

# Foundations of Faith

The conclusion of the Old Testament is actually found in the New. The Baptist was preaching repentance upon the shores of the Jordan and multitudes came to hear his message. A new testament was closing in on the horizon; with it, a new message and a new beginning. But John prepared the way before our Lord as a moral firebrand -- attitudes and behavior acceptable to God were the foci of his forceful proclamations.

*Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, ... every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

*So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?"*

*He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."*

*Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"*

*And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you."*

*Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?"*

*So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages." Luke 8:7-14*

The vast majority of what the people understood relative to

pleasing Jehovah was 'do-oriented'. The greatest misunderstanding of the people, having been schooled by the law of Moses, was that heaven was reserved for those who **lived** righteously meaning they **did** the 'right things', **made** the 'right moves'.

Enter Jesus. And...

*...they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"*

*Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." John 6:28,29*

A new day had dawned and with it came a new message.

*...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Heb 11:6*

In fact, you will only find 101 mentions of faith or belief and their related words in the Old Testament compared to some 582 mentions in the New. Nevertheless, there is arguably no other foundational issue in the contemporary church that is so misunderstood, contentious and unfortunately used so inappropriately as faith. Knowing this, Jesus posed the question to those living in the last days before His return, "...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8

Let's examine some of what the scriptures have to say about faith and we will note 12 foundational aspects of it. This will be much too brief and much less than the subject demands. In Berean fashion, see if these things be so through your own study!

1. Saving Faith: We are saved by faith in the finished work of the Lord on Calvary's cross. Eph 2:8,9 For nearly 2000 years, the gospel has proclaimed this loudly and yet there are multitudes attending church who are still trying to work their way up to heaven, to earn God's grace.

Even father Abraham was deemed righteous by God because of **belief** – see Gen 15:6.

There's clearly a time for faith initiated works but they have nothing to do with 'meriting' eternal life.

2. Binary and Analog Faith: Faith is a bit like pregnancy – you are or you aren't. With faith, you have it or you don't. However, beyond that, there are definitely degrees in strength of faith. The scripture uses such descriptors as great, strong, weak and lacking regarding believers' faith. Rom 14:23; Mat 21:21; Mark 4:40; Mat 6:30; Mat 8:26; Mat 8:10; Mat 14:31; Acts 6:5; 1 Cor 13:2; Rom 12:3, 6; Rom 14:1

3. Growing Faith: Faith can increase or decrease. The deeper the roots of God's planting grow in your heart-soil, the stronger your spiritual life will be. These roots tap into reservoirs not seen on the surface to feed and strengthen the plant even in times of distress. 2 Thes 1:3 Luke 22:32; Heb 10:23; Jam 1:6; 1 Cor 10:15;

4. Gracious Faith: Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is also described as part of His fruit. It is fundamental to understand that this applies to both the initial saving faith and all points of faith thereafter. 1 Cor 12:9; Gal 5:22

5. Audible Faith: Faith comes from hearing God's Word. This may be in the course of prayer, study of the written Word, from preaching, teaching or by revelation. The point is – it's God speaking to you. It was God's speaking that formed all of creation and is the agency, if you would, by which faith exerts divine power over it. Rom 10:17; Gal 3:2

6. Touch-point Faith: Faith can indeed be 'triggered'. For some, this may appear superstitious but we should not dismiss it. Faith cannot exist apart from the working of the Holy Spirit. Clearly, the Lord does not seem to prefer such means but we see it in the gospels, in the book of Acts and many of us have witnessed it. Unfortunately, deceivers have often used faith tricks to beguile the weak for the purposes of power, prestige and monetary gain. Mat 9:20-22; Acts 5:15,16; Acts 19:11,12

7. Honest Faith: Faith has an object. Faith in faith is meaningless. Faith in yourself or some other person is a recipe for eventual disappointment. God is always the object of true faith – it is He in whom we trust. Many charlatans are selling schemes to succeeding in faith none of which keep God Himself as the object. Even when you are honestly trusting in what He has said, you are fundamentally trusting Him. Trusting Him leads to knowing Him leads to trusting Him leads to knowing Him leads to ... Mar 11:22; Rom 4:19,20; 1 Cor 2:5; Heb 10:23

8. Pleasing Faith: There are two specific kinds of faith required to please God. You must believe that He is or more accurately WHO He is

and you must believe that He rewards your sincere search for Him. This Who He is cannot be overstated. Even the devils believe THAT He is, however Who He is implies the knowledge of intimate acquaintance. All the way from the Garden of Eden, Satan has sought to corrupt our trust in Who He is. In the original language, seeking diligently carries with it the underlying motive of desiring or craving. To believe that your deep desire and dogged search for Him will be rewarded is faith that pleases God. Heb 11:6

9. Unfeigned Faith: Real faith always leads to a response. It may be work or it may be wait. When faith motivates work, it will inevitably be opposed by evil. The same is true when faith says, "wait". However, both working and waiting can mask an absence of faith and/or an abundance of fear. Spiritual opposition and good spiritual fruit are indications of faith in either event. 1 Thes 1:3; Heb 11:13; Heb 11:8,9,11, 17, 20,21, 22,23, 30, 39; Jam 2:17

10. Defending/Overcoming Faith: Faith is the most important part of the Christian's spiritual armor. Faith quenches the enemy's attacks upon us. Satan has no power to overcome true faith. In fact, it is our faith that overcomes him and the evil in this world. Eph 6:16; 1 John 4:4; 5:4; Rom 12:2; Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5,12

11. Glorifying Faith: "All things are possible" to the one who has specific faith. 'All things possible' faith however never glorifies the receiver. It always glorifies the Giver – God. We see this in the

Man who said it – Jesus. Check it out – every time He did a miracle, people glorified God.

Now, Jesus wasn't exaggerating. His declaration wasn't some rabbinical teaching allegory. ALL things are absolutely possible to the one who has faith. The emphasis however is not upon the 'all things' but rather upon believing. Though they are sometimes enormous in our limited view, from God's perspective, the 'all things' are insignificant because they are generally temporal at best. Faith though trains up the soul of the believer and that lasts forever. Mat 9:29; Mark 11:23,24; Num 20:12, 1 Cor 13:13

12. Humble Faith: Faith is not presumptuous of God's will but rather submitted to it. Material 'blessings' are never an accurate indicator of faith. In fact, the Bible says that it is the poor who are rich in faith. The Father said to the Son, "Concerning the works of My hands, command me." However, Jesus' heart was, "...not my will but yours be done." Jam 2:5; Isa 45:11-13; Luke 22:42

When Jesus comes, will He really find faith on the earth? If we will sit like Mary at His feet to listen and then like Martha take action, the answer can be, "YES". May we cease all the silly church games and religious rigmarole in which it is absent or feigned and get serious about faith – true, effective, God-glorifying, loving, humble faith. John prepared the way with moral imperatives. Jesus is the Way and He told us to believe. God bless you with faith!