

Trusting God With Our Lives – Old Testament Perspective

Scripture Readings: Deuteronomy 32:20 & Psalm 147:3 – 8

Oct. 31st, 2021

Most dictionaries define ‘FAITH’ as confidence or trust in a person or thing, such as when we have faith in a person’s ability or integrity. For example – a cancer patient may have faith that the surgery will be successful and that he will be completely healed.

The word ‘FAITH’ can also refer to one’s belief that is not based on proven facts. For example to have faith or belief in God is a Christian faith. In the Bible, the word ‘FAITH’ is closely related to the idea of faithfulness. Humankind’s faith is a response to God’s faithfulness. Our faith is manifested in our faithfulness.

Faith is not blind belief in something we cannot see or fully comprehend but we have faith in God because the Bible reveals God’s faithfulness through accounts of the divine initiative making a difference in people’s lives. The Old Testament relates many stories of God’s faithful relationship with a particular people called by God and God reveals his trustworthy promises.

I have faith in God because I have personally experienced God’s faithfulness. I have discovered in my own life that God keeps the divine promises made in scripture. My life works much better when I obey God’s law and live by the principles found in God’s Word.

You can have faith in God because you can personally experienced God’s faithfulness and maybe you have already! You will discover in your life that God keeps the divine promises made in scripture. Your life will work much better when you obey God’s law and live by the principles found in God’s Word.

In our common usage of the word ‘FAITH’, we mostly tend to connect faith with belief. However, the Bible’s use of the word ‘FAITH’

actually is more closely related to the idea of 'trust'. It is not that we have the correct belief about something but rather that we have the correct belief in something.

A wonderful story illustrates this important point – A man was performing a high wire act above a large crowd. His act included pushing a wheelbarrow across the tightrope. After the man pushed the wheelbarrow across the tightrope, the crowd applauded loudly. When done with this sequence in his show, he ask the crowd – 'How many of you believe that I could take a person across the tightrope in the wheelbarrow?' The large crowd shouted – 'YES!' Then the tightrope walker asked the crowd – 'Who will volunteer for me to take them across the rope?' Total silence was the response!

It is one thing to believe something intellectually. It is quite another thing to believe with enough faith to trust someone with your life. The kind of faith scripture describes calls for more than simply believing in a set of doctrines; it calls for trusting God with our lives.

Faith is a central concept in Christianity to an extent it is in no other religion. The way contemporary Christians tend to think of faith which has been shaped by medieval philosophers to be the act of the intellect when it assents to divine truth under the influence of the will moved by God through grace. Boy, that is a long theological explanation of faith. Faith is the divine truth under the influence of the will moved by God through grace!

However, when we examine scripture, especially the Old Testament, we see a more multifaceted understanding of faith. It will surprise many of you to discover that there is no word in the Hebrew language that has the same meaning as our English word 'FAITH'.

There is a verse in Deuteronomy that the King James verse of the Bible translated as 'FAITH' – Deuteronomy 32:20. *He said: I will hide my face from them – I will see what becomes of them – because they are a confused generation; they are children lacking faith.'*

But the modern translation uses instead of 'faith' – 'loyalty' Deuteronomy 32:20 with the modern words. *He said: I will hide my face*

from them – I will see what becomes of them – because they are a confused generation; they are children lacking loyalty.’

We can see here that faith has more to do with our actual conduct than with an act of the intellect. Faith in the Old Testament is more about faithful behavior than it is about beliefs. It is more about being trustworthy than it is about believing correct doctrines. Faith is humankind’s response to God’s primary action. This is not to suggest that belief has no part of our faith in God. We are not going to trust something in which we do not believe.

The Old Testament never defines ‘FAITH’ but instead describes faithful behavior by those who believe in God. The Old Testament reveals a trustworthy and faithful God who has entered into a covenant relationship with humankind who have been called to express their faith in and loyalty to God by their trustworthy behavior.

In Psalm 147, the psalmist demonstrated his faith in God by seeking refuge from the problems of this world. He placed his trust in the Lord and was willing to get in God’s ‘wheelbarrow’ and cross the tightrope of live with God as the leader.

In the Old Testament, having faith means to believe that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and can be trusted to care for us. To have faith in God is to recognize that we owe God for our existence and that all that we are and have is a gift from God.

The idea that faith is a moral response more than correct beliefs can be seen over and over in the lives of the prophets and people of the Old Testament. Many men and women in the Old Testament lived by faith.

Abraham lived by faith. He must have to leave his homeland and journey to a place unknown by him, but known by God. That’s faith! And Abraham’s faith was tested over and over again. Each time, the test required action on Abraham’s part. Abraham, the father of the Israelites

and us, was not saved by his actions, but his actions demonstrated that his faith was genuine.

You all know I have a beautiful wife and I have faith in my wife. I trust her. I eat the food she prepares for me without testing it for poison. I do not worry that she is going to betray me when she goes on trips without me. Oh, when I was President of my teacher's union and we traveled to State Conventions and I found out that if I died on public transportation on union business, she would receive triple my life insurance policy amount. I did get a little nervous getting on the subway with my wife behind me. I am just kidding; I believe what she tells me because I have never caught her being untruthful. My faith in her relates directly to my behavior. I believe Sherri has faith in me as well. However, I might question that faith if she did not trust me.

A good marriage is built on trust. As a pastor I have counseled couples where that trust had been destroyed by one or both partners. It is difficult to restore trust once it has been shattered. I have also known parents to lose faith in their child because of repeated misbehaviors. Even worse, I have known children who have lost faith in a parent or perhaps never developed faith in a parent because of irresponsible behavior on the part of that mother or father.

Abraham was repeatedly tested and he passed every test thus proving his faith in God.

May each of us pass every test of faith that God puts us through or that happens in our life not put upon us by God but put there by our choices or life situations. Faith is closely tied to our faithfulness. Our God is faithful to us in all the promises he has made. Let us be faithful to him in our words, actions, and deeds.

For 120 years, people have worshipped God on this site in the Tabernacle. The original Tabernacle was torn down in 1961 and a new Tabernacle was built in 2001. Our Chapel was built in 1963 and today

we are celebrating our 23rd anniversary of full time ministry here at the Bethany Beach CC (DOC).

I am sure that everyone who has worshipped here has passed the test of faith by being faithful to Jesus Christ. May our ministry on the beach of Bethany continue year round for many more years.

Let us pray:

O God, it is by your grace that we have been saved. It is through faith that we worship you. Your gifts have overwhelmed us and let us serve you with our whole heart. We are trying to do your good work, give us the strength to succeed in our workmanship for you.

We pray this in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
AMEN.