

FTB 66 WHAT IS FAITH AND HOW CAN WE KNOW WE HAVE IT?

So what does it mean to have faith? Are we to obey the Law of God or did Jesus come to abolish the Law for the believer? Has the church redefined words that are foundational to Christianity for fear of looking Jewish or legalistic? These are the questions we will seek to answer as we take a closer look into the depth of God's Word.

Ezekiel 20: says, "And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which *if* a man do, **he shall even live in them.**"¹² Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I *am* the LORD that sanctify them.¹³ But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which *if* a man do, **he shall even live in them;** and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.¹⁴ . . .¹⁹ I *am* the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them;²⁰ And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I *am* the LORD your God.²¹ Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which *if* a man do, **he shall even live in them;** they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness." (Ezek 20:11-21). An obvious theme is that Israel was rebelling against God, not honoring the Sabbath and not honoring God's precepts. The idea of honoring God's precepts continues to hang on my Spirit. As I read these verses in Ezekiel, the phrase, "he shall even live in them" stuck out as I remembered reading these same words in Romans. He is saying that if you obey the statutes of God you will live in them. As I looked this over I had to ask, "Is it a good thing to live in them or a bad thing?" The context is clear that it was a good thing to "even live in them." If you will obey God, it is almost as if it gives you life isn't it?

As we look in Romans 10 we read the same words. Now this may be a long text here, but it is important to read this carefully.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.² For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.⁴ For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.⁵ For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the **man which doeth those things shall live by them.**⁶ But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) ⁷ Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) ⁸ But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; ⁹ That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.¹⁰ For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.¹¹ For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." (Rom 10:1-11).

So what does this mean????? I looked in a number of commentaries and found a familiar theme coming about. The Bible Exposition commentary said, "Christ is "the end of the Law" in

the sense that through His death and resurrection, He has terminated the ministry of the Law for those who believe. The Law is ended as far as Christians are concerned.” Matthew Henry said, “The moral law was but for the searching of the wound, the ceremonial law for the shadowing forth of the remedy; but Christ is the end of both.” In other words, the theme being that when Christ came he put an end to the Law, however, I must strongly disagree with this understanding that has also permeated the church today. Remember, Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Mat 5:17). Let’s go back and look at these verses again in Romans. Verse 4 tells us “Christ is the end of the Law” and if you put a period there it would give the impression that these commentators were correct, however, it goes on to say “for righteousness.” In other words, the law does not bring about righteousness. There is a big difference here. One says Christ got rid of the law (contradicting what Jesus said in Matthew) and the other says that the law cannot bring about salvation. By the way, the NIV has improperly translated this, making it sound as if Christ did end the law but the KJV is correct as quoted here.

Verse 5 tells us that Moses describes the righteousness of the Law which begs the question, was their a righteousness that the Law could bring about? It seems to be so. Keep in mind, Paul is quoting Moses here in Romans from the Old Testament. I believe that most Christians read this passage in Romans as comparing something good to something bad. The law’s righteousness in verse 5 is bad but Christ’s righteousness in verse 6 is good. However, this is not the case at all. Paul is comparing good and good by comparing the words of Moses which is also quoted in the above Ezekiel passage. As we said, that passage is telling us it is a good thing to do and live by the Law. If a man could obey that law fully, he could live in that law, however, who can do that? Only one man- Jesus! I believe Ezekiel may have been giving us a Messianic prophecy when he told us IF a man do the Law he will live in it. This is exactly what Jesus did as He obeyed the Law and lived it out because He is the very essence of that Law. This is the righteousness that Moses was describing that Jesus would do.

Verse six goes on to tell us about the righteousness of faith, which interestingly is also coming from Moses as Paul quotes Deuteronomy. When the average person reads this Roman text they think that Paul is comparing the words of Moses in the Old Testament to some new wisdom in the New Testament, however, it is actually comparing two truths from the Old Covenant. Paul says that this righteousness of faith says, “Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*.)⁷ Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)” Again, what does this even mean? As we go back to Deuteronomy and see the context it says,

“For this commandment which I command thee this day, it *is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off.¹² It *is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?¹³ Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?¹⁴ But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it” (Deuteronomy 30:11-14).

Again, the context shows this to be a good thing coming out of obedience of the Law and it clears up what Paul is telling us in Romans. Moses was saying the law was not hidden from you that you had to go on some great journey to find out what truth was. The fact is, the truth was very near to you, even in you because God has placed it there. This fact is attested to by

many verses of the Bible as God has given us a conscience that will bear witness against us when we sin. Therefore, the “righteousness that comes from faith” isn’t saying don’t obey the Law, rather the opposite, that you are to obey the Law but the Spirit will place that Law in your heart so that you may obey it. You don’t have to obey anything, you just will want to because your faith will demand it from yourself. This probably isn’t some great new truth that we didn’t already know, yet for some reason we couldn’t get that from the Romans passage. Why? Because we have an unScriptural bias against the Law of God in the westernized church today. We have this strange idea that the Old and New Testaments are separate ideas and teachings which is actually heresy. We must begin to realize and look for the fact that the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

Now in summary we see that Romans is telling us that the righteousness of the Law was described by Moses in that if you could obey the Law you could live in it, but since we can’t, Christ came to do it for us and has now given us the righteousness of faith by placing that Law in the hearts of believers. The Law is still there, in fact, it better not be missing or you are in trouble.

Changing gears a bit, this is closely connected to some truth found in the book, *The Tanakh: The Dictionary of the New Testament* by Bradford Scott. In this book we see that the Jewish sages used to say that the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet were the foundational building blocks of life. If you think about we see that Elohim God created everything with these 22 letters, speaking it into existence. It can also be compared to the periodic chart where we see by combining certain elements we get different material. For example, two hydrogen and one oxygen molecule will give us water H₂O. However, by changing this slightly and putting a sulfur in place of the oxygen, you get hydrogen sulfide which is lethal. In other words, a small change in the proper arrangement can be the difference between life and death. God’s Word is the same way and every letter is there for a reason. Jesus even said, “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Mat 5:18).

Also within the Hebrew language we see that there is an emphasis on the verb over the noun. Just as in Spanish you would say, “the car red” with the adjective after the noun, in Hebrew one would say “the goes car” rather than “the car goes,” placing emphasis on the action. Sometimes it even appears redundant like “He opened his mouth and spoke, saying. . .” It isn’t some poetic form of King James language, it is built within the Hebrew language to do so.

Let us look at this Hebrew language more closely. Genesis is called *Bereshiyt* in Hebrew because the first words of Genesis are “in the beginning” which is the Hebrew word, *Bereshiyt*. Many of the Bible names are given because it is simply the first words of the book. The words following say “*Bereshiyt* (In Beginning) *bara* (created) *Elohim* (God) *at*” The word “at” is from two letters Aleph and Tav. What is interesting is the Aleph is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the Tav is the last. From a Hebraic viewpoint Genesis can be seen as reading, “In the beginning God created the first and the last.” In other words, God created the entire plan from beginning to end right at the start. This truth is echoed in Isaiah, “I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come (Is 46:10). Again, God tells us that He has made known what will happen in the end from what He has made and said in the beginning. One can’t understand Revelation without understanding Genesis. This is a deeper truth seen in the first four words of Genesis.

The Hebrews also believed that these letters of the alphabet were to be studied and spoken forth because if there was ever a time when Torah wasn’t vocalized, the earth would melt

away with fervent heat because it is these words or letters that are holding all things together. Interestingly, the New Testament tells us in 2 Peter 3:10-12 that this is exactly what will happen in the lawless days to come.

I explain this depth to the Hebrew language to show that it has been preserved and revered unlike any other language. Language evolves throughout time often giving new meanings to words, especially when translated from one language to another. The Hebrew language, however, for the most part has maintained its integrity. Therefore, to understand the meaning of Scripture, it can often only be understood by going back and looking at the original language that it was written in. This is precisely what we want to do to define terms that are often misunderstood in the church today. Let's begin by examining the following verses and as you read them ask yourself, "What does the word 'light' mean?":

- Matthew 5:14 "Ye are the light of the world."
- John 12:46 "I am come a light into the world."
- 1 Thess 5:5 "Ye are all the children of light, and children of the day."
- John 11:10 "But if a man walk in the night, he stumble because there is no light in him."
- Acts 13:47: I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles."
- Acts 26:18 ". . . to turn them from darkness to light."
- Mat 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men."

Most people would define the light as a beacon or christian belief etc. Most would say it is just symbolic and is a quality given to believers because of their belief in Jesus as light of the world. But I want to ask, is it possible that this word meant something significant to Jesus and the Hebrew people? Our English word "light" is taken from the Greek *phos* or the Hebrew *or*. It first appears in Genesis 1:3 when God says "Let there be light." The rest of the Old Testament will give us clear understanding as to what the meaning of this word was to be. Just as to understand a word today we must go to its origin to find its meaning we must do the same Scripturally. For example, if you want to know what gay means you look it up in a dictionary where the word was first used and we see it meant "happy." Today, however, it means something else because culture and sin have changed it. Consider the following Old Testament verses to help us define New Testament ones:

- Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."
- Ps 119:130 "The entrance of thy words give light; it gives understanding to the simple."
- Proverbs 6:23 "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life."
- Isaiah 8:20 "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them."
- Isaiah 51:4 Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from men and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people."
- Isaiah 5:20:21 "Woe unto them who call evil, good, and good, evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness."
- Hosea 6:5 "I have slain them by the words of my mouth; and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth."

These are just a small few of the many verses that could be given to show that Scripturally, light seems to represent the Word or Law of God. This would be our dictionary understanding of its meaning. Now let's look at the New Testament verses again and see if that definition fits the context.

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- John 12:46 "I am come a light into the world."
- 1 Thess 5:5 "Ye are all the children of light, and children of the day."
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Let's take this practice to view Jesus words, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Look at the word "way" in these passages:

- Gen 6:12 "And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."
- Isaiah 2:3 "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us His ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."
- Psalm 119:11 "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."
- Micah 4:2 "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
- Psalm 119:9 "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."
- Psalm 119:39 "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me."
- See also Ps 1:1-6, 119:30-32.

Again, there seems to be a theme connecting the word "way" to the Word or Law of God. The Hebrew word used for "way" is *derek*, meaning path, road or manner to show the means by which something is accomplished. There is only one way and that is Yah's way, not our way. Understanding Yah's way helps us understand the "ways" of the New Testament. Consider the following:

- Mark 10:5 "He received his sight, and followed Yeshua in the way." (In other words, he obeyed the words of God.)
- Matthew 22:16 "And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth"
- Rev 15:3 "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints"
- 2 Peter 2:15 "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam."
- See also Acts 9:2, Rom 3:11-12 among others.

God's Word spoken in Genesis have become flesh dwelling among us today. The way of Yahweh is to obey His words. Yeshua, Jesus is the Way. How about Jesus being the "life?" In Hebrew, this word is *chay*. Remember that in Genesis 2:7 God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life (*chay*). Again, I am going to propose that this life is the Word of God breathed into man. This is also why we saw in Romans that the Law is near us, it is in us and we don't need to move across the country to find it. Psalms says, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made" (Ps 33:6, Also John 6:63). Consider these Old Testament verses to define what life really is:

- Deut 30:16 "In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply"
- Psalm 119:50 "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy Word hath given me life."
- Ps 119:93 "I will never forge thy precepts: for with them thou hast given me life."
- Ps 119:17 "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and keep thy word."
- Prov 13:14 "The law of the wise is a fountain of life"
- See also Prov 3:1-2, Psalm 119:144, Ps 119:24-32 among others.

Again, we see that life is the laws, precepts, ordinances, statutes, words, ways and teaching of Yahweh. The New Testament would concur.

- John 6:63 "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life."
- John 1:4 "In Him was life and the life was the light of men."
- Acts 2:28 "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life"
- See also 1 John 1:1, John 14:6, Col 3:4, John 5:24 among others.

Regarding this truth, Bradford Scott says, "The concept of life in Hebraic thought is not some symbolic utopia. When Yeshua said that He came to give us life and to give it more abundantly, He was referring to the power of His words when put into action." We always think that Jesus gives life through the Gospel, however, Yeshua is life (word), and He gives life (word) so that you may obey Him (Word). The Gospel is the payment for which you may have life (Torah). So then, the question becomes, is it the Gospel that gives life, or a means to which you may have life?

Yeshua is the way, the truth and the life. We have seen that the way and the life are both the Word of God, as is Yeshua Himself. What about truth? I'm sure it is no surprise by now that we see the same thing. John 8:31-32 tells us that "you will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Free from what? Sin! Not free from obeying God's commands or laws, even though it seems that many a christian think that. Truth is the Word of God that we follow, all of the Word. You can look at the following verses to see this truth (pun intended): Ps 119:142, 1 Kings 2:3-4, Malachi 2:6, Ps 138:2, Ps 40:11, Ps 119:151, Ps 119:160, Ps 33:4, Ps 85:11 compared to John 17:17, 2 Kefa 2:2, John 14:6, Rom 1:25, Eph 6:14, 3 John 4, John 18:37-38. I hope that you are picking up that we need to be teaching that we don't just accept Jesus as Savior, but we accept Him as the Word, all of the Words of Scripture, all of His commands are truth and "His commandments are not burdensome," but will set us free (1 John 5:3).

So far all of this has really led up to a word that is most misunderstood in Christianity today, that is the word, “faith.” To show how we misuse this term consider the following statements: “Keep the faith man,” “You gotta have faith,” “Don’t you have any faith,” “Where is your faith?”, “What kind of faith is that?”, “He isn’t of our faith.” All of these statements reflect an inaccurate understanding of what true faith is.

The Hebrew word for faith is *aman*, which is the root for *emunah*, which is translated as faithfully, steady etc. We see this word is first used in Numbers where Moses is complaining to God, “Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a **nursing father** beareth the sucking child” (Num 11:11-12). Here the words “nursing father” are used for *aman*. God was showing us that he wanted Moses to be the object of total trust for these disobedient children. True faithfulness is the complete trust that a helpless child has for his nurturing parents. In other words, faith is NOT just an admission of God’s existence. Faith is NOT a bunch of facts about Him, but rather trusting His Words and doing them. Believing in God is not the same thing as believing God. Yet in the church today, we say we have faith because we go to church, claim a church, or simply pray to a God who we don’t really understand. The Devil knows who God is, and even knows much about Him, yet he has no faith because he doesn’t trust or obey God. Do we? How many times have we had our stomach in knots because we weren’t trusting God to deliver us from certain trials. Oh how we are ye of little faith.

Let’s begin to bring this to a complete circle by looking at a very important verse on faith: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). Let me ask you, is faith visible here? Most people would say, No, faith is not visible, however, look again at Hebrews. It tells us that faith is the SUBSTANCE of what is hoped for and the EVIDENCE of things that aren’t seen. In other words, faith is visible. It is the evidence and substance, both of which are tangible things. This goes directly in line with the Bible that says, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. ¹⁸ Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (Heb 2:17-18). Again, we see that faith is visible through our works. Faith is a personal commitment to follow, obey and observe God’s Word, yet so many in the church today say faith is invisible, allowing so many false converts to be in and lead in the church.

The Hebrew word for faith is most often translated into English as “believe.” Though there is nothing wrong with this translation, we must remember that it is much deeper than just believing because even the devil believes. We see examples of the word “faith” and its use in the following verses:

- Genesis 15:6 “And he believed in the LORD, and he counted it to him for righteousness.”
- Deut 1:32 “Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God.
- Isaiah 7:9 “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.”
- See also Deut 32:20,28-29, 7:6-9, 2 Chron 20:20, 6:17, Pslam 119:66, 31:23, Prov 20:6.

I believe that Yeshua was in a culture that knew that faith was obedience, not just sacrifice. It was a response to a commitment, not just a profession of it. This is what we see with faith being a “substance” and “evidence” (Heb 11:1). In John we read “Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God hears God’s

words, ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God” (John 8:46-47). Here we see that the Pharisees were certainly listening to and hearing God’s Word, they just weren’t responding to them. Consider the following New Testament verses showing an action with faith:

- John 14:12 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also.”
- John 14:15 “If you love me ye will keep my commandments.”
- See John 10:25-27 among others; especially the book of 1 John.

In Matthew we see the event of a centurion who comes to have Jesus heal his sick servant. Jesus is awed by this man’s faith because of this account: “The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. ⁹ ***For I am a man under authority***, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*. ¹⁰ When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Mat 8:8-10). Interestingly, the Greek and Aramaic texts make it very clear that this centurion stated that he ALSO was a man under authority. I used to read this text and think that this man was simply showing that he had authority and told people what to do so likewise, Yeshua, Jesus, could just bark the orders. However, this man was actually recognizing that Yeshua was under God the Father’s authority and that He would only do what His Father commanded. Remember, Jesus came under the Law and fulfilled the commands of God for us. Yeshua was faithful as seen in His actions.

Paul hints at this truth as well when he says, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of the Messiah. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ***ordinances***, as I delivered *them* to you” (1 Cor 11:1-2). I used to look at this verse and think how wonderful it would be to be so obedient to God’s Word that I could have the boldness and confidence to tell people to do what I do because I was so holy that I did what Yeshua did. However, this isn’t what Paul is saying. One of the reasons God chose Israel was that He knew they would preserve and pass His Words and ways down through the generations. The word for “ordinances” in the above verse is *paradoseis* in Greek, and it is most often translated as “traditions.” In other words, Paul was saying, “Keep up the traditions that God gave you as I keep them and as Yeshua Jesus kept them.” Romans points to this election (vocation) of the Jew for this purpose, “What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, ***they have been entrusted with the very words of God.***³ What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God’s faithfulness?⁴ Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar” (Rom 3:1-3). The Hebrew people were entrusted with the Word and they have indeed preserved it by the grace of God, passing it down to us. For this, we should be very thankful and do as Paul has told us, “to keep the traditions of Christ, the Word of God.” Paul was simply following his authority.

The same action filled faith is seen and demonstrated when obedience to a higher authority is lived out. See Acts 14:22, Rom 1:5, 3:21, 4:12 and Col 1:23 for further examples. Clearly, our obedience can’t save us, but our obedience is evidence of what does save us, faith in our Lord. However, this does beg the question, do we know what God’s commands are? Are you following them? Are you only believing that God exists, without seeking to know Yah’s way? Are you a cheerleader in the crowd or are you on the playing field? Put Scripturally, “Examine

yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus [God's Word] is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?" (2 Cor 13:5).

For further information on misunderstood English terms within the church see FTB 67.