

The Clarity Trumpet

a publication of

CLARITY MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

First Corinthians 14:8, 9

Living By Faith

The entire Christian life from beginning to end, when properly lived, is a faith life. At least four times the Bible makes the statement, “The just shall live by faith” (Habbakuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; and Hebrews 10:38). Of particular interest is the statement found in Romans. Verse sixteen contains that classic testimony of Paul where he declares, “*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*”

Many have memorized this prized verse, but have you ever carefully scrutinized verse seventeen? It says, “*For in it [the Gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’*” Notice especially the phrase **from faith to faith**. It is telling us that the good news of how to be righteous with God *begins with faith, continues in faith, and ends upon faith.*

Similarly, Colossians 2:6,7 admonishes: “*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.*” How did you receive Christ? By faith. How are you to walk in Him? By faith. In fact, Paul, in discussing questionable areas of life, affirmed, “*Happy is the man who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats [questionable foods], because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin*” (Romans 14:22b, 23).

Add Hebrews 11:6 to the above verses and you get this undeniable mandate from God: “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” Let the phrase sink deeply into your soul: *Without faith it is impossible to please Him!* If we *must* have faith to please the Lord, if it is absolutely *impossible* to please Him without it, it

is imperative that we know what faith is and how to appropriate it to our personal lives, to our families, our ministries, our businesses, to our needs, our wishes, our dreams, to *all* of life.

What Faith is Not

Emotions or emotionalism. We all have emotions. If we didn’t we would be inanimate like a rock. *We feel. We long for* things. We have emotional highs and lows. But faith is not the same as emotions, nor is it based upon how we feel at any certain time or about any given situation. Neither is faith emotionalism. How does emotionalism differ from having emotions? *Emotionalism* is a state of being; it is how some people operate, how they cope, how they function in life. We all have emotions, but *emotionalism* is when we base our every move upon how we feel.

I may feel emotionally down—drained, in fact, but I can still believe God and trust Him to see me through my down times. In my emotional lows I may be in fellowship with the Lord but may not feel close to Him, or in my emotional highs I may feel extremely close to Him but not be. It is when I allow my emotions to dictate my perceptions, decisions, and actions that I have adopted emotionalism as a way of life. Operating in this way is not living by faith; it is walking by feeling.

Closely related to the above is the fact that faith is not a **hunch, a gut feeling, or just knowing** something is or is not going to be. Have you ever said, “I just know this is going to work.” It may have been a business venture, a relationship, a machine you’ve been tinkering with, or an investment. You just *knew* it would turn out all right; your gut feeling told you so.

So many believers approach their walk with the Lord in this same way. They decide where they will live, whom they marry, what career to pursue, what schools to attend—all based on this somewhat intuitive gut reaction to life’s many twists and turns. This may be just another substitute for a genuine faith walk. Faith may be the exact opposite of our best hunches.

Thirdly, living by faith is not necessarily a **walk of logic**. Though God is the most logical Person in all the universe, His logic is often quite contrary to human powers of deduction.

How logical was it for Israel to march around Jericho once a day for a week and then to march around it seven times blowing trumpets and shouting on the seventh day? Is this great military strategy, or what? Or how about God promising Abraham that the world would be blessed through the offspring of his son, Isaac, and later telling Abraham to sacrifice that same son on

an altar? Logical? Certainly not by our standards.

You may be thinking, “I don’t confuse logic with faith. I know the difference.” Well, how about this scenario. You are praying about something and all the pieces seem to be coming together; and you say to yourself, “It must be God’s will *because*. . . .” You then reason it all out in your mind logically and conclude “God is in this thing because after all look how everything is working out.” Of course, it may be true when God is doing something in our lives the pieces do fit, but not always. If you were Joseph being sold into slavery and rotting away in jail for something you didn’t do, or Job with your flesh full of putrefying sores, or the mighty Moses tending sheep for forty years in the desert, you may not observe any pattern at all—at least while you were going through the trial. Faith looks beyond the present situation or problem, to the God who knows what He is doing and does it *in His time*.

What Is Faith?

True Biblical faith is founded upon *God’s character* and His character is *revealed in His Word*. So, *faith is taking God at His Word*, which is another way of saying that faith is totally dependent upon what God’s Word reveals about what God *is*. He *is* faithful. He *is* truthful. He *is* merciful, righteous, holy, infinite, all-knowing, all-powerful. He can be trusted. I can safely put my faith in Him knowing He will stand true and be there for me. “*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*” (Romans 10:17).

Kinds of Faith

Scripture reveals two kinds of faith and we need to recognize the presence and validity of them both.

There is *active faith*, usually connected in some way with the *commands* of God. God commands his child or children to do something and because they believe *He* has commanded them, they *do* that something—they *obey*. For instance, “*By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark. . . . By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called. . . . By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. . . . forsook Egypt. . . . kept the Passover*” (Hebrews 11:7, 8, 24, 27-28).

Active faith is the kind of faith we normally think of when we hear or read about someone’s faith. How often have you heard some well meaning person say, “If you really believe something you’ll act upon it.” Well, that’s true of active faith where there is something God expects you to *do*, whether it’s to abhor what is evil (Romans 12:9), or to be thankful in everything (I Thessalonians 5:18), or whatever God has commanded.

Active faith *does* the thing commanded for no other reason than God has stated His desire or will concerning a matter.

But then there is also *passive faith*. This kind of faith is evident where God has given a *promise* and there is nothing the recipient of the promise can do but to trust the One who has promised. To be sure the faith or trust is obedience but there is no *activity required* or *possible* to bring about the promised result.

The obvious example of this kind of faith is in salvation. “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved*” (Acts 16:31). Not only is believing in Christ all we *must* do in order to be saved, it is all we *can* do. Another good example of passive faith is Sarah. Hebrews 11:11 gives this description of her faith: “*By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed . . . because she judged Him faithful who had promised.*” What could Sarah do at her age to conceive? Absolutely nothing. There were no fertility pills, no magic potions. All she could do was to “receive” strength from God. And how did she do that? By faith, “counting Him faithful.” Her’s was a beautiful example of what I emphasized earlier, that living by faith is based upon God’s character. Can He be trusted? If He can, then the faith walk is a walk in which we *rely* upon this altogether trustworthy One, our heavenly Father.

Three Phases of the Faith Walk

First, where God has spoken in His Word, *commanding* us to do something, **obey** *because* of the fact that *He* is the One giving the command. “*Forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you*” (Ephesians 4:32) demands action on our part. Disobedience to a clear Bible command shuts the door to further development in the School of Faith Living.

Secondly, where there may be no direct command but there are *clear promises* to believe or *principles* to apply, respond in **faith** to those promises and principles. Example: “*In My Father’s house are many mansions. . . I go to prepare a place for you. And. . . I will come again and receive you to myself*” (John 14:2, 3). An acceptable attitude of faith brings deep peace within because faith *knows* He is telling the truth.

Thirdly, where there is no direct command, no clear promise and you are not aware of a Bible principle to apply, **trust in** the revealed *character* of your God and Father, knowing He will not and cannot fail you. When you search and grope for meaning in the darkness of your life, He is still the same and can be trusted through all times and in every situation. ∞