

3. Faith Towards God

a) Key Scriptures

Hebrews 11:1-3,& 6

Matthew 17:20

Romans 10:17

Romans 1:17

b) Introduction

This is a natural progression on from repentance from dead works. Whereas our focus of attention had been self, now our focus of attention is God. Dead works always interfere with faith towards God. We have to 'turn from' to enable us to 'turn to'. There must be repentance from dead works to enable faith towards God to develop. In fact, anything apart from faith in God is dead (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23). Faith, in the context of this foundational truth, can be defined as 'having trust, assurance or confidence in another person and that person's word'. Having faith in God involves an exchange of trust from self to Him.

c) How Does Faith Towards God Develop?

(i) Having the right attitudes of mind

Faith is a persuasion. The word 'faith' comes from the Greek word 'pistis' which means 'firm persuasion; strong and welcome belief; the conviction of the truth of anything' (2 Timothy 1:12). We need to realise the futility of everything without God. Faith involves an attitude of humility and submission to the will of God (Philippians 2:5-8) and we need to confess this attitude.

(ii) Realising faith is substance and reality

Faith is not the imagination or the wishing of things into being. It is the conviction of the truth by the inner working of the Holy Spirit. If God gives us the faith for something, we can be sure that in the mind of God that thing really exists and is as good as ours (Hebrews 11:1; Numbers 23:19).

(iii) Realising faith is a gift from God

We cannot work ourselves up into believing. It is not the result of mental gymnastics. The Holy Spirit must place the ability to believe God within our hearts (Ephesians 2:8).

(iv) Faith develops through our knowledge of God

You cannot trust anyone you do not know. The more we know God and His faithfulness, His love, His character, His ways and how great He is etc., the more we will be able to trust Him. This is a basis for true faith towards God (Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 9:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:24). We get to know God as the Holy Spirit gives us revelation of Him through

the Scriptures, and through direct revelation to us that is in line with the Scriptures. This is reinforced through life's experiences as we, by faith, prove God (Hebrews 11:6). We cannot really get to know anyone unless we speak to them. Prayer, therefore, is a wonderful means of getting to know God. Prayer always manifests two things: firstly, a heart desire that all we do is in the will of God, and second, a confession of our total dependence on Him. Remember, God's faithfulness is great and unfailing (Psalm 89:34) and eternal (Psalm 119:90). We need to commit ourselves to His faithfulness (1 Peter 4:19; Hebrews 10:23), and we need to magnify His faithfulness (Psalm 92:1-2; Psalm 89:1).

(v) Faith is a response to hearing

God communicates His thoughts through His Word. When He enables us to hear what He is saying to us by the Spirit, this should create within us the response of believing or being persuaded that what He is saying is indeed true and is for us. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the (specific) word of God." (Romans 10:17 AV). As we confess the word of faith given to us and stand upon it and, when appropriate, act on it, we will find the creative power of God working in and through that word to bring to pass what has been promised. Jesus tells us that by faith nothing shall be impossible to us (Matthew 17:20). Having faith involves an exchange from only relying on one source of knowledge, i.e. sense knowledge (which we need), to relying on a higher source of knowledge, i.e. revelation knowledge.

Sense knowledge is all knowledge that comes to the natural man through his five senses. This is limited knowledge and is described as the wisdom of man (1 Corinthians 2:4-6). Revelation knowledge is knowledge, not based on the five senses or natural reasonings, but upon a higher source, the truth of the Word of God. It is revealed by the Holy Spirit to the spirit of man and it is described as the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-16).

"Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title-deed) of the things (we) hope for, being the proof of things (we) do not see and the conviction of their reality - faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses.." (Hebrews 11:1 Amplified Version)

(vi) Faith comes by experiencing God and His faithfulness

The more we have faith towards God, the more we experience of His faithfulness and the more our faith grows. God has also given us the gifts of healing and miracles etc., which should point us to Him and increase our faith (John 2:11; John 11:15).

(vii) Faith grows as we remember past faithfulness

d) Conclusion

Faith is not a mental attitude towards problems. It is the very nature of God. God is a faith God: He created the universe by faith (Hebrews 11:3). The person who is born again by the Spirit of God has received the potential of the nature of God. The old nature of every man is dominated by negative forces such as fear, doubt, confusion and error, but the new nature is God's nature which is creative, bringing order out of chaos (Genesis 1:2), life out of death, health out of sickness, prosperity out of poverty, truth out of error, and righteousness out of sin. Faith is this new nature expressed (Romans 1:17). Faith towards God is the lifestyle of the disciple of Jesus.

e) Summary and Application

1. Repentance from dead works is necessary for faith towards God to develop.
2. Without faith it is impossible to please God,
3. Faith is believing that what God has said will happen.
4. Faith involves trusting God more than we trust ourselves.
5. Faith towards God should be the lifestyle of the disciple of Jesus.
6. Faith comes from God.
7. Faith grows as our knowledge of God grows.