

## "Strong Faith"

Without faith it's impossible to please God. Well what kind of faith does God desire from His people? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Well what does a strong faith look like when it's challenged? Well the word of God gives us the answer. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Why? Well Paul said in Romans 10:17 that "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of God (or through the word of Christ)." The more we read and study God's word, the stronger our faith will become. And the more we study God's word, the better we'll know God and His will for our lives. Nothing can replace a serious study of Scripture to help you grow in faith. Now Paul commended the elders of the church at Ephesus "to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20 and verse 32). I tell you, we need God's word to build us up spiritually and to help us go to heaven. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

To say "I believe" means placing your complete trust in the Lord Jesus. It means trusting in God when you may not fully understand what lies ahead. Faith stands firm in your trust of God's promises even when life is filled with unsettling circumstances. Faith means taking God at His word, regardless of what others say. Faith means being willing to act in obedience out of trust in the character and the authority of God Himself. We trust His word, because we trust Him.

What we know about God, how He's dealt with people in the past, should speak to what we see for the future. It should tell us what God will do. The Lord Jesus said in John 7:17, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it's of God or (what Jesus says) whether I speak from Myself." My friend, are you willing to do His will? Do you trust God?

Now we offer this study on faith free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Hebrews 11:1 to 6, and then we'll explore our need for a strong faith.

Our reading today comes from the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, verses 1 through 6. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And 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 seek Him." That's a reading from the book of Hebrews. Let's pray together. Oh Father, we're thankful that these men of old gained approval by their faith, that they were willing to stay with what you have taught them and that they were willing to obey You. And Father we pray that You will help us to be obedient and to believe you as well. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it's impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He's a rewarder of those who seek Him." Faith is essential to our salvation

and to living the Christian life. Faith makes a remarkable difference in how we think, how we act, and how we treat others.

There's a big difference between those who believe in Christ and those who don't know Him or believe in Him. When people really believe and put their faith into practice, they make the world brighter, more loving, more positive, more joyful, more hopeful, and closer to God. When people don't know God or have no faith in Him, they lack the wisdom that comes from God, they lack the love of God, and the hope of God. Without faith they often turn to fairy tales and myths. They build for themselves idols that cannot talk, cannot hear their prayers, and cannot help them in a time of trouble. They live futile lives.

Now the Scriptures teach us of people who put their faith into practice and found the blessing of God. Hebrews 11 and verse 2 says, "For by it (that is by faith) the men of God gained approval." God blesses true believers. Hebrews 11 gives many examples of faith in action.

Hebrews 11 verse 7 says, "By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." Noah took what God told him to heart. He built an ark to the saving of his family. Genesis 6 verse 22 says, "Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did." Real faith is not dead; it is active and living. It reveals itself by doing what God commands.

Hebrews 11 and verse 8 says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going." God made a covenant with Abraham and made him a promise that he would make of him a great nation. God called Abraham at the age of seventy-five, when he lived in Haran and told him to go to the land of Canaan. Abraham obeyed, even though he didn't know how God would accomplish all these things or when. You see faith obeys even when it doesn't understand all the reasons why, or the ways how, or even when.

Now faith calls us to trust God and to be obedient to His word. Do you believe the Bible is God's Word? Do you believe that God created the world in six days and created you? Do you believe in heaven and in hell? Believing God means believing what we've been told. If we don't believe what God says in His inspired Word, we really don't believe God.

Do you believe the Bible is true? Do you believe God has all authority? Do you follow the Lord in all that He instructs, he tells us what to believe and to do? Are you willing to obey God's Word, even when it disagrees with your friends, and family, and neighbors? Are you willing to adjust your thinking on every subject to what the Bible says? Are you willing to do what the Bible says, even if you don't want to? Do you believe God's promises will prove true?

To claim "I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Lord" means that I've given myself to Him and will believe what He teaches. Faith is not selective in what it believes. It doesn't say that it believes some things that Jesus teaches while ignoring other things. If one believes Jesus is truly God's Son risen from the dead and knows all things, one believes Him completely. And he will stand with Jesus even when the whole world disagrees.

Now great faith is the answer to fear. To believe in God's promises helps us to cope in the best way with the challenges of life. When we believe, we know God will take care of us. Even if we should suffer for our faith, and at that time we lose the love of God when we don't believe. When the disciples thought the storm on the Sea of Galilee would overtake them, Jesus said to them, "Why are you

afraid? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4 and verse 40). I tell you, we all face frightening storms; but when the Lord is with us, we must not abandon all hope.

The apostle Peter, inspired of God, prepared the church for the Roman persecution. And he said in 1 Peter 3 verses 13 to 17, "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it's better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong."

Strong faith in Christ will determine how we will live. There's a significant difference between those who truly believe and those who doubt. Our faith in God's teaching will determine our morals and our values. Since God's word is final and authoritative, we reject the notion that morals are relative and dependent on circumstances. God's morality matters. And since we believe the Lord will judge us on the last day by His word and by our deeds, there are firm reasons to be moral beings, to love and respect others, and to live with integrity and honesty.

Now only faith in a God to whom we must answer provides the constant motivation for right living. Paul could warn the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17 verses 30 and 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He's fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Now if I believe, I cannot keep on doing the things that are wrong. If I believe I can't keep on lying, I can't keep on stealing, using foul language, gossiping, getting drunk, coveting other men's possessions, I can't keep on committing acts of fornication, or taking vengeance, and many other sins. I must regard myself as dead to sin and alive to righteousness. Faith doesn't pick out some sins as wrong and some as insignificant. To believe God means to believe all sin is hurtful, destructive, and wrong. Are you willing to sacrifice friendship with the world to be a Christian?

It should never surprise us that the world is worldly, filled with selfish ambition, lusts, and the desire to overthrow the rules God placed upon us. Many have cast off the teaching of God in Scripture for their own opinions, morals, and desires. This rejection of faith in God shows why our society is in a moral mess and full of chaos. The apostle Paul described the pagan world of the first century in Ephesians 4:17 to 19, and he said "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." When people fail to give themselves to God, they start giving themselves to sin.

One talk-show recently suggested that we live in a post-fact world. That is, people don't want the facts if they disagree with their preconceived ideas or agendas. Some in our culture are driven more by their passions than by their logic. They follow their passions and follow their friends rather than seek the truth. They do what they want to do rather than what they ought to do. When our desires rule over our duties, when our lusts overrule our morals, when our emotions overrule the facts, we are indeed living a fantasy headed for ruin. Like the prodigal, we'll one day find total permissiveness leads us to a pig pen.

How badly we need faith, a confident trust in what God says to be true! When we leave the Truth, the way things really are as God revealed them, we're left with chaos and confusion. Without God's revealed will, we don't know where we came from, why we're here, or what will happen to us once this life is over. Without God's instructions we're on a road to destruction. We need God's teaching, God's salvation, God's providence, and God's instructions. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 4 and verse 4, that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Without God's teaching there is no real nourishment for the soul.

Many people have bought into the idea that they should never express their faith to others but should keep it private. They believe we should eliminate anything "Christian" from the public square. They would separate Christianity from every aspect of life. I tell you, when you reject faith in Christ, you're promoting faith in something futile, something that cannot save you or give you eternal life. You're advocating a faith based on things less than God, less than moral, and less than true. When faith in Christ is lost, people place their faith in a fantasy.

Belief in the God of the Bible is not like believing in an idol or in some humanly manufactured religion. Belief in God is not some blind leap of faith. No belief in God is built upon solid evidence found in our created world, found in Scripture, found in history, found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and found in our very nature as moral beings. The DNA in every cell of your body and mine could only come from a great intelligence. The universe with stars, and planets, and moons could only come from a great power. The moral conscientiousness that's inside your heart could only come from a moral governor. The moral and spiritual wisdom found in Scripture could only come from a Divine source. Yes, there is a God in heaven, who made you, who loves you, who sent His Son to die for you, and who will one day judge you by His word.

Now since God is real, don't hesitate to come to Him, to know Him, to love Him, and to obey Him. Don't hesitate to give yourself fully to Him. Coming to Christ means denying ourselves and taking up our crosses to follow Him. True faith involves a full commitment. Paul said in Galatians 2 and verse 20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Have you made a full commitment to Christ or are you wavering in your faith? Jesus Christ fully committed Himself to you upon the cross for your sins in the hope that you would respond to His love by fully trusting and obeying Him. Love Him, trust Him, serve Him. And if you believe, don't hesitate any longer. Let's pray together. Oh Father, help us to have a deeper faith in you, in Your son Jesus, and in Your word. Father help us to be obedient to the things that You teach. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

People frequently tell themselves things that simply aren't true rather than having to deal with what God teaches. They put off making any decision or commitment. They think somehow everything will be okay in the end regardless of what they believe or do. Oh it would be sad to face the Lord in judgment spiritually unprepared. I don't know of any promise of God to bless the unbeliever or the disobedient.

We don't like to think that anyone would be lost; but we mustn't presume upon the grace of God. We have no promise of salvation apart from grace, or apart from faith, or apart from repentance, or apart from obedience. We want the truth. We don't want any surprises on the day of judgment. We don't want to be deceived, thinking that we're saved, and then finding out we're rejected.

God will save those who place their trust in Him, those who repent of their sins and those who are willing to obey His word. James 1:22 to 25 says, "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not

merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he's looked at himself and gone away, he's immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."

Now if you truly believe in Jesus Christ, if you repent of your sins, if you turn your heart to the teaching of Christ. And you confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and you're baptized into Christ and you do that for the forgiveness of your sins, God can save you and He will. Now baptism is not for little children but for those who are old enough to really believe and to repent. Now when you're baptized, God will wash away all of your sins, He'll make you His child. And you'll have His blessing only if you remain faithful. Oh, will you be baptized, and will you remain faithful?

Well we hope that we have stirred you to want to believe more strongly in the Lord and to be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can also see our programs on YouTube on the SearchTVMInstry channel. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses, and study sheets to go along with every lesson. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you please, please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and please, please tell a friend about this program. Let them know that you're watching and encourage them to watch as well, that would be so valuable to us. Well we're always grateful that you tune in from week to week. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.