

Faith - Are We Missing the Point?

by Stella Paterson

Moreover, when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? Luke 18:8b

There is no question that we are in the age of apostasy ('defection from Truth'/'falling away from Faith'). The evidence is all around us--whether in the degradation so obvious in governments; unspeakable depths of sin being promoted as 'the norm'; 'ministers' preaching anything but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, or in marriages and families being torn apart by brutality and unfaithfulness. Such things are but a tiny example of the evidence of the apostate condition that has spread throughout every aspect of life.

All hell seems to have come against life, as we covered in [Death and Life - A Closer Look](#). The enemy of man's soul is doing everything in his power to destroy life. Little does he know that the *Life* of Jesus in us, is far removed from the 'touch' of any devil, as we read in First John. "*We know that whosoever is begotten of God sins not; but He that was begotten of God keeps him, and **the evil one touches him not.***" (1 John 5:18)

The secret to the *untouchable life* is "Faith." But what kind of *faith* are we talking about? What kind of faith will the *Son of man* be looking for when He returns? What is the *point* we are missing?

Why faith?

When man came into the knowledge of good and evil, he began to trust in *self*. What an abomination in the eyes of God who had created man in His own image! With his own eyes opened to the possibilities that lay before him, fallen man forsook his simple trust in God, setting the course for all mankind after him. He was cut off from the Life of God, and *death* became the heredity for every person born after him. And so, he had to be driven out of the Garden of Eden, lest he partake of the Tree of Life and live with trust in *self* for ever.

Throughout the Bible can be found countless references where God sought and found men and women whose hearts were toward Him. He never gave up on man, and when Abraham entered the picture, *faith* was conceived, so to speak. And God's plan to redeem fallen man was set in place, with the *promise of faith* being given to Abraham. With Abraham being the "father of faith," many of his descendants are recorded as being faith-filled ones. A number of these are spoken of in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, which we commonly refer to as the "faith chapter." More on this later, as we explore the ultimate need for faith.

Yesterday, December 6, my husband had the television on, and I overheard a preacher speaking on faith. The few words I heard caught my attention as the Lord quickened his words to my spirit. The preacher was speaking of Joshua's faith in God, and how he so boldly asked for something most folks would never dare consider. The thing Joshua asked, and truly believed God would do, was that the sun would stand still so the children of Israel would have their enemies delivered into their hand. "*Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon. **And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies.***" (Joshua 10:12b-13)

The Lord God was glorified in the sight of Israel AND their enemies. Would we, today, even dare to be so bold? That is the kind of trust the Lord desires us to have--not to pamper our self-serving flesh, but to glorify Him and to exalt the Name of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Referring to the unusual request Joshua made, the preacher then said, "God answers bold, unreasonable faith." What could be more *unreasonable* than to ask for something so beyond human comprehension? Yet that kind of trust will bring a response from our awesome God every time. Needless to say, false teachers abound, and have perverted the message of faith, corrupting the thinking of millions who need to hear the truth.

Word of "faith?"

Faith is one of the most distorted of all truths found in the Bible. Especially today, we have the "Word of faith movement" with their multitudinous twisting of Scripture to build their empires of greed. Their influence is far-reaching, and has brought incredible harm to the understanding of a most vital gift our Lord has given to us. When Jesus came, *Faith* came. We'll get back to more on that as we go on here.

One *Word of faith* preacher has said that faith is a "force." He speaks as though faith is something we own and can take, in and of our will, to use as a way of *getting* what **we** desire. And to make it even more blasphemous, he suggests it is glorifying to God, and pleasing to Him, when we *use* "our faith" in such self-serving ways. Such teaching is diametrically opposed to the *Faith* our precious Lord paid the ultimate price to offer to mankind.

Confession of "the Word" is high on the "WOF" list of priorities, as though they can fulfill their greedy desires, all the while shouting the words, "Jesus is Lord!" The Scripture passage used as a basis for this spurious doctrine is found in Romans. *The word is nigh you, in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the **word of faith**, which we preach: because if you shall confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,*

*you shall be saved: for **with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession** ['acknowledgement'] **is made unto salvation.*** (Romans 10:8-10) The truth is found in the latter bold words, and especially the meaning of . . .

Believing unto righteousness

In the New Testament, the Greek word *pisteuo*, from which "believing" is translated, occurs 250 times. Its primary meaning is "to entrust one's spiritual well being to Christ." The Greek word (*dikaiosune*) for *righteousness* is found 93 times, and is defined as "specifically (Christian) justification."

Let's rephrase *believing unto righteousness* in simple terms, according to the meanings of the Greek language. "*Justification comes solely through entrusting our spiritual well being to Christ.*"

With that in mind, we can see how much desecration has been made of the message of *Faith*. But we're not finished yet. In fact, we're just getting started. It is of utmost importance that we examine closely what it means to "entrust our spiritual well being to Christ."

Promise of Faith

Abraham was given the promise of faith four hundred and thirty years before the Law was given. The Law was given through Moses, for Israel to live by and acknowledge God through their obedience. The Law was necessary because of their violation of the will of God for them, and it became their *tutor* to keep them until their Messiah would come. They lived under that law for hundreds of years, and some still do, albeit in ignorance, having been blinded to the faith that was offered them. But did the Law serve to make them righteous, even if they were to perfectly obey it? Not at all! There was nothing they could do in their own strength that would justify them in the sight of God. The reason is found in Romans 9:32, *Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.*

The promise of Faith endured throughout those centuries. Here are the words of our brother Paul, as he explained it:

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could **make alive**, verily righteousness would have been of the law. Howbeit the scripture has shut up all things under sin, that the **promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe**. But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. So that the law has been our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you

are all sons of God, **through faith, in Christ Jesus**. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be **neither Jew nor Greek**, there can be **neither bond [Greek: 'in subjection'] nor free [unrestrained']**, there can be **no male and female**: for you **all are one man in Christ Jesus**. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. Galatians 3:21-29

As a side note, the reference to "all are one man in Christ Jesus," including *no male and female*, takes us back to Creation. When God created *man* [Hebrew: 'adam'], He created them "male and female." (Genesis 1:27) The woman was part of the man, having already been created, as the above verse shows. Then the Lord took her from his side (not his 'rib' as ancient [Bible scholars](#) show), formed her and gave her back to him, to complete him and make them "one flesh." Thus, in the beginning, man (humans) was *one*, and was in perfect communion with God, being made in His image, as spiritual beings. Now, in Christ, through His Spirit dwelling in those born anew, *man* is again "one." From this one example we see how far the bias of those of King James' era has taken us away from the truths of Scripture, using inserted words to twist meanings, so that the erroneous hierarchical thinking has been inflicted upon Christ's body. Also, if there is no "being *in subjection*" in Christ, why is there is so much belief that some must be *in subjection* to another? This is another enormous topic, but we'll leave it for now. If the Lord so leads, we will address it in His time.

Examples of faith - their meaning

It is so easy to pass over verses of Scripture, having heard them countless times and thinking we understand their significance. But have we really stopped to reflect on a verse, allowing the Spirit of Truth to reveal the depth of meaning that was the Lord's intent when He inspired the words or had His disciples record Jesus' life and works?

In some passages, *believe*, or *have faith in*, did mean "to give mental assent," or "trust in" what they heard, and such cases are obvious, as the context shows. But in other places, where Jesus used such declarations as "Your faith has saved you" or "Your faith has made you whole," we find the foundational truth of *faith*.

How did *their faith* make them whole, or save them? It was their complete trust in Jesus and the reason He came. Why did He come? He came to free man from sinful *self*. It is preposterous to suggest that man can take 'his faith' and 'get' whatever he desires. His faith is not a thing **he** owns. His faith is the opposite--a position of *selflessness*. It is complete reliance upon the One who paid the supreme price to free a wayward, sinful, self-reliant mankind.

Faith and Life

With freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1) The Greek word for *free* means "exempt from mortal liability." This clearly shows us that as born-again believers we are exempt from the liability of death that is inherent in sinful flesh--and now have Life 'inborn' [inherent] in us, in the person of the Holy Spirit of Christ Jesus. *We have passed from death into life.* Jesus said it best.

Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in [Greek: 'entrusts his spiritual well being to'] Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has **passed from death into life**. Most assuredly I say to you, that an hour is coming, and now is, when **the dead will hear** the voice of the Son of God; and those **having heard shall live**. John 5:24-25 EMTV

According to the Greek definitions, *yoke of bondage* is "(figuratively) servitude (a law or obligation)" of "slavery."

Why, when having once been freed from death, would anyone choose to turn their back on Life and become enslaved to the servitude found in some law or obligation? Yet that is what we find so rampant among countless numbers who name the Name of Christ.

This raises the question, "Were they ever born anew, or did they offer only their sins in return for forgiveness, rather than submitting the root of the problem to be put to death?" The *root of the problem* is sinful SELF, and a vile thing in the eyes of God who came in the likeness of sinful flesh to destroy it on behalf of mankind--because of His mercy and Love. All He asks is that we offer SELF on the altar of sacrifice, to be purged by His Refining Fire and conformed into the image of His Son. The *Refining Fire* is the Holy Spirit who renovates His new abode which is now His *temple*, from which He leads, guides and reveals Truth to the one in whom He dwells.

How hard is it, to entrust our spiritual well being to the One who has taken up residence in our spirit? When we receive the revelation of such reality, how can we not rest in Him? When we do rest in Him, the powerful presence of the Spirit of Almighty God can do no less than produce fruit that is the very essence of His Being. He is LOVE, and wrapped up in Love there is *joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance*. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Faith and love

The more we surrender self and flesh to the Holy Spirit, the more Christ-like we become. We are literally transformed into His image! And more of Him will

emanate from us; the evidence being the fruit of His Spirit, which is seen in our daily walk with others. Jesus said, "*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*" (John 13:35) And as Paul said, "*For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed [Greek: 'destroyed'] one of another. But I say, **Walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.***" (Galatians 5:14-16)

Faith and love go together. To use Paul's words, "faith works through love." (Galatians 5:6) The evidence of faith is love, and, as Jesus said, it shows to others that we are His.

The 'opposition'

Paul addressed this *opposition* in the following two passages:

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that you may not do the things that you would. Galatians 5:17

For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practice. . . . For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under **the law of sin which is in my members**. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of **the body of this death**? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I myself with the mind serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Romans 7:18-19, 22-25

As long as we are in this mortal body, walking upon this earth, the flesh will always war against the Spirit. The *natural* inclination is to function according to our knowledge of good and evil, which Paul referred to as "the law of sin." We may strive to live out what is *good*, but if the source of the goodness is *self*, it is just as sinful as a thoroughly evil deed.

God does not look for *self* to be pleasing in His sight. We can never be pleasing to Him, for "*Without entrusting our spiritual well being to Christ [faith] it is impossible to please God.*" (Hebrews 11:6)

Faith on trial

"*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance [constancy].* (James 1:2-3 EMTV)

Our faith must be tried if it is to be perfected. It is the one thing that will be tested again and again, to bring us to that place of perfect reliance upon the Lord. As James also said, "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; because when he is approved, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord promised to those who love Him.*" (James 1:12 EMTV)

Just when we think we have attained a place of perfect trust in the Lord, we may begin to look around at those 'less faithful,' and pride could creep in. Falling into spiritual pride would simply mean--we're about to be tested again, and we need to remember Paul's words to the Corinthians. ". . . *let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he should fall!*" (1 Corinthians 10:12)

In His love and mercy, the Lord continues to allow testing of our faith because nothing is more important than that we totally surrender our spiritual well being to Christ. But in the midst of it all, He will be there, as Paul tells us. "*No adversity has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but **God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tested beyond what you are able, but with the adversity, He will also make the way out, so as for you to be able to bear it.***" (1 Corinthians 10:13) Oh, the joy that is ours when we give it all to Him and rest in His omnipotent care! Peter spoke of such *joy* when he gave this admonition:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, **which comes upon you to prove you**, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but insomuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of His glory also you may rejoice with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you; because the Spirit of glory and **the Spirit of God rests upon you.** 1 Peter 4:12-14

'Resting' faith

The letter to the Hebrews begins with a wonderful description of Jesus, and tells of His power and majesty. Then, on through the chapters we find a detailed explanation of the reason Jesus came; the superiority and perfection of His Priesthood, and the examination of the Law of Moses with its ineffectiveness to produce righteousness. *For there is a disannulling [Greek: 'cancellation'] of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God.* (Hebrews 7:18-19)

If only we, as believers, could grasp this truth, and resist the temptation to revert to our knowledge of good and evil in an effort to understand what only the Holy Spirit can reveal. Such understanding comes exclusively through our submission to the mortifying of our flesh by His indwelling presence. **Knowing** Jesus is possible solely by the Spirit to spirit revelation of Who He is.

Because of the Spirit of truth, the message of faith is crystal clear. No amount of obedience to Scriptural instruction through fleshly efforts can ever make us righteous--just as obedience to the Law could not make the Jews righteous. Paul told Timothy, *Yea, and all that would **live godly in Christ Jesus** shall suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But abide in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them. And that from a babe you have known the **sacred writings which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness.* (2 Timothy 3:12-16 ASV) Paul did not say that obedience to scripture would make Timothy *righteous*. His salvation came through faith in Christ Jesus, and the Spirit-breathed Scriptures were simply profitable for instruction in that life of faith--resting in Christ. The whole point is, the message of faith in Him--not *self* and man's efforts to perfectly obey Scriptures. These words of Jesus' elaborate on that point, as found in John's gospel.

You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and **these are they which testify about Me**. But you are unwilling to come to Me, so that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men. But I have known you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. John 5:39-43
EMTV

Getting back now to the letter to the Hebrews. The tenth chapter speaks of the vast difference between the blood of bulls and goats and the blood of Jesus, as to the effectiveness to remove sin. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near **with a true heart in fullness of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil [Greek: 'calamitous'] conscience [Greek: 'moral consciousness'] . . .* (Hebrews 10:19-22a ASV) What is the significance of "having our hearts sprinkled" from a *calamitous moral consciousness*? The answer is basically this: Moral consciousness leads to man's endeavor to operate in the natural, attempting to *be* righteous by his own efforts. It is *calamitous* because it not out of a *true heart in fullness of faith*, but rooted in the knowledge of good and evil.

There is only one sacrifice for sin. And that was the sacrifice Jesus made when He went to the Cross to crucify flesh on our behalf. The consequences are dire for anyone turning away from faith in Him and reverting to some *law* to please God through the efforts of *self*. This is made plain in the following passage:

Anyone disregarding the law of Moses dies without compassion on the testimony of two or three witnesses. By how much worse punishment, do

you think, will he be deemed worthy who has **trampled the Son of God underfoot**, and has regarded as common the blood of the covenant, by which he was sanctified, and **has insulted the Spirit of grace**? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "**The LORD will judge His people.**" It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Hebrews 10:28-31 EMTV

Carrying on, still in the tenth chapter, we see the closing verses which tell us, *For yet a very little while, He that is coming shall come, and shall not tarry. But **my righteous one shall live by faith**: And if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have **faith** unto the saving of the soul.* (Hebrews 10:37-39)

There should be no chapter break, for the first verse of chapter eleven continues the thought. *Now **faith** is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1) The word *faith* in both verses comes from the Greek word *pistis* and means, in most cases, "reliance upon Christ for salvation."

The faithful saints of whom we read in the eleventh chapter maintained their hope in the One who was to come, and in the "City" He would make *without hands*. What tremendous trust in God they had!

The second verse of the chapter says, *For **therein** the elders had witness borne to them.* The word *therein* is translated from the Greek word "en," and means "a relation of rest." The elders' faith in God was their *rest* in Him and His promises. They believed what He said. They obeyed what He asked them to do--things we, today, would not find easy to do. One example would be the ark which Noah built, in spite of the ridicule from those he was instructed to warn of God's impending judgment.

In verse thirteen, we are told, *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

The unwavering faith of yet others, is found in this passage:

Women received their dead by a resurrection: and others were **tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection**: and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and of prison: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, evil entreated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth. And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided

some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect ['complete']. Hebrews 11:35-40

Unfortunately, there is again a chapter break which interferes with the continuity of the letter. Following that *break*, the very next words convey to us this crucial message, referring to those we just read about:

Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every hindrance, and the sin [unbelief] which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the chief leader (author) and completer of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2

The sin of *unbelief* is better defined as "NOT relying upon Christ for salvation, and NOT entrusting our spiritual well being to Him."

True faith

Death to *self* is required--and it is accomplished, not by *self*, but by the Spirit of Grace, as we relinquish to Him our 'right' to *self*. Without faith there is no life--we are still dead in sinful *self*. And the greatest temptation we face is that of turning away from complete trust in Christ. Faith is not a thing to be trifled with.

It would take a book to do justice to this topic of faith, so I pray the Holy Spirit's quickening will rest upon the words written herein, and that the revelation of true faith will sink deep into your spirit. May we all be ready for the coming of Jesus--having the faith which He is looking to find in the earth. When all is said and done, the issue is simply a matter of death and Life.

In closing, here are a few passages, paraphrased to emphasize the message of *faith* as intended by those who penned the words:

But whoso shall *entice to sin/apostasy* one of these little ones which *entrusts their spiritual well being to me*, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Matthew 18:6

Jesus said to him, "If you are able to *entrust your spiritual well being to me*: all things are possible to him that *entrusts his spiritual well being to me*." Mark 9:23

And those beside the road are they that hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, lest they *entrust their spiritual well being to Christ* and be saved. But those on the rock are they that,

whenever they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who *entrust their spiritual well being to Christ* for a while and in time of testing fall away. Luke 8:12-13

Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by him every one that *entrusts his spiritual well being to Christ* is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Acts 13:38-39

But now apart from the law a righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through *reliance upon Christ for salvation* unto all them that *entrust their spiritual well being to Him*; for there is no distinction; Romans 3:21-22

For we which have *entrusted our spiritual well being to Christ* do enter into that rest; even as He has said, As I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. Hebrews 4:3

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that *entrusts his spiritual well being to Me*, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever lives and *entrusts his spiritual well being to Me* shall never die. John 11:25-26a

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in *entrusting your spiritual well being to Christ*, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Romans 15:13

©2004-2009 ekklesia4him.net. Permission is granted for not-for-profit reproduction or distribution (without any changes) provided this notice appears and this link is included: http://www.ekklesia4him.net/faith_are_we_missing_the_point.html