

Principles of Faith

by Brian Bailey

Faith is a basic foundation of the Christian life, without which it is impossible to please God or to receive anything from Him (Heb.11:6). A life of faith is needed because everything in our spiritual life comes from faith. Paul emphasized this truth in Galatians 2:20 where he testified, “*I live by the faith of the Son of God.*”

Faith Defined

Let us first define faith. Faith is not an emotion, nor is it a product of our will or intellect. We cannot manufacture faith; it must come from God. In Hebrews 11:1 Paul gives us a description of faith: “*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence [or proof] of things not seen.*” Faith is a substance—it is something that is tangible; you can feel it. When you have it, you will know it. However, it is a gift from God (Eph.2:8).

We might hope and pray for something from the Lord, but how can we be sure that we are going to receive it? We can have the assurance that we are going to receive those things we have asked for if we have God’s faith, for faith is the evidence of things not seen and the *substance* of things hoped for. Faith is very real!

Faith is given by God to fulfill His purpose and to the end that He might be glorified. The literal Greek rendering of Christ’s words in Mark 11:22 is, “*Have the faith of God.*” We must have God’s faith because we live by His faith (Gal.2:20, Hab.2:4). I will give an example of this because it is so very important to understand how faith works.

Some years ago we were seeking to purchase a property. At that time, the Catholic Church was selling a campus they owned in New York State. The government was offering to buy the campus for \$800,000 because they wanted to change it and make a prison. We felt impressed by the Lord that this campus was His choice for our Bible school. However, we did not have any money at all. Several of us prayed, and we felt that the Lord wanted us to offer \$400,000 to buy it. That was the amount the Lord impressed upon our hearts to offer. It was a step of faith because we did not have the money to pay for the building.

Our offer was accepted. This was the first miracle. However, we did not have any money, and the down payment was \$2,500. We did not ask anyone for the money. We simply prayed in faith to God, “Lord, if it is Your will for us to purchase this campus, please bring in the money.” The money came in just as we felt by faith that it would. By the end of the month, we were required to give \$22,500, which through prayer also came in on time. Again, we had told no one of our needs. The next obstacle we had to overcome through faith was our next payment of \$100,000.

When we moved into the campus, there were many expenses to begin operating. Halfway through the year, the Lord said to me, “I want you to build an auditorium which will be used to have conferences and will also serve as a gymnasium for the Bible school students.” We had no money, and we had not even paid for the building. When I asked the Lord, “Where is the money for this project going to come from?” the Lord quickly replied, “You do not need money. I have put faith within your heart, and that faith will produce the finances you will need.”

The Lord was true to His words to us, as He always is. We made no appeals for money whatsoever. We began the construction of the auditorium, which ended up costing over \$110,000. At the exact moment that we needed money, the Lord not only provided the \$100,000 first payment for the building, but He also paid off the whole balance of \$400,000 and paid for the auditorium at the same time.

It was the *faith* that God had placed within my heart that *produced* the finances for the campus and auditorium. We did not ask anyone for money, and yet it came in on time. We know what we are talking about when we speak concerning various principles of faith, because of the many miracles the Lord has performed for us personally. I know by experience that faith is a substance. I have felt it in my heart. Faith is an absolute reality—it produces. The faith that produced the finances for our Bible college and missionary center has also produced the finances to run the college and support missionaries in many nations for the past twenty years. Let us have God's faith!

Four Steps to Obtain the Promises of God

It is faith that produces the answers for whatever need we may have. However, the faith that causes our prayers to materialize is a divine gift from God. It is not something we can “stir up” in our hearts because we want a new car or a new church. In order for us to have faith, the Lord must impart it to us. However, the Lord only gives His faith for those things that are His will. Therefore, we must be absolutely sure that we are not being presumptuous and moving forward towards something that is not God's will. If we move in a direction that is not God's leading, we can *believe* with all our might that the situation will work out; but if it is not birthed of God, He will not give us the faith to see His hand accomplish the matter.

The following four steps are needed for us to succeed in our Christian life and obtain the promises of God. Because of a lack of understanding of these four steps many have sadly shipwrecked their lives, ministry, and eternal inheritance. When men and women do not follow these four steps, then situations often do not work out the way they expect. They often then blame God for their disappointments and become bitter at Him. So let us look at these four steps:

- 1.) **A Revelation** of God's will
- 2.) **Believe God's Will** and respond to it
- 3.) **Prevail in Prayer** until faith comes
- 4.) **Faith Will Come** and fulfill the promises of God

First, we must gain a revelation of God's will for a specific situation. For example, we knew it was the will of God for us to buy that property. This is the first step, we must first come to know the will of God. We may receive this revelation of God's will through a personal word or quickened scripture from the Lord, or else we may receive it through a prophecy. Before we begin to move toward obtaining something we must be certain that it is the will of God and not merely our own good intentions or desires. Let me give you an illustration of this.

When I was a pastor on the West Coast of the USA, I was asked to pray for two men who had heart attacks. God showed me that one of them would live but the other one would die. Someone might say that I did not pray enough for the one that died. Yet that is not the truth of the matter, because it was not God's will for that man to live. My wife and I were much closer to the man who died because he was my wife's uncle. If healing depended upon us, we would have chosen to heal my wife's uncle as well. We have to understand that healing and miracles do not depend upon us. Healing must be done according to God's sovereign will.

After we know the will of God, the second step is that we must believe Him wholeheartedly. That is our responsibility, it is something that we do by an act of our will. We must not have the attitude that we cannot do what God is asking us to do. Neither can we think that the circumstances are impossible, for *all things* are possible with God. We must believe what God speaks to us. However, this act of believing by itself will not bring the promise into reality. After we have a believing heart, then we have to practice step number three. We have to pray earnestly and travail for God to bring to pass that which He has spoken to us. We have to pray until we have received an impartation of faith from God to perform the miracle or bring God's will to pass.

James 5:16 tells us, "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*" There must be fervent prayer on our part to bring into existence that which God has spoken. The Lord Jesus Christ made this very clear. In response to the disciples' request for Christ to teach them how to pray, He gave the following story in Luke 11:5-8: "*Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him?' And he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you.' I say to you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.*" We often do not receive anything from God if we ask Him for it only once. We have to ask and keep on asking until He finally grants our petition. We must continue praying until we have a breakthrough. Another parable that teaches us this important lesson is in Luke 18:1-5.

Let us also consider the prevailing prayers of the prophet Elijah. James 5:17-18 says that Elijah "*was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced her fruit.*" We see the details of this story in First Kings 18:1, which says, "*And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, 'Go, present yourself to Ahab; and I will send rain on the earth.'*" This is very clear-cut. God spoke to the prophet, and Elijah obviously believed, because he obeyed the Lord and showed himself to Ahab.

However, the rain did not come simply because God had spoken and Elijah had believed. What actually caused the rain to finally come? We are given the answer in First Kings 18:41-44: "*And Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.' So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, 'Go up now, look toward the sea.' So he went up, and looked, and said, 'There is nothing.' And seven times he said, 'Go again.' Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, 'There is a little cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea.' So he said, 'Go up, say to Ahab, Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.'*" After Elijah had learned God's will and had believed, he prayed through until faith arose within his heart. He told Ahab in faith that they had to move quickly because the rain was coming. Since there had been no rain for forty-two months, this was a tremendous declaration of faith. The Lord had brought Elijah to our fourth step, as faith had come to his heart so that he could bring the rain and obtain the promise of God.

There is a specific time for God's purposes to be accomplished. When the *appointed* time came, God told Elijah to command the heavens to be opened. We must operate in the area of faith according to God's timetable, not ours. The Word of God tells us that there is a specific time to heal (Eccl.3:3). Ask God to reveal to you His timing.

I hope that you will review these four steps so that they might enable you to lead a victorious life in Christ. We must follow the four steps and be upright in heart to be ready to receive God's faith. Once we grasp this, we will enter into a new relationship with God and a new dimension in our Christian experience!

Two Types of Faith

There are two types of faith. There is the *fruit* of faith according to Galatians 5:22. By this faith we have imparted to us the different aspects of God's nature and we come to spiritual maturity. However, there is another type of faith called the *gift* of faith from First Corinthians 12:6. This type of faith is what we might refer to as "faith in action." Paul speaks of this type of faith that is able to move mountains (1 Cor.13:2) and through this faith Samson performed all of his miraculous works (Heb.11:32).

Both aspects of faith are very important. The Church has often emphasized the fruit of faith for holiness while ignoring the gift of faith for miracles and mighty works. Obviously, this is not balanced. We must be careful not to get so totally involved with seeking holiness that we forget about the gift of faith and miracles.

However, in recent years there has been an overemphasis in some groups on the gift of faith so that character and holiness have not been emphasized enough. In over fifty years in the ministry I have known many who have failed and missed the mark of God for their lives. The reason they have failed is that they did not develop godly character and holiness.

The Fruit of Faith

We will first consider the subject of faith as a fruit. In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul lists faith as one of the nine fruits of the Spirit. And because faith is a fruit, it has to develop and grow. Jesus explained the different stages of growth in Mark 4:28, saying, "*The earth brings forth fruit by itself; first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.*" These three levels of development can be paralleled with the faith necessary to abide in the outer court, then the faith needed to proceed into the holy place, and then the faith required to go within the veil into the holy of holies. They also represent bringing forth fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and one hundredfold (see Mt.13:8) and are comparable to the three levels of fruitfulness in John chapter fifteen: fruit, more fruit, and much fruit.

1. The Blade

Outer Court faith

Thirtyfold

Fruit

2. The Head

Holy Place faith

Sixtyfold

More fruit

3. The Full Grain

Holy of Holies faith

Hundredfold

Much fruit

There are stages of development in our Christian experience. This is especially true concerning the fruit of faith. When we are born-again, we receive God's faith into our hearts like a grain of mustard seed (see Mt.13:31-32 & 17:20). However, we do not want to live the whole of our Christian life with only a seed of faith. We want our faith to grow and mature so that it becomes a large, strong tree that bears much fruit for the kingdom of God. A farmer would never be satisfied if he planted seeds that never grew or produced little fruit. Likewise, if the fruit of faith is to flourish in our lives, the soil of our hearts must be fertile and soft. All the stones of hardness and the thorns and briars of the fallen nature must be uprooted in order for faith to mature in our lives. There are many aspects to the fruit of faith, and I want to look at a few of them with you now.

Faith Expressed Through the Names of God

Psalms 91:14 speaks prophetically of the Lord Jesus and also of those who follow in His footsteps: *“Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath **known my name.**”* I would like to link this verse with the fruit of faith because faith is expressed through the names of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through faith, we come to know the Lord by His various names as we allow Him to take us through circumstances that require a revelation of one of His names.

We could never know the Lord by His name Jehovah-rapha (“the Lord our Healer” in Ex.15:26) unless we have been sick. Nor could we ever know His name Jehovah-shalom (“the Lord our Peace,” in Jud.6:23) unless we have gone through stressful and confusing difficulties. We need the faith of God to carry us through sickness and troubles. The whole goal of Christianity is to know the Lord, and we come to know Him by His many names as we pass through different experiences by faith. We do not want to know His names in theory only, but we want to *experience* them.

Another name of Christ is Jehovah-tsidkenu (Jer.33:16), which means, “the Lord our Righteousness.” This aspect of the Lord’s nature is also connected to faith because Romans 1:17 says, *“The righteousness of God [is] revealed from faith to faith.”* There is an ever-increasing revelation of the righteousness of God revealed to us through faith. Therefore, faith must grow in our hearts in order for righteousness to increase in our lives. These virtues do *not* originate within ourselves; they are divine. The Apostle Paul understood this truth when he proclaimed in Philippians 3:9, *“Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the **righteousness which is of God by faith.**”* So it is very clear that one aspect of the fruit of faith is to produce the righteousness of God in our lives.

Imputed and Imparted Righteousness

In Romans 4:6-7 Paul addresses the subject of imputed righteousness: *“Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God **imputes** righteousness apart from works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.”* Therefore by faith we receive *imputed* righteousness from God at our new birth. We are counted righteous in His sight by faith, but that state of righteousness must grow and develop. We need to go on to know the Lord as Jehovah-tsidkenu (the Lord our Righteousness) in all His fullness—not in theory, but in experience.

We are counted righteous when we are born-again, but there are many aspects of righteousness that we still need to come into by faith after that initial imputation of righteousness. We do not want simply to be *counted* righteous, we want to *become* righteous in character. When we are counted righteous, our “record” is wiped clean and we are forgiven of all our sins, but we are actually still very carnal in character. What the Lord does for us at salvation is exactly what a judge does for a criminal when he pardons him. A judge can pardon a criminal of his crimes so that he is freed of the charges. However, that criminal is still a criminal in heart and character. He is forgiven, pardoned, and his record is cleared, but he is not yet honest and upright in character. Only in his legal standing is he changed.

The same thing happens to us when we are born-again. The Lord forgives all of our crimes and debts, and His righteousness is imputed to us. However, we are still very carnal inside. Therefore, the Lord desires to work in our lives to make us just as righteous as Himself. This is called *imparted* righteousness, and it involves being filled with God’s very own righteousness. It is an actual spiritual garment that clothes the Bride of Christ, as seen in Revelation 19:8 - *“To her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is*

the righteous acts of the saints.” Therefore, faith must increase in our lives for us to become partakers of the imparted righteousness of God, so that we may fully reflect the image and nature of Christ!

Steps of Obedience We Must Take by Faith

There are steps of obedience we must follow in order for righteousness to develop and increase in our lives. One step of obedience we must take after salvation is to be water baptized. Water baptism is an act of faith because we go into the waters of baptism believing that we are following the commandments of the Lord. Christ insisted on being water baptized Himself, saying in Matthew 3:15, “For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill *all* righteousness.”

Therefore, being water baptized is not only an act of faith, it is also fulfilling righteousness. With every step of obedience we are fulfilling the righteousness of God. That is very important. Christ said we should fulfill *all* righteousness. Therefore, there are many levels and degrees of righteousness that we need to experience after we are saved.

After we have accepted the Lord into our hearts and we have been water baptized, the next step of faith and obedience in the Christian life is to be baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. The baptism of the Holy Spirit requires great faith, because we have to bypass our intellect and release our tongues to the Lord. It is also faith that leads us into the crucified life whereby we die to ourselves and our will, and the Lord lives His life through us (Gal.2:20). Every step of obedience in the Christian life is by faith.

The Gift of Faith

Now we are going to study the gift of faith. The *gift* of faith is quite different from the *fruit* of faith. The gift of faith relates to miracles, healing, and the power of God, whereas the fruit of faith relates to our character and relationship with the Lord. The gift of faith can be called “faith in action.”

The gift of faith is one of the nine *gifts* of the Holy Spirit spoken of in First Corinthians 12:7-11. As we saw in Galatians 5:22-23, the fruit of faith is one of the nine *fruits* of the Holy Spirit. These are two different workings of the Holy Spirit in two different sets of nines. In First Corinthians 14:1 the Apostle Paul teaches us the correct balance we should have in our lives: “*Pursue after love, and eagerly desire spiritual gifts.*” One of the hardest things to maintain in the Christian life is a proper balance. There is a human tendency to overemphasize one thing or another and to turn either to the left or the right. This is so often the case with character and the power of God. Paul tells us to major first in our character and to pursue love, which is the mark of maturity, but also to eagerly covet spiritual gifts in order to serve others.

The gift of faith is linked to the gifts of healing and the working of miracles. Sometimes it is difficult to discern which gift or gifts are operating. When the Lord performs a miracle, we do not have to analyze whether it was the gift of healing, the gift of the working of miracles, the gift of faith, or all three that were in operation. We should simply appreciate the fact that God performed a miracle. However, faith is really the basis for these operations of the Holy Spirit because you must have faith to move in any of these nine gifts. You must have faith to prophesy, to give a message in tongues, to give the interpretation of tongues, and to speak a word of wisdom. Thus, faith manifests itself in many ways. This is the reason the gift of faith is so important if we would desire to move in the Holy Spirit.

Paul gave us a wonderful definition of faith in action when he said of Abraham in Romans 4:17 that God “*calls those things which do not exist as though they did.*” God renewed the physical bodies of Abraham and Sarah to enable them to have children in their old age. All of this came about through the *agency* of faith. Faith overrides natural laws. Nature said that they were past the age of childbearing, but faith made it possible for them to have children. God is still performing extraordinary miracles today; so let us be encouraged!

Hebrews 11:3 confirms this truth when it states, “*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*” The world was formed by the creative words that came forth from the mouth of the Lord. Moses used this creative faith when he struck the rock in faith and water came forth. There is tremendous power in faith. Faith creates things that were not there before. I have heard many accounts of people praying for others who had no eyes, and the Lord instantly created eyes in their eye sockets. That is an act of creation.

Faith is also a source of provision. In the late 1940's, when I was attending Bible school in England, I was sent on an outstation to Wales. The people in Wales told me stories about what they had experienced firsthand during the Great Depression of the 1930's that affected England, America, and many other countries. Many of the people were so poor because of the unemployment that they did not have any food to eat. All of their cupboards were empty, but they would pray and believe that the Lord would provide for them. Then when they opened their cupboards, they would be full of food. Mothers told me of milk bottles that never ran dry because they would pray in faith, similar to the story about the bowl of flour and jar of oil that never failed to supply for the widow and her son in I Kings 17:14-16. This happened time and time again during that depression era. Faith always provides for our needs. However, once the depression began to lift and people were able to find jobs again to support their families, the miracles also ceased. Yet God had faithfully provided for them every time they could not provide for themselves.

Can you see how faith brings into existence those things that were not there previously? I have known people who have prayed for money, looked down on the ground, and found money that was not there before. We must realize the tremendous supernatural power of faith that can provide for everything we need.

Kathryn Kuhlman often experienced this tremendous power of faith that can bring into existence that which is not. I would like to recount one such occasion. Kathryn had written a book entitled *I Believe In Miracles*, but she had lost the only copy of the manuscript. She could not remember where she had put it. Her secretaries and staff members thought she had left it inside her automobile, so they thoroughly searched, but they could not find it. It was definitely not inside the car. Then Kathryn got into her car alone and said to the Lord, “I know that You know where the manuscript is. I am going to put my hand down by the side of my seat, and I am believing that when my hand touches the floor, I am going to pick up that manuscript.” When her hand touched the floor of the car, she felt the manuscript and picked it up. This is the creative power of faith. Faith brings into existence those things that are not.

The gift of faith in particular is given when there are impossible obstacles that God wants us to overcome. Therefore, He wants us to look to Him. When God has given us a commandment to do a certain thing, it is useless to say to the Lord that we do not have the money, because He has a never-ending supply. By faith we can reach into His resources to bring to pass what He has told us to do. Faith produces. Where there is nothing, faith creates. Where there is no way, faith makes a way. Unfortunately, I have seen many people fail because they lacked faith and looked at their natural obstacles saying, “It cannot be done, Lord.” But with faith, all things are possible.

Abraham did not consider that his own body was as good as dead, but he was strong in faith and was fully persuaded that God was able to perform those miracles He had promised (Rom.4:18-21). We must not consider the natural obstacles or our own resources. We must view everything with a heavenly viewpoint, knowing that nothing is able to stand before the awesome and commanding presence of faith!

The function and very nature of faith is that it goes above natural laws. When the Lord walked upon the water, He was overcoming natural laws. And when Peter asked the Lord to bid him to come out onto the water also, there was a transmission of faith from Christ to Peter that enabled him to defy the laws of nature and walk on water. There are no boundaries faith cannot cross. Faith is one of the most powerful forces in the universe because it is not subject to the laws of nature. It overrides them with the greatest of ease! Faith makes possible what is impossible in the natural.

If we have faith flowing and working mightily in our lives, there is no limit to what we can accomplish for the kingdom of God! So let us apply to our hearts all the lessons about faith contained in the Word of God. Let us receive from the Author and Finisher of our faith all that He has awaiting us in these last days.