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SALVATION

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, or aren't sure and would like to become one, then you need to believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God, that he was God who became a man, that he lived a sinless and perfect life, keeping the Law of God perfect in every way, that he kept faith perfectly, and that he was crucified on that cruel cross for your sins, mine and the entire world- he died for our sins! His death on the cross paid the penalty fully, one time for all sins that we have ever committed and that we will ever commit. He died; he went down into the bowels of the earth, even into Hell, and was raised from the dead on the third day in a resurrected, eternal body. He ascended back into heaven, was seated at the right hand of God, and is now Lord over heaven and earth. He is coming again to judge the world, to raise the dead, where he will give an eternal, resurrected, glorified body to everyone that has believed on him as their Lord and Savior, and to establish his kingdom one earth.

You come become a Christian right now as you read this, by personally placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior; believing that he is God's only begotten Son, that he died on the cross for you and that he was raised from the dead and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.."* Acts 16:31a And when you do trust Christ, and Christ alone, as your Lord and Savior, then go to God the Father in heaven in prayer and tell him so. Tell him that you have believed on his Son, thank him for his Son, and thank him for forgiving your sins and saving you! *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* Romans 10:9,10 *"For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Romans 10:13 *"Therefore, being justified by faith (declared righteous), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:1

We Walk By Faith

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7

Intro:

There are three different means by which we can perceive reality: empiricism, rationalism and pisticism, or by faith. Empiricism and rationalism are the foundation of western thought, science and life. Children are trained in these two modes of perception from their early days onward. But they are not trained in the utilization of faith. In fact, it is often ridiculed.

Empiricism is where one or more of the five senses: sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, are used to perceive what is true, what is real, what is factual in the outside world. We see with the eyes, we hear with the ears, we taste with our mouths, we smell with our noses and we touch through the skin.

Rationalism is where the mind is employed, by using principles of reasoning, to arrive at the truth of something. For example the distance between the town you are in, town A, and the town you want to go to, town B, is 30 miles. The third town you want to drive to, town C, which is at a right angle from town B, is 40 miles from town B. But you do not know how long it is from where you are at in town A. So you wonder how far would it be to drive directly from town A to town C?

Under **empiricism** you could drive your car directly to town C and find out that it would be 50 miles! But under rationalism, and by employing Pythagorean's Theorem, A squared plus B squared equals C squared, you would be able to deduct that the distance in a direct route between A and C would be 50 miles, thus saving you time and gas.

But under **pisticism** you could ask a person how far it was to town C, whereupon he would tell you that it was 50 miles, and by faith you would believe him and start driving. The point is that empiricism and rationalism are not the only bonafide means of perceiving reality. The issue under pisticism is that the source has to be reliable and for Christians our reliable source is the Word of God found in the Bible!

Now when we look at faith there are two aspects to it. There is the **subjective** concept of faith where we are exercising faith, or believing, and there is the **objective** concept of faith, that is, the object of our faith, or what we are placing our faith in. Both are needed. We are to place our faith in God and his Word, but not in people. *“Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.” Jeremiah 17:5*

There is also an active sense in faith and a passive. **Active** faith is where we believe something that God has said, or promised, and we act upon it. Hebrews 11, and so much of the Bible demonstrates active faith. But there are also times, when we will not be able to act on our faith, but will have to exercise **passive** faith for God to come through for us. This use of faith is defined by such words as: to endure, to persevere, to wait, to wait patiently, etc., and is also found throughout the Bible.

The recurring theme throughout the Bible is that God's people are to live by faith! Even our Savior, the son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, lived by faith when he was here on earth. *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2*

A. Little Faith.

*“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of **little faith**?” Matthew 6:30 “And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of **little faith**? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.” Matthew 8:26 “And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of **little faith**, wherefore didst thou doubt?” Matthew 14:31 “Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of **little faith**, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?” Matthew 16:8*

The word *oligopistos* for *little faith* is used in all four of these passages and could be a tender rebuke for anxiety, but it does mean to have a little faith. Now what this is telling us is that they do have faith, but a little faith. But the encouraging thing is that one, **they have faith** and two, **faith can grow**. It starts out as a small seed and can, and is to grow, into a mature plant. Or as a delicate strand of twine, but by adding more and more faith to it, it can grow into an unbreakable rope!

Each one of these passages deals with trusting God in a particular situation. Matthew 6:30 deals with **trusting in our heavenly Father to provide our daily necessities**: food, water, shelter and so on. The second one in Matthew 8:26 deals with **trusting the Father to protect us in the trials and crises of life**. The third one in Matthew 14:31 deals with **getting our eyes off the Lord**, while we are living the faith rest life, and onto the turmoil of this life. And the fourth one in Matthew 16:8 deals with our **feeling responsible to provide for things pertaining to Christ's ministry**.

If we're to live by faith in this life, then we are going to have to learn to trust the Father to provide for us and protect us in this life. We are to look to God for these things, and everything else, not the government, not corporations and certainly not other people.

B. Great Faith.

*“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.” Matthew 8:10 “Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, **great is thy faith**: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.” Matthew 15:28*

In Matthew 8:10 we have the story of a Roman centurion, who had a servant who was grievously ill. The centurion asked the Lord to heal him, to which the Lord replied that he would go there and heal the man. But the centurion replied that it wouldn't be necessary for him to go there in person, (for he felt unworthy to have the Lord in his house), all he had to do was speak the word from there and he would be healed. Then he went on to explain how he was a man under authority and had men under him in authority and all he had to do was tell them what to do and they would do it!

When the Lord heard this, he was amazed and said that he had not seen faith this great in all of Israel! The word used here for *great* was *tosoutos* and it emphasized the idea of strength, unwaveringness, of absolute confidence. The thought would have never occurred in the centurion's mind that his words would not be carried out, and so he believed the same way with the Lord. This also gives us another insight into faith and that is one of authority. If someone says he's going to do something, then you have the absolute confidence that he is going to do what he said he would do.

In Matthew 15:28 we have the story of the Canaanite woman, who had a daughter who was demonized by a devil causing her major torment. She went to the Lord to have him deal with the demon and heal her daughter. The disciples wanted the Lord to send her away, but the Lord decided to talk to her about the situation. He told her that he had been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and that it wasn't good to take bread away from one's children to give it to the dogs. To which she replied that she was only asking for the scraps left over which the dogs usually got.

Now when the Lord heard this he said that she had great faith. And the word used for great is *megas*, which in this case, brings out the idea of **intensity**! **The intensity of this woman's faith is brought out in her persistence with the Lord in asking him for her daughter's healing. And the intensity of her faith existed because of the intensity of the situation of her daughter's suffering!**

C. According To Faith.

*“Then touched he their eyes, saying, **According to your faith** be it unto you.”* Matthew 9:29

We have the story here of the two blind men who asked the Lord to have mercy on them. Now the idea of mercy is one where God sees the suffering of an individual, regardless of whether it was caused by their own bad decisions or not, and moves to alleviate their suffering. This also presupposes that the petitioners believed that the one they are petitioning is in the position to do something about it.

The Lord asked them if they believed that he was able to do this? Or, if they believed that he had the power, *dunamai*, to do this? To which they replied, yes! Then he said that according, *kata*, to their faith it would be done. The preposition *kata* is used to denote **the criterion by which an action is performed.**

Which tells us that **the criterion upon which Christ healed them was their faith in him.** This goes back to the concept of grace versus human works. If we want God to do something for us, then it must be based upon his grace. Otherwise, it has to be based upon his justice. So these men wanted Christ to be merciful to them, and this mercy proceeds out of his grace, and for him to do it the criterion had to be faith in him.

The reason why faith is so important is that faith is the only non-meritorious concept from man that God will accept. **The merit of faith lies in the object of faith, not in the one exercising faith.** If there is anything we want God to do for us in our lives, it has to be based upon the standard of faith.

The first and most important area in this matter of God doing something for man is in the matter of salvation, the forgiveness of personal sins and eternal life. Man comes to God to ask for forgiveness, to save him and give him eternal life. So now man is asking God to do something for him. For God to do something for him, it cannot be based upon man's works, or personal righteousness, for this would be doing something based upon man's works.

So what is the **criterion**, the standard by which God will forgive him, etc.? It has to be according to the standard, or basis, of **faith**. But in this matter it is **faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior.** We approach the throne of God, which is the throne of grace, to ask him for favor. Not demand him to do something for us based upon who we are, or what we have done, but based upon his grace and mercy.

That's what we have here with these two blind men. They had no rights before Christ, no demands, no expectations, nothing that they deserved from him. They only appealed to his grace and mercy and they believed that he could do it. So, based upon their faith in him, his authority and his power to heal them, according to that criterion of faith – Christ healed them!

D. Seed Of Faith.

*“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have **faith as a grain of mustard seed**, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and **nothing shall be impossible unto you.**” Matthew 17:20*

In this passage we have the case of a man, who had a son apparently suffering from some sort of mental illness, which they would refer to those in those days having mental problems as being “moon-struck”, and is translated by the KJV as *lunatic*, .

He knew that the Lord and his disciples were healing people, so he brought his son to the disciples for them to *cure* him of his mental illness, *therapeuo*, but they were not able to. They had correctly identified the boy's problem as something resulting from the presence of a demon in his life, but they were unable to cast the demon out. So he then took his boy to the Lord himself, whereupon the Lord cured him, but **he cured him by casting a demon out of the boy!**

Later on, after it was all over with, the disciples came to the Lord and asked him **why** they couldn't cast it out? Or why didn't **they** have the **power** to cast it out? To which the Lord replied, after rebuking them, with a simple answer and it was because of their **unbelief!**

He then goes on to talk about the power of faith, rather that is, **the power that is available through the exercising of faith**. He then uses the example of a mustard seed, a very small grain, and that if they had even just a little faith as small as a mustard seed, it would have been enough to get the job done. In fact, it would be enough to tell a mountain to move and it would move. In fact, if we had faith, even that small, **nothing would be impossible for us!**

He did go on to say that this particular species, or type, of demon will not come out without much prayer and fasting. That is to say, that there has to be the sufficient spiritual preparation to get one's faith up to the place where you can deal with this more difficult type. They had cast out demons before, so they probably felt that this would be just a routine thing. But they had not encountered this type of demon before, a much stronger and more entrenched demon, and their level of faith and preparation that they had up to this point was not at a level sufficient enough to deal with this kind.

Which also tells us that in our spiritual walk with the Lord, we may handle day to day problems in our faith walk with God as we go through life. But there will be new territory, new problems, new spiritual battles that we get into where the level of faith, strength, knowledge and confidence that we may have had before, and gave us the victories before, will not do it now. So we will have to get our faith up to the necessary new level, through prayer and absorbing ourselves in the Word of God.

As an aside, there is an interesting concept brought out in Matthew 17:21, where it says, “*Howbeit this kind **goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.**” The word used there is *ekporeuomai*, which means to go out and continue on its journey. Demons wander around on the earth. Some believe that demons are the disembodied souls of the *nephilim* who died in the flood, others believe that demons are fallen celestial beings existing on the earth.*

Either way, they are disembodied spirits, who are constantly seeking new bodies to possess. When they possess, indwell, human bodies, they remain in them until their host body dies, or until they are cast out, as we see here with the Lord. While they live in these bodies they cause tremendous destruction to their souls and physical way of life. (There is also a difference between demon possession and demon influence). It is while they are between bodies they are constantly **wandering** about seeking a new body to possess. (Satan, put as the lord of the flies, wanders about on the earth). So what we have here is that the demon indwelling this boy was cast out by the Lord and now he **will continue his journey of wandering here on earth**, until he finds someone new to possess!

E. No Doubts.

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, **and doubt not**, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.” Matthew 21:21 αποκριθεις δε ο ιησους ειπεν αυτοις αμην λεγω υμιν εαν εχητε πιστιν και μη διακριθητε ου μονον το της συκης ποιησετε αλλα και τω ορει τουτω ειπητε αρθητι και βληθητι εις την θαλασσαν γενησεται

When the Lord had cursed the fig tree, and they all came back by it the next day, the disciples were amazed at what had happened, that it had withered so quickly. So they asked the Lord, “**How soon is the fig tree withered away!**” Matthew 21:20 The word *pos* is an interrogative particle which asks the question of how, or in what manner did something take place. They saw that the fig tree was withered, but they wanted to know **how** it happened! And with the use of the word, *parachrema*, they wanted to know how it happened **so quickly**. *Parachrema* meant immediately, at once, or so quickly.

Apparently the disciples were more interested in the physical phenomenon of the tree withering than they were in the spiritual lesson about the spiritually dead nation of Israel and how it was being cursed by God, or the spiritual dynamics of faith and the power that comes alongside the exercise of faith.

But the Lord answers their question of **how** it happened in verse twenty one. The passage begins with the word *apokrinomai*, which meant to answer a question, or to reply to someone's statement, and then he goes into the mechanics of this destructive miracle, the only one recorded in the NT, and tells them that **it was accomplished by the exercise of his faith**. And he also tells them that they too can do such things, if only they believe.

He begins his statement with the phrase, “*Verily I say unto you*”, or, “*I tell you the truth*” *amen lego humin*. *Amen lego humin* was a solemn introductory formula used at the beginning of a statement to alert the listener that what he was going to hear was of the utmost importance, that they needed to listen to it, understand it and do what it says!

Here the Lord is giving the disciples the secret for accomplishing these mighty works of power, (which actually come from God), but it is a two fold condition: **one**, there must be faith, and **two**, there can be no doubting. Both conditions have to be present. What we are looking at here is the secret of the universe: a faith idea, truth, grace and the power of God.

He then says, “*If ye have faith*”, *ean exhete pistin*. *Echete* is the present active subjunctive of the verb *echo*, which means to have or to possess something. So what he's saying is, **if** you have or possess faith. But when we have *ean* used with the subjunctive mood of the verb it brings out a third class condition of *if*, where the condition for something to be fulfilled is **first** stated, and **then** if the condition is there its fulfillment will come to be.

For example, 1 John 1:9, “*If we confess our sins*, (maybe we will and maybe we won't), (but if we do, then), *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. Which tells us that the condition that God sets for him forgiving our sins and cleansing us is based upon our confessing or acknowledging our sins to him.

But the other part of the condition in addition to faith is, “*and doubt not*”, *kai me diakrithete*. *Diakrithete* is the aorist passive subjunctive of *diakrino*, the word for wavering back and forth between two positions. The subjunctive mood is also used with this verb, along with the connective use of *kai*, which tells us that these two ideas are connected together in the condition.

Which tells us that **we must be exercising our faith**, active voice revealing the activity of the will in all this, and at the same time **not be doubting**. *Diakrino*, to doubt, meant to waver back and forth between two positions or opinions, which means to be believing that God will do something, then go back to not believing that he will. It's to go back and forth between the positions of faith and unbelief. Maybe he will, maybe he won't. Will he? Won't he? Yes? No?

To *believe* is used here in the active voice, which shows the activity of the believer's will is involved in choosing to believe. But to *doubt* is found in the passive voice indicating that there is something in all of us, our fallen flesh natures, that acts upon the believer in such a way that causes him to doubt, that causes him to go back and forth between faith and unbelief.

Mark's statement on the mountain emphasizes the idea of prayer. Whenever there is something that the believer wants, then it is expressed to God in prayer. So **Mark's faith is a faith that believes and prays**. “*For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*” Mark 11:23,24

Prayer is the vehicle by which one's will is expressed and directed toward God; God's almighty **power** is its source and assurance; **faith** is the opening through which his power works; and God's **sovereignty** is its only restriction.

Christ tells the disciples that if they have faith, they will be able to not only do what he did, but even more, “*ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain*”. And we notice the word *ye*, or *you*. It's not just that **he** did it, but by the inclusion of the word **you**, he's telling them that **they** can do it! If they have faith. **They**, if **they** have faith, could say to the mountain, “*Be thou removed and be thrown into the sea*”, then it would do that!

The first command in Mark is *artheti*, the aurist passive imperative of *airo*. The second command is *bletheti*, the aurist passive imperative of *ballo*. We notice that both words have the same grammatical construction; they are both aurist passive imperatives, which tells us that two commands are directed toward the mountain, to be *removed*, (from its place), and be *thrown...where?...into the sea*.

The passive voice tells us something else. If they were in the active voice, it would tell us that the mountain had volition, which it doesn't. There is no *animus*, no soul life in a mountain, so it is incapable of volitionally obeying a command. But because it is in the passive voice, it tells us that the mountain has been the recipient of a command and will be the recipient of the action.

Which is to say that the mountain will be removed and be thrown, passive voice, into the sea. It will receive the action of the commands. But there will be something else, or I should say, someone else who will be the causative agent behind all this and that is the power of God the Father.

The question and issue for all of us is, 'Do you believe this?' Not just do you believe that Christ could do this? But do you believe that any believer in Christ could do this? I think the resounding answer from most, if not all, believers is, No! Even the yes' would have a loud no behind them. So was this just idle chit chat? Was he describing a hypothetical situation that could never exist? Then why did Christ take the time to talk about it? **And then why did he use the second person plural and tell them that they could do this, if they had the faith?**

Mark 11:23 adds, “*and shall not doubt in his heart*”, *kai me diakrithe en te kardia autou*, the aorist passive subjunctive of *diakrino*. This is the second part of the two-fold condition for getting God to answer our prayers. One, we must be believing, and two, we must not be doubting.

“*In the heart*” is the dative case of *en te kardia*, telling us where the location of doubting comes from, the heart. Included also is the causative sense, which is to say, that **it is our hearts that cause us to doubt**. Our minds may believe something to be true, but **it is our hearts that cause us to doubt**. **It's the things going on in our heart that influence us away from the position of truth and faith.**

The Lord talks about the heart in Matthew 15:19, “*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:*”, and Mark 7:21, “*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,*”. Quite a list of negative dynamics going on in the heart and all of them detract from faith.

Matthew has *dialogismoi poneroi* for evil thoughts, tending toward the idea of sexually impure thoughts, carnality, etc.. While Mark has *dialogismoi hoi kakoi*, tending toward the idea of evil reasonings, or the process of human rationalism devoid of faith, which has the idea of worldly viewpoint, the thinking of the world and its people, thinking based upon emotions, assumptions, etc..

It is this process of rationalism that we have to be on guard for in the life of faith. The mind reasons that it can't be done. The reasoning process of the world's people says it can't be done. And this is where doubt enters into our minds. **We must believe God when he says it can be done!** This is exactly what Proverbs 3:5 is about, “*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*” **Trust in the Lord and stop leaning on our ability to reason things out with our minds!**

Doubting is not unbelief. It is the wavering back and forth, the going back and forth between the two positions of belief and unbelief. This is exactly what Elijah was describing in 1 Kings 18:21, “*And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long **halt ye between two opinions?** if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*” If Yahweh is God, then follow him. But if *Baal* is God, then follow him! If you think that Satan, or the people of the world, or your own thinking is true, then believe it! **But if you think that Christ's words are the truth, then believe them and act on them!**

The heart tends toward unbelief because of its reasonings and doubts, so it acts upon the believer in such a way that it creates an opposing viewpoint to faith. The writer of Hebrews told us about the problem of the unbelieving heart in Hebrews 3:12, “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an **evil heart of unbelief**, in departing from the living God.*”

The Apostle James told us to purify our hearts, James 4:8, “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*” To purify, *katharizo*, was to cleanse something from dirt or evil. It had the idea that something was new or clean, but became dirty, so the dirt, the unbelief, needed to be removed from it.

James addressed this very problem in our prayers to God where we are to believe while we are praying and not be wavering back and forth between faith and unbelief. He said that the believer who does this is a *double minded* believer, *dipsichos*, literally a double souled believer and is unstable in all he does. “*But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*” James 1:6-8

F. No Faith.

*“And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have **no faith**?”* Mark 4:40

This is where the Lord was out on the boat with his disciples and a ferocious storm whipped up to the place where the waves were going over the side and swamping the boat. The disciples, being fearful, woke him up to do something about it, upon which he asked why were they so fearful?

Now the word for **fearful** here is *deilos*, which actually referred to that part of the fear complex that dealt with timidity and cowardice. These are concepts where the person is governed by fear, lacking courage, and when faced with a dangerous situation will tend to shy away from it, the idea of **timidity**, or run away from it altogether, the idea of **cowardice**.

In battle all soldiers are afraid; it's normal to have fear. But bravery is where one forges ahead despite their fears, while cowardice will propel the individual away from the fight. Timidity could be used in a lesser sense where the individual tends to shy away from certain uncomfortable concepts. Lack of self assurance and confidence are also found in the mix.

The disciples should have had the same confidence that the Lord did in the storm and forged ahead by faith. Faith that they were safe in the hands of God and his son, who was riding in the same boat with them. The lesson for us is that we will go through many storms in our lives and perhaps we should not be afraid of the storm, with its wind and waves, but enjoy the ride! Why be so timid? Why tend to shy away from things that scare us? We need to muster up our faith and go for it!

And we see, once again, that lack of faith in the Lord and his Word opens the door for fear to rush into our souls. It is through faith in Bible Doctrine that we are able to shield our souls from stress, which will lead to fear, timidity and cowardice, all arising out of the resident sin nature in the flesh.

G. Where is the faith?

*“And he said unto them, **Where is your faith**? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.”* Luke 8:25

We notice that Mark's account has it as, “Where is your faith?”. They have faith, but they aren't using it. And this is the point that all believers in Christ need to be aware of. When we believed on Christ as our Savior, God gave us the faith to believe on Christ. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Romans 10:17

God has dealt to each one of us a measure of faith. *“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the **measure of faith**.”* Romans 12:3

This faith that we have been given is to grow and get to the place where it is completed. And it is through the trials of life that we go through that provide the opportunities we need for our faith to grow. It is in this situation the Lord was saying to the men, you have the faith, but you're not exercising it.

The one thing we note in the different accounts of believers exercising their faith in the Lord is their total inability to do anything about what they were facing. Whether it was healing a blind man, moving mountains, having power over demons, or calming a storm, these are things that none of us can do – but the Lord can! We think it's impossible, because we can't do it, but it's not impossible to him. And all things are possible to him who believes.

H. Increasing our faith.

*“And the apostles said unto the Lord, **Increase our faith.**” Luke 17:5*

I think we might be surprised about what things the disciples believed about the Lord, at least at the beginning. Even we ourselves today, what did we believe about the Lord when we got saved? We believed he was the Son of God, that he was sinless, that he came to earth from heaven, he died for our sins, that he was raised from the dead and if we believe on him we will have our sins forgiven. Perhaps a few more concepts, or perhaps a little less. In fact, salvation will come to those **who just believe on the name of Jesus Christ!** *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:” John 1:12*

The disciples did believe that Jesus was the Messiah. But it wasn't until later on that the disciples believed that Christ knew all things and that he had come from the Father. *“I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, **Do ye now believe?**” John 16:28-31* He said, *“Do you **now** believe?”*

Thomas didn't believe that the Lord had been raised from the dead. *“The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” John 20:25*

Peter didn't believe that the Lord would have to suffer the things that he was going to go through. In fact, he rebuked the Lord for even saying that. *“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” Matthew 16:21,22*

And all the disciples were amazed that even the wind and waves obeyed him! *“And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” Mark 4:41* *“And he said unto them, **Where is your faith?** And they being afraid **wondered**, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.” Luke 8:25*

When one asks a question like this, and the fact that they were totally amazed that even nature itself obeyed him, tells us that they didn't know who he really was and that he had that kind of power. Their faith, and their knowledge of who the Lord really was and the powers he possessed were incomplete. They knew he was the Messiah, but their faith in him and their knowledge of him and what he could do was constantly growing. And we see this expressed in their request of increasing their faith.

And so it is with us today. We believe that Jesus is the son of God and that he saves sinners, even to them who just believe on his name. But our faith in him, our knowledge of him, who he really is, what he can actually do, the power that he has at his disposal is to be constantly growing and it will as we spend our lives in prayer, in the doctrinal study of his Word, in personal growth, in meditation on his Word and in living the faith rest life in the promises of God. And as our knowledge of him grows, so will our faith.

I. Faith holding up in extreme trials.

“*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*” Luke 22:31,32

The word for desired here is *exaiteomai* and it actually means to demand. *To have* is not in the original, so it's Satan has demanded you. But the word for *you* here is *humas*, the accusative plural of *you, su*, so it's actually, “*Simon, Simon, pay attention now, Satan has demanded all of you to sift as wheat*”.

Now it may seem strange, even unbiblical, that Satan could demand anything from God. But the word *exaiteomai*, like it's English translation, *demand*, means to lay formal legal claim to. It's a legal formal demand one uses before a judge in court stating that they have a claim to something, where a demand is made for something as due, an assertion of a right or an alleged right, a just title to something.

Now if children from parents living in slavery were found off the plantation, and the slaveholder made a demand on them, but the children at the same time also made a claim that they were free, or that they belonged to another man, then they would be taken to court where a judge would determine the case.

So on what basis would Satan come before God's court demanding that he has a claim to the disciples? Remember, that when Adam and Eve sinned against God, Satan became the absolute despot over the world as its ruler and everyone born from the original couple are all under his ownership, much like slaves, who have children while they are in slavery, their children are all property of the slave owner.

Now Satan had no part in Christ whatsoever. Christ did not belong to him; he was not born in sin, he was not a part of Satan's slave system; he was not a part of anything pertaining to Satan. The claim that the disciples, and all other Christians have is that we belong to Christ! That is, we are legally identified, en Christo, with Christ! And because we belong to Christ, we are now free from Satan, his system and any other thing connected to him. So the issue now becomes, do they really belong to Christ! And a trial is set in place to determine that. But not just any trial, but to go through something so difficult that it's designed to “*sift you as wheat*”, that is, to find out what's really going on inside.

In verse 31 the Lord is telling Peter that Satan has demanded to sift all the disciples, but in verse 32 the Lord switches over to the dative singular of *su, sou*, telling us that he's directing what he has to say next at Peter himself, but I have prayed for **you**, Peter, *sou*, dative of reference, then he goes on to explain in reference to what – Peter's faith! That “*the faith of you*”, *sou*, the genitive singular of *su, your faith*.

The Lord isn't praying that Satan goes away. What he does pray for is that Peter's faith will not fail, cease, come to an end, that he won't give up. What this tells us is that in this life problems will not go away, neither will Satan's demonic attacks against us. But what the Lord has left us with is faith! And what it also teaches us is that our faith in the Lord and his Word is sufficient enough to carry us through any trial, regardless of how bad it is, and to carry us through any Satanic attack against us!

It is our faith in Christ, the Father and his Word, that will enable us to stand up against any and all attacks against our souls and bodies and prevail over them in victory. We have the faith; It has been given to us by the Father; it is constantly growing under the teaching of the Word, so all we have to do is exercise it! And we exercise it by making a conscious choice to exercise it in the trial. We choose to believe! I choose to believe!

J. Full of Faith.

*“And Stephen, **full of faith and power**, did great wonders and miracles among the people.” Acts 6:8
“For he [Barnabas] was a good man, and **full of the Holy Ghost and of faith**: and much people was added unto the Lord.” Acts 11:24*

We look at the faith of these two men, Stephen and Barnabas, and we see that both of them were **full of faith**. The word for **full** is *pleres* and it has the idea of being full of something up to the top, such as in a glass of water. Or, as in the case of believers, where the soul is full of something. Which brings in the idea of a beginning of something, an adding to it and the place where it is full.

But we also see something else connected to that idea of being full of faith, which is faith in the Father and faith in the Word of God, and that is in the case of **Stephen** where he was full of faith and also full of **power**! And in the case of **Barnabas** he was full of faith and full of the **Holy Spirit**! So we have the ideas of faith, power and the Holy Spirit all linked together.

And it all makes sense when we read Romans 15:13, “*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*” We see that God fills us with joy and peace in the sphere of believing, or in the sphere of us exercising faith in the Father and his Word. This results in us abounding in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. So we have joy, peace, power and hope all being connected to faith. And because these men were full of faith and power, through the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit, they were able to minister respectively and mightily before the Lord.

K. Purifying the hearts.

“And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” Acts 15:9

Now when we talk about faith again, we must remember that when the Bible talks about faith it isn't speaking of some mystical thing that stands by itself all alone, but a **faith that must always have an object**! And the biblical object of faith must always be to begin with, faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, then after we are believers in Christ, faith in the Father, faith in his many promises and faith in the doctrinal teachings of the Word of God.

Now there is a cleansing of the believer's soul, through the act of regeneration by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation, then there is the post salvation cleansing of scar tissue from the soul, garbage in the soul, etc., as we move forward toward spiritual maturity.

Bible doctrine opens up those areas in the soul that restrict the Spirit's ministry in us, and we are operating in the sphere of faith in the promises of God's Word and the doctrines of Scripture that deal with our problem areas, we will have those problem areas cleansed from our souls.

When the Bible tells us that we walk by faith, faith in the Father's plan for our lives, faith in his power, faith in his provisions, faith in his protection, faith in his promises, faith in the process he uses to mature us, it's telling us that faith covers every aspect of our lives! Our actions, our decisions, our thinking, our ministries, the direction we take in life, where we go, what we do, who we marry, the jobs that we work at, the trials we go through, even the removal of scar tissue from the soul are all to be done out of faith in God and his Word!

L. From faith to faith.

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from **faith to faith**: as it is written, *The just shall live by faith.*” Romans 1:17 - **εκ πιστεως εις πιστιν** καθώς γεγραπται ο δε δικαιος εκ πιστεως ζησεται.

Actually it says, “*out of faith*”, *ek pisteos*, in the genitive singular, and “*unto faith*”, *eis pistin*, in the accusative singular. *Ek* with the genitive shows an exit from something with which there had been an earlier connection giving us the idea of origin. So we have an action that originates in faith and the idea of going from that faith unto something else - unto another concept of faith.

The something else is also denoted in the passage by the use of *eis pistin*. The preposition *eis* indicates a **goal, direction toward that goal, action, motion toward that goal, and then actual penetration into that goal**. So what we end up with is living in the dynamic of faith in the Lord and his Word on any given day and in any given concept, or situation we may find ourselves in, and then going from that localized concept of faith on to another concept of faith!

An individual believes on Jesus Christ as their Savior, thereupon their sins are completely forgiven and they are guaranteed the resurrection from the dead unto eternal life. From there their entire life is to be one of living by faith. Many try to turn their relationship with the Lord into a religion, or into their own personal code of morality, but the Christian life has been designed by God to be one of faith.

Why? Because faith is nonmeritorious thereby leaving God free to bless us in his grace. Another reason why is because it is through the exercise of faith in the doctrines and promises of the Word of God, that moment by moment trust in him, that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit and are then living in the spiritual life dynamic.

There is never a time as believers that we can stop living by faith and resort to our works, although we try to do this all the time. God has so designed our lives here on earth that we have to live by faith, to live by that continual dependency upon him. And just about the time that we think that we have it all figured out, or when we've got everything all set up in our lives, then another test will come our way and drive us back to the throne of grace in faith asking for his help.

Life is full of trials and problems. We muddle around in them trying to get ourselves out of them to no avail. Then one day we get the bright idea of turning to God in prayer to help us, lo and behold he helps us, and we get through the trial! But that trial is not the last problem we will have in this life. Others will come and to get through them we will have to exercise faith in God's promises and doctrines and go through them to the other side. We are going from faith to faith. Or we are going out of one concept where we have exercised faith unto another concept where we will have to exercise faith.

Life is also full of opportunities; opportunities where we can exercise faith and opportunities where we can be blessed by God. These I call **faith objects**. Abraham had as his faith object a son. Noah had as his faith object deliverance from God's judgment. Moses' faith object was the reward for serving the Lord. The Bible is full of the records of God's people who had an object for their faith. And, as we go through life, we will find ourselves having faith objects. Maybe we moved by faith from one town to another because we wanted to make a better life for ourselves and our families, or to be under face to face teaching. All these and many more things are objects of faith toward which we are heading in our faith life on earth. From faith to faith.

M. Living by faith.

*“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, **The just shall live by faith.**” Romans 1:17 “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but **the just shall live by his faith.**” Habakkuk 2:4 “Now **the just shall live by faith:** but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Hebrews 10:38*

Both NT passages have the future middle indicative of *zao* for life, or to **live**. The future tense is used to embrace the time of the Christian's entire life from the point of their salvation, until they go to be with the Lord. It is an imperative future, where the future tense is used to express a command. So it isn't a request from God, nor is it a suggestion. It is **a command**, it is mandatory, for all believer-priests to live their entire lives here on earth by faith in the Father and faith in his Word!

Bios is one of the Greek words for life and it has the following meanings. **One**, the period or duration of one's life here on earth. **Two**, the means of life, one's livelihood, maintenance. **Three**, The manner by which one lives their life, life in regard to one's moral conduct, their ethics, principles they live by.

Now the word we have here is **zao** and it does mean life as the antithesis of death. And it does have the idea of the vital life force in all of us. But as soon as a moral element is involved, or a manner of living one's life, or how one lives their life, or in its sacred use in a religious context, then it takes on a more noble or higher idea of life. **And so *zao* takes on the idea of life at its highest level!**

What this tells us is that Christians will live their lives here on earth. How they live them will vary from believer to believer. Some may live their lives down at the bottom, spiritually, mentally and morally. All will live their lives by the vital life force that exists in all of us in our human bodies. But there is another plane of life that exists that is far above all the others and this is **the life of faith!**

What this tells us is that the highest form of life believers in Christ can live here on earth is the life of faith in God and his Word. Many believers err in trying to live morally superior lives, which they often are quick to display before other people, and they think this is the highest form of Christian life. Now there is nothing wrong with having one's own moral values, per se, that they live their own lives by, but they are not to replace the truly highest form of life available to all of us and that's living by faith in the Word of God.

This life of faith includes believing the doctrines of the teachers that God has placed over us. Believing the many promises listed in the Bible. Having our faith and trust in the Father as we live before him each day. Having faith in the Father's **plan** for our lives. Having faith in the Father's **promises**. Having faith in the Father's **power**. Having faith that the Father will **provide** for us. Having faith that the Father will **protect** us. Having faith in the **process** that the Father chooses to mature us and bring us to glory!

Now who does living by faith apply to? All believers in Jesus Christ. The Just, the Righteous, are to live by faith. Even the Son of God lived by faith while he was here on earth. Romans 1:17 points out believers in Christ, and so does Hebrews 10:38. But we see from Hebrews 10:37 that there is a reference being made to the Coming One, the Messiah of Israel, Jesus Christ, and that he, too, had to live by faith. And if he had shrunk back, God's soul would not have been pleased with him. And if we shrink back from faith, then God won't be pleased with us! Why? It is only faith that pleases God! *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* Hebrews 11:6

N. Justified by faith.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1 δικαιωθεντες ουν εκ πιστεως ειρηνην εχομεν προς τον θεον δια του κυριου ημων ιησου χριστου

The word for *justify* is *dikaioo* and is a forensic term borrowed from the courts of law and refers to the legal proceedings found in them. **Justification does not express an ethical change of conduct; it is not a term of ethics or morality, nor does it deal with emotions, but expresses the judicial acts of God where God formally and legally declares someone to be righteous.** It is entirely a legal term! It meant to pronounce one innocent or righteous in a court of law. While its opposite, to condemn, is to pronounce one guilty. We should not use the term innocent in Christianity for it means that one had not done anything wrong. To declare one righteous means that one can be **pronounced righteous**, even though he wasn't innocent.

All of this goes back to the Law of God, the Court of God and God as the Supreme Judge of all mankind. To be righteous meant that **one stood in right standing before the Law**. Which would mean that he had not broken the Law. If he had, he would have been guilty of it, pronounced guilty and condemned. The question is, (and also the problem), how does God pronounce one righteous in relation to the Law, when he is already guilty of breaking it? This goes back to the work of Christ on our behalf.

Christ died for the ungodly, that is, he died on our behalf. *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”* Romans 5:6 The penalty for breaking the Law of God was death; whoever broke it had to die. Now we have Jesus Christ enter into the picture on our behalf; Christ died for us, that is, as our **substitute** and he paid the penalty for our sins.

When Christ was hanging on the cross, God imputed to him our sins and viewed him as a sinner, even though he was the only one on earth who had never sinned! When he took **our** sins upon himself, God viewed him now as a sinner, and God punished him for all our sins. Personally and legally Christ was totally innocent concerning this matter of breaking God's Laws, **but legally he was counted as being guilty at the moment when our sins were imputed to him**. He then suffered our punishment because he was counted as being guilty, even though he wasn't personally guilty.

And the same thing goes in reverse when it comes to this matter of righteousness. We were not righteous, but God views us as being righteous when Christ's righteousness is imputed to us! Do we deserve it? No! Neither did Christ deserve our sins imputed to him! Christ was righteous, but when our sins were imputed to him, God viewed him as unrighteous and punished him because of our sins. We were unrighteous, but when Christ's righteousness was imputed to us at the moment of our salvation, God then viewed us as being righteous and we now have God's favor and blessings.

Righteousness is that state one enjoys where he is in right standing with the Law. One can have this standing if they have not broken any of God's laws, but we all have broken his Law! If one has never broken a law of God, then one would be righteous before the Law.

But there was another way he could be counted as being righteous, as Paul so wonderfully developed in Romans chapter four, and that was through faith in Jesus Christ! To the man who trusts God **his faith is counted as righteousness!** *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, **his faith is counted for righteousness.**”* Romans 4:5 God counts faith in Christ as righteousness!

So to the one who trusts Christ as his Savior an entry is made into his account that says, “Faith in Christ”, and that faith in Christ is **counted or credited as righteousness**. The word for *count* is *logizomai* and was a bookkeeping term used to describe the entry an accountant made into his books.

David understood this when he said, “*Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*” Romans 4:7,8. He knew that the Lord could impute sin to an individual and that he could also impute righteousness.

God justifies wicked people; he justifies them if they have faith in Christ. He declares them to be righteous when he sees their faith, for he counts faith as righteousness even though they are wicked. Faith in Christ is the means by which we have been justified by God. We are not justified by our works, our goodness, our religion, our morality, or our personality.

“*By faith*” is *ek pisteos* and it tells us that this something is the means by which something happens, or the cause of it happening. The issue is being justified, of being declared righteous by God. How does this happen? What is the thing that causes it to happen? *Ek pisteos* in the genitive singular tells us that **it is faith in Christ that causes our justification to happen!**

Justified is in the orist passive participle and the passive voice tells us that we have received the action of being justified. We did not justify ourselves by our actions, but God justified us! The action of the orist participle occurs before the action of the main verb, which also tells us that **because of our justification we now have peace with God and have gained access into the grace of God**.

Romans 4:5 says that, “*God justifies the wicked*”; **he pronounces the wicked righteous when he sees their faith in Christ**. For when he sees faith he **counts** that faith as righteousness. Even though he's unrighteous, **his faith is counted as righteousness!** God cannot count our works of “righteousness” as being righteous because they aren't! Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the eyes of a holy God. But when he sees faith he counts that as righteousness. That's what people need to see, that's what Martin Luther saw from the Scriptures, and that's what launched the Protestant Reformation.

It must be emphasized again and again that the grammar shows that this justification, this being declared righteous by God, is a **one time event! It occurs only one time in the life of a believer in Christ and stands for the rest of his life and all eternity!** The orist tense tells us that this happened **once**, at a point in time, sometime in the past in the believer's life. And the participial form tells us that it keeps on going **as an abiding principle of the legal state that he now enjoys**.

It is not an emotional concept. It is entirely a legal, judicial proceeding where God the Father pronounces the believer in Christ as being righteous. Too many Christians are looking for some sort of feeling to accompany their salvation and their Christian life as a sort of proof or evidence that they have been saved. But justification is not an emotional concept. It is something that God does for us legally in his heavenly court. **Our salvation is first and foremost a legal matter and we need to keep this in mind.**

One cannot lose his salvation because one cannot lose or change his legal standing in heaven; it's a permanent legal standing before God. God has justified him; God has pronounced him righteous and that's **his legal standing forever!** “*We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” The Christian *has, echo, peace with God*. This is something that we now possess as our own. It is our new found state with God. God isn't mad at us, and he doesn't hate us; he has accepted us in the Beloved.

The word *with God, pros ton theon, (with the God)*, is used to denote a personal relationship with someone else that is friendly. This tells us that the one who has believed on Christ, the one who has trusted him as their personal Savior, has moved from a position of being an enemy of God and hostile toward him, into a personal friendly relationship. They have actually been moved into the new position where God is now their Father!

“Through our Lord, Jesus Christ”, is *dia* plus the genitive, which tells us of a medium through which an action passes before its accomplishment. A wall of our own hostility toward God stood between us and God. But because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sakes, we now have gone through him into this state of having peace with God. But we have to go through Christ in order to have peace with God. And this occurs when we believe on Christ as our Savior.

O. Faith is counted as righteousness.

*“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, **his faith is counted for righteousness.**”* Romans 4:5 *“However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, **their faith is credited as righteousness.**”* Romans 4:5 NIV

Now righteousness and faith are not the same thing. Faith is a nonmeritorious concept in that it is not a work and there is no merit to faith. The only merit there is found in the **object** of one's faith, Jesus Christ, **not in the exercising of that faith!**

It's much like the idea of grocery coupons, where a coupon is worth one dollar toward a purchase of something. That coupon is not a dollar, nor is it worth a dollar, but the grocery store considers it to be a dollar toward a purchase. And it has every right to do so because it owns the store. Faith isn't righteousness, but God considers faith in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as being righteousness.

And when we talk about faith in Christ, or to believe on Christ, such as found in Acts 16:31, *“And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.**”*, we find that in the Greek it has it as, **πιστευσον επι τον κυριον ιησουν χριστον**.

Now when the verb to **believe**, *pisteuo*, is used with **upon**, *epi*, and the accusative of direct object, **the Lord Jesus Christ**, then the word believe takes on the idea of trusting the Lord Jesus. Trusting takes in the ideas of depending on someone, dependence, leaning upon, placing your whole self upon, those sorts of ideas.

A tight rope walker pushes a wheelbarrow across a rope stretched between two points and comes back and asks the crowd if they believe he can put a person in it and push them across. The crowd nods that they believe he can! He then asks for a volunteer, but no one comes forward. That's the difference between belief and trust.

In the concept of what trust is about you are totally dependent upon the other person to save you, help you, carry you through danger. Whether it's the fireman carrying you out of a burning building, or a rescue worker rappelling you down from the side of a cliff, or a rescue swimmer diving under the water to save you from a watery grave, or a doctor performing life saving surgery on you. There is nothing you can do, but put your trust in the one saving you. And so it is in the area of salvation. **Only Jesus Christ can save us!** And for him to save us our trust must be in him completely! Not him, plus ourselves. Not him, plus our church. Just **Him!**