

## **God's Track Record**

### *Biblical Faith*

August 2008

I hear many people referring to faith in some strange ways nowadays. For some odd reason, faith has become an unreliable thing, like the phrase points out, "Take it on faith," meaning even though you don't see it and there's no proof, it's still true. Then there are people who believe as just a system of accepted mechanical and often intellectual views. Their belief system does them no practical good whatsoever.

So I'm asking the question this month, "What is biblical faith?" By biblical faith, I mean what kind of picture or understanding do we receive from Scripture about faith. How does the Bible define faith? Are there different levels of faith or trust in God? What is the source of our faith? All of these are good questions and I hope this article sheds light upon the answers.

Biblical faith is an active pursuit of God based upon hope and expectation. This requires a stepping out, a doing, not just a knowing. It is important and helpful to know Christian doctrine. It is just as important to put your belief that God is pleased by our worship when we reach out and help someone. Faith should be active, a pursuit of God, a pursuit of righteousness and it should be a tool to apply our hope in Christ to our world.

When you see faith in the Bible, it is based on a relationship with God. You see, Israel did not have to blindly jump out into

the Red Sea. They had seen God act in the past. They had seen Him single-handedly perform the ten plagues. They had seen God's track record and simply said, "If God can do all of that, then of course He can part the Red Sea." Faith is a gift from God to see beyond our circumstances and finite ideas to a supernatural and infinite God who cares for us. Faith is not a noun. It is a verb. And when you center your faith on Christ as the source of power, your faith gets a lot more done than you could ever imagine.

Faith is something that grows. Jesus talks about the power of faith when He says that if you only had faith the size of a mustard seed, it could move mountains (Matt 17:20). Even a bit of faith goes a long way. In the Bible, God grows faith through trials. He may or may not cause the trials or troubles in your life. Some trials have a source of evil and are not from God, but God can use the trial to establish your faith in His power and then to strengthen or grow your faith so that you can believe for even greater things. That is the power of God, that He is bigger than any trial we face and that He can actually take something totally negative, and bring something wonderful and positive out of it. So we pray as the disciples in the gospels, "Lord, increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5)

Faith is first defined in the flow of human history. God steps into our time and does some pretty amazing things. God also

does some pretty normal things. But one of the coolest things about revelation is that when God interacts with humanity, He always reveals His own character, His attributes, the kind of God He is. We know from our past experiences that God is a good God, a loving God, a God who was willing to give up His only Son to save us! When I see who God is from His Word and from what He has done in history, it makes my faith swell.

God builds upon these events. He continues to do more than we can imagine. He blows our minds to increase our faith. We begin to say, "If God could do that, then I can believe Him to do this." Our faith does not come out of thin air but is forged in the fire of trial and fueled with a knowledge of God both factual and experiential. Faith grows. Even in your personal life, when God does something amazing and you witness it, whether He did it for someone else or for you, it rubs off on you. Faith is contagious! That's why we tell people our testimonies, so that it will also grow their faith.

Think this way: God wants to do awesome and unheard of stuff for His children. We've got to trust Him. We've got to know that He can and will do these things. We've got to buy in to His will and to His plan and to His Spirit. That is faith. An active buy-in to what God already wants to do in us. But many times in our walk with God, we're so busy telling Him not to stretch us that we don't even think of how far God wants to take us, how much better it will be if we'll just trust. Do you trust God with this life? If you don't, then how do you know you're saved with eternal life? We need to live this life with a trust in this God who so cares for us. He's building up our trust in Him with His actions and words, because that is how we see His heart.

Most people go to Hebrews 11 to define faith. It's a good summation of what faith can become. Faith in God makes things possible because God can do anything, and when we believe that fact, then what we know as reality can be changed by God. Now God can change our reality without us exhibiting faith. He does not need our help. Faith is not cheerleading. Faith is seeing what God is doing and wants to do in our lives, in our world, in our universe. Faith is seeing God break the mold. And without faith, no one can please God. Faith is pleasing God with trust in Him and His character and His works.

As we live between the ages of Christ's promises of eternal life from the cross until the culmination of all time at the eschaton, we must have faith not to survive in this place between the ages, but to thrive here and now. God is doing great things and faith helps us realize those things. Faith relies on the past, what God has done and revealed about Himself to us, so that we can see and be part of what God's doing in the present and the future. It's tough to step out into a new experience. We are creatures of habit. We love knowing what comes next. We thrive on being prepared for every contingency. But faith moves us away from ourselves, away from our comfort zones, and demands that we rely on Someone else. It demands that we trust God in a new experience. God wants us to experience the fullness of His plan for us and for this universe.

Biblical faith is not mystical or weird. It is an expectance of the hope we already have, based on the experiences we have already had. Faith produces the unseen when it is grounded in what we have already seen. So now we must step out into something

new, trusting in God, who has shown Himself to be who He said He would be last time we stepped out. Stepping out never gets easier. When you think you've mastered stepping out, God ups the stakes. He doesn't

do this because He wants to torment or scare you. He does it because He wants your faith to continue to grow. So since faith is so active, step out and do that new thing because God's with you every step you take.