

Faith and Trust

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

Our salvation requires faith, and Jesus was looking for it when He came to the Jewish people. Jesus told His disciples: *"When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8, NKJV).*ⁱ

But Paul said: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).* From his words, we are not saved by faith. Instead, God's grace saves us *through* faith. But even our faith is a gift from God lest we erroneously believe that somehow, we can save ourselves from our dead nature caused by sin. No, we were dead in trespasses, and dead people are neither aware nor capable of making themselves alive through faith. Only God can save us by His grace and the faith He has given us so we might choose Him. As we read, *"God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).*

The Oxford definition of faith is "a strong belief in God or the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof."ⁱⁱ This definition rings with human intellectualism and contradicts what Paul wrote: we play no part in our salvation. All is a gift from God: His grace, faith, and redemption. The Greek mind would lead us to believe that *if* we conjure up enough intellect, we will suddenly believe in Christ and receive His salvific power to raise us from the dead. But Oxford also more accurately defines faith as "complete trust or confidence in someone or something" and that someone is God and the Son of God who came to save us.ⁱⁱⁱ

The apex of our Western Civilization and its Greko-Roman history measures the volume of knowledge one can accumulate over a lifetime and the intellectual capacity for knowing and thinking everything about God and our world. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the European church entered "the Age of Enlightenment" or "the Age of Reason." Preceded by the scientific revolution, this global movement influenced ideas centered on human happiness through the pursuit of knowledge. It included ideals such as natural law, empiricism, and scientific method, literature and the artistic movements, reason and rationality, progress, tolerance, liberty, individualism, social contract (fraternity), separation of church and state (secularism), constitutional government, and skepticism of traditional authority (critique of absolutism).^{iv} In contrast, the great and renowned men and women of the Bible are recognized for their absolute and unshakable faith, demonstrated as *trust* in God.

The Bible does not clearly define faith but says it is *"The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1). The keywords are "substance" and "evidence." Substance means "foundation" or "that which underlies our hope." It speaks of covenant relationship and mutual love between God and His children, our ground of hope. Faith that is based on substance is not blind; instead, it provides a conviction born of a loving, relational experience that God's revealed word is true. In a legal sense, substance translates as a "title deed;" he who believes divinely in his heart, God's love amounts to persuasion, and he has a title deed to God's complete provision.^v Hence, faith is our primary way of approaching God and the essence of our salvation experience.^{vi}

Trust is a synonym for the word faith, so they have the same meaning. Therefore, we understand that God wants us to "trust" Him, not exclusively believe in Him. There is far more to believing in God than merely knowing about Him. Yes, we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, and he who has faith has eyes to see the spiritual things of God. But even our ability to believe in the spiritual is a gift from God.

Jesus told Peter, *"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 16:17). His words suggest that some measure of our faith requires Godly revelation and the illumination of His truth. However, this faith is not blind or without evidence. In a traditional sense, "evidence" means "proof," and our faith is the foundation and the proof that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.^{vii} But again, God is the source of our faith; as we read, *"God has dealt to each one a measure of faith"* (Romans 12:3).

But far more importantly, God wants us to "trust" Him, not merely believe in Him, for even the devil and the demons believe that Jesus is the Christ. As we read, *"And the evil spirit answered and said, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?'"* (Acts 19:15). For neither our faith nor our works are sufficient, but our faith is exclusively and entirely based on what God has done for us and what He has yet promised to do.^{viii}

The word "faith" appears more than two hundred times in the New Testament but only shows up twice in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy, we read, *"I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be, For they are a perverse generation, Children in whom is no faith"* (Deuteronomy 32:20). The Hebrew word used here is *Emun*, and more accurately translates as "faithfulness," from the root of the word *Amen*.

In Habakkuk, we read, *"Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith"* (Habakkuk 2:4). Here, the Hebrew word used is *Be'emu-nato*, which accurately translates as "by his faithfulness," inferring faithfulness towards God. Therefore, the Lord was not saying that Israel did not have faith; He rebuked them for their lack of faithfulness toward Him, saying they were *"Sons that have no faithfulness in Him."* In Habakkuk, the Lord was not saying that the righteous will live by Faith; He was saying that those to whom He imputes righteousness must live a faithful life toward God and will live.

We acknowledge that our faithfulness does not make us righteous, but those whom God has justified and made righteous through His Son; these demonstrate a life of faithfulness towards Him. And how do we show our faithfulness towards God? Yes, we believe in God and His only begotten Son, but more implicitly, we obey and live a life of faithfulness towards Him. In this context, we can reread Deuteronomy as: *"Children in whom is there is no faithfulness [towards God]"* (בְּנֵי־לֹא־אֱמֶן כָּם). And in Habakkuk, we reread: *"The righteous, in their faithfulness [towards God], will live"* (בְּיָמֵי צְדִיק בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה).

The writer of Hebrews, acknowledging several Old Testament Biblical heroes of the faith, said: *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him"* (Hebrews 11:6). Since the writer is referring to the Old Testament saints where faith is applied as faithfulness toward God. We could read Hebrews as: *"Without [faithfulness towards God] it is impossible to please Him."* But the second part of this verse also says, *"For he who comes to God must believe."*

Throughout the New Testament, the Greek word for "faith" is *Pistin* (πίστιν). The Greek word commonly used for "trust" is *Pepoithotas* (πεποιθότας). In Luke, we read: *"Therefore if you have not been faithful [Pistoi, πιστοι] in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust [Pisteuseithe, πιστεύσει] true riches?"* (Luke 16:11). In Matthew, we read, *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe [Pisteuontōn, πιστευόντων] in Me to sin..."* (Matthew 18:6). We can see that the words faith, faithfulness, belief, and trust share a common Greek root, *Pist(i)(o)(e)*. However, the applied translation of these words will vary depending on whether we utilize a Western Greek model of thought or a Hebraic one.

The term "faith" has been systematically intertwined with that of "Belief." Many now in the church equate faith in God with an intellectual faith that merely believes in or knows about God. Further, there is often no correlation with repentance. Hence, many Christians have heard about Jesus but do not know Him personally, and many have never repented. It is doubtful if anyone can be saved without genuinely repenting, which can only come with having trusting faith in Jesus.

Faith in Jesus has become nothing more than having a mental agreement with certain systematic theological statements about Jesus. Evangelically, the Good News of the Gospel is presented as an opportunity to agree with certain declared truths about humanity and God: we are born sinners, Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins, and if we mentally believe in Him, we are saved, and when we die, we are transported into some spiritual, heavenly realm for eternity.

The writers of the Old Testament repeatedly affirmed their Trust in the Lord. There are fifty verses in the Psalms alone that proclaim this along with other writers, such as Job, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Nahum, and Zephaniah, all declaring in some way, *"Let him trust in the name of the LORD And rely upon his God"* (Isaiah 50:10). Trust stems from God's faithfulness. It means a greater sense of dependency upon the Lord. We read, *"He has remembered His mercy*

and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Psalm 98:3). The more dependent we become on Him, the deeper our Trust becomes, and the greater our personal, relational commitment, meaning faithfulness to Him as well. Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). We cannot increase our belief in God; we either do or do not believe. But we can Trust Him more profoundly day by day. As it says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). And

Jesus told His disciples, emphasis added, "If you keep My commandments [i.e., if you are faithful towards me], you will abide in My love [i.e., you will abide in my loving faithfulness], just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10). And He promised to take care of us, saying, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26). If we "Believe" that He is [the Christ], then what should flow out of that revelation is that God's faithfulness leads us to trust in Him with our very lives. And if we trust God with our lives, we should also love and be faithful to Him for granting us eternal life in Christ Jesus.

The Psalmist wrote, "You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts" (Psalm 22:9). If we can Trust God to take us out of our mother's womb and sustain us with everything we need, our love and gratitude should be demonstrated as faithfulness to trust and obey God. Not knowing Christ's salvation, King David declared: "The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned" (Psalm 34:22). Our gratitude should be seen as humility leading to repentance, which requires us to turn away from our old carnal ways towards the things that are important to God. Hence. We must turn in a new, opposite direction, which is the object of repentance. We turn around or turn away from sin.

Merely believing in Christ without knowing Him accomplishes little or no transformation in the believer. These individuals have the intellectual capacity for learning and thinking everything about God but otherwise live a life apart from Him—they are Carnal, as Paul says. The fullness of the Holy Spirit in the believer is through faith, and that faith is manifest as trust. We read, "That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14).^x Yes, the believer is sanctified through faith, as we read, "That they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18).^x But more importantly, we trust God, that He has forgiven our sins. We are sanctified by trusting Him; otherwise, sanctification has no benefit. While faith and trust are synonymous, faith is believing, but trust is completely letting go and surrendering to God so that our faith might be complete. If we have faith but do not trust God, then we do not honestly believe. We are like double-minded men, unstable in all our ways.^{xi}

Do we trust God to protect us? Yes, we have our security and perfect peace through faith.^{xii} Do we trust God to heal us? Yes, our healing comes through faith.^{xiii} Do we trust God to overcome our sinful nature and our enemies? Yes, we have victory over our flesh, the devil, and our adversaries, and we overcome the trials of this world through faith.^{xiv} Do we trust God with every

detail of our life? Yes, the entire Christian life is lived through faith.^{xv} Paul said, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith [trust] in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

Our faith must be exercised intellectually, emotionally, and volitionally (voluntarily). Jesus told His disciples, *"Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves"* (Matthew 10:16). Christians do not have blind faith; we have faith substantiated both with God's knowledge and wisdom and the evidence of His faithfulness towards us. The faith we need for salvation is based on written evidence from credible witnesses who wrote the Bible, either by hearing or reading the Gospel, which is God's knowledge and wisdom preserved for us. We read, *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17).^{xvi}

The emotional aspect of our faith is the joy and peace accompanying the realization of God's goodness in rescuing us from eternal damnation and His loving provision, healing, and protection; God's faithfulness is proven for us. It says, *"The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:7). Far beyond intellectual understanding, we experience an emotional ascent of the mind to the truth of God's Word as we comprehend the love that God has bestowed upon us and experience His continual faithfulness to orchestrate our lives and order our footsteps; our faith trusts God to have us walk in the light of His word.^{xvii} Paul reminds us, saying, *"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:37-39).

Lastly is the volitional (voluntary) aspect of our faith. Knowledge and emotion are not enough. We must deliberately choose to believe, trust, and be faithful to God. Jesus warned us, saying, *"He who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles"* (Matthew 13:20-21).^{xviii} Many in Israel knew Christ. Some witnessed His miracles. And others even received Him with joy, but only for a season. Knowledge affirms the truth, and emotions penetrate our souls to solidify this truth. But it is only with the heart that man, through volitional faith and our free will to choose, that we deliberately trust God and remain in His faithfulness—God's renewing, saving grace.

Again, we emphasize that we are not saved by faith; God's grace saves us through the faith He has given us. It says, *"By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8); *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"* (John 1:12-13).^{xix} However, God does not make us believe and trust Him; we choose to do so. If a person tries to believe in their own faith or in

something they do to earn God's grace, neither their works nor their faith will be sufficient to save them.

Thus, our salvation is not of works but one sustained by a continuously surrendered heart to God, without which there is the danger that one might fall away from the faith. Paul warned, *"If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard" (Colossians 1:23)*. And the writer of Hebrews said, *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame" (Hebrews 5:4-6)*. God's salvation can only be fully realized when we surrender, let go of every earthly stronghold, and give our entire lives to God in utter surrendered commitment, comprehending that we can do nothing to save ourselves, but that Jesus alone holds the keys to eternal life in His hand.

Genuine faith *is* in the realm of human will and volition as it responds to the promises and faithfulness of God, even those promises we have yet to realize.^{xx} We read, *"Being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform" (Romans 4:21)*; *"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10)*.

Faith requires action; it must be exercised. Hence, faith involves the surrender of the heart and the appropriation of Christ as Lord and Savior.^{xxi} We surrender to the Lordship of Jesus over our entire life, fully receiving all He has done for us on the cross. But more importantly, salvation is in *receiving* Jesus Christ Himself. It is not enough that Jesus died on the cross. I must believe and confess that He died for *me*. Yes, He died for all, but I must surrender and accept Him as *my* Savior. I must invite Him into my soul and the essence of my very being entirely, and this *personal* appropriation of faith is a vital necessity for my salvation.

The words we speak are more than a simple confession of faith. They emerge from the heart as a willful surrender of our will to His. Jesus said, *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32)*. When we declare the truth, it is because we believe it and have fully embraced it. We have made God's truth our own. It now belongs to us and has become part of our regenerated nature. Hence, we read, *"Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:3)*. But those born again of the Spirit of God will confess that He is Lord because they believe and trust Him.

We are instructed to mature in our faith from this moment of salvation. But we *cannot* grow in our belief in God; we either believe or do not. However, we *can* grow in our obedience, trust, and faithfulness toward God. These require time, surrendering our will, and an emotional investment of our whole being toward the things that please God. Like the saints of old, through

our intimate relationship with God, we are energized, strengthened, and sustained to wrestle against the kingdom of darkness and work righteously to advance Christ's Kingdom in the face of resistance and adversity, even unto death. The heroes of our faith in the Bible overcame the adversity thrown at them by relationally trusting the Lord, submitting in obedience to Him, and selflessly living a life that both served and glorified God.

Genuine faith deepens our intimacy and personal relationship with God through obedience, trust, and faithfulness toward Him. In this place of intimacy, we are faithful to obey His commandments and trust Him with every ounce of our being—body, mind, spirit, and soul. Paul eloquently summarized what this faith looks like, saying:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL DAY LONG; WE ARE ACCOUNTED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

Now that we understand that genuine faith is akin to trusting in God and then living a life of faithfulness towards Him, we can reread Hebrews eleven with emphasis added: *"But without faith [i.e., without trust in Him and faithfulness towards Him] it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe [i.e., humble themselves, repent, turn from their wicked ways, have faith and trust in the Lord, be grateful, love God, and faithfully live a life that is glorifying to Him]" (Hebrews 11:6).*

Amen!

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

ⁱⁱ Definition from the Oxford languages.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. Oxford.

^{iv} Wikipedia. *Age of Enlightenment*.

^v Duffield, Guy P. and Van Cleave, Nathaniel M. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*. Foursquare Media. 1910.

^{vi} Ephesians 2:8. Mark 16:16. Acts 16:31. John 1:12. Romans 4:5, 5:1. Hebrews 10:39. John 5:24.

^{vii} Arndt, William F. and Gingrich, Wilbur. *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), s.v. "elegos." Matthew 16:16.

^{viii} Romans 10:17. Acts 4:4. Romans 10:8-9. John 5:24. Acts 16:31.

^{ix} John 7:39.

^x Acts 15:9.

^{xi} James 1:8.

^{xii} 1 Peter 1:5. Romans 11:20. 2 Corinthians 1:24. Isaiah 26:3. Hebrews 4:3.

^{xiii} James 5:15. Acts 14:9.

^{xiv} 1 John 5:4. Romans 6:11. Ephesians 6:11, 16. Luke 22:31-32.

^{xv} Hebrews 2:4, 10:38. Romans 1:17. Galatians 3:11.

^{xvi} Acts 4:4.

^{xvii} Mark 12:32-33. Psalm 17:5, 37:23, 85:13.

^{xviii} Psalm 106:12. Mark 4:16-17.

^{xix} Romans 10:8-9. John 5:24. Acts 6:31.

^{xx} Hebrews 11:1-13.

^{xxi} Proverbs 23:26. Matthew 11:28-29.