

"THE BELIEVER REMAINS IN THE FAITH"

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To have "faith in", or "trust in", someone, or some thing, or some plan, is to "believe" in that person, (thing, or plan.)

Jesus wanted His followers to understand, that to be a true believer in Him, means to trust in Him or have faith in Him instead of some human plan or person and not to fall away from that faith. The one condition or one requirement that Jesus gave His followers is found in John 6:29, "This, replied Jesus, "is above all the thing that God requires, that you should be believers in Him Whom He has sent."

The most profound questions a true Christian could ask themselves are, "Am I acting and seeing in faith? Am I being a believer as Jesus said that God requires of us?"

Or we could ask, "Have I in a spirit of unbelief turned my place of trust to someone or something else besides God?"

The apostle Paul reminded and encouraged the Romans in his letter to them that because of their believing in the Son of God and what His Atonement work on the Cross had done for them, they had been grafted in to the vine....while some of the natural branches (meaning some of the Israelites) had been cast aside because of their unbelief. However he then warned them, Romans 11:20, "This is true"; meaning you were grafted in in place of them. Many of the Israelites because of not believing God's Word given through Moses which resulted in their disobeying His Word, could no longer act in faith; thus, they had fallen away from the faith, and God cast them aside until they would repent. (Verse 20 continues) "yet it was their unbelief that cut them off, and you only stand through your faith." (He said).

Paul was warning the Romans (the Gentiles) not to glory in themselves for having believed and thus were grafted into the true vine. (Verse 21 says) "Do not be puffed up with pride. Tremble rather.....for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you." The NIV translation says, "Do not be arrogant, but be afraid,...For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either."....If you do not remain in the faith.

The apostle wanted the Romans to realize that God sees the heart of a person as He told the prophet Samuel, and not the outward person or the actions one takes in the sight of other people. He knows if the motives behind those actions are sincere or not sincere. Jesus explained, that motives are of supreme importance. Matthew 6:23, "If however, the very light within you is darkness, how dense must the darkness be!"

Thus, when God saw the disobedience and resulting unbelief of the Israelites, He cut them off, or cast them aside, until they would

repent and return to trusting in faith on His Son. Verses 22-23, the apostle explained further, the never-ending justice of God,... "Notice therefore God's kindness and God's severity. On those who have fallen His severity has descended, but upon you His kindness has come, provided that you do not cease to respond to that kindness. Otherwise, you will be cut off also. Moreover, if they turn from their unbelief, they too will be grafted in. For God is powerful enough to graft them in again. (The NIV translation says), "And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God is able to graft them on again."

Jesus rose to life and went before His true followers to take His place at the right hand of God on His throne of grace where He pleads for us to His Heavenly Father on our behalf, that we might also have a repentant spirit and be willing to come to confess and forsake our mistakes. Romans 8:26 says, "But the Spirit Himself pleads for us in yearnings that can find no words."

The writer to the Hebrews (chapter ten) explained (verse 20) that "through the Blood of Jesus Christ, by the new and ever-living way, which He opened up for us through the rending of the veil, He has given us the privilege of entering God's immediate presence with a repentant spirit in our heart to seek His mercy.

Jesus is and has been extending His mercy from His throne of grace at God's right hand that all might come to Him with a repentant spirit and a heart that is willing to follow Him in obedient faith. Then, by His grace alone, we can be a believer in Him, as Jesus said that God requires of us, and by His grace remain a believer in the faith so as not to be cut off because of unbelief (Rom.11:20 explains).

By His grace, we can, if we truly believe in Him, follow the example of obedient faith when we are tempted, that Jesus set for us to follow by obeying His Father's Word when He was tempted Himself.

(Hebr.4:15-16), "For we have not a High Priest who is unable to feel for us in our weaknesses, but One who was tempted in every respect just as we are tempted, and yet did not sin. Therefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our times of need.

These verses clearly indicate that even the believer will still be tempted to fall away from the faith, but that God's mercy and grace is sufficient for us in those times of need so that we might not be cut off because of losing our faith by which we stand.

Jude (one of the Lord's brethren), also explained the kindness of God toward true believers and the fulfillment of His promise, .. as well as severity of His retribution for disobedience and falling away from the faith,... resulting in falling away from God's grace that He

has extended to everyone through the atonement of His Son if they will repent and come back to Him through His Son.

(Jude verses 5-6) "I desire to remind you (---although the whole matter is already familiar to you ---) that the Lord saved a people out of the land of Egypt,... but afterwards destroyed those who had no faith. The NKJV and the NIV translations, say, "but later destroyed those who did not believe." (Vs.6 says), "And (even) angels (those who did not keep the position originally assigned to them but deserted their own proper abode), He reserves in everlasting bonds, in darkness in preparation for judgment of the great day."

The apostle Paul had explained and encouraged those who are tempted to sin, Romans, chapter seven, that the conflict of sin and righteousness even in a good man's heart can be taken away by the deliverance that Christ offers. He then encouraged the repentant believer who is willing to follow Christ Jesus (Rom.8:1) "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ..who, do not live according to the sinful nature, but according to 'the Spirit', because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." The NKJV says, "who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

If we are truly walking or being guided by the Spirit in our choices, decisions, and actions, then we are in Christ Jesus. (V 3, says), "for the Spirit's law ---telling of Life in Christ Jesus ---has set me free from the Law that deals only with sin and death.

So, the real point we want to determine and confirm in our mind and heart is how we are actually seeing ourselves. Are we walking in the Spirit, or are according to the sinful nature? Am I seeing myself acting in faith and remaining steadfast in my faith on God's promises? (that are all backed up the power of Jesus' Blood.)

Am I remaining steadfast in faith because of what His Son did for me through His suffering on Calvary's Cross and really claiming my divine rights that were paid for by the shedding of His Blood and the sacrifice of His life for me? Am I living the life of faith and trust, believing for things and supplies in this life because the atonement work of God's Son on the Cross has provided them for me, ..since that is what God requires of me? .. And, am I believing that His shed Blood has also purchased salvation for me? (and for everyone else who truly believes or trusts in Him?

Or, am I really seeing myself as placing my trust in other persons or plans? What am I actually seeing my condition to be physically? Or how am I really seeing my spiritual condition in light of the circumstances I am dealing with in my life?

Am I allowing God to avenge wrongs or mistreatment done to me or my family, and most importantly, am I believing that He will make

right any wrong done to me ,...or am I seeing things the way the devil would want me to see the circumstances? (and maybe using a little self-effort to straighten things out)

We can ask ourselves, are we following God's financial plan? And are we seeing ourselves where God's Word and Promises say we have a scriptural right to be financially? Or, are we depending on the world's financial plans of laid-up money in the form of pensions, social security, or some other type of insurance money,... or a savings account (just in case we might need it someday)?

Are we being contented as God provides for us and our family, .. and are we sharing and helping others when we are blessed with some extra money above our needs?... Or do we fear following God's instructions--- Hebrews 13:5-6, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

Are we following God's plan for meeting other family members in God's way and seeing peaceful, conditions in our home, the way God's Word tells us it can be? Luke 10:6 says, "And if there is a lover of peace there, your peace shall rest upon it."

We could refer to the examples of Cornelius and Job, who were willing to lay aside efforts of the self-life and were willing to believe what Jesus had done for them. The Bible says that Cornelius feared God, prayed often and fervently, and gave many charities to the people around him,...but, he did not have God's salvation plan,...that is to be led by the Spirit in a life of trust on or in the Son of God, and in believing on what Jesus Christ had already purchased for him.

However, when he heard Peter explain the message of the Cross and God's salvation plan to believe on His Son to receive His Holy Spirit by which to lead and guide him in a life of real faith and trust,...he was willing to accept what he heard about Christ. He was willing to lay aside all of his human plans and efforts of a self-life to control his family and other people, his finances, and other circumstances in his life.

He was willing to accept God's forgiveness for giving up his own plans and self-efforts and was willing to accept God's plan of salvation for those who are willing to live a life of faith and trust in His Son by following Him instead of continuing in the self-life.

Peter told them, Acts 10:42-43, "And He has commanded us to preach to the people and solemnly declare that this is He who has been appointed by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness and testify that through His name all who believe in Him receive the forgiveness of their sins."

God, Who sees the heart, could see that Cornelius believed the testimony about His Son, He could see the real change in Cornelius's heart. He could see that Cornelius accepted His Word about His Son, so He bestowed His Spirit on Cornelius and his family. (Vs.44-45 say), "While Peter was speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all who were listening to the Message. And all the Jewish believers who had come with Peter were astonished that on the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out."

Because they believed God's testimony about His Son and were willing to follow Christ in a life of obedient faith and trust in Him. Cornelius's place of trust was then in the right place, so God's peace had descended on Cornelius's family and home.

That chapter takes us behind the scenes, and we realize that righteousness is simply a result of believing about the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross and being willing to follow Him in faith.

(Rom.6:11) tells us, "In the same way you also must regard yourselves as dead in relation to sin, but as alive in relation to God because you are in Christ Jesus." So, we must remain trusting in Him and not fall away from the faith and the grace that He is extending to us (as Paul warned in (Romans 11:20) "yet it was their unbelief that cut them off, and you only stand through your faith."

Again, we ask ourselves, are we seeing in faith and believing for the answers to the prayers we have placed before God,...or, are we only seeing what the devil wants us to see? .. And, as a result, are we passively accepting the devil's lies and what he pictures to our mind. If we are seeing defeat everywhere, that is just the way it will be. (Jonah 2:8) "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy."

So, if we accept the devil's dark pictures, and we act out of fear by using self-efforts instead of remaining in the faith, we hinder God power from working for us.

When the Christian looks in the wrong direction for things needed for ourselves and our families, then everything will be wrong. When we rely on outward things and gestures and efforts of the self-life, we throw God's offers of mercy to the winds.

Again, what we really believe in our hearts is the issue we are talking about. And, that is why the apostle Paul told the Corinthians that they must examine themselves on this one vital point. (2 Cor.13:5) "Test yourselves" (he said) "to discover whether you are true believers: put your own selves under examination. Or do you not know that Jesus Christ is within you, unless you are insincere?" So, what we really believe in our heart is the issue we are talking about because that is what controls our decisions.

In the face of situations to be met over the course of each day, we will have as a free moral person, the free-will choice to place our trust in God or in some other person or thing. The choices the Christian makes, the actions that one takes, and the words that one speaks, ..show or reveal the true spiritual condition of the heart.

We can recall that Jesus said (Matt.12:34-37) "O vipers brood, how can you speak what is good when you are evil? For it is from the overflow of the heart that the mouth speaks. A good man from his good store produces good things, and a bad man from his bad store produces bad things. But I tell you that for every careless word that man shall speak, they will be held accountable on the day of Judgement. For each one of you by his words shall be justified, or by his words shall be condemned."

And God gives a wonderful promise to true believers who make the right choice and who are trusting in the Son of God, instead of man's ways and plans. The promise is in John 3:18, "He who trusts in Jesus ...does not come up for judgement."

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