God. They believe that God exists. They even believe that God created the world. They would say that God loves us. But does that mean that they are saved from their sins and will spend eternity with God in heaven? Does this kind of faith mean that God has already accepted them? The Bible gives us several examples of people who also believed but had no saving faith. Wayne Grudem points out in his book, *Systematic Theology*, that Nicodemus knew that Jesus had come from God. He said,

“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him.”  
John 3:2

Nicodemus had evaluated Jesus’ teaching and His remarkable miracles, and had drawn the correct conclusion: Jesus was a teacher who had come from God. But this alone did not mean that Nicodemus had saving



faith. One element was missing: he still had to “believe in Jesus.” King Agrippa provides another example of one who has knowledge and approves the Bible, but not have saving faith. King Agrippa knew the Old Testament of the Bible, which is the holy book of the Jews. When Paul was on trial before Agrippa, he said,

“King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.”

Acts 26–27

Agrippa did not have saving faith; he said to Paul,

“In a short time you think to make me a Christian!”  
(Acts 26:28).<sup>1</sup>

Many people know a great deal about God, the Bible and the Christian faith in general. But the Bible teaches us that our knowledge will not save us. Jesus Christ alone will save.

People often depend on other people’s opinions. They often follow what other well-known people tell them. But just relying on someone else’s deep opinions or beliefs about Jesus won’t save anybody. Joshua Harris talks about “right opinion”—having “your opinion or thought about God right.” He calls this orthodoxy. Joshua Harris says:

“The word orthodoxy literally means ‘right opinion.’ In the context of the Christian faith, orthodoxy is shorthand for getting your opinion or thought about God right. Orthodoxy matters

because the Christian faith is not just a cultural tradition or moral code. Orthodoxy is the irreducible truth about God and his work in the world. Our faith is not just a state of mind, a mystical experience, or concepts on a page. Theology, doctrine, and orthodoxy matter because God is real and he has acted in our world, and his actions have meaning for today and for all eternity."<sup>2</sup>

Some people also want to accept Christ because they see advantages for themselves. David J. Hesselgrave says:

"Undoubtedly many so-called decisions for Christ are not decisions for Christ! Many believe without believing the gospel. Many accept something other than salvation. Let us remember that our purpose is not that our hearers simply accept the missionary-evangelist (as a good person), or a better way of life, or peace with God, or heaven as an alternative to hell. No one can simply accept prosperity, peace, and paradise and get Christ as a bonus. But if any of us accepts Christ, then all the promises of God in him are yes and in him amen."<sup>3</sup>

Did you know that it is God's desire to see you saved from your sins and from an eternal separation from Him? Did you know that God wants you to be saved so that you can serve Him and experience Him for all eternity?



Let us turn to 1 Timothy 2:4-5 (CEV):

“God wants all people to be saved and to know the whole of the truth, which is, there is one God and Christ Jesus is the only one who can bring us to God. Jesus was truly human and he gave himself to rescue all of us.”

Jesus paid the full price—He made His life a total sacrifice so that we can have forgiveness of sins. Yet, there are people, especially in the Philippines, who go so far as to let themselves be crucified. According to an article from the Internet:

“About two dozen Filipinos were nailed to crosses on Good Friday in an extreme display of devotion that the Catholic Church looks down upon as a form of folk religion but appears powerless to stop. The re-enactment of the passion of Jesus Christ draws thousands of tourists to the Pampanga region, 80 kilometers north of the capital, to watch barefoot penitents flagellate themselves and a series of crucifixions on an artificial hill. The practice took hold in the province about 60 years ago as a form of religious vow by poor people seeking forgiveness, a cure for illness and the fulfillment of other wishes.”<sup>4</sup>

This example proves how many people are trying to free themselves from their sins, so that they will be able to spend eternity in heaven with God. After talking with many Indian seamen who practice the Hindu faith, it

became clear to me that no matter how strictly they observed their rituals, they still longed for forgiveness sin. The good news is that Jesus Christ has promised to forgive all our sins completely if we confess our sins to Him. In 1 John 1:9 (CEV) it says,

*“If we confess our sins to God, he . . . will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

It is amazing that God said *all* unrighteousness and not just some unrighteousness. But, there is one condition that many people overlook. First of all, forgiveness is only through Jesus Christ, because He is the only person who ever died on the cross for the sins of people. Secondly, confession must be made to Jesus Christ directly. Read what Acts 10:43 says;

*“All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*

Paul makes it very clear in Acts 4:12,

*“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”*

There is no other name given to us on this planet! Jesus is the name above all names and only in HIM can we be saved and forgiven. Please read the following verses to encourage you in your search for God and your search for salvation:

Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Romans 10:4, NLT

In this amazing verse it says that God considers a person to be right in His eyes on the basis of his faith or on what he believes, not on the basis of his good works. It does not matter what he has done or not done. Becoming right before God is not obtained through good works but simply through faith in Jesus alone. Isn't that wonderful?

"If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:9–13

Did you notice that Paul says that anyone who believes will never be put to shame? It is amazing to read that everyone who believes will be saved! God gives the same chance to everybody, no matter where he comes from and what he has done. So what is the requirement? To believe in Jesus Christ with all our heart.

“Everyone who has faith in the Son has eternal life. But no one who rejects him will ever share in that life, and God will be angry with them forever.”

John 3:36, CEV

This is a key verse in the sense that it shows God’s greatness and love. It does not say: may have, or maybe if you do this and that, then finally, you will have eternal life. No, it clearly says: If you believe you have eternal life! At the same time, it clearly says that if we reject the Son of God we will not see life, but God will be angry with us forever.

“I assure you, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.”

John 5:24, NLT

This verse is similar to John 3:36—the wonderful, clear promise that if you believe in Jesus and the Father who sent Him, then you have eternal life!

“Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.’ Then Jesus said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ The other guests began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this who even forgives sins?’ Jesus said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’”





This is one more promise that shows us that faith saves. God is honored if we trust and believe Him. God does not want our good works for our salvation. He wants us instead to put our whole trust and confidence in HIM alone. If works were effective, then we could save ourselves by our works. But salvation is 100% God's work.

"All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ."

Galatians 3:26, CEV

You and I are children because of our parents. In the spiritual sense you can become a child of God's family by simply dedicating your life to Jesus who made the way free for you on the cross of Calvary. You do not need to pay for your sins anymore. Christ has paid everything, and He simply desires you to place your trust in Him. In this way, you become a child of God, and you become a member of the family of God. (See also the Appendix at the end of the book.)



A grayscale photograph of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, large, dark, jagged rocks are scattered across the beach. The ocean is visible in the middle ground, with a small ship on the horizon. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The overall scene is serene and somewhat somber due to the monochrome palette.

PART 2

# How to Live by Faith





# Prayer for Faith

I've been working as a port chaplain on ships since 1987. One of the things that has always been very important to me is to pray for seamen—that their faith will make a difference in their daily lives, and that their faith will remain strong. Over the years, many seamen have asked me to pray for them. Among those who have asked were Muslims and Hindus, besides Christians. Many of them had tears in their eyes after I prayed for them, because they sensed God's presence. One seaman on a bulk carrier<sup>1</sup> told me, "I feel so free, so uplifted."

Seamen know that they cannot live without God's sustaining grace. They know that they need God's blessings, and they know that life isn't complete if the Living Savior isn't a part of it. They are well familiar with their weaknesses, their shortcomings, and their daily problems. And so, they ask for prayer. I still remember when the war between Iraq and Iran was going on, a ship captain from Scotland asked me to pray for their safety

because their ship was heading towards that dangerous area. Many seamen also ask me to pray for their safety as they sail over the oceans. They request prayer while they sail through pirate areas, but they also specifically ask me to pray that their faith will be strong. And if they feel that their faith is gone, they ask for prayers that their faith will be renewed and revived. Some ask for prayer due to illness of a family member. Once, a captain asked me to write a prayer for the ship and put it in the mess-room of the crew and officers.

Perhaps you are in a situation in which you feel you have lost your faith. Or, maybe you even feel you have betrayed Jesus. It feels bad, and you know something has got to change. You cannot go on like that. You feel like a backslider. Well, let me encourage you—you are not alone with such feelings. Many other seamen feel the same way—I think it's natural. You encounter trials, temptations, and when you have no fellowship with fellow believers, no family around you, no church to attend, no person to go to, you easily fall into the trap of believing you've lost your faith. In such a situation it is essential for you to start reading the Bible and to find out how much Jesus longs to have fellowship with you. He longs to be with you every single day. It makes Jesus so happy when you trust Him. No matter what happens, Jesus will never leave you or turn you away—even when you feel weak. He wants you to come to Him. Have a look at Matthew 11:28 where Jesus says:



“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

“Walk with me and work with me . . . I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you” (TM).

“. . . you will find rest for your souls.”

It is especially in moments of weakness when Jesus invites you to come to Him—during those times when you feel weak, you feel like you have forgotten Him, or you feel like a backslider. Jesus mentions the word “rest” twice, emphasizing that He wants to give you rest. He desires to give you new hope and assurance. If you trust Him and believe in Him, He will bless you.

It is interesting to note that Jesus has such a strong desire to be with you that He even prays to His own Father on your behalf. You can read the following prayer of our Lord Jesus in John 17:9, 20–23:

“I pray for them . . . for those you have given me, for they are yours. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, . . . I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

In another part of the New Testament we read in Hebrews 7:25 (NCV),

“So he is able always to save those who come to God through him, because he always lives, asking God to help them.”

Did you read that verse carefully? It says that Jesus always lives to help you, to pray for you, to pray that your faith will be strong and active. Jesus has a ministry in heaven. He prays for His children on earth. Jesus knows that we are too weak and that we constantly face temptations of all kinds. He knows that without His help, you and I could not resist the temptations we that frequently encounter. And so, He prays to His Father that He will protect us and strengthen our faith. We can read in Romans 8:34 (NCV),

“Who then is the one who condemns? No one, Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding [appealing to God for us].”

In the next two verses you will see that Jesus not only prays for you, but He also acts as a lawyer on your behalf. He appears in heaven before God the Father and speaks in your favor. Hebrews 9:24 (NCV) says,

“Christ . . . went into heaven itself, and is there now before God to help us.”





And again in 1 John 2:1 (NCV),

“My dear children, I write this letter to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have a helper in the presence of the Father—Jesus Christ, the One who does what is right.”

Jesus appears before God the Father asking for our sins to be forgiven. He acts as our lawyer. So if you are disappointed because you have fallen into sin again, be of good courage, because you can be sure that Jesus Christ, your lawyer, is praying for you, that your sins will be forgiven. He constantly intercedes for you. We need Jesus’ prayers, because we are simply too weak in our daily lives. Even the apostles, who are viewed as examples of faith, prayed to God in Luke 17:5 (CEV), “*Make our faith stronger!*”

But, one prayer that we can pray to God is mentioned in Mark 9:24,

“The father instantly replied, ‘I do have faith; Oh, help me to have more!’”

These last two verses should encourage us enough to pray, “Lord, please increase my faith!” I am sure that God will answer that prayer if you pray with all your heart. It is also most encouraging to see that not only Jesus Christ but also the Holy Spirit Himself prays for us, as mentioned in Romans 8:26 (NCV),

“Also the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit himself speaks to God for us, even begs God for us with deep feelings that words cannot explain.”

And finally, turn with me to James 5:16 (LB) where it says,

“Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results.”

Let me encourage you at this point to look for Christian friends whom you can trust and who are dedicated to Jesus Christ. Ask them to pray for you regularly, and pray for your faith to grow. You will indeed see the difference when people start praying for you.



# Faith— A Gift of God

## Is faith a gift of God?

This question has always been controversial, yet it's puzzling considering how plainly the answer is laid out in the Bible. Some modern Evangelicals believe that faith is something which arises out of the fallen nature of certain persons, but not others . . . and that this difference in response is not due to grace (for all had grace), but rather, some inherent difference in the persons themselves. But Jesus puts such speculation to rest:

In John 6:65 [NIRV], Jesus says, "No one can *come to me* unless the Father helps him." In the same chapter Jesus also says, "Everyone the Father gives to me will *come to me*" (John 6:37, [NIRV]). In both verses the phrase, "come to me," simply means "believe in me." In other words, Jesus is saying that no one can believe in Him unless God grants it, and all to whom God grants it will believe. So, according to this passage, God

grants faith, a faith that will infallibly arise in the heart of those He has given His Son . . .

Faith is not the product of an unregenerate human nature. If a person becomes humble enough to submit to God, it is because the Holy Spirit has given that person a new, humble nature—not because some men are more humble than others. It was not by chance that one person believed the gospel and not the other, nor was it because one had some innate virtue that the other lacked. It is grace and grace ALONE that makes men different, not the exertion of men's wills. While God requires faith of all men, He promises to give His Holy Spirit to all those that are ordained to have eternal life (John 6:63–65). It is He who quickens [makes them alive] and disarms hostility so they are willing, and able to believe.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Faith comes as we hear God's Word**

But, some might say:

“Faith is not a direct gift from God given to some but not others.’ Rather, as Paul wrote to the church at Rome, ‘Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God’ (Romans 10:17). Faith in Christ as the Son of God is only found in those who have first heard the Word of God, and then believed (cf. John 20:31).”<sup>2</sup>

Well, it is true that faith comes as we hear the Word of God being preached to us or as we read it ourselves.



I still believe that faith does not come automatically because it is the Holy Spirit who helps us to understand the Word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals God's plans for human beings through the Word. If there is no work of conviction of the Holy Spirit, showing a person his error or compelling him to admit the truth, there will also be no faith in HIM. I, myself, know how difficult it is to live a daily walk of faith. Too often we live by our own efforts but when things go wrong, we realize we did not exercise faith. So, I conclude that faith must be a gift of God, and we desperately need that gift in order to live holy lives that are pleasing to God.

"Saving faith means than just man's belief, conviction, knowledge or conscious assent. It is a God-given influence, the favorable response to God that we might spiritually receive and trust in that which we may not physically see. It is the spirit of belief to understand that God is faithful and true."<sup>3</sup>

Ephesians 2:8 says,

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."

When we look at the second part of this verse, we clearly see that it says: ". . . *and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God . . .*" If we were able to believe by means of our own strength, then we would have difficulties

understanding what real faith is. Everyone would argue that his belief is the right one and the other person's belief is not. In here, we can be happy knowing that faith is only true faith when it is given to us through God's grace. Another very good explanation is found in the book of Hebrews 12:2 (GW). It reads,

"We must focus on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith. He saw the joy ahead of him, so he endured death on the cross and endured the disgrace it brought him."

Once again it is amazing to see how clear the Scripture explains that no one else but Jesus is the source (pioneer) and the goal (finisher or perfecter) of our faith. We, as human beings, have no power to press a button and say, "Now I believe!" In John 6:29 (NKJV) Jesus says,

"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

It is the work of God, not my work, your work or that of any other human being. And so, we do not have to be afraid that we might lose our faith. The promise given to us says that Jesus is the perfecter or finisher of our faith. Just as Paul said in the book of 2 Timothy 4:7,

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."



At the end of his life and ministry the Apostle Paul could say that from start to finish, he had experienced God's sustaining grace daily. And so, he was now able to say, "*I have kept the faith.*"

## Gifts of Faith from God

In this section I will show you that God gives us gifts of faith. There is *saving faith* which we already mentioned earlier. It is encouraging to see the grace of God which is so wonderfully shown in 1 Timothy 1:14 (NIRV),

"Our Lord poured out more and more of his grace on me. Along with it came *faith* and love from Christ Jesus." (emphasis mine)

Saving faith is clearly not human but from God, as shown in this particular verse: ". . . *along with it came faith and love from Christ Jesus.*" In other words, it is a faith that has its origin in Jesus, not in human will power. We also see in Romans 12:3–8 that God distributes to His children a measure (amount) of *faith to be used in serving* Christ's Body, the church. Paul explains in verse 3:

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with *the faith God has distributed to each of you.*" (emphasis mine)

Paul explains in verses 3 and 6 (LB):

“. . . Be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value *by how much faith God has given you* . . . So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, then prophesy whenever you can—as often as your *faith* is strong enough to receive a message from God.” (emphasis mine)

This is a living and practical faith that God enjoys distributing to each believer. God is the giver, not men. If God is the giver, why don't we pray to Him for more faith so we can serve others well?

So, the Bible speaks about a saving faith that is from God which He so freely gives to mankind. Then, there is also an amount of faith that God distributes to His children which accompanies the abilities or giftings He has given them so as to serve others, especially those belonging to the Body of Christ (Romans 12:3–8). But, the Bible also speaks about *a special gift of faith*. This is a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:7–9:

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another *faith* by the same Spirit.” (emphasis mine)

Here, the gift of faith is mentioned as a particular gift to use for the Body of Christ as well as God's kingdom.





In this context, this is not the faith for salvation or ministry but rather the faith that moves mountains. For example, if you are caught up in difficult situations like storms on the oceans, sickness in your family or marriage problems that disturb you. Whatever the problem, God is able to give you the gift of faith to move the mountains that seem immovable. With this kind of faith we can encourage others to believe in Jesus too, and to trust in His unchanging power. This faith will point to Jesus and give glory to God alone.

Lastly, 1 Peter 1:3–5 speaks about *faith as a gift to keep us strong in the Lord* until we receive the expected inheritance in heaven to be given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us a new birth and hope that is alive. It is alive because Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He has given us new birth so that we might share in what belongs to him. It is a gift that can never be destroyed. It can never spoil or even fade away. It is kept in heaven for you. Through *faith* you are kept safe by God’s power. Your salvation is going to be completed. It is ready to be shown to you in the last days.”(NIRV, emphasis mine)

We are kept safe through faith. Faith works as a shield to protect us from being polluted by this world’s temptations (Ephesians 6:16). Let’s respond by giving thanks to God who so wonderfully works faith in us for His glory!



# God is Faithful and So are His Promises

We are constantly tested by problems, circumstances, disappointments, and trials of many kinds. We can easily lose faith if we look at the circumstances around us. You might become disappointed in a friend who has acted very foolishly. He used to be your example in faith and now he has done something you would never have expected. As a result, you may say to yourself, *I thought he had a strong faith*. And then you begin to take faith more lightly, or you might even abandon the faith because you have been disappointed at every turn. You wonder, *Is faith really working at all?* Let me tell you this: “We never learn faith when we compare ourselves to others or look to others. Also, faith is not something that we can learn in an instant, once and for all. Faith is something that will challenge us all our lives, and we will need to pursue it day after day. We are told to live by faith and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).



This world, with all of its pleasures and riches, tempts us to live for the moment and to forget faith. The world seems to have so much to offer. But can this world completely satisfy your souls? The whole human race constantly scrambles to find peace, joy, fulfillment in life. But where can people find those things? Jesus once made a very important statement in John 10:10,

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Jesus wants us to have a meaningful life. We see a very interesting story in Luke 15. Here we are told that the prodigal son was looking for life apart from his family. When he left his father, he probably also left the faith. However, no matter how far away this son was from his own father, the father kept waiting for his lost son. He did not give up on him. This story reminds us of God’s faithfulness despite our lack of faith. Luke 15 should really encourage you to trust God and put your faith in Jesus, since He alone is the Giver of Life.

Below you will find many other verses from the Old and New Testament in which God shows His faithfulness. Even when we are not faithful, when friends are not faithful, God remains faithful because He has committed Himself to keeping His promises. Actually, faithfulness is one of the many qualities of God. People long considered George Verwer, the founder of Operation

Mobilisation,<sup>1</sup> to be a man of faith. But David Greenlee says,

“Yet anyone who has met George, heard him speak, or read his writings, knows that George considers himself a struggler. He sees himself and all his co-workers as examples of the truth that it is better to possess a weak faith in the Lord Jesus Christ than to have a strong faith in anyone or anything else. We are thankful that God’s work ultimately rests on something much more than our faith. It rests on his faithfulness.”<sup>2</sup>

George has achieved so much in his life because he trusted in God’s faithfulness more than in his own abilities. To me George is a man of faith because he shows us where we need to focus our view—on God Himself, on His faithfulness.

I’d like to encourage you to take one or two verses from the following pages everyday, and learn them by heart. Meditate on these verses, too. These truths will bless you, make your faith strong and give you a new perspective on life. They will show you that indeed it’s wonderful to believe in Christ and trust His promises! Once you know some of these verses by heart, you can call them to mind everytime you face difficulties. Added to this, they will lift you up and renew your perspective. And if you share these verses with other people, they will also be blessed. Below you’ll find a few verses, but if you search the Scriptures you will find many more that you can add to this list.



“For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.”  
Psalms 33:4

“Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.”  
Psalms 36:5

“But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”  
Psalms 86:15

“I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.”  
Psalms 89:1

“O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you.”  
Psalms 89:8

“Say this: God, you’re my refuge. I trust in you and I’m safe!” That’s right—he rescues you from hidden traps, shields you from deadly hazards. His huge outstretched arms protect you—under them you’re perfectly safe; his arms fend off all harm. Fear nothing—not wild wolves in the night, not flying arrows in the day, not disease that prowls through the darkness, not disaster that erupts at high noon.  
Psalms 91:2–6 TM

“It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, to the

music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp.”

Psalm 92:1–3

“For great is your love, higher than the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies.”

Psalm 108:4

“Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.”

Psalm 115:1

“O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.”

Psalm 143:1

“For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.”

Proverbs 2:6–8

“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.”

Proverbs 29:25

“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Lamentations 3:22–23



“When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’”

Luke 5:4-5

“What if some of them were unfaithful? Can their unfaithfulness cancel God’s faithfulness? That would be unthinkable!”

Romans 3:3-4, GW

“Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.”

Romans 4:20–21

“God . . . shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that.

1 Corinthians 1:9 TM

“But remember this—the wrong desires that come into your life aren’t anything new and different. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can bear up patiently against it.”

1 Corinthians 10:13 LB

“In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”

Ephesians 3:12

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,<sup>2</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.”

Ephesians 3:16–18

“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”

Ephesians 6:16

“Now may God Himself, the God of peace, make you pure, belonging only to him. May your whole self—spirit, soul and body be kept safe and without fault when our Lord Jesus Christ comes. You can trust the One who calls you to do that for you.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 NCV

“But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”

2 Thessalonians 3:3

“I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.”

2 Timothy 1:12

“Even when we are too weak to have any faith, he remains faithful to us and will help us, for he cannot disown us who are part of himself, and he will always carry out his promises to us.”

2 Timothy 2:13 LB





“So let’s do it—full of belief, confident that we’re presentable inside and out. Let’s keep a grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word.”  
Hebrews 10:22–23 TM

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”  
2 Peter 3:9

“God is faithful and reliable. If we confess our sins, he forgives them and cleanse us from everything we’ve done wrong.”  
1 John 1:9 GW

“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”  
1 John 5:4



# JESUS— Our Great Example of Faith

If we look to Jesus Christ and make Him our example of faith, we will learn more than we have ever imagined for our personal lives. We will learn so much from Jesus which we will be able to share with other people. In fact, no human being could ever teach you as much as Jesus Christ Himself can. And so, I strongly suggest that you study very well the life of Jesus in the New Testament. But then, some people would say when it comes to examining how Jesus practiced His faith, “It’s not fair to compare the life of Jesus with our lives because He is the Son of God, and we are just human beings.” This is true. Jesus is the Son of God and we are human beings. But still, let us remember that Jesus came to earth as a human being.



The Bible says that He was tempted in every way. It says in Hebrews 4:15 (NCV),

“For our high priest is able to understand our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way just as we are, yet he did not sin.”

The amazing thing we can learn from Jesus is that although He went through some very unpleasant situations, He still practiced faith. While He lived on earth, He did not have a bed to sleep on (Luke 9:58). When He was in the desert, He was tempted by the Devil (Matthew 4:1–11). He was cruelly beaten, and then while He was hanging on the cross people mocked Him (John 19:1–3). He was even forsaken by His heavenly Father (Mark 15:34). And yet despite all these difficulties, Jesus never complained. He never said to His Father, “Why did You give Me such a difficult burden to bear? Why did You send Me to these people on the earth, who aren’t interested in following Your commandments?” Jesus simply obeyed the call that God His Father gave Him. He knew His Father—knew He could trust Him completely. But even though He knew His Father, being human, He still felt the opposition from the people around Him. We can also read that Jesus showed His feelings. When Lazarus died, it says in John 11:33–36 (NCV),

“When Jesus saw Mary crying and the Jews who came with her also crying, he was upset and was

deeply troubled. He said, 'Where did you bury him?'

"'Come and see, Lord,' they said.

"Jesus cried. So the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him.'"

This passage clearly shows that Jesus was human; He had no problems showing His emotions. He did not hide His emotions, but instead He showed people that He was human and so, He is able to understand us.

In spite of all of the trials Jesus went through, He practiced faith. When Jesus was at a wedding, His own mother told Him that the party had run out of wine (John 2:1–5). Jesus was not troubled and He did not panic. He did not blame people. He could have said to the servants, "Why didn't you order more wine?" But He didn't do that. Instead, He acted in faith by trusting His Father that He, the Creator of heaven and earth, could do a miracle. Then, Jesus by faith turned the water into wine. The guests noticed the superior quality of this wine, but didn't know the source. But, those who knew what had happened, of course, were very much surprised.

On another occasion we can see how Jesus preached and ministered to many people. Matthew 14:13–21 (NIV, NIRV) tells the following story:

"Jesus heard what had happened to John the Baptist. He wanted to be alone. So he went in a boat to a quiet place. The crowds heard about this. They followed him on foot from the towns.



When Jesus came ashore, he saw a large crowd. He felt deep concern for and healed their sick.

When it was almost evening, the disciples came to him. 'There is nothing here,' they said. It's already getting late. Send the crowds away. They can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.'

Jesus replied, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.'

'We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,' they answered.

'Bring them here to me,' he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up to heaven, and gave thanks. He broke the loaves into pieces. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied. The disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftover pieces. The number of men who ate was about five thousand. Women and children also ate."

Again we read in this passage that Jesus acted in a very human manner. He had compassion on the crowd. It wasn't His intention to make Himself out to be a hero. He who was there to obey His Father in heaven and serve people on earth. Having faith does not always mean that everything will go smoothly. It might mean that Jesus is trying to teach us something. Jesus Himself was willing to learn from His Father—no matter what it was. The hardest thing that Jesus had to learn was to trust His Father because it meant He would have to go

to the cross. He would have to believe that His Father was still making the right decision. We see Jesus praying in Luke 22:42 (LB),

“Father, if you are willing, please take away this cup of horror from me. But I want your will, not mine.”

Jesus trusted His Father. He said, “Not my will, but Yours be done.” He knew that by carrying out God’s will, He would glorify His Father and at the same time, He would be the greatest example for our faith.

Interestingly enough, Jesus never panicked when a problem arose, because He had confidence and trust in His Father that made Him relax in every situation, even when a storm arose on the sea. It is recorded in Mark 4:35-40 (NIRV):

“When evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Let us go over to the other side of the lake.’ They left the crowd behind. And they took him along in the boat just as he was. There were also other boats with him. A wild storm came up. Waves crashed over the boat. It was about to sink. Jesus was in the back, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him up and said to him, ‘Teacher! Don’t you care if we drown?’

He got up and ordered the wind to stop. He said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Don’t you have any faith at all yet?’”



**Jesus trusted God the Father more than the sweet temptations offered by the Devil.** In Matthew 4:1–11 (NIRV), it says,

“The Holy Spirit led Jesus to the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’

Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Man does not live only on bread. He also lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’

Then the devil took him to the holy city. He had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down. For it is written:

‘He will command his angels to take good care of you.

They will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not trip over a stone.’

Jesus answered him, ‘It is also written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’

Finally, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’

Jesus said to him, ‘Get away from me, Satan! For it is written:

‘Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve.’”

It is an amazing story, isn't it? How would you react if somebody offered you all of the world's possessions?

Or, if you were not healthy and somebody just offered you perfect health on the condition that you would follow him? I can imagine that the temptations Jesus went through were extremely trying. Yet, He gave us an example of how to trust solely in His heavenly Father's promises, no matter how sweet the temptations were. Jesus resisted the Devil while He looked to His Father in heaven for help and direction. In this way He showed us how to overcome temptation and act in faith, and so honor God. It is also interesting to note that Jesus quoted the God's Word, the Bible. So I encourage you to read the Bible alongside, while you're reading this book. By reading the Bible, you will get the spiritual food you'll need to sustain you in any difficulties you may encounter. In the Bible you will read about Jesus Christ and be able to follow His example.





# People of the Bible Who Had Faith

“In God’s eyes, the greatest heroes of faith are not those who achieve prosperity, success, and power in this life, but those who treat this life as a temporary assignment and serve faithfully, expecting their promised reward in eternity. The Bible says this about God’s Hall of Fame:

‘All these great people died in faith. They did not get the things that God promised his people, but they saw them coming far in the future and were glad. They said they were like visitors and strangers on earth . . . they were waiting for a better country—a heavenly country. So God is not ashamed to be called their God, because he has prepared a city for them.’

Your time on earth is not the complete story of your life. You must wait until heaven for the rest of the chapters. It takes faith to live on earth as a foreigner.”<sup>1</sup>

Let's get to know some of those who are in the Bible's Hall of Fame.

## Abraham

Imagine that God calls you to leave your country but you do not know where you are going. You probably won't go. You will want to wait until you knew your destination. Abraham did not know the destination of his journey, but instead of waiting for more information, he obeyed God and acted in faith. We read in Hebrews 11:8–9:

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.”

What was the challenge? To go, even though he did not know where he was heading to. To go, just because God told him to do it. Abraham obeyed God because he knew that God could not make a mistake, and that God would only ask him to go somewhere for godly purposes. And so, God blessed Abraham for acting in faith.

In another passage, Hebrews 11:17–19 (NIV), we can read about Abraham's faith:

“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham had

received the promises. But he was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'Your family line will continue through Isaac.' Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead. In a way, he did receive Isaac back from death."

## Noah

When we look at Noah, a person from the Old Testament, we can see how much faith was needed in a strange and difficult situation. Just imagine: God told him to build a very large boat on dry land (there was nothing said about water nearby). There was no rain, and none was expected. But, Noah built the big boat on dry land. "*How stupid!*" people must have thought. I can even imagine that people made fun of him and mocked him. They must have shouted to him, "Noah, look at the sky. Do you see any clouds? Where is the ocean? Even if it rains, there won't be enough for a very big boat!" Yet, Noah did not pay any attention to the people's ideas and opinions. He didn't doubt in spite of the circumstances around him, instead he looked to his God and obeyed by faith. In Hebrews 11:7 (NCV) it says:

"It was by faith that Noah heard God's warnings about things he could not see. He obeyed God and built a large boat to save his family. By faith Noah showed the world was wrong and he became one of those who are made right that is in keeping with God through faith."

The wonderful lesson this story teaches is that Noah's faith saved his family as well as many animals, and so it saved the generations to come. God had planned to destroy people because of their wickedness and sin. Noah's faith was a reminder that if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, he will also save you from eternal destruction and punishment.

## Sarah

Sarah, who was the wife of Abraham, received a most strange and puzzling promise (Genesis 18:10). She was already past the age of childbearing when an angel told her that she would give birth to a child. At first she laughed, doubting the promise, but later on we read in Hebrews 11:11 (TM):

“By faith barren Sarah was able to become pregnant, old woman as she was at the time, because she believed the One [God] who made a promise would do what he said.”

Obviously, there was spiritual process going on in Sarah. She must have seen the faith of her husband, and she also saw the faithfulness of God. She came to the conclusion that the only right thing to do was to trust God, even though it looked foolish. We can see the transformation in Sarah, from a doubting Sarah to a faithful Sarah, when it says that she believed God. She didn't laugh anymore but honored God through her faith, and

was rewarded with a child. You can read more about the rewards and blessings of faith in Chapter 17 of this book.

## Moses

Another very exciting person is Moses. He was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, and he could have enjoyed all the riches and privileges in Pharaoh's palace—a lifetime of ease and relaxation. No worries about anything! Yet, when he grew up, he chose to follow God's call to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt—he put obedience over worldly pleasures. This is what is said about him in Hebrews 11:24–25:

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”

One might ask, why did Moses do that? Where did he get the strength to prefer being mistreated, instead of enjoying the pleasures and entertainments of this world? The answer can be found a few verses later, in Hebrews 11:26–28 (CEV):

“Moses knew that the treasures of Egypt were not as wonderful as what he would receive from suffering for the Messiah, and he looked forward to his reward. Because of his faith, Moses left Egypt. Moses had seen the invisible God and wasn't afraid of the king's anger.”

## Daniel

Daniel was another man filled with faith. He was one of the king's three administrators, but he did such a good job that the king made him prime minister. But, the other administrators envied Daniel, and so they devised a plan. They went to the king suggesting that everyone who did not honor and pray solely to the king should be thrown into the lion's pit. When Daniel heard about the decree, he did not stop praying to God. In Daniel 6:10 it says:

"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."

It is amazing to see how strong his faith was, even when he was threatened with death if he disobeyed the king's decree! Well, the two other administrators reported to the king that Daniel didn't bow down to the king, and disobeyed the decree. Instead, he prayed to his God. And so the king was forced to order that Daniel be thrown into the lion's pit, although he was not happy about it. But, to his surprise, Daniel was kept safe. We read in Daniel 6:19–23:

"At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near



the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?' Daniel answered, 'May the king live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.' The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God."

Did you notice Daniel's secret? It is revealed in the last sentence which says, "because he had trusted in his God." His faith saved him from the lions and all dangers. His faith even strengthened the relationship between him and the king, because the king was truly impressed with Daniel's faith. Once again, Daniel is another example of how God will be pleased and will act on our behalf if we honor Him by faith.

## **Peter**

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, was a real man of faith although some do not consider him so. But let me show you. In Matthew 14:25–26, the disciples were on a boat when they saw someone walking on the water. They thought it was a ghost. But Jesus told them not to be afraid. It was Peter who immediately spoke.

In verses 28–31 it says:

“‘Lord, if it’s you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’ ‘Come,’ he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’”

When people read this passage they often criticize Peter because he suddenly became afraid and began to sink. But, few people notice how much faith it took Peter to even ask Jesus to call him out of the boat. Peter actually climbed out of the boat! He left his comfort zone. Have you left your comfortable life in order to follow Christ by faith? It’s so easy to see the mistakes and sins of other people and criticize them, but have you tried at all to follow Peter’s example? Have you climbed out of your life’s boat to follow Jesus?

Our boats sometimes get too cozy, warm and comfortable. We lack nothing. But are we willing, by faith, to step out of our boats so we can powerfully experience Jesus just like Peter did? Imagine he was able to walk on water! Have you ever “walked on water”?

Of course, we also read that the Lord told Peter that he had little faith. Why? Because at that very moment Peter focused on the waves, and not on Jesus. What can we learn from this? Not to focus on our problems





and circumstances but to focus on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Peter soon learned that lesson, and later he was shown to be a real man of faith.

In Acts 3:2–7 we can read one example of how he acted by faith:

“Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, ‘Look at us!’ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong.”

Peter did not focus on the difficulties involved in dealing with a lame person. Instead, he saw the possibilities he had, as well as the authority that Jesus had. He prayed in faith to Jesus and the man was healed.

## **The Army Officer**

It is also exciting to read about this military man. Earlier in Mathew 8:5 the officer, who was a Roman centurion, approached Jesus, because he had a servant at home who was very sick. So Jesus offered to go with the officer

to his house to make the servant well. But the officer said that he was not worthy to receive Jesus in his house. Besides, he thought it wasn't needed.

In verses 8–10 (CEV) it says:

"But the officer said, 'Lord, I am not good enough for you to come to my house. Just give the order, and my servant will get well. I have officers who give orders to me, and I have soldiers who take orders from. I can say to one of them, "Go!" and he goes. I can say to another, "Come!" and he comes.

"When Jesus heard this, he was so surprised that he turned and said to the crowd following him, ' I tell you that in all of Israel I've never found anyone with this much faith!'"

This passage is so astonishing because Jesus said that He had not found anyone in Israel with that kind of faith. What was the faith of this man like? Well, first of all, he fully trusted Jesus. But even more importantly, he didn't ask Jesus to come to his house, so that he could see Him perform the miracle. Instead he asked Jesus just to speak the word for his servant to get well! This indicates that he totally believed that whatever word Jesus spoke, it had authority to make something happen! Once again, this is a great example for all of us to believe every spoken word in the Bible. By following the words of Jesus, by obeying what He says in the Bible, we exercise faith.



# Ways to Learn faith

This book might convince you of the importance of having faith, but you still might not know how to trust Jesus more. Or, you might need to develop a strong faith which can give you perspective and enable you to overcome problems, temptations and sins. Well, first of all, I ask you to think of your own life and see when God has blessed you because you acted in faith. I am sure that you have experienced situations in which you trusted God, and then you saw how He blessed you because you gave Him the honor that was due to Him. There is an old hymn with some lines like these:

Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.  
Count your blessings, name them one by one;  
Count your many blessings, see what God has done!<sup>1</sup>

Even the Bible tells you to look back and remember the wonderful things that God did for you.

In 1 Chronicles 16:12 (NCV) we read,

“Remember the miracles he has done, his wonders and his decisions.”

We tend to become ungrateful during hard times, when things aren’t going well. We forget what God did for us in the past and how He protected our lives. That is why some of the authors in the Bible like David remind us about God’s faithfulness in Psalm 103:2–5:

“Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

Especially in times of difficulties, or when people have disappointed us, it will help to remember God’s faithfulness, God’s love, God’s protection and His blessings. We have so much to be thankful for. If we look back on how God has blessed us and displayed His greatness, our faith will become stronger because we recognize that God is greater and more powerful than we thought.

## Learn from people

I am sure you have at least a few good friends you can count on. Maybe you even look up to some of them as heroes. And others have a lifestyle of faith that you desire to imitate. Hebrews 13:7 (CEV) says this,

“Don’t forget about your leaders who taught you God’s message. Remember what kind of lives they lived and try to have faith like theirs.”

And in 1 Corinthians 11:1, the Apostle Paul writes, *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”* This tells us we can follow other people’s good examples. You can see how children look up to their parents. They learn faith and confidence from them. It’s very natural for them to imitate their parents as role models. And so, I encourage you to find friends who live a life of faith. Spend as much time with them as you can—ask questions, imitate their faith as long as it is based on what the Bible teaches.

## **Learn by using modern equipment**

In this day and age it is so easy to learn through modern media. Most of us have a laptop, computer, smart phone, TV, e-books, etc. While on ships, I have met countless seamen who have shown me their technical equipment and explained to me how they use it to deepen their faith in Christ: they read the Bible on their smart phones, listen to sermons on the Internet, do Bible studies online, use e-books. Some also read books that they bought in a bookshop or from a seamen’s mission. Even good inspirational music can lift our spirits and teach us to trust God more. Music from Don Moen, Keith Green and others can be of great help. Probably the best way so far—at least what we have seen with

seamen—is to study the Bible using Bible study courses. These courses can be ordered through Emmaus Bible School<sup>2</sup> or even through certain seamen’s centers in various ports. Here is a short list of books that I would recommend to help you grow in faith:

*The Bible*

*The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren

*The Bondage Breaker* by Dr. Neil Anderson

*Systematic Theology* by Dr. Wayne Grudem

Bible study courses — from Emmaus Bible school

## **Learn from *The Bible***

Hebrews 11 writes about people who can teach us a lot about faith. They show us how eternal things matter more than earthly things, and what real faith in the risen Jesus Christ means. There may be times when you don’t find many good examples around you. If so, just read Hebrews 11 and you will be inspired to follow the faith of these heroes in the Bible. The entire Bible, with its many promises, is a fantastic book to learn faith from. It is inspired by God, so it will guide you into all truth (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible will inspire and encourage you in your faith, over and over again. That’s why you should read the Bible daily. Try to read the whole Bible, not just parts of it. Before you begin reading, briefly pray to Jesus to help you understand what you are going to read, and to help you put it into practice.

## Learn from Jesus Christ

In Hebrews 12:1-2 (GW) it says:

“Since we are surrounded by so many examples of faith, we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially sin that distracts us. We must run the race that lies ahead of us and never give up. We must focus on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith. He saw the joy ahead of him, so he endured death on the cross and ignored the disgrace it brought him. Then he received the highest position in heaven, the one next to the throne of God.”

Jesus was focused on carrying out His mission. Peter, one of His disciples, advised Him to be careful and look out for Himself, and not to allow suffering. But Jesus didn’t pay attention to Peter’s advice, instead He continued to look to His Father in heaven for guidance and direction. We read in Matthew 16:21–23:

“From then on Jesus began telling his disciples what would happen to him. He said, ‘I must go to Jerusalem. There the nation’s leaders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law of Moses will make me suffer terribly. I will be killed, but three days later, I will be raised to life. Peter took Jesus aside and told him to stop talking like that. ‘God would never let this happen to you, Lord!’ Jesus turned to Peter and said, ‘Satan, get away from me! You’re in my

way (NLT); you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

This lesson was not only intended for Peter, but for us as well. Jesus can also say to us that we do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns. We all need to examine ourselves: What are my concerns? What are your concerns? If we desire to follow Christ and bring honor and glory to His name, our journey of faith will teach us a lot and we will long to pass on to others what we have learned. Learning from Jesus will intensify our relationship to God, and at the same time, it will make our faith practical and strong like a tower.

Neil T. Anderson wrote:

“The only way to increase your faith is to increase your knowledge of God. What will you do to increase your knowledge of God? Set some goals—long range and short range—regarding church attendance, reading the Bible, attending a bible study, meditating on God’s word and memorizing passages from Scriptures. Find someone who will encourage you, hold you accountable and, even better, join you in your efforts. Then identify the step you will take this week.”<sup>3</sup>





# Faith in Times of Temptations, Problems and Difficulties

Have you ever been tempted and then you fell into sin? You must have felt very miserable. You might have wondered why you weren't able to overcome that temptation. Was it because you didn't try hard enough to fight the temptation? Or were you just having a bad day? You might have even tried to shift the blame, arguing that you sinned because others treated you badly. You surely wished you were somewhere else, or that you had already solved that problem. But, at this very moment, you are still struggling to overcome that problem.

Another very common problem people face is sickness. When we get sick, or a family member gets sick, it makes us feel helpless. Even worse is when one is faced with cancer. Jack Miller, an American pastor, wrote to a lady with cancer the following words:

“Dear Mrs. Jones,

Though I have never met you, I have heard that you have cancer and would like to hear from me. You know that I also have recently suffered from this disease—about the hardest time in my whole life. So, I think I understand you.

Most important do not think of yourself as a victim. You are not a defeated person. Do not suppress your inward struggles with cancer. Learn that a powerful hope can grow in you as you become honest with God. When the symptoms of your illness frighten you, or when chemotherapy makes you nauseous, pray and tell HIM how you really feel. Admit that you are desperate. Acknowledge the truth if your misplaced confidence has been in yourself and not in HIM. But shift your trust from yourself to God. He is a lot bigger than you are! When you are feeling well, it’s easy to say, ‘I confidently believe that God will help me.’ But what you really mean is, ‘I can handle my own affairs with a bit of assist from God.’ So give up presumptuous self-reliance. Discover the power of a living faith placed in a mighty God!

Dear Friend, make Christ your only hope. Trust in him and trust your life to him. Take this loving Lord into your heart. Your security will not be in yourself or medical technology, or diet, but in God alone. He will shepherd you in his mighty love through every trial that comes your way. Be of good courage.”<sup>1</sup>

Faith will not only help you to overcome temptations of all kinds, but it will also help you to have hope in the midst of terrible situations and problems. It will actually change your view of things, and bring real solutions that you might never have dreamed of. Trusting ourselves will bring confusion. Trusting God will bring reality into your life.

Below you will read about a Filipino captain's experiences while in captivity under pirates for several months:

"My name is Danilo B. Bueno. I am from Sanchez Mira, Cagayan Valley, Philippines. I am a seaman by profession. I graduated from the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy class in 1986. I am a Master Mariner and I work on tankers.

"In 1984, at the age of 20, I started my career as a Deck Cadet. Since then I've sailed around the world, visited countries I never dreamed of seeing, met people of different nationalities, and explored various ports. When I became an officer, I was given more responsibilities. After that I was promoted to senior officer, then I became a captain in 2006. After all these years of experience, I became confident, perhaps too confident and sure of myself.

"As a Master, I have the final say in everything concerning the ship. I have very much power at my disposal and I have used it with GUSTO! I have been this way on nine ships, and it must have made such an impression on the owners that they kept renewing my contracts. Of course, this was a boost to my ego. Then, to my surprise, God came

along. In spite of my boastfulness He had other plans in mind.

“On the morning October 28, 2011, while sailing through the Gulf of Aden, we were attacked and captured by pirates. All my training and so-called expertise were of no use—I didn’t know what to do. I was helpless. While in captivity we all tried to remain calm but the thought of death made all of us afraid. Although the pirates assured us they only wanted money we didn’t believe them—not with their AK7 pointed at us each time we moved. After a few stops in various parts of Somalia we anchored at a place called Grad (I don’t know the exact spelling) where 50 or more pirates boarded with more guns and ammunition. They started to make inventory of what we had, including VHF radios, which the crew had hidden at my order. They warned me not to lie or they would kill me.

“Weeks passed and they found the missing radios and the crew said the pirate in charge was angry. I felt responsible for the ship, but with their threats I was afraid they would do something to me, and I became scared. I was so scared that I began to tremble at the thought of never seeing my family again. I shivered in fear. When evening approached, I couldn’t bear my fears any longer and I felt I needed to share them with someone. Suddenly, I thought of God. My tiny faith led me to say to God, ‘God, I am so afraid and don’t know what to do. Please take my fear, and take care of my family, and also, please take care of me.’ At that very moment, not even

30 seconds after praying, I was filled with a sense of peace and calm. Although there were tears in my eyes, I was not afraid anymore. I was calm.

"A short time later, a pirate came and told me the pirate commander wanted to see me. I got up and went to the bridge, thinking, "This is it!" While I was walking up the stairs I prayed Psalm 91, reciting whatever verses I could remember till I reached the bridge. When I arrived, the pirate commander asked me, 'Do you have a problem?' I didn't know what to say then, but I answered, 'Yes, I'm afraid of you.' He answered, 'Don't worry, we are not here to hurt you. Go back to your crew and relax.' I was expecting death, but I was given comfort and assurance. I wondered to myself, "*Did God hear me?*" There were other Christians on board: the Chief Engineer and the Second Mate. We started reading the Bible, along with the Chief Cook and a Greek security officer.

"After a few months, there was another situation. On January 2, a new interpreter came on board and said that the pirates wanted to take the ship out to sea to do piracy, and they wanted me to sail the ship. Knowing we didn't have enough fuel for the voyage, I informed the commander, but it made him so angry that he threatened me with death if they found out I was lying. This time they were more serious. They tied my neck to the railing of the ship and put a guard near me. Once again I prayed using Psalm 91, and asked God to take care of my family and me. Then another pirate came, they talked a while (I didn't understand their language except for

“Allah U Akbar.”) The guard filled his AK7 with ammunition and pointed it at my head, but the other pirate pushed him away. We were forced to sail out. I talked to the crew and told them I had no choice; we don’t have enough fuel left to return and this might be the end. The crew said, ‘Please don’t give up! If you give up being the Captain what will become of us?’ Again, in spite of all my training and experience I didn’t know what to do, so I turned to God. I told Him, ‘God, help us—we don’t know what to do!’

“Halfway to our destination the pirate commanders began arguing about the fuel. Chief Engineer and I were called to their meeting where the atmosphere was very tense. They were all shouting and pointing guns at each other until the commander pointed toward us and made a gesture signaling death. The guard asked us to stand up. However, even before we were able to, the first interpreter asked the Chief Engineer what was written on a piece of paper he had found on the table. The Chief Engineer said that is was the amount of fuel we had on board. Then the interpreter asked me, ‘Is this enough to go to Gulf of Aden and go back to Grad?’ I answered, ‘No.’ Right there in front of us they began beating up the second interpreter for lying to the pirate commanders. Again, God rescued us, and I could hardly believe what was going on. I was convinced that God was watching and listening to everything.

“The next day, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Chief Engineer Irwin Torremoro,

my shipmate who is also a Christian, spoke to us that morning and said the prayer, and I accepted Jesus as my Lord and personal Savior. No special ceremony, no special persuasion was necessary. I just asked God to accept me under His care, and I gave my life to Him.

“After we returned home, I had the joy of knowing, sharing and reading the words of God. I did not miss a single Sunday (by God’s grace). I attended church, where I was able to grow, learn and understood more. It became my desire to share the truth with my wife and daughter. They too accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. I made a promise to my pastor to share the words of God with my crew and that is what I now try to do.”<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle Paul also experienced difficulties of various kinds. The Bible reports that he was a prisoner on a ship headed for Malta on turbulent seas, as you can read in the book of Acts. Yet the astonishing thing was that Paul’s faith in his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ saved all of the people on the boat. In Acts 27:10–25, the apostle said:

“Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also.’ But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship. Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there.

This was a harbor in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest.

“When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island. The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure, so the men hoisted it aboard. Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along. We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. On the third day, they threw the ship’s tackle overboard with their own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

“After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: ‘Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, “Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar;



and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you." So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me."

So God clearly saved people like Paul and those in the ship from terrible problems. He is able to do the same today.

When I was a young man I remember meeting a lady in the hospital who was both blind and crippled. What a difficult situation to be in! Our youth group decided to go to the hospital and sing a few songs for that lady, hoping to cheer her up and give her some hope despite her seemingly hopeless situation. When we arrived at the hospital we greeted her and got ready to sing.

But, we did not get very far because this lady began telling us about how she experienced God even in the midst of her situation. It surprised us to see her joyful and almost dancing on her bed. We were there to comfort her, but there she was, giving us hope. It touched us so much that some of us had tears in our eyes.

She told us the reason for her joy, "If I could see and walk, I would probably go the way many people go. I would do what I wanted and would not ask about God. But since I am blind, I can focus on Jesus and the treasures that He gives me." Faith in the Lord Jesus changed her life so much that even the nurse told us how wonderful it was to serve her.

That lady told us a story which took place many years before. One day, a doctor told her about an operation which might possibly save her vision. However, she refused. I can still hear her say, “If I had undergone that operation and was able to see afterwards, I fear that I would have lost my faith in Jesus Christ, because I would have seen this fallen, sinful world. I prefer to see nothing except with my inner eyes, and see how wonderful Jesus is to me!”

We can read something similar in Hebrews 11:24–25:

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”

Moses could have had a life full of pleasures in Egypt, but he chose to obey God and not pursue this world’s enjoyments and sins. Moses had a very strong faith in God, trusting Him more than anyone else who could offer him riches and pleasures.

Since most my readers will probably be seamen, I can imagine that the following faith experience will give you hope, courage and strength. I received an email in which Captain Federico Ricalde wrote:

“By the way, my dear brother, right now I am very thankful to God for giving me the strength for my second day of fasting and prayer, asking our dear Loving God to give me peace and the

right decision regarding our good vessel which is caught between two huge typhoons.

Even with modern technology, nobody knows the exact movements of these typhoons—only God who knows everything, because He is in control of every situation in our lives. Not even these two huge typhoons here in the south of Japan and east of Okinawa can disturb us because we firmly believe in the name of Jesus—I believe that He alone can stop the strong wind, no matter how powerful it is, for He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. To God be the glory! I believe God will safely bring us to our destination.

I constantly read my favorite verses in Philippians 4:4, 6–7 where the beloved Apostle Paul says to rejoice even in stressful situations. I believe Paul wrote this while in jail, but imagine, he is encouraging us to rejoice not once, but again and again! The bottom line is to have peace in our hearts and minds—it is FREE—only believe Jesus and you will have it all. I still remember when Jesus said to Jairus, ‘Only believe!’<sup>3</sup>

**A few days later I received another email from Captain Ricalde:**

“Well, today at lunch we had a Thanksgiving party (thanking God for the safe passage from Long Beach California until finally we arrived here in Japan). The celebration took place on the poop deck to glorify God for what He did for us and for this good ship. Before we ate, I read the passage in Psalm 46:1–3:

*“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”*

“After the reading this passage, I prayed thanking God for protecting us from the perils of the sea and for keeping the crew safe while working onboard; and of course for the food we shared.”<sup>4</sup>

We can see that when we exercise our faith in times of temptations, problems and difficulties, God is faithful, and He will pull us through!



# Things that Disturb and Hinder Faith

You wish so much to be a man or woman of faith, yet there are times when you struggle with disappointment and failure, and sometimes you even want to give up. You wonder why faith works for other people but not for you. You have tried hard to improve your life but you are still dissatisfied with certain things. You spend time studying the lives of people known for their faith, and watch movies or read books about them, yet your own faith is shaky. The New Testament gives us examples of people who lacked faith. When Jesus was in His home town He noted that the people were not strong in faith, and so He did not do many miracles there. We read in Mark 6:6, "*He was amazed at their lack of faith.*" Through the ages there have always been people who lacked faith. I would like to tell you about stumbling blocks that might hinder you from being a good Christian who lives by faith.

## 1 Have you neglected Bible reading? Have you stopped praying regularly?

If that is the case it's no wonder why your faith has grown cold. The Bible is food for our souls. Imagine not eating food everyday. What would happen? You wouldn't have enough strength to work; you would probably get sick and die. Faith is not a technique that one learns. It is something given to us by the Holy Spirit, as you can read in Ephesians 2:8,

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

If you do not read the Bible your faith will grow cold. The Bible shows how faith works and gives us numerous examples of people who placed all their trust in God. Prayer is as vital as reading the Bible. It is like the breathing of your soul. Prayer is communication with God. Imagine that you do not communicate with your wife. What would be the result? Your marriage would be a disaster and wouldn't last long. In the same way, if we do not pray regularly, it's hard for us to practice faith and we lose an opportunity to get to know God more. You need to pray so that you can concentrate on the things that are from God. In prayer, you hear God speaking to you, thus shaping your faith. We read in James 5:16 that the prayer of a person who is right in God's eyes is powerful and effective.

## **2 Have you sinned?**

If so, it's no wonder why your faith has grown cold. We simply cannot experience God while holding on to sin. Sin separates us from God. It disturbs our fellowship with Him. The writer of Hebrews says in Chapter 12:1–2 (NKJV):

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Here you can see a very simple solution: first, throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily ensnares you. Secondly, fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. Too often we fix our eyes on problems, temptations and sins. But if we fix our eyes on Jesus, our great example, our faith will regain strength.

## **3 Are you focusing on the experiences of the past?**

Often, instead of looking to Jesus, we look back at the past. We often cling on to past experiences and build our lives on these experiences, and not on the promises of God. Lot's wife is an example. She was commanded not to look back. But, she could not pry her eyes off her

old life. The terrible result is shown in Genesis 19:26 (CEV),

“On the way, Lot’s wife looked back and was turned into a block of salt.”

Looking back can cause tremendous problems, weakening and ultimately defeating our faith.

#### **4 Are you looking at circumstances?**

This is probably the most common problem. Circumstances can seem very real and appear to be either good or bad to us, but they seldom show all of reality. We cannot build our faith on circumstances because they are not constant.

#### **5 Are you trusting your emotions?**

It’s normal to want to keep on feeling good. You want to enjoy your positive emotions for as long as possible because you know that they will soon disappear. However, we are taught not to trust emotions because we all know that they come and go. It would be silly to build our lives on emotions. The problem is that many people literally crave emotional experiences, and this will disturb and hinder their faith life. King Solomon, a very wise king, said in Proverbs 3:5–6,

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your



ways submit to him, and he will make your path straight.”

Our faith will be established by trusting God instead of our emotions. (See also Chapter 18).

## **6 Are you looking up to people instead of God?**

This will bring constant disappointment. Even if your friends have impressed you by something they did or by how they behaved, there will come a time when they will disappoint you. Even in churches we can see how people almost lose their faith because they have put their confidence in people and not in God. Psalm 146:3–5 says:

“Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God.”

God is perfect, He is faithful. You will never be shaken or lose your faith if you look to Him and place all your expectations in Him alone. God will honor you when you trust Him.

## **7 Are you seeking your own glory and not the glory of God?**

This will not help you at all find the faith that you need in your life. It says in John 5:44,

“How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?”

This verse clearly shows that we cannot believe if the focus of our lives is on ourselves and not on God. God will not share His glory with anyone else. He is a jealous God. He wants to be number one in your life. We need to make a choice: either we live for God’s glory or for our own glory. We cannot work on building up our own reputation and at the same time try to please God. Isaiah 42:8 says,

“I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols.”

God wants our whole, undivided heart.



# Rewards and Blessings of Faith

There are so many things one can buy in this world. You are bombarded by advertisements of products in the movies and shopping centers. The variety of products they offer is overwhelming. There are always special deals, and you are often tempted to buy something only because it seems so cheap! But later on, you realize that you didn't really need what you bought. You were fooled by the advertisement, and now you're sorry you wasted your money!

It is very different with God. If God offers you something He will keep His promise, and you will never regret that you trusted Him, and you will never be disappointed. God's nature is to be faithful and true. God will never fool you. He gives you a lot of "specials" when you obey and trust Him. He rewards you and blesses you as you act in faith.

But, it's important to note that God's rewards are not always material rewards—there are also rewards of a spiritual nature. But, of course, God blesses us materially. I experienced this when we bought our house some 22 years ago. We got a house for a relatively low price, and after much prayer, we even received financial assistance from the government. God indeed helped us a great deal materially, but this was not His primary intention. Above all, God wants to bless us inwardly so that we can get a greater picture of who He really is. He wants to bless us and reward us with His presence. Once we experience His presence we would not want anything else. On one occasion, Peter the apostle, experienced God's holy presence and said to Jesus,

“Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” Mathew 17:4

Peter wanted to stay in this kind of heavenly atmosphere as long as possible.

But God also rewards us physically, in relation to our health. That is what we see in the Gospel of Mark where it tells us about a woman who was ill. She put her faith in Jesus, and she was rewarded with bodily healing. It says in Chapter 5:27–29 (NLT):

“She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe. For she thought to herself, ‘If I can just

touch his robe, I will be healed.’ Immediately her bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed.”

After we have learned spiritual lessons, we can also receive material blessings. The Bible gives us some examples of it. Take, for instance, Job in the Old Testament. After Job lost his children and belongings, and even his health, God spoke to him and showed him what really mattered in this life. Job was astonished and exclaimed,

“I had heard only about you before, but now I have seen you with my eyes. I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance.”

Job 42:5-6, NLT

After Job repented of his sins and put his full confidence and faith in God again, God blessed Job with material possessions. He even received more than he had possessed before. It says in Job 42:10 (TM),

“After Job had interceded for his friends, the LORD restored his fortune—and then doubled it.”

So we see that God is able to bless physically, materially and spiritually. However, the greatest reward is when we are drawn closer to God and when we experience Him in a practical and personal way. Let’s examine some biblical promises<sup>1</sup> which show how wonderfully God rewards those who put their full confidence and faith in HIM alone.

### 1 You will be surrounded by mercy

“All kinds of troubles will strike the wicked, but your kindness shields those who trust you, LORD.”

Psalm 32:10, CEV

### 2 You will be kept in perfect peace

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”

Isaiah 26:3

### 3 You will be happy

“He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he.”

Proverbs 16:20

### 4 You will rejoice

“You make our hearts glad, because we trust you, the only God.”

Psalm 33:21, CEV

### 5 You will be taken care of

“Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.”

Psalm 37:5

### 6 You will be delivered from your enemies

“And the LORD shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.”

Psalm 37:40

### 7 You will be kept safe

“The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.”

Proverbs 29:25



## 8 You will be radiant

They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed.”

Psalm 34:5

## 9 You will not be put to shame

“The Scripture says that no one who has faith will be disappointed.”

Romans 10:11, CEV

## 10 You will be victorious

“Judah’s army won, because they trusted the LORD God of their ancestors.”

2 Chronicles 13:18, CEV

## 11 You will not be moved

“Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.”

Psalm 125:1

## 12 You will be prosperous

“Selfish people cause trouble, but you will live a full life if you trust in the LORD.”

Proverbs 28:25, CEV

## 13 You will be rescued

“Because you trusted me, I will protect you . . . I will rescue you and keep you alive. I, the LORD, have spoken.”

Jeremiah 39:18, CEV

## 14 You will be protected by God

“As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.”

Psalm 18:30

## 15 You will have your prayers answered

“And they were helped against them, and the Hagrites were delivered into their hand, and all who were with them, for they cried out to God in the battle. He heeded their prayer, because they put their trust in Him.”

1 Chronicles 5:20

## 16 You will be established

“So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.”

2 Chronicles 20:20

## 17 You will never thirst

“Jesus replied, “I am the bread that gives life. No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry. No one who has faith will ever be thirsty.”

John 6:35, CEV

## 18 You will not be afraid

“Bad news won’t bother them; they have decided to trust the LORD.”

Psalms 112:7 CEV





# Accepted —Welcomed— Made Right by Faith

“I’m so ashamed!” I often hear this from seamen while visiting ships. There maybe many reasons why they say this. Some are ashamed about something which happened in the past or even about a present situation. If you have ever lost face, you most likely want to hide. This is a typical reaction which occurs in relationships. Hannes Wiher says:

“Shame always seeks [to cover] as a remedy to the separation. Consequently, man puts on a mask. This mask is a necessary sign of the separation. But under the mask the desire for the restoration of the lost unity continues to live.”<sup>1</sup>

But what does it have to do with God? You ask yourself questions like: “Am I really on the right path?” “Does

God accept me the way I am?” “What if I sin, will I lose my salvation? Will I lose God’s favor?” Some people who began living by faith might later say, “I do not feel God anymore—has God abandoned me?” “Can a person really be good enough for God?” “Have I done enough or do I have to do more in order to please God?” These are a few examples of the questions that go through people’s minds.

I am convinced that one of the main misconceptions of today’s society is the notion that people have to do good works in order to please God. People usually compare life to a scale. If, on one side of the scale, there are more good works than bad works, then people feel good and assume that God will also be happy with them because they have more good than bad works. But there is a small error in this kind of reasoning: Who’s to say whether our “good works” are also considered by God to be “good works”? Are God’s standards the same as our standards? Is what we consider to be right in agreement with God’s view? What is righteousness anyway?

We all come from different cultures, religions, circumstances, places and countries. In my opinion, the best thing to do is to take God’s perfect standard, the Bible and see how our lives measure up to it, and then adjust our lives to it. In order to see God’s way of thinking and His standards, we need to learn a few facts from the Bible. Among these is the fact that God is holy and no human being can approach God, because God is sinless and we are sinners. But God is loving, He has a

solution for mankind's problem. He has a perfect plan which has been revealed in the following ways:

## **1 God is love, and His love is manifested through His only Son Jesus Christ**

He who came to earth to die for our sins and to cleanse us from everything that hinders us from coming to God. The most well-known verse in the Bible reads,

"God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die."

John 3:16, CEV

God loves people so much that He sent Jesus to earth to die for our sins. This shows us that God is for us and not against us. God is love and God loves the people He created, so His greatest desire is to have fellowship with them. God desires nothing more than to have people turn to Him and enter into a love relationship with Him.

## **2 No human being can earn his way to God. God is holy, and we are not.**

"Everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard."

Romans 3:23, NLT

Because we have all sinned, we do not achieve God's perfect standards. No matter how hard we try, we will always fall short and will not please Him as He wants. God knows this and so He made a provision for us.

He sent Jesus to die on the cross so that Jesus could become God's perfect standard inside us. Here is where faith plays an important role. If, by faith, we ask Jesus Christ to come into our hearts and ask Him to forgive us our sins, He will do it and will cleanse us from every wrong we've done (1 John 1:9). Jesus becomes our perfect righteousness before God. When Jesus lives in us through His Holy Spirit, God will no longer see us as sinners, because it's Jesus He now sees, who is perfect righteousness.

### **3 Faith in the complete work of Jesus on the cross is the saving factor—not our good works.**

"It is by God's grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

Ephesians 2:8–9

In verse 9 of Ephesians 2 we read that salvation can not come through works; or else we would boast and think we are so great. We would give all credit to our good works and what we have achieved for God and men instead of giving the credit and glory to God alone, who is the source of our salvation. Have you ever thought about the fact that we have deserved to be crucified for our sins? But Jesus loved us so much that He took our place. This is real love. Imagine that you committed a crime and somebody else, who was not guilty, took your punishment and went to prison for you. How would

you feel? Jesus took our sins and all of the bad things we have ever done to the cross, so that we can be free from all that and start serving God who created us for fellowship, to be with Him.

#### **4 Our faith in Jesus makes us acceptable in God’s sight.**

“Now that we have God’s approval by faith, we have peace with God because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done.”

Romans 5:1, GW

This verse clearly shows us that no matter who you are, no matter what you have done—if you have chosen by faith to accept Jesus as your Savior and follow Him, then God has justified you—He has made you right in His sight. He has welcomed you into the family of God. This is a free gift of God. You cannot pay for it. You cannot earn it. It is just God’s undeserved grace, God’s gift to you. If Jesus lives in your heart and you commit a sin, all you need to do is simply ask Jesus to forgive you and He will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. If you sin again, you will not lose your membership in God’s family.

Some people have problems on this point and think that God will reject them. I have often heard seamen say, “I am ashamed!” Will you believe me when I say that God is different and thinks differently from us? He accepts us even if we feel ashamed. He still loves

you even if you feel ashamed. If you consider your own children, would you reject them if they have sinned over and over again? Of course not. They are your children no matter what they do in the future and no matter what they may have done in the past. You accept your children and love them even if they have sinned. God also accepts and loves you even if you have sinned. The only condition with God is that you to humbly come to Him by faith and confess your sin, and you will still be accepted.

Read Romans 8:1,

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

If you are in Jesus Christ, He will never ever condemn you. Why? Because His work on the cross has been completed for you, and now you live by faith in what He did for you. In the verses below you will see some wonderful promises God has made regarding your position in His family. You will read that by faith you have been made right before God, you are welcome and you are accepted by God. Jesus did it all—100%. There is nothing you can do to earn it. Just receive it!

“But we know that God accepts only those who have faith in Jesus Christ. No one can please God by simply obeying the Law [Ten Commandments, etc]. So we put our faith in Christ Jesus, and God accepted us because of our faith.”

Galatians 2:16, CEV



“No one can please God by obeying the Law. The Scriptures also say, ‘The people God accepts because of their faith will live.’”  
Galatians 3:11, CEV

“But Christ rescued us from the Law’s curse when he became a curse in our place. This is because the Scriptures say that anyone who is nailed to a tree is under a curse. And because of what Jesus Christ has done, the blessing that was promised to Abraham was taken to the Gentiles [those who are not Jews]. This happened so that by faith we might receive the promised Holy Spirit.”  
Galatians 3:13-14, CEV

“Nothing is as wonderful as knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have given up everything and count it all as garbage. All I want is Christ and to know that I belong to him. I could not make myself acceptable to God by obeying the Law of Moses. God accepted me simply because of my faith in Christ.”  
Philippians 3:8–9, CEV

“It is just as God says in the Scripture, ‘Look! I am placing in Zion a precious and choice cornerstone. No one who has faith in that one will be disappointed.’”  
1 Peter 2:6, CEV



## How Can I Deepen My Faith?

This was exactly the question a Filipino seaman asked me shortly after he had committed his life to Jesus Christ. He was convinced there was more to be experienced in his new life with Jesus. Faith is not something that you experience only once, but it is an ongoing experience which should be exercised day by day. Your faith will be deepened when you share it with others. All of us have experienced times of temptations, trials and difficulties—times when you feel that your faith is so weak. One way to stimulate your faith and to experience God in a very practical way is to share with others what Jesus means to you and what you have experienced through Him. Below, you will read what seamen have experienced while sharing the Good News about Jesus with others.

On a feeder ship<sup>1</sup> I met with Geovanni, a young chief cook, who had come to know Jesus Christ through





a Bible study course. I asked him to write down what he felt could help him grow in faith. This is what he wrote:

“There are many things I can do in order to grow in faith. One way is to read and understand the Bible. When I read the Scriptures it’s like God is talking to me. By reading the Bible I learn how to live the kind of life that pleases Jesus. Through reading [the Bible] I become aware of sins that I never knew about before. And now I want to avoid these sins. Another way of growing in faith is by praying. Praying is a way to talk to God. I believe that God will provide my needs. He will send support and protection in many ways.

I have learned many more ways to strengthen my faith. I regularly meet with a friend who also works on the ship. Together we have a regular Bible study, and it is a wonderful experience. This friend, who has been a Christian for a long time, can answer many of my questions using the Bible. These are just a few simple things we can do to grow in our faith. I strongly believe with all my heart that our faith will grow as God looks into our inner being.”<sup>2</sup>

## **Faith is deepened by reading the Word of God**

Paul explains in Romans 10:17,

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

God made it very clear that no spiritual growth will take place without the Word of God. Rick Warren, the author of *The Purpose Driven Life* says:

“The Bible is far more than a doctrinal guide book. God’s word generates life, creates faith, produces change, frightens the Devil, causes miracles, heals hurts, builds character, transforms circumstances, imparts joy, overcomes adversity, defeats temptation, infuses hope, releases power, cleanses our minds, brings things into being, and guarantees our future forever! We cannot live without the word of God! *Never* take it for granted. You should consider it as essential to your life as food. Job said,

‘I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread’ [Job 23:12].

“God’s Word is the spiritual nourishment you *must* have to fulfill your purpose. The Bible is called our milk, bread, solid food, and sweet dessert [1 Peter 2:2; Matthew 4:4; 1 Corinthians 3:2; Psalm 119:103]. This four-course meal is the Spirit’s menu for spiritual strength and growth. Peter advises us,

*‘Crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation’*  
[1 Peter 2:2].<sup>3</sup>

Look for a quiet, private place where you can spend time with God, talking with Him! Find a church that shares your beliefs (believes in the Word of God and

doesn't mix it with men's opinions). Seek fellowship, seek the company of other believers! Find verses about your security in the Lord, and memorize them or take note of them (while your faith is strong) so that during times of trial, you will know exactly which verses can help you!

### **Faith is deepened by prayer**

Somebody once said, "Prayer is the breathing of our soul." Prayer is vital to our spiritual lives, yet it is often neglected. Does prayer seem to you like an exercise in eloquent speech which you just cannot master? Do you fail to trust God and believe what He has promised and that is why you don't pray? Or, don't you trust your own prayers?

The fact is, we don't often take the time to pray. We find it hard to make prayer a priority. Why? I think there are two reasons: on the one hand, we might not see the immediate results and, on the other hand, the Devil tries to hinder our prayers because one of his greatest fears is that we would cultivate deep communication with God. It's easy to work for God, and to do good works for other people, but the moment you decide to pray, you suddenly find an excuse not to pray. In the Bible there are lots of examples about how Satan tried to hinder God's work, but when people prayed the victory was won. There is also resistance to prayer in the heavenly realms. Although we do not understand the

nature of the fight that is going on in the unseen world, we can be sure that Satan and the other fallen angels are consistently resisting God's angels who come as messengers carrying answers to our prayers. Look at what is said in Daniel 10:12–13. An angel appeared to Daniel who had fasted and prayed for 21 days. The angel said:

“Relax, Daniel,’ he continued, ‘don’t be afraid. From the moment you humbled yourself to receive understanding, your prayer was heard, and I set out to come to you. But I was waylaid by the angel-prince of the kingdom of Persia and was delayed for a good three weeks. But Michael, one of the chief angel-princes, intervened to help me.’”(CEV)

It is evident that Satan uses various means to keep us from praying. Sometimes he just makes us lazy, or he gives us other important jobs to do. But, we should not be discouraged by Satan's efforts, instead we should be encouraged by what God wants to do through our prayer. If you have time, do a little web search on the Internet on “promises on prayer” and you will be surprised at how much you will find. One of the wonderful promises in the Old Testament is 2 Chronicles 7:14:

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”



Is there anything more wonderful than to know that God in heaven will respond?

## **Faith is deepened by sharing your faith with others**

“Many Christians shy at the idea of sharing their faith. But Jesus never intended for the Great Commission to be an impossible burden. God meant us to be witnesses of Jesus Christ by just living for Him. However, we make it complicated. We think we must complete a 10-week course on evangelism and apologetics before getting started. God designed an easy evangelism program. He made it simple for us.”<sup>4</sup>

If you share the Word of God with others, you will notice that your understanding of the gospel will deepen. Look at Philemon 6,

“I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.”

The more I share the gospel with others, the more I hear it myself and consider what it means. Colossians 1:10 says,

“So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

The more I obey and trust God to work through me, the stronger my faith will grow. While you are sailing over the oceans, you will probably remember other seamen who have shared Christ with you and your fellow seamen. They did this in obedience to God, and God blessed their obedience. Through their sharing you probably learned a lot without realizing it. You were blessed by others who shared their faith with you. Now let me encourage you to start sharing Christ with those you come in contact with. Surely, God honors everybody who shares His message. When you do that, you will notice that your faith will deepen!



# Strengthening Faith through Service

## Loving God

Jesus once asked Simon Peter a question which was not very easy to answer. Many of us would probably have difficulty, too, answering that very important question. What did Jesus want to know? Turn with me to John 21:15–17 where we read the following:

“When Jesus and the disciples had finished eating, Jesus spoke to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you really love me more than the others?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he answered, ‘You know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’

Again Jesus asked, ‘Simon, son of John, do you really love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of my sheep.’

The third time Jesus spoke to him, ‘Simon, son of John, do you really love me?’ Peter felt bad because Jesus asked him the third time, ‘Do you

love me?’ He answered, ‘Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my sheep.’”

The very fact that Jesus asked Peter three times whether he loved Him shows how much our love means to God. Loving God should have top priority in our faith life. That is why Jesus once gave the command,

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, love your neighbor as yourself.”

Luke 10:27

This also shows that God places a great deal of emphasis on our personal relationship with Him. He is less interested in our works than in our love towards Him. Not even our faith in Him or our trust mean anything if we do not love Him with all our heart. Let’s look at 1 Corinthians 13:1–2 (NIRV):

“Suppose I speak in the languages of human beings and of angels. If I don’t have love, I am only a loud gong or a noisy cymbal. Suppose I can understand all secret things of God and know everything about him, and suppose I have enough faith to move mountains, but don’t have love, I am nothing at all.”

Love is the sign of a real Christian. It shows the world that we belong to Jesus. John quotes Jesus in Chapter 13:34–35,



“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Love for God is true love only if it includes love for people. So, our faith will be strengthened tremendously if we love God. He will grant us many experiences in our faith life, and He will bless our love towards Him more than we can imagine.

## Loving people

In 1 John 4:20 it says,

“Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.”

This verse is amazing! Sometimes we might be tempted to think or even say, “I love God but I cannot love certain people. What they have done to me is just too much. They have hurt me and they have never apologized for it. How can I love such people?” You feel you have given so much, you have loved them, but instead of being loved and accepted in return, they treated you badly. People talked behind your back, people disappointed you—and now you are supposed to love these people? It’s probably very hard to love after all you’ve been through. On the emotional level,

it is almost impossible to love. But that is exactly why we need Jesus. He knows that our strength would not be enough to forgive when we have been hurt and neglected so much already.

Imagine how Jesus must have felt when everybody left Him at the cross. He shared everything with them during His time on earth, but all He got in return were disappointments, loneliness, betrayal and so much more. Even Peter, who once said that he would never leave Jesus, betrayed Him three times and denied that he knew Him. How could Jesus forgive such people? Jesus is our greatest example in this matter. He actually commanded us to love others. In John 13:34 it says,

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

If we want to practice faith, we have no other choice than to love people no matter what they have done.

If we love people, that will be a sign to the world that our faith is not just theory but rather alive and practical. It will also show that God is living in us. True love will convince people of God's existence. You can start loving people by listening to them. Just show an interest in what they tell you. Start praying for your friends, relatives and neighbors. Spend time with people so they can see that you're interested in their lives. When people see that you love them, they will also listen to you. Then, you can start talking about the greatest love that



they can ever experience in getting to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. True faith is always expressed in love. Paul says in Galatians 5:6 (CEV),

“If you are a follower of Christ Jesus. . . . All that matters is your faith that makes you love others.”

Andrew Murray says:

“Faith roots its life in the life of Christ Jesus, which is all love. Faith knows, even when we cannot realize fully, the wonderful gift that has been given into our heart in the Holy Spirit’s shedding abroad God’s love there. A spring in the earth may often be hidden or stopped up. Until it is opened the fountain cannot flow out. Faith knows that there is a fountain of love within, that can spring up into eternal life, which can flow out as rivers of living waters. It assures us that we can love, that we have a divine power to love within us, as an inalienable endowment [or a natural ability that cannot be taken away because] of our new nature.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Serving God**

The Bible says we are to see a job or task as work for the Lord, or as a means to serve God. This will strengthen our faith and relationship to God. We can read in Colossians 3:23–24 (CEV) what Paul advised the slaves during his day who had become believers in Christ:

“Slaves, you must always obey your earthly masters. Try to please them at all times, and not just when you think they are watching. Honor the Lord and serve your masters with your whole heart. Do your work willingly as though you were serving the Lord himself and not just your earthly master. In fact, the Lord is the one you are really serving, and you know that he will reward you.”

Serving the Lord really requires a decision from the heart. We see that in the life of Joshua when he challenged the people of Israel in Joshua 24:15,

“. . . choose here and now! But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

People tend to put themselves first before they serve others. This egocentric attitude is widespread—it doesn’t seem to matter what culture or country one comes from. I need something first, for myself, before I can help or serve somebody else. In order to serve God, we need a change of heart—which only the Holy Spirit can bring about. If not, we won’t understand why we should serve someone who is invisible and obviously far away. We won’t be able to understand how to serve God if we don’t examine the life of Jesus and see how He served human beings first. Mark 10:45 says,

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”



Jesus showed us what it meant to serve when He talked to the prostitute, when He healed the lame and the blind people and when He fed the five thousand. When Jesus served people, He did it with a humble attitude, in order to help people as well as to demonstrate God's loving attitude.

Peter tells us to serve with the strength that God provides. We are supposed to serve God because He served us first. He gives us the strength to love Him and serve Him. This strength is gained by trusting God in every situation. By faith we can serve God and make a difference in this world. In 1 Peter 4:11 it says:

"If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

This verse is very encouraging as it shows us that service for the Lord is possible since God Himself will give us the strength that we need while serving Him. Let us then, "Serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalm 100:2).

## **Serving people**

Several years ago I met the third officer of a cargo ship who made it a habit to be of help to others while he was off-duty. This third officer, who was from Peru, was a

dedicated Christian. He made it his goal to show to his fellow seamen that faith was not simply talking about God but also actively serving others with love. When he was off-duty, he would go on deck to help a seaman do his practical work and also answer the questions the seaman had. He did this for quite a long time until the AB finally asked him why he was spending his time helping although he was off-duty. The third officer answered that he loved Jesus and that he wanted to share God's love, even in practical terms. The seaman was so impressed that soon he also wanted to find out more about the faith of the third officer. As a result, he accepted Jesus as his Savior and Lord.

When you begin serving people, you will notice that your faith will be strengthened, because you not only believe but you also do something practical. People will be encouraged by that kind of practical faith, because faith that serves will always have visible results. In today's world, people like to see results. You will have results when you serve people in practical ways. However, we do not live to please people in this world, but only to please God. I am convinced that God is pleased when you serve people.

When you want to serve God and you read the Bible, you will notice how important it is not only to believe but also to help wherever it is needed. Let's look at James 2:15–17 (CEV):

“If you know someone who doesn’t have clothes or food, you shouldn’t just say, ‘I hope all goes well for you. I hope you will be warm and have plenty to eat.’ What good is it to say this, unless you do something to help? Faith that doesn’t lead us to do good deeds is all alone and dead!”

On ships we try to serve seamen from various countries by offering practical help. In winter we give them clothing such as scarves, woolen caps, jackets and gloves, so that the seamen who travel to cold countries will be warm enough. We also serve them by giving them phone cards so that they can get in touch with their families or skype with them. We sometimes visit them in the hospital if they had an accident on the ship. These visits are often very much appreciated because seamen are especially lonely in German hospitals where few people speak their language. We also take seamen shopping. On one particular ship, a seaman asked me to get him a tennis racket, so I took him shopping to buy one. This man was so happy that afterwards, not only he but the whole crew wanted to hear more about faith. In this way, I was able to combine faith with good works. James put it this way in chapter 2:26 (CEV),

“Anyone who doesn’t breathe is dead, and faith that doesn’t do anything is just as dead!”

## Song by Keith Green

My eyes are dry, my faith is old,  
My heart is hard, my prayers are cold.  
And I know how I ought to be—  
Alive to you and dead to me.

Oh, what can be done  
for an old heart like mine?  
Soften it up with oil and wine—  
The oil is you, your spirit of love  
Please wash me anew  
in the wine of your blood.

My eyes are dry, my faith is old,  
My heart is hard, my prayers are cold.  
And I know how I ought to be  
Alive to you and dead to me.

Oh, what can be done  
for an old heart like mine?  
Soften it up with oil and wine—  
The oil is you, your spirit of love  
Please wash me anew  
in the wine of your blood.





PART 3

Theological  
and  
Philosophical  
Issues





# The Difference between Faith and Religion

Since 1987, when I started working on ships with seamen of various religious background from several nations, the question of religion and faith has always been an important one. It is interesting to note that almost every week while on ships, I get this question: What religion do you belong to? After visiting many ships and asking seamen from various backgrounds and religions about their understanding of religion and faith, you can imagine the variety of interesting answers I have received.

A seaman from India with a Muslim background told me plainly that in his view religion is very different from faith. He said,

“Religion is something that my mum made up.”

He went on to say that faith has been around since God created men. But religion was created through human beings.

A seaman with a Buddhist background explained that Buddhism is a way of life. According to his understanding, faith means doing something good so that you will also receive good things in the afterlife. In his opinion, faith is meant to prevent evil. Another Indian seaman who professed to be Hindu explained,

“Religion is a guideline that shows you what is good and bad.”

He is convinced that faith has nothing to do with religion at all. It depends on the person alone how he or she expresses faith.

But, on a small container ship I met two Catholic seamen from the Philippines who believe that religion and faith are the same. On another ship, a Filipino cook said,

“Religion means joining religious activities, while faith is something that comes from your heart or your desire. You can have faith even if you do not attend religious activities.”

I could probably go on and on interviewing people without ever getting a complete definition of faith and religion. You might even find it confusing to read the variety of definitions mentioned above. That is why we should have a look at what is written in the Bible.

The Bible mentions the word “religion/religious” several times. The word that James uses in James chapter 1, verse 27, *thréskos*, is translated as “religious, pious,

devout.” But, the word the Apostle Paul employed in Acts 17:22 which is sometimes wrongly translated as “religious,” is the Greek word *deisidaimonésterous*, which means “a fear-driven superstition by a confused concept of God.” Similarly, the word the Paul used in Colossians 2:23 is the compound word *ethelothreskeía* and is translated as “self-willed religion” or “self-devised worship, and thus, not true God-willed religion.”<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note what the Apostle Paul said to the religious people in Greece in the book of Acts, chapter 17, verses 22–30:

“Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: ‘People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO AN UNKNOWN GOD

So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that

they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."

Isn't it amazing that the Greeks even had an altar with the inscription: "*TO AN UNKNOWN GOD*"? This could mean that, although you might be religious, it doesn't necessarily mean that you know God.

Many seamen who come from a religious background follow certain rules they learned in their childhood from their religious parents or from the country in which they live. They have inherited religion, often without thinking about its implications. I have frequently met seamen who told me that they pray for something out habit or tradition, but these very same people do not even know if their prayer was ever heard or answered. They simply prayed according to what they had learned in church, from school or even from their parents. Many did not even think about what they prayed. For them it was only important to pray. Prayer was like a daily habit in the hope that it would yield good results.

A certain religion may not change your life or your habits. But a personal faith, a living relationship in the risen Savior Jesus Christ, will bring about many changes.

I've had many conversations with seamen who testified that while they followed the religion which they had learned all their lives, they never knew whether or not their sins were forgiven. But when, by faith, they asked Jesus Christ to forgive them and come into their hearts, they immediately felt the presence of God and had assurance that God Himself had forgiven them. As it says in 1 John 1:9 (NLT),

"If we confess our sins to God, he can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away."

You might not know how much God cares for you, or how important you are to God. You do not know that He longs to have a personal relationship with you. So, I have good news for you: God deeply loves you and cares for you so much that He sent His only Son Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for your sins. He wants to live in your life through your faith. God loves you so much that even if you were the only person in the world, He would still send Jesus Christ to the cross to die for your sins and bring you close to Himself.

There is also a very encouraging passage in the New Testament that shows us how personal Jesus Christ is, and that He longs to have a personal relationship with you. Read Hebrews 4:14–16 (CEV):

"We have a great high priest who has gone into heaven, and he is Jesus the Son of God. . . . Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because he was tempted in every way that we are. But he did

not sin! So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved kindness, and we will find help.”

Jesus is waiting for you. In Matthew 11:28–29 (TM), Jesus says,

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Work with me and walk with me—watch out how I do it. Learn the unformed rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Here is an explanation of the difference between religion and faith, sent to me by a seaman. He wrote that he believes that faith is very different from religion. Faith means trusting God completely for our salvation and for our lives without adding anything to it, while religion is more like self-help salvation, without the complete trust in God. When this man formerly followed a certain religion, he always felt that trust was missing; he never trusted God for what he needed. He did many things in the name of religion, but they never seemed enough. He really just imitated people who worshipped God, and it confused him because in the end he didn’t experience any improvement in his life. He listened to what those people said, and he did what



they told him to do but it didn't change his life. He just became more confused. Eventually he realized that religion was simply a traditional and doctrinal way or path, and it was sometimes even political. It is very different from the faith he now has.

What he has now is primarily a lifestyle, not a tradition or a doctrine. Christ died on the cross to save us from our sins, and He now wants us to put our faith in Him alone and not add anything to it (like we do in religion). It is unnecessary—it will make no difference to what Jesus did for us in order to redeem us. His sacrifice on the cross was enough to save us from the wrath of God and to save us from this fallen world. This seaman realized that he was a sinner, and that he needed Someone to save him from all his sins.

Faith made it possible for him to have a relationship with God, and to trust Him completely. While he practiced a religion, he often felt isolated and confused. But when, by faith, he put his complete trust in God, he became a part of the Body of Christ. And so, he now enjoys the company and friendship of fellow believers—what is called Christian fellowship. Faith in Christ paves the way for a fuller life.

Finally, there is a remarkable difference between religion and faith. Whenever I ask people, “Where do you think will you spend eternity?” I usually get two different answers. Those who claim to follow a religion often say, “I do not know—maybe in heaven, maybe in hell.” But, those who have experienced a change in their

life through a personal faith in Jesus Christ often say, “I will go to heaven.” If, by faith, people have asked Jesus Christ to forgive their sins and come into their hearts, they receive the Holy Spirit. And it is this Holy Spirit who gives these people the assurance that they are saved for all eternity, and that they will never die, but instead, have eternal life (John 3:16). No doubt about it!

## Faith vs Feeling

It's really hard to know the difference between real faith and the feeling that one has faith. Many people say that they can feel God. But I wonder how it's possible to feel the Almighty God—what does it feel like? Does God want us to experience Him by feeling or by faith? Is it really God I feel or just an emotion based on a pleasant experience? I am convinced that even the most experienced Christians are not so sure whether they have acted in faith or if they just acted because the feeling was good, strong and convincing.

Just imagine you are of marrying age. You have seen a beautiful woman, and you are very excited! You just feel so attracted to her. How will you make your decision? Will you marry because you are attracted to that woman and she arouses emotions in you? Or, do you have the faith and inner strength to wait until God really shows you the right kind of woman to marry?

God created us with emotions. They are a gift from God, and they are wonderful. But emotions can lead us astray if we build our life on them and not on faith.

But what are emotions and feelings anyway? Can we trust these? Can we build our lives on these? We experience this world through our feelings and emotions. Without feelings and emotions we would be like robots. God created us as human beings with a body, soul and spirit. So it's natural for emotions to be part of this life. When we are young, we are full of feelings and various emotions; we still experience them strongly now as adults, so we are sensitive and react immediately to our social and physical environment. (When we grow old, our emotions might only be a far-off memory and our feelings might even be greatly diminished.)

The problem with emotions, however, is that they change so much. Today it's sunny, so I feel wonderful. Another day it's rainy and stormy, and my feelings match the weather! Feelings go up and down and are driven by many different forces. Unfortunately, people as well as circumstances often exert a great influence on our feelings. For example, you get promoted to a better position in your company or on your vessel, and it makes you feel happy and blessed. But then, someone criticizes you and talks badly about you and your feelings hit rock bottom. Often, bad news from our family or friends can make a great difference in the way we feel. So, we see that there are lots of different factors that influence our emotional lives.

We can see the difference between living by faith and living by feelings in the story of Job, a man written about in the Old Testament.

“Job exercised faith and acted according to his faith, even in times of darkness and trials. But his wife was controlled by her feelings. She might have been a great role model during prosperous times, and happy during times of plenty. Yet she didn’t possess faith, and being under the control of her feelings, she rebelled against God when the trial became too heavy for her to bear. And so, she advised her husband to curse God.

“But Job was ruled by a higher principle. His faith opened doors for him to a future reward. By faith, he saw ahead his heavenly inheritance and grasped for riches that will last. With such a faith, pain and poverty did not mean anything to him. As a reward for his faith which was so tried and tested, God restored Job’s prosperity. God was pleased with his faith because it stood the test of adversity. God honored Job because he was not controlled by mere feelings. He was not driven about by the winds of adversity and trial. Instead, he was governed by the law of God. He exercised his faith. When tossed on the sea of trouble, when in darkness and doubt and uncertainty, God was his rock, his fortress and his tower of strength.”<sup>1</sup>

The *Concise Bible Dictionary* adds to this:

“There is also the power and action of faith in the Christian walk—for we live by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). We see such faith [shown] in the lives of the Old Testament saints, as given in Hebrews 11. The Lord had often to [scold] His

disciples for their want of faith in their daily walk. The believer should have faith in the living God concerning all the details of his daily life.”<sup>2</sup>

If you need to make a decision, keep in mind this guideline: you should first trust facts, then faith, and then feelings. In your job, you do the same thing. The *fact* is that you started to work for your present company after you signed a contract. You believe (have *faith*) that your salary will be on your bank account at the end of the month because you signed a contract. And finally, you can *feel* the enjoyment of spending the money when you receive your salary at the end of the month.

Oswald J. Smith, the well-known pastor of the People’s Church in Toronto agrees with this order of fact-faith-feeling:

“Do not let Satan cheat you out of the blessing by making you wait for some supernatural manifestation or feeling. You will know the joy and comfort of the Holy Spirit as you go out believing, testifying and acting on your faith. God’s order for salvation is first, ‘fact’; second, ‘faith’; third, ‘feeling.’” Now Satan always reverses the divine order, and tells you to look for feeling. But how can you feel before you believe and how can you believe until you know something to believe?<sup>3</sup>

When seamen are away from home, their feelings are constantly changing. They work in different environments, and they need a strong faith to deal with the



challenges and problems. So, they need to know how to be successful in meeting the challenges, and not get defeated. Feelings certainly won't bring about the desired result. Here is what Justo, a Filipino seaman, had to say about faith versus feelings:

"Feelings are connected with our emotions, and the heart is the center of the emotions . . . . Feelings change and express themselves in so many different ways. One can feel happiness, sadness, excitement or loneliness, and in the case of us sailors, homesickness is one of the main things we feel. A lot of factors affect homesickness. For example, when we are at home with our families after long months away, everything seems to be great and all is safe. It's like heaven on earth. But, when the time comes to leave for months at sea, it's difficult. Someone said, 'I feel like my feet are heavy.' So, feelings constantly change and they are dependent on our circumstances. On the other hand, faith is based on knowledge. Knowledge is an essential element of faith . . . Every person has faith. The Bible tells us that even the Devil has some kind of faith, and he trembles as a result.

"Faith is the result of teaching (Romans 10:17). Faith in a thing or in some person will get us nowhere; but faith in the right person, the person who came to redeem us, who died on the cross for our sins, that faith will save us. Living faith or saving faith not only believes the great doctrines of the Bible, but it also embraces them with the heart and affections . . . ."4

## Here is an explanation of faith versus feelings by Second Officer Hamish Boham:

“‘Faith,’ according to the English dictionary, is ‘belief or trust; a religion or religious group; trust in God or a set of beliefs.’ According to the Bible (Hebrews 11:1, 6), “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. . . . 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” [NKJV].

“‘Feeling,’ according to the English dictionary, is ‘an emotional state; sensation, including bodily sensation; to think that something is so; to make your way hesitantly or be aware of something not visible or apparent.’

“Our feelings can be good or bad, or they can be right or wrong. They are motivated by our emotions, like fear, happiness, love, hatred, joy, sorrow, etc. So they can lead us to be impulsive, to react without carefully considering the result. With regard to our feelings, the Bible (Proverbs 3:5–6) encourages us not to rely on these feelings, but to “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” [NKJV].

“As Christians, our faith must be based on our trust in a loving God and belief in His wonderful promises. The Bible is packed full of extraordinary promises—it says in 1 Corinthians 2:9 [NKJV], “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor



have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

“Six months before my first trip to sea on a small fishing boat, 28 years ago (in May 1985), I made a special commitment to serve the LORD God and Jesus Christ as my beloved Savior with all my heart, mind, strength and soul. I invited God’s Holy Spirit to come into my heart and mind, to lead me in all His ways. I knew that, although I desired to live wholly for God with all my heart, it would not be possible for me to do so in my own strength. What followed was an incredible experience; suddenly God became so real to me. Whatever I had previously [thought and understood about] Him [cannot compare with] the reality of the personal God that I now discovered in Christ Jesus.”<sup>5</sup>

Here is a prayer from Neil Anderson that might be helpful to you.

“Creator God, You gave me my emotions so that I can know what is going on inside. Thank You for that gift. Too often though, I listen to and believe my emotions rather than the truth. When that happens, please bring me back to your truth so that I can believe it, live accordingly by faith and let my emotions follow. And Father God, please free me from the emotions I have suppressed and/or my tendency to suppress my emotions. Forgive me for times I have indiscriminately expressed my emotions, and show me whom I have hurt and need to ask forgiveness of. Give me

the courage and sensitivity I need in order to acknowledge my emotions and to support those I care about when they are sharing their emotions. May I reflect your love as I learn to follow the guidelines for emotional honesty. And Father, enable me to be emotionally honest with you since you already know what I am feeling anyway. I pray in Jesus name, Amen.”<sup>6</sup>



# Faith vs Natural Reasoning

Have you ever thought about how your brain works? God has given us a wonderful brain to use for many purposes. We need our brains when we begin school, and of course, later when we start studying or working in a job. Actually, we need our brains all our lives. Our brain especially needs to function properly when we have to make very important decisions like whom to marry or what company to work for or what house to buy. Indeed, we use our brains every day in order to make many good decisions. If we do not use our brains wisely, we will get into big trouble and end up in situations we do not want to be in. So, we can say: “Without using our brains, or our understanding, it is almost impossible to live a good and meaningful life.”

But, sometimes we place too much importance on our knowledge on how to discern and understand life. We easily become proud when we have made certain decisions. I think it is important to notice that even

people who are mentally handicapped can live meaningful lives. Why? Well, first of all, God is the giver of life and secondly, in God's view, even people with low IQ's are as important and worthy of respect as other people.

Whatever our worldview and personal situation, God has given us some interesting statements in the Bible that should help us to put our natural reasoning in perspective. Here is what King Solomon says in Proverbs 3:5–6,

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not depend on your own understanding. In all your ways remember [submit (NIV)] to him, and he will make your paths straight." (NIRV)

It is amazing that none other than the mighty King Solomon, who was a man of knowledge and of great wisdom (1 Kings 4:29), encourages and challenges us to, first of all, trust in the Lord. He does not call us to use our brains more, but instead he challenges us to get our priorities right: God first and then men. As it says in Matthew 6:33 (GW),

"But first, be concerned about his kingdom and what has his approval. Then all these things will be provided for you."

Seek first God's knowledge and God's wisdom. Solomon has learned that when he trusts God, God would act and guide him in the best way possible. When Solomon

says, “. . . *with all your heart* . . .” he means that we should trust God at all times, in all situations. Sometimes we trust God for some decisions, but for other decisions, we trust our own understanding or our past experiences. This is almost like saying, “God, I need you for the problems that I cannot solve, but for the rest, I can do them myself.” Solomon encourages us here to trust in the Lord with all our hearts, and he adds that we should not depend on our own understanding. Why? I think it is because our understanding is influenced by so many factors such as emotions, past experiences, people’s opinions and many other things. Solomon has probably known that our understanding is not always in line with God’s Word. Our understanding seeks the easy and comfortable path; it seeks success and the approval of men.

God’s understanding is independent of these factors. In 1 Samuel 16:7 we have a good example. When Samuel was given the task of looking for a king for Israel, he naturally looked for a man with a fine appearance, someone who was strong and who looked suitable for the job. Samuel was deceived into looking at outward things based on his own understanding. But, it is interesting to note what God had to say,

“Do not consider his appearance or his height, . . .  
The LORD does not look at the things people look  
at. People look at the outward appearance, but  
the LORD looks at the heart.”

We have to make many decisions. How do we go about it? Do we trust our past experiences? Maybe we have good memories of how things worked out in the past. But, now we are in a new situation. We have two choices: use our own reasoning, or ask God to give us wisdom for the decision. Sometimes, God would let us use our brain and look back to our past experiences in order to make a wise decision. But at other times, God has a different plan. We need to grow in faith and be willing to listen to what God has to say.

The message behind this is: God wants us to trust Him totally, since He is the sovereign God, and He always has the best plan for us. For example, God wanted David, a mere shepherd, to be the king of Israel. You normally would not consider a mere shepherd to become a king. But David's heart and David's faith were in the right place, and so he was chosen by God to become the king of Israel. It says in Isaiah 55:8–9:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

These verses, as well as the previous ones, might give us the impression that God does not want us to use our brains. It almost seems like if we use our understanding, this goes against faith, against God's will. Is that true?

Didn't God give us mental abilities to use for His glory?  
How then shall we use our understanding?

We first need to see how both rationality and faith work. Wikipedia gives the following explanation:

"Faith and rationality are two modes of belief that exist in varying degrees of conflict or compatibility. Rationality is belief based on reason or evidence. Faith is belief in inspiration, revelation, or authority. The word faith generally refers to a belief that is held with lack of, in spite of or against reason and evidence."<sup>1</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 2:5, the Apostle Paul writes,

". . . so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power."

He must have made that statement so that we would understand that faith has its origin, not in human wisdom, but in God. If faith were based on human wisdom, people would praise men and not God, the Author and Finisher of our faith. All glory, all honor belong to God, who created us with wisdom and gave us the gift to be able to believe, for the increase of His glory. But, we're still faced with the question: Does human reasoning conflict with faith? Not at all! God wants to use **both** reasoning and faith even though they may seem to contradict each other.

One answer to this question might come from Matthew 6:33,

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

If we learn to seek God’s will first, and make His priorities our priorities, then we will also learn about how God would let us use our human reasoning. Here is what Neil T. Anderson says about this matter:

“Faith in God is the Christian way to live and humanistic philosophical reasoning is man’s way, but they are often in conflict. God is a rational God and he does work through our ability to reason. The problem is that our ability to reason is limited and prone to rationalization (see Isaiah 55:9). We can live God’s way by faith (Plan A), or we can live our own way by humanistic reasoning (Plan B). The strength of Plan A in your life is determined by your personal conviction that God’s way is always right and by how committed you are to believing him. When has your conviction that God’s way is always right wavered? What specific issues have moved you to question God’s way? The strength of Plan B is determined by the amount of time and energy you invest in entertaining thoughts that are contrary to God’s word. Are you, for instance, currently establishing an escape route in case God’s Plan fails? In other words, are you contemplating your own plans on how to live your life instead of investing time and



energy in seeking God's plan and asking him to help you live it out?"<sup>2</sup>

If we seek God's face, and let Him direct our lives, and if we believe His promises, then God will equip our brains so that our understanding will be used for His higher purposes. Our brains should help us to be more in tune with God's mind. Our brains could, for instance, remind us about past experiences with God, why it is important to trust Him. On several occasions in the Old Testament, God challenges the people to use their reasoning, such as in Isaiah 43:26,

"Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence."

Tom Holladay, teaching pastor at Saddleback Church in the USA says:

"A lot of people think living an obedient life of faith means putting your mind in neutral and letting God direct you wherever he wants, as if you are a robot. That's not it at all. The Bible says, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' (Luke 10:27 NIV). You've got to engage your brain with God and live out the kind of life he has for you to live. This is what Joseph [the husband of Mary] did when he obeyed God's command to move back to Israel. Joseph heard that Herod's son was reigning in Judea so he was

afraid to go there. “Then in a dream, he was told to go to Galilee, and they went to live there in a town called Nazareth’ (Matthew 2:22–23 CEV).

“Nazareth is where the Bible prophesied that Jesus was going to live, so Joseph was exactly in the center of God’s will. And he got there by looking at the situation—the politics, Herod’s son as ruler—and he realized it wasn’t a safe place to be, and engaged his mind with God to make the right decision.”<sup>3</sup>

A verse from 2 Corinthians 5:7 can help to understand this matter better: “*For we live by believing and not by seeing*” (NLT). In other words, we live by trusting God and not by what we usually see with our limited capacity. God knows the past, the present and the future and so, it is best to live by faith in Him. By entrusting our lives and our decisions to Him, we will surely become blessed people, who experience God in a wonderful way.

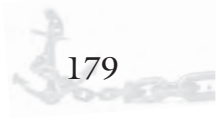
### **More Bible verses to meditate upon:**

“But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height . . . The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:7

“It is better to go to the LORD for safety than to trust in mere men.”

Psalms 118:8 NIV



“His greatest joy will be to obey the LORD. The king will not judge by appearances or listen to rumors.”

Isaiah 11:3, CEV

“For my thoughts are not like your thoughts, and your ways are not like my ways,” announces the LORD. The heavens are higher than the earth. And my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts.”

Isaiah 55:8–9, NIV

“The LORD says, “Those who trust in man are under a curse. They depend on human strength. Their hearts are far away from me.”

Jeremiah 17:5, NIV

“Jesus said, ‘ . . . The people who have faith in me without really seeing me are the ones who are really blessed.’”

John 20:29, CEV

“For God, in his wisdom, made it impossible for men to know him by means of their own wisdom. Instead, God decided to save those who believe, by means of the ‘foolish’ message we preach.”

1 Corinthians 1:21, TEV

“We do speak wisdom when speaking to people who are mature in their faith. But it isn’t the wisdom of this world or its rulers, who will soon disappear.”

1 Corinthians 2:6, CEV

“The man who does not have the Spirit cannot receive the gifts that come from God’s Spirit. He really does not understand them; they are nonsense to him, because their value can be judged only on a spiritual basis.”

1 Corinthians 2:14, TEV

“For we live by faith, not by sight.”

2 Corinthians 5:7



## **f** Faith vs Doubt

We all have experienced doubts which really confused us at one time or other. Sometimes doubts can be positive because they warn us about certain dangers. Doubts are usually seen as negative because they darken our daily lives.

Doubt was the first thing the Devil tried to plant in the minds of Adam and Eve. The Devil challenged them in the garden in Genesis 3:1,

“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”

It’s the Devil who usually comes with such tricky questions. We should be aware of what is said in John 8:44, that the Devil is a liar and the father of lies. So, we shouldn’t be surprised when doubts about God or the Bible run through our minds.

What are doubts anyway?

In *Wikipedia* it says,

“Doubt, a status between belief and disbelief, involves uncertainty or distrust or lack of sureness of an alleged fact, an action, a motive, or a decision.”<sup>1</sup>

In the next section we will look at examples in the Bible in which people doubted Jesus.

## **Thomas doubted the resurrection of Jesus**

John 20:24–29 (NIV, NIRV)

“Thomas was one of the Twelve . . . He was not with the other disciples when Jesus came. So they told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, ‘First I must see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side. Only then will I believe what you say.’ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came in and stood among them. He said, ‘Peace be with you!’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here. See my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’ Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”



## Sarah and Abraham doubted God's promise

Genesis 17:17–22, 18:10–15 (NIV, NIRV)

“Abraham fell face down; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man who is 100 years old? Will Sarah have a child at the age of 90?” And Abraham said to God, “I wish Ishmael could receive your blessing!” Then God said, “I will bless Ishmael, but your wife Sarah will have a son by you. You will name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him, it will be a covenant that will last forever. It will be for Isaac and his family after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. You can be sure I will bless him. I will give him children. I will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of 12 rulers. And I will make him into a great nation. But I will establish my covenant with Isaac. By this time next year, Sarah will have a son by you.” When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God left him.

“Then the Lord said, ‘You can be sure that I will return to you about this time next year. Your wife Sarah will have a son.’ Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already very old. Sarah was too old to have a baby. So she laughed to herself. She thought, “I’m worn out and my husband is old. Can I really know the joy of having a baby?” Then the Lord said to Abraham,

“Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too hard for me? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I didn’t laugh.” But the LORD said, “Yes, you did.”

Thomas doubted the resurrection of Jesus. He wanted to see the holes made by the nails on His hands. He wanted proof. Sarah and Abraham doubted that God could give them a child at an age when people normally could no longer have children. You might have read these stories; they might be familiar to you. But, do you trust God when He tells you something that is beyond your ability to understand? Do you believe God’s wonderful promises in the Bible, or do you doubt? Do you trust Jesus that He wants to completely save you from your sins and give you eternal life, on top of that?

Nowadays, people long to have assurance, trust and security in their lives. But doubts seem to make these things vanish. You really want to be sure about your job, your family and your house. You want to be sure that the medicine you sometimes have to take is good for you. Even more important than all those things is the question: “How I can be sure I will go to heaven and live there for all eternity?” Most people doubt whether it is possible to be certain about something like that. Yet, the Bible says that when Christ comes into our lives and we fully believe in Him, we can be certain about eternal life. Let’s turn to 1 John 5:12–13. If you happen to be



young, you might not be bothered by that question, but if you get ill or when you grow old and approach death, the question will suddenly become very important. The good news for you then is: Faith in Jesus gives assurance, hope and security concerning the future!

But you have to make a decision. You can live a life of faith by trusting all that Jesus said and by putting into practice what Jesus tells you to do. But you can also decide not to follow Jesus and just to trust yourself, trust your own decisions and your own wisdom. As a result though, you will come against limitations and barriers and you will find yourself in situations where you just have no answers. Once you see your own limitations, doubts will soon creep in and block your mind. How will you decide? Jesus says,

“Come to me, all of you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest. Become my servant, and learn from me. I am gentle and free of pride. You will find rest for your souls. Serving me is easy and my load is light.”

Matthew 11:28–30, NIV

Below are some verses that speak about doubt and faith.

“Jesus replied, ‘. . . You must have faith and not doubt. Then . . . you can say to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.’”

Matthew 21:21-22, NIV

“Right away Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘Your faith is so small!’ he said, ‘why did you doubt me?’”  
Matthew 14:31, NIV

“If you need wisdom, ask God for it. He will give it to you. He doesn’t find fault. But when you ask, you must believe. You must not doubt. People who doubt are like waves of the sea. The wind blows and tosses them around. A man shouldn’t expect to receive anything from the Lord. He can’t make up his mind. He can never decide what to do.”  
James 1:5-8, NIV

## Appendix

# Man's Problem: Separation from God

But your sins have separated you from your God.  
They have caused him to turn his face away from  
you. So he won't listen to you.

Isaiah 59:2, NIV

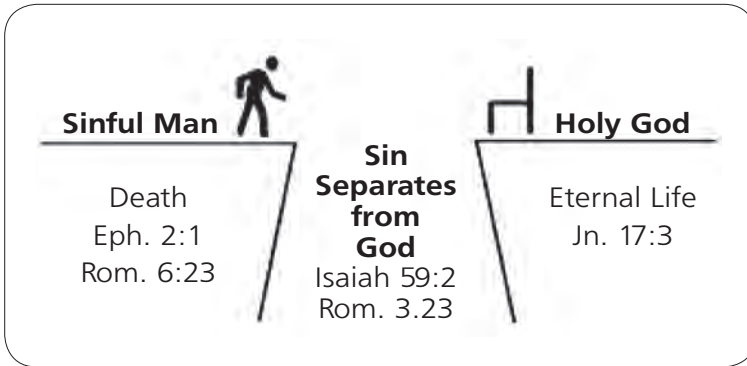
But God has shown his love for us. While we were  
still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8, NIV

According to Romans 5:8, God showed His love for us through the death of His Son. Why did Christ have to die for us? Because Scripture declares all men to be sinful. To “sin” means to miss the mark. The Bible declares, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory (the perfect holiness) of God” (Romans 3:23). In other words, our sin separates us from God who is perfect holiness (righteousness and justice), and God must therefore judge sinful man.

You [God] can't stand sin or wrongdoing.

Habakkuk 1:13a, CEV



## Our works cannot take us to heaven

The Bible also teaches that no amount of human goodness, human works, human morality, or religious activity can gain acceptance with God or get anyone into heaven. The moral man, the religious man, and the immoral and non-religious are all in the same boat. They all fall short of God’s perfect righteousness. After discussing the immoral man, the moral man, and the religious man in Romans 1:18–3:8, the Apostle Paul declares that both Jews and Greeks are under sin, “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:9–10). Added to this are the declarations of the following verses of Scripture:

You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God’s gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. It isn’t something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about.

Ephesians 2:8–9, CEV

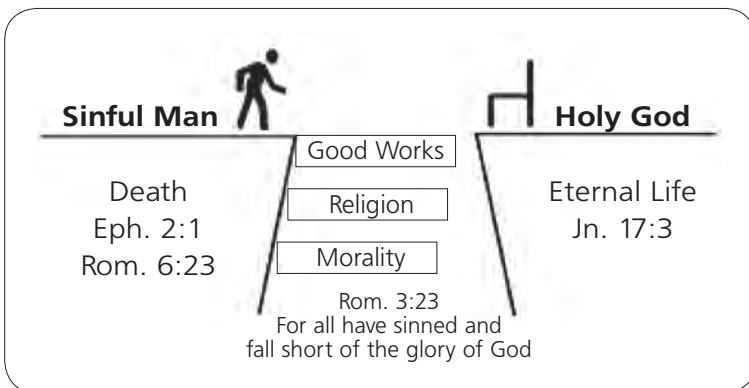


He saved us because of his mercy, and not because of any good thing that we have done. God washed us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He gave us new birth and a fresh beginning. God sent Jesus Christ our Savior to give us his Spirit. He treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God and gave us the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:5–7, CEV

What then shall we say that Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh, has discovered regarding this matter? For if Abraham was declared righteous by the works of the law, he has something to boast about (but not before God). For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his pay is not credited due to grace but due to obligation. But to the one who does not work, but believes in the one who declares the ungodly righteous, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Romans 4:1–5



No amount of human goodness is as good as God. God is perfect righteousness. Because of this, Habakkuk 1:13 tells us God cannot have fellowship with anyone who does not have perfect righteousness. In order to be accepted by God, we must be as good as God. Before God, we all stand naked, helpless, and hopeless in ourselves. No amount of good living will get us to heaven or give us eternal life. What then is the solution?

## **God's solution**

God is not only perfectly holy (we can never attain His holy character on our own or by our works of righteousness), but He is also perfectly loving and full of grace and mercy. Because of His love and grace, He has not left us without hope or a solution.

“But God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us even though we were sinful.”

Romans 5:8, CEV

This is the Good News of the Bible, the message of the gospel. It's the message of the gift of God's own Son who became man (the God-man), lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sin, and was raised from the grave. This proved both the fact that He is God's Son and the value of His death for us as our substitute.

“The Holy Spirit proved that Jesus is the powerful Son of God, because he was raised from death.”

Romans 1:4, CEV

“God gave Jesus to die for our sins, and he raised him to life, so that we might be made acceptable to God.”

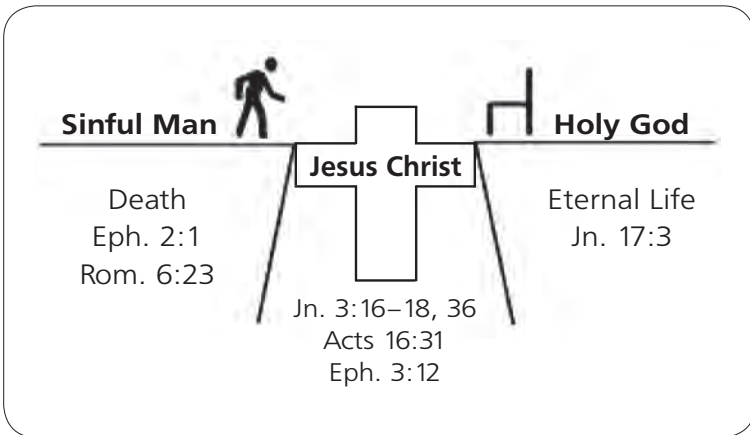
Romans 4:25, CEV

“Christ never sinned! But God treated him as a sinner, so that Christ could make us acceptable to God.”

2 Corinthians 5:21, CEV

“Christ died once for our sins. An innocent person died for those who are guilty. Christ did this to bring you to God, when his body was put to death and his Spirit was made alive.”

1 Peter 3:18, CEV



## How do we receive God's Son?

Because of what Jesus Christ accomplished for us on the cross, the Bible says, "He that has the Son has life." We can receive the Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior by personal faith, by trusting in the person of Christ and His death for our sins.

"But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God's children.

John 1:12

"God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them! No one who has faith in God's Son will be condemned. But everyone who doesn't have faith in him has already been condemned for not having faith in God's only Son."

John 3:16–18, CEV

This means we must each come to God the same way: as a sinner who (1) recognizes his sinfulness, (2) realizes no human works can result in salvation, and (3) relies totally on Christ alone by faith alone for his salvation.

If you would like to receive and trust Christ as your personal Savior, you may want to express your faith in Christ by a simple prayer acknowledging your





sinfulness, accepting His forgiveness and putting your faith in Christ for your salvation.

If you have just trusted in Christ, you need to learn about your new life and how to walk with the Lord. May we suggest you start by studying through the *ABCs for Christian Growth* available online at [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org). This series will take you step-by-step through some basic truths of God's Word and will help you build a solid foundation for your faith in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 Martin Otto, *Help, How Can I Overcome Temptations?* (Mandaluyong City, MM, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc.)
- 2 <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/faith>
- 3 <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/faith>
- 4 All Bible verses in this book are taken from the *New International Version*

## Chapter 1 – What is Faith Really?

- 1 <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/faith>
- 2 Dr. Alban Douglas, *God's Answers to Man's Questions* (Columbia, SC, USA: Cause & Effect Ministries), p. 124
- 3 Dr. Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over Darkness Study Guide* (Ventura, CA, USA: Regal Books), p. 72
- 4 Rose Mary Miller, *From Fear to Freedom* (Wheaton, IL, USA: Harold Shaw Publishers), pp. 15–16
- 5 *Concise Bible Dictionary* (Dillenburg, Germany: Gute Botschaft Verlag)
- 6 Dr. Alban Douglas, *God's Answers to Man's Questions* (Columbia, SC, USA: Cause and Effect Ministries Inc.), p. 125
- 7 A room in which meals are eaten.
- 8 Permission was granted by the seaman to quote his email.
- 9 Permission was granted by the seaman to quote his letter.
- 10 Permission was granted by the seaman to quote his letter.
- 11 Permission was granted by the seaman to quote his letter.
- 12 Permission was granted by the seaman to quote his letter.

## Chapter 2 – Is Faith Really THAT Important?

- 1 [http://www.2knowmyself.com/why\\_do\\_we\\_need\\_faith](http://www.2knowmyself.com/why_do_we_need_faith)
- 2 Andrew Murray, *Working for God* (New York, NY, USA: Fleming H. Revell Company)

## Chapter 3 – Where Can I Find Faith?

- 1 Neil T. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness Study Guide* (Ventura, CA, USA: Regal Books), p. 71
- 2 John Newton, *Out of the Depths* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Kregel Publications), p. 76

## Chapter 4 – Saving Faith

- 1 Dr. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press), p. 710
- 2 Joshua Harris, *Dug Down Deep* (Colorado Springs, CO, USA: Multnomah), pp. 14, 15
- 3 Dr. David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Crossculturally* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan)
- 4 <http://tvnz.co.nz/world-news/filipinos-crucify-themselves-good-friday-5390177>



### Chapter 5 – Prayer for Faith

- 1 A bulk carrier is a merchant ship especially designed to transport unpackaged bulk cargo such as grains, coal, ore, and cement in its cargo holds.

### Chapter 6 – Faith, a Gift from God

- 1 Adapted from [http://www.reformationtheology.com/2006/07/is\\_faith\\_the\\_gift\\_of\\_god\\_what.php](http://www.reformationtheology.com/2006/07/is_faith_the_gift_of_god_what.php)
- 2 <https://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=6&article=1246>
- 3 [http://www.mountainretreatorg.net/faq/is\\_faith\\_a\\_gift\\_of\\_god.shtml](http://www.mountainretreatorg.net/faq/is_faith_a_gift_of_god.shtml)

### Chapter 7 – God is Faithful and So are His Promises

- 1 Operation Mobilisation is an Evangelical Christian organization founded to mobilize young people to live and share the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- 2 David Greenlee, *Global Passion* (Carlisle, UK: Authentic Lifestyle), p. 45

### Chapter 9 – People of the Bible Who had Faith

- 1 Edwin O. Excell, “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns for Worship* (Mandaluyong City, MM, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 1976), p. 172

### Chapter 10 – Ways to Learn Faith

- 1 Edwin O. Excell, “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns for Worship* (Mandaluyong City, MM, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 1976), p. 172
- 2 [www. http://emmausuk.com/](http://emmausuk.com/)
- 3 Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over Darkness* (Ventura, CA, USA: Regal Books), pp. 75–76

### Chapter 11 – Faith in Times of Temptations, Problems and Difficulties

- 1 Jack Miller, *The Heart of a Servant Leader* (Philipsburg, NJ, USA: P&R Publishing), p. 285
- 2 Permission was granted by Captain Danilo B. Bueno to quote his email
- 3 Permission was granted by the seaman to quote his email.
- 4 Permission was granted by the captain to quote his email.

### Chapter 13 – The Rewards and Blessings of Faith

- 1 <http://brookeespinoza.blogspot.de/2013/05/18-ways-god-rewards-your-faith.html>

### Chapter 14 – Accepted—Welcomed—Made Right by Faith

- 1 Hannes Wiher, *Shame and Guilt* (Bonn, Germany: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2003), p. 276.

**Chapter 15 – How Can I Deepen My Faith?**

- 1 A feeder vessel is usually smaller compared to the mother vessel. Feeder vessels serve between smaller ports and main major ports.
- 2 Printed with the seaman's permission.
- 3 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan, 2002), p. 186.
- 4 Adapted from <http://christianity.about.com/od/practicaltools/a/shareyourfaith.htm>

**Chapter 16 – Strengthening Faith through Service**

- 1 Andrew Murray, *Working for God* (New York, NY, USA: Fleming H. Revell Company), p. 35.
- 2 Used with friendly permission from <http://www.bible.org>

**Chapter 17 – The difference between Faith and Religion**

- 1 Adapted from <http://www.reformation21.org/articles/faith-vs-religion.php>

**Chapter 18 – Faith versus Feeling**

- 1 J. Clarke, adapted from [www.writtentreasures.org](http://www.writtentreasures.org)
- 2 Adapted from *Concise Bible Dictionary* (Dillenburg, Germany: Gute Botschaft Verlag), p. 280.
- 3 Oswald J. Smith, *The Man God Uses* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott), p. 61
- 4 Permission was granted by the seaman to quote his article.
- 5 Permission was granted by the seaman to quote his email.
- 6 Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over Darkness, Study Guide* (Ventura, CA, USA: Regal Books), pp. 121–122

**Chapter 19 – Faith versus Natural Reasoning**

- 1 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faith\\_and\\_rationality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faith_and_rationality)
- 2 Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness, Study Guide* (Ventura, CA, USA: Regal Books), pp. 98–99
- 3 Adapted from <http://purposedriven.com/blogs/dailyhope/index.html?contentid=5471>

**Chapter 20 – Faith versus Doubt**

- 1 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doubt>

**Appendix: Man's Problem – Separation from God**

- 1 Used with friendly permission and adapted from <http://bible.org>

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