

WHAT IS FAITH?

It is seldom that I take the time to personally answer a letter due to the limitations on my time. Occasionally, however, I receive a letter that reveals the cry of a heart to understand the truth of Christ that makes the believer free. This article is my response to such a letter.

You ask in your letter, "What exactly is faith?" You also stated that Hebrews 11:1 "...seems rather vague in its definition of faith." The Apostle Paul wrote in the first verse of his famous "faith chapter" of the Bible, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" Hebrews 11:1. This is not the definition of faith, as we will see in a brief examination of the verse. I am aware of the modern faith teaching which says the word "substance" speaks of "matter," which tangible things are made of; that we "create in the spirit" the things we hope to receive, using our "faith" as the substance. According to this theory, if we do not doubt or allow negative thoughts, we will receive what we have created in the spirit world. This teaching is foolishness, as we shall see.

The word "substance" was translated from the Greek word "hupostasis," which is defined by Strong's Greek Dictionary as "a setting under (support), that is, (figuratively) concretely essence, or abstractly assurance." The Greek word "hupostasis" is made up of two different Greek words; the first is "hupo," meaning "under," and the second is "histémi," which means "to stand." This does not speak of intellectual understanding, but rather of what we "stand upon" to receive the promises of God. Even the English word "substance" (sub-stance) is formed in the same manner from two different words. The prefix "sub" (under) connected with the word "stance" (how we stand) gives us our word "substance" in this text. What do we "stand upon" to receive the promises of God? Our "works" are never sufficient. If we stand upon them, we will perish. The only possible support to stand upon to receive the promises of God is "faith." Again, we come again to the question, "What is faith." The answer is incredibly simple, but the "faith teaching" of the past two generations has only succeeded in clouding the issue of faith, which was so very simple to our forefathers. "Faith" is simply "believing what God has said." This is easily confirmed by simply inserting "believing God" in every place the words "by faith" are used in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. For example:

Hebrews 11:4: "*By faith (believing God) Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain...*" It is made obvious by this verse that God had spoken to both these sons of Adam concerning the sacrifice, because no one can "believe God" for what He has not spoken.

Hebrews 11:7: "*By faith (believing God) Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house...*" Noah did not "build the ark by faith;" instead, he spent a hundred and twenty years building the ark because he "believed God."

Hebrews 11:8: "*By faith (believing God) Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed...*" This is the verse that makes the connection between "faith" and "obedience." In every case, however, those who "believed God" also "obeyed God."

"Faith" is not some mysterious power which some have and others do not. Those who teach that God used faith to create the worlds are very misled and ignorant of the scriptures. Paul said "*Through faith (believing God) we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God...*" Hebrews 11:3. We understand because we believe the Genesis record; "**And God said**, Let there be light: and there was light" Genesis 1:3. The words "And God said" are used eight times in the first chapter of Genesis as God called all things into existence. These eight instances in the Genesis record are what Paul referred to when he said "*Through faith (believing God) we understand...*"

In the Old Testament times before Christ, all those who "believed God" were "*justified by faith.*" This, however, is somewhat different than "*justification by faith*" in the New Testament after Christ died for us. Paul established in the fourth chapter of Romans that Abraham was justified by faith Romans 4:3. In Romans 5:1 he speaks of our justification in these terms; "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" Romans 5:1. Notice, our "peace with God" is "*through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Eight verses later,

continued on next page

Paul wrote **“Much more then, being now justified by his blood...”** Romans 5:9. Our **“justification by faith”** is **“much more”** than what Abraham received. We are justified **“through faith in His blood”** Romans 3:25. In other words, we believe what God said His Son, Jesus Christ, accomplished through his death, based upon what God spoke through the prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New Testament.

What must I believe to be saved?

“...he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”

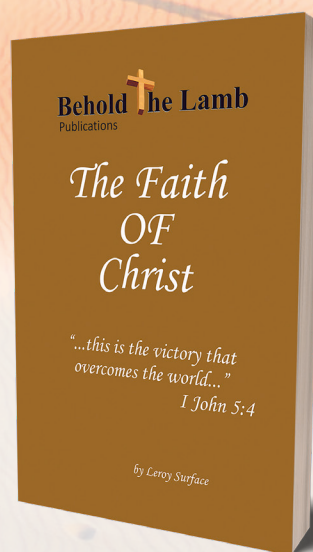
I John 5:10

God spoke many things through the prophet Isaiah concerning His Son Jesus. He would be born of a virgin, and be called **“Immanuel,”** meaning **“God with us”** Isaiah 7:14. His name would be called **“Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”** Isaiah 9:6. **“He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth”** Isaiah 42:4. **“His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations”** Isaiah 52:14-15. **“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed”** Isaiah 53:5. All these are only a small portion of the record God gave of His Son through just one of the prophets. Perhaps of even greater significance is the record which was given to the prophet Daniel.

v24 *“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. v25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. v26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. v27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the*

consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” Daniel 9:24-27

This most important of all prophecies is concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It was a prophecy of **“The Messiah, the Prince,”** of whom Peter spoke when he said to Jesus, **“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”** Matthew 16:16. Saving faith is based upon this prophecy. The Apostle John said, **“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”** John 5:1. Those who believe **“Jesus is the Christ”** must also understand that Jesus fulfilled everything that was written of Him. Through His death on the cross, He **“made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness”** for everyone who **“believes in Him”** John 3:16. We who know the truth are no longer sinners, because Jesus Christ died as **“the Lamb of God”** to **“take away our sin”** John 1:29. He **“loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood...”** Revelation 1:5. Do you believe this? If so, you do have saving faith. The proof of your faith will be in you for all to see I John 5:10, because you have received everlasting life I John 5:11, which cannot be hid.



FREE BOOK!
The Faith of Christ
by Leroy Surface

To order, visit cochurch.org or write to:
Behold the Lamb • PO Box 750 • Porter, TX 77365

Behold the Lamb
cochurch.org