

Keeping the Faith in the Last Days

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In these last days, do you long to be counted among the end-time saints described as “those who keep the commandments of God and **the faith of Jesus**”? (Revelation 14:12 NKJV).

But what exactly is this faith? We know that we must have it because without this faith, “it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6 NIV84). Yet what does it really mean to have it, to be a member of “the faith,” to have “a saving faith”? And what is faithfulness—what does it mean to be faithful?

Is faithfulness merely a heart attitude, or is it about behavior—or both? Can one be faithful while performing poorly, when our behavior is less than perfect? For instance, why is Rahab counted among the faithful (Hebrews 11:31) even though she told a lie (Joshua 2:4-6) to protect the spies?

In your search for this faith, have you read the words that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1 NKJV) and concluded that you must “simply believe” even though you don’t understand or have evidence?

You’re not alone. Even though Christians know that having the “faith of Jesus” is vital, far too many are confused about what a living, active, saving faith really is. Let’s clear it up.

The Truth About Faith

Saving faith is a trust transaction between the sinner and God. It is a bond of intelligent, functional understanding—a loyalty, devotion, trust, and confidence in God that results in real action and real change in the sinner.

In Hebrews 11:1, the Greek word translated as “substance” is *hypostasis*. The first part of the word (sub) is from the Greek *hypo* and means low or under, as in hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) or hypotension (low blood pressure). The last part of the word (stance) is from the Greek *stasis* and means standing. This Greek word (*hypostasis*) was translated into a Latin-based word (substance); the first half, sub, means low or under, as in subway or subterranean; the last half, *stance*, means standing.

Translated into modern English, faith is our “**understanding** of things hoped for.” This *understanding* has two meanings, both of which apply to our faith: 1) an understanding of God, and 2) an understanding with God.

First, our faith is built upon truth, our *understanding* (comprehension) of reality—the reality of God’s character, goodness, trustworthiness, methods, design laws, what sin is, our terminal condition, our inability to save or heal ourselves, and what God has provided for us through Christ. With this *understanding of God* and the reality He created, Satan’s lies are displaced and we are won to trust in God.

Second, now that we comprehend God’s trustworthiness and the beauty of His character, we then eagerly enter into an *understanding* (agreement) with Him. This *understanding with God* is a covenant transaction—not a legal transaction. It is like the marriage covenant. When two people get married (as God designed, not as the state legally encodes), they commit to be faithful, loyal, and devoted to one another, forsaking all previous and all other potential love-interests. They commit to go to each other and work together through difficulties, to overcome obstacles together, and to not betray the best interests of the other. As sinners, we’re unable to promise our spouses that we will never make mistakes; rather, we promise that when we do make mistakes, we will work through them together—that despite such mistakes, we will stay faithful, honest, loyal; own up to our own shortcomings; repent when we are wrong; and seek to do better.

The covenant of marriage is symbolic of our faith relationship with God, which is the agreement known as the *covenant of grace*. In the covenant of grace, we have the *understanding* that God is love, that He so loved the world that He gave His only Son not to condemn the world but to be the remedy that cures our terminal condition (John 3:16, 17). We have the *understanding* that we cannot save or heal ourselves, so we enter into an *understanding* with God:

“God, because of all you have done through Jesus, all the evidence you have revealed about your trustworthiness, I am won over to you. I trust you and surrender myself to you, and I know that you will heal my heart and mind from sin. Going forward, I will honor you by cooperating with you and following your instructions. I know you are always faithful to me, Lord; now I choose to be faithful to you. I give you my heart, my mind, my soul, and my strength. In the life I now live, I will live to honor and bring glory to you. In good times and in bad, it is you, Lord, that I cling to; it is you that I will faithfully run to; it is you that I will always seek, for you and I are now ‘one’ just as you and Jesus are one” (John 17:20–23).

In this marriage-like covenant of faith, Jesus is the groom and we are the bride. The faithful bride is not a sinless people, but they are sinners who have “died” to the old me-first life of sin and have been “reborn” into a new life of love, with hearts being transformed and renewed because they have entered into a covenant relationship with Jesus in which they maintain their connection to Him. They stay faithful; they do not turn away from Him when they are hurt, frustrated, angry, assaulted, threatened, tempted. Instead, they remain faithful when trials, tribulation, and shortcomings occur; they always run straight to Jesus, faithfully seeking Him in every problem, even their failures. These are the ones described as being pure brides, dressed in white, who did not betray their faith, their covenant relationship, by going after other gods (i.e., other solutions to their sin problem).

When we are bonded to our Savior in faith, it is like a godly marriage; when difficulties come, we will be faithful and go to our “Spouse” to work it out. Faithfulness isn’t about trusting blindly; it is about rational, evidence-based trust, fidelity, loyalty, confidence. God is always faithful—He has never broken trust and never will; He is never disloyal; He always keeps His promises; He always reaches out to us to win us, heal us, save us, and transform us. And God calls for each one of us *to be faithful to Him*, to be loyal to Him, to stand by Him, to say what is right about Him. And when we have this loyal faith in God, then God can have faith in us.

People of Faith

We, the faithful, become like Job, Moses, and Abraham, all of whom kept faith with God in the face of various trials, losses, conflicts, abuses, threats, and dangers. These people were sinners, just as we are, but because they *knew* God personally and trusted Him, they were transformed to be His friends, people whom God could trust!

Before the entire onlooking universe, God voiced His faith in Job: “The LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil’” (Job 1:8 NIV84).

In the face of unimaginable loss, trial, and suffering, without a divine revelation as to why it was happening, Job remained faithful. In a stunning rebuke to Satan’s accusation, Job trusted God to the end. Despite not understanding the reason behind his suffering, despite “friends” and family tempting him to betray God, Job remained faithful. He didn’t know why the tragedies were occurring, but He did know God well enough to trust Him for answers that he didn’t then comprehend—and to trust Him with his future and how things would ultimately turn out. Job kept faith with God by going to God and crying out for answers. This is exactly what a faithful spouse does when problems arise. The faithful go to the one they love, the one they know and trust, and they faithfully open their hearts in love, seeking understanding of and resolution to any difficulty.

This is what it means for you to have the faith of Jesus: Our Savior on the cross, *feeling* abandoned by His Father, didn’t allow His feelings to rule over what He knew to be true. Despite the unjust treatment of His people—the physical abuse, the taunts of the mob—and His own emotional pain, our Savior remained faithful to His Father and, with His dying breath, uttered, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46 NIV84).

At this time in human history, many people are struggling, suffering, being tempted by all kinds of trials, threats, and dangers. Perhaps, like Job, they also have friends and family tempting them to give up on God. But it is when times are tough, when the pain is real, when the burdens are more than we

can humanly endure, that the faithful run to Jesus and, just as Job did, say, “No matter what comes, even if He were to ‘slay me, yet will I trust Him!’” (Job 13:15).

This is what faith is: a living, active, interactional covenant transaction, an *understanding of* and *with* our supremely trustworthy God. I implore you, no matter what this world throws at you, to keep faith with Jesus, for He is keeping faith with you!