

# LIVING BY FAITH



# **Part One:**

# **Faith and Works Go**

# **Together**

## **Believing in the Unseen**

Faith is the belief that we can put our lives in the hands of God and trust in what we know about Him from the Bible.

There is a “seen faith” and an “unseen faith.” According to John 20:29, which says blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed the real power is in our unseen faith. When we believe in the unseen, then we are truly blessed.

But believing things we can't see is difficult. We live in a world where we like to be in control, and we can't be in control when we have to trust in something we can't see.

Control is a weird thing. Even when we're not technically “in control” of a situation, if we can at least foresee the outcome, it's easier. We can have more peace about it. It's when we have no control AND we can't foresee the outcome that we start to get anxious and lose faith.

# Start with What You Know

When it comes to having faith in things we can't see, like the future, it helps to start with having faith in what we know and what we've seen. For instance, we know that Jesus Christ is our savior. We know from reading the Bible that the price He paid for us made us right with God and granted us everlasting life. Because of this we know that God loves us, and those of us that have been saved have experienced this love personally. We've seen it.

Believing in Jesus is the first step, but faith entails much more than just believing. The book of John tells us that Jesus is the Word. But he's not just the written word. He's the living word. So believing in Jesus means we not only believe that what the Bible says is true, but we also believe what He's done, what He declares, and that He's still working today.

In essence, when we read the Word and believe in what it says, we're believing in Jesus. We can't believe in Jesus and not the Word or believe in the Bible and not Jesus since they are the same. Embracing Jesus while neglecting the Word isn't possible.

# Next Steps

Once we believe in Jesus, there are things we can do to help us build our faith from there. The typical things like studying the Word, praying, fellowshiping with fellow Christians, and meditating on the fact that Jesus is our King of Kings all help us grow in our faith. Our faith is meant to grow. If it's not growing, then it's getting smaller. We have to exercise our faith like a muscle.

But this also takes faith. It takes faith to believe that God will reward you for all the time and energy you put in to building your relationship with Him. We've always heard in church to do these things. We've been told to read our Bible and pray. It's the cookie cutter church answer to everything. But it takes faith to believe that it's worth something, that there's a spiritual payoff.

What's ironic is that when we put in this effort, God gives us a zest for life in return. Then that zest for life gives us the energy to pursue Him even more. It's cyclical. It's kind of like the idea of tithing. When we give our money to God, He blesses what's left, and we're able to give even more. We just need to trust God to take the first step.

# God Gives Us Our Faith

The great thing about that very first step – the one where we're saved – is that God even helps us with that.

Ephesians 2:8 says, For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. This grace that saves us is a gift, and how do we get this grace? Faith. Our faith is what releases this grace to us to save us. But guess what. That faith is also a gift from God. The faith it takes to know God and to please Him and to fully accept His grace as everything God promises it to be...is a gift. All we have to do is make the choice to accept Him.

What this means is that non-believers who don't understand how grace works or maybe even don't fully believe that God could truly forgive them for everything they've done don't have to worry about their faith being weak. All they have to do is make the decision to accept Christ. God won't force us. But once we do choose Him, He will give us the faith it takes to fully receive His grace and be saved.

# Faith and Works

Lastly, once we are saved by our God-given faith, what naturally follows is obedience. The word used in the Bible for this is often “works,” which just means us doing what God calls us to do, both as a follower of Christ and personally day by day.

James 2:20 says, Faith without works is dead. Therefore it must take works to have faith that’s alive. Faith and works go together. And why wouldn’t they? The natural response to a God who has saved us is to do what he asks, having faith that He knows what He’s doing.

# **Part Two: Love and Faith Can't Exist Without Each Another**

## **Faith and Love**

Have you ever stopped to consider how faith and love are connected? We hear all about faith and all about love in the church as if they were two distinct things, but the concepts are actually very much intertwined with one another. You can't really have one without the other.

## **Faith without Love**

You can't have faith without love because if you truly have faith in God, you know Him personally. It's hard to have faith in or trust someone you don't know very well. If we know God, we also know what true love is, because God is love. It's like being around a truly joyful person. You can't know that person and not see and experience what true joy looks like. Similarly, we can't know God and be around Him and not experience what true love looks like.

Therefore our faith in God, which grows from knowing Him, creates the opportunity for us to experience the fullness of His love. And when His love floods us, it will spill out onto other people.

# Love without Faith

On the flip side, you can't have love without faith. If you actively love the people around you and show them the love of Jesus, you are, in essence, demonstrating your faith in God. After all, why would we bother to show love to people if we didn't believe it mattered in the long run?

There's a reason why we love. We were created for it by God. It's part of God's purpose for His people to further His kingdom. But we can't do it if we're not in tune to His spirit through faith.

Sure, there are plenty of non-Christians who do good things for others because they just feel it's the right thing to do, but they probably couldn't honestly say they do all those things out of a deep love for God's children. Only people who have experienced God's immense and perfect love for themselves can extend that same love to other people. Non-Christians may try their best to love others, but how can you feel something and give something so personal if you've never experienced it?

# Activating Faith through Love

Love and faith definitely go hand in hand, but their relationship is a cyclical one. The one feeds on the other and vice versa. When we demonstrate love to others and serve people as Christ did and as God wants us to do now, we activate our faith.

You've probably heard of people who go on mission trips and come back saying how they went to help other people but they found that they themselves grew a lot spiritually in the process. This is because when we serve others out of love, God uses that humble action to empty us of ourselves, and the more we empty ourselves, the more room we have to be filled with God.

When we serve others or do what God calls us to do, we draw closer to God and must rely on Him for guidance and to be filled up again. Every time we love on someone and give or serve we are, in essence, drained a little. To get filled back up, we must spend more time with our Father. That time spent with Him in turn grows our faith.

Then, as our faith grows, guess what we want to do more. Love! The more we believe and trust in God and who He says He is, the more we know how loving He is. The more we grasp His infinite love for us all, the more we're compelled to show everyone that same love so they can experience it themselves.

People are often like this with other things of the world that excite them like sports, books, movies, music, etc. If you see a great movie or read a great book, you're probably likely to share with others how great it is to get them to go see it or read it themselves. If it's something amazing, we'll want to share it with everyone because we know how great of an effect it had on us and we want that for others.

Our loving relationship with God should be the same. When we experience Him fully through faith, experiencing all of His love, grace, joy, peace, strength, etc., we can't keep it in. We know how great life can be with Him, so we want others to experience it too.

# How Do We Love?

Still, even when we do know God's love, we can get caught up in life and our own schedule and fail to make time to love people. So how do we love? How do we get to that point to where it just flows out of us?

The answer is fairly simple. We get to know God like we never have before. God is perfect in everything but especially in love. That is His defining characteristic. So the more we know Him, the more we'll understand about how we must love others.

We can get to know God by reading His word and learning about Jesus' time on earth. We can pray daily and listen for His voice to speak to us. He desires to spend time with us because He is a personal God. A strong relationship with Him is our highest priority. If we develop this first, everything else, including loving others, will follow.

# **Part 3: How Can We Achieve Perfect Love?**

## **Perfect Love Casts Out All Fear**

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

## **What is Fear?**

Fear can take on many shapes and forms. We can be afraid of failure or not being good enough. We can fear bad things happening to those we love. We can fear for our future, whether personal or national or even global. Or we can simply fear the unknown.

Another aspect of fear is worry. Worry doesn't sound quite as bad as fear, does it? Still, its roots are the same, and it can have some of the same negative effects on us. If we get carried away with our worries, they can be just as detrimental.

Worries are often the manifestations of much deeper fears. For instance, we worry about not getting a certain job at work completed on time. Perhaps that worry is rooted in the underlying fear of failure.

No matter what exactly we're afraid of or worrying about, apart from fear of the Lord, fear is ultimately from our enemy, Satan. Fear can be one of Satan's biggest tools against us because of how crippling it can be. If Satan can make us afraid enough, he won't have to worry about us stepping out in faith and doing something to further the kingdom of God. We'll be too scared to be used by God or to do something out of our comfort zone.

Fear can also stunt our spiritual growth. If we're too consumed with fear, we won't have the time or energy to focus on God and allow His spirit to transform our minds. And if we don't let God transform our minds, we won't evolve and grow in our faith. We won't ever be able to replace Satan's lies with His truth.

# How Does Love Cast Out Fear?

So why does 1 John say that perfect love casts out fear?

From a human standpoint, we can understand this at least a little bit. Take a child who knows and never doubts that her father loves her. One thing that comes with the knowledge of her father's love is a sense of security. This child could be completely scared of a monster underneath her bed, but once her dad is there, she suddenly isn't afraid anymore.

What made the difference? She trusts her dad and believes he's capable of keeping her safe. This trust grows out of the intimate, loving relationship they share.

So, what does this mean for us? We need to be continuously developing our intimate relationship with our heavenly Father. It's one thing to have a head knowledge of Him and to know that He loves us and can keep us safe, but that only takes us so far. We have to be intimately connected with Him to truly believe what we know about Him. We must allow His perfect love to filter through us and fill all of the cracks where fear can hide.

Honestly, our fears and worries tell us how much we really believe God is who He says He is. If we really believed God was all-powerful, involved in our lives, and cared enough to give us what's best for us, what reason would we have to fear? It sounds harsh, but worry and fear is basically us telling God, "Sorry, but I don't think you can handle this."

The truth is, when we fully embrace and experience God's love, we experience an intimate relationship with His true self. The more we experience God's true self, the easier it is to believe that He is love. The easier it is to believe God's promises are true. Just like a person is easier to trust the more you get to know him or her, God becomes more trustworthy the more we know Him.

# The Fear of Death

The ultimate fear that Satan really wants us to embrace is the fear of death. Many people are afraid of dying for various reasons – the pain, what will happen to those they leave behind, and what will happen next in the afterlife. As Christians, we have no reason to fear death. We can rest assured that God will be with us, God will be with our loved ones, and we will be with God on the other side.

Death can only have power over us if we fear it. Jesus came to eliminate that needless fear. By embracing the love Jesus poured out for us on the cross, we as Christians don't fear death anymore. Death can't touch us. Not in a spiritual sense anyway. Our souls are completely safe in God's hands, and we should be excited to meet Him face to face, not scared.

If you have given your life to Christ, your afterlife is secured. Knowing God's love and grace is all we need to live the rest of our lives free of fear in our present and in our future.

# About Faithworks Centre

Faithworks Centre is located just a few minutes outside of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

The Centre is dedicated to reaching out to the larger community and help them build their faith.

Find out more online:

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