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# FAITH

## – ASSURANCE AND EVIDENCE

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January 2010.

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“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

Faith is a theme that many have preached on in various ways, and even misused while missing its very core. It is my hope that the Holy Spirit will impart to us truth regarding faith and that we will be encouraged in these difficult times of crisis as we continue to rely on Him and remain firm and immovable in the things of the New Kingdom. The Word tells us that “without faith [it is] impossible to please [Him].” (Hebrews 11:6) Without faith in God our lives become focused on the things of this world that can lead us to making wrong decisions that in the natural can be good, but in the supernatural are disastrous to our life and ministry. This is why faith is an important ingredient for which we must fight and firmly apply

ourselves to if we want to please Him.

This verse from Hebrews is one of my favorites and takes me back to those days when I studied theology. I remember very well when I received a letter from a Bible institute in America where I had applied that I had received a scholarship. Despite the scholarship, I had to cover all my travel expenses, as well as other personal expenses, and just as every other student in those days, I didn't have money for a plane ticket, however, I simply decided to believe God for His provision. After some time in prayer I

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even said to myself that I would no longer seek God in prayer for the tickets, but simply thank Him that it was already provided. In that moment I began to pray for my future roommates, even though I didn't have the finances for the tickets, or anything else that was needed.

I received the letter about the scholarship prior to Christmas, but as the end of the semester drew nearer I didn't have any kind of visible results, so I began to doubt and persuade myself that it probably wasn't God's will. In fact, I felt that I didn't even need to pray about it any longer because the start of the new semester was so close that my faith had completely dissolved and I began to plan for other things for that year.

One morning, at nearly the end of the semester, the school's dean, where I was currently studying, called me into his office. When I entered the office he told me that he had found a couple of envelopes under the door, and one had my name on it. I automatically put it in my pocket thinking that it was probably some sort of notice about a lecture or something. When I left the office and was in the hall I took it out of my pocket, opened it up, and found \$100 along with the verse from Hebrews "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

After reading that verse my faith immediately grew and I repented for not enduring to the end and

for turning to my own plans. To make a long story short, I decided to reserve airline tickets in faith, even though I didn't have all the money. Two weeks before the flight I paid them in full. After that God miraculously provided the rest for other things that were needed for me to travel to the "promised land". In that year and a half my life was entirely changed, but most of all God gave me a vision for my life. You see how much I would have missed if I had continued on with my plans without faith in the Lord for Him to complete what He had started in me?

### 1. FAITH IS THE ASSURANCE AND EVIDENCE FOR THE REALITY OF WHAT WE CANNOT SEE.

Many times Christians seek for some evidence of faith, but often times the only evidence, or assurance for that which has been promised us by our Lord Jesus Christ, is faith. The Word says that "...faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

By this the writer of Hebrews wanted to instruct, encourage, and show us that faith is a real and living thing, it would be better to say that faith is a way, or one's lifestyle, and not necessarily a dull formula or doctrine that we believe in.

The Greek word for faith is *pistis*, meaning "a firm belief", namely knowledge that is based on hearing. The Word also means confidence or security.

In the same way, the word assurance in the original Greek means reliance. In other words, the writer of Hebrews is saying that there exists a reality that we do not necessarily have material evidence for, even though it is not less real because of lack of evidence. But, actually, faith in the Lord enables us to know that these things exist. Faith is a foundation for every believer and

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a great source of Christian hope.

The word evidence, which many translate as “test”, indicates that even apart from faith, whose foundation of all we hope for, is the evidence of things that we cannot momentarily see. In other words, Christianity is not without hope. The writer of Hebrews says that we have faith and through it we test all things that cannot be seen. In short, two words describe faith in God: confidence and security.

In those days when we put our faith in God, it was the beginning of believing in God’s character – in who His is and what He said, and the final outcome of believing in God’s promises is that He will do that which He said. Therefore, when we believe that God will fulfill His promises, although we don’t momentarily see that those promises are fulfilled, as believers we received them by faith.

This is why it is impossible to please Him without faith because, first of all, at the beginning of our faith we have no confidence in Him, in who He is, and in what He said and therefore we discard all His promises that actually prove all that He can do for us. What happens when we do not believe in Him, is that we live according to our own emotions, discretion, plans, and self-reliance and in doing so miss those things that He had for us had we remained on the path of faith.

## 2. HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF FAITH AS ASSURANCE.

Faith is not only evidence it is assurance for that which we hope. I would like to look at some examples of faith, namely people who simply believed in God despite their difficult circumstances and those things that were not very logical to explain in that time; they had faith as assurance for that which they hoped for. The writer of Hebrews goes on in

the eleventh chapter to recite the heroes of faith, of whom I would like to use Noah, Abraham, Moses and Joseph as examples.

The Word tells us that “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” (Hebrews 11:7)

Noah experienced rejection only because he was different from his other fellow-citizens. God commanded him to build a great ark in the middle of the desert. Although in the natural this seemed crazy, nevertheless, Noah obeyed in faith. “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which [is] the breath of life; everything that [is] on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark--you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.’ Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.” (Genesis 6: 11-13, 17-18, 22)

In Genesis we read that “Noah was a just man,

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perfect in his generations.” (Genesis 6:9). This does not mean that he did not sin, but that in his heart he loved and obeyed God. Noah simply believed God.

The world, as it is today, was filled with evil. The number of people who loved God had been reduced to just one family. God told Noah that He would judge the earth because of its corruption and commanded him to build an ark. Can you just imagine how the people ridiculed him and what they must have said to him? “Are you crazy building that thing, that boat, in the desert?” But despite mocking, the Word tells us “by faith Noah...prepared an ark for the saving of his household.” (Hebrews 11:7) Noah was obedient to God, and obedience is a component of faith in the Lord.

You see, for Noah, faith was the only guarantee for the ark. He built the ark for 120 years. God gave that much time of grace for the people around him to be saved from judgment. 120 years of grace! Noah, in faith, obeyed God, which means 120 years of dedication to a specific task that in the eyes of others was completely imaginary and insane. Nevertheless, after 120 years the Word confirms for us the evidence of his faith. “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.” (Genesis 7:11-12)

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Noah was obedient by faith, and because he believed in God he was saved. The only guarantee for those 120 years of building was faith in the Lord, nothing more.

One lesson is important: in faith we do not need to consider our momentary situation or be afraid to be different from other people. Our obedience to God and His Word will always enlighten and draw attention to the disobedience of others, namely the right path on which people around us need to travel. Radical faith is always a signpost for us and for the lost.

Let us now look at another historical example of faith – Abraham. The Word tells us that “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as [in] a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.” (Hebrews 11:8-9)

Abraham’s life was a life of faith. At God’s command he left his home and went to another land – he obeyed without question. In Genesis we see what God’s command was: “Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.” (Genesis 12:1-2)

Abraham believed in the covenant that God had made with him. He was even prepared to sacrifice his own son of promise, Isaac, out of obedience to God. Often a life of faith is a life of sacrifice; therefore do not be surprised if God seeks of you to leave the security of your homeland or of your surroundings to fulfill His will.

Moses’ parents also acted in faith, even though

their circumstances were very hard they had faith in God as assurance and that is why they decided to hide him. Later Moses, also by faith, rejected his life with Pharaoh and chose to suffer affliction that we later know gave birth to great fruit. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw [he] [was] a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:23-27)

Moses' parents were not just proud parents who boasted of his success or diplomas that he received from Pharaoh's university, rather they were first of all believers and believed in God, not man. Actually, because of his obedience and faith, Moses became one of the greatest leaders of the Israelites, a prophet, and a giver of the law.

Later, Moses also needed faith to leave the beautiful palace and the riches that surrounded him. It is very easy to be deceived by temporary riches, prestige, status, and achievement and become blind to the lasting and valuable investment of the kingdom of God.

This is why faith helps us to see above all these earthly values, so we can see the eternal values of the kingdom of God. Moses considered the reproach of Christ to be of greater value than the riches of this world. He knew what was of worth. Christ above all. He knew the "Chief Shepherd" would give him "the crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Peter 5:4b)

"By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones." (Hebrews 11:22)

Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, was sold into slavery by his own brothers; but because of his faith in God he gained the greatest position in Egypt. Even though Joseph could have used his position to build his own kingdom, he remembered God's promise to Abraham. After he was reconciled to his brothers, he sought for them to be close to him and for his bones to be brought to the Promised Land.

You see, faith means believing in God and doing that which He has commanded us to do, regardless of our circumstances. The apostle James said in his letter "Blessed [is] the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12)

God's crown of life is not glory and honor on this earth, rather the reward of eternal life – to live with God forever. Yet, to overcome means to love Him and remain faithful under pressure. Faith is the assurance that He will help us in times of trials. If we remain consistent with Jesus and on His path, faith will assure us that those things that God has intended will come to pass through us, although momentary things around us may be difficult.

The verses from the letter to the Hebrews summarize for us a life of great faith. Some endured supernatural victory; some even overcame death,

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yet you have those others who experienced ridicule, prisons, stoning, trials, and murder regardless of whether or not they succeeded in this natural world. The Word tells us that these are ones “of whom the world was not worthy” (Hebrews 11:38a)

To have enduring faith does not just mean having a happy and carefree life here on earth. Actually, our faith in God, among other things, is assurance that we will be scorned and rejected by the world. Many believers today go through suffering and feel as if God has left them; they accuse Him of not caring for them only because they did not succeed as they imagined they would. But the reality is that we live in a world filled with suffering, rejection, and pain. He can even allow Christians to be martyred for Him. This does not mean He has left us; rather it is evidence of our faith and obedience that always brings fruit regardless of whether we see it in our lifetime or afterward. We see that many heroes of faith did not receive what they were promised; meaning that they did not receive their full reward because they died before Christ came. “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.” (Hebrews 11:39-40)

### 3. FAITH ALWAYS HAS A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND IS FOCUSED ON JESUS.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured

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of them, embraced [them] and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that [country] from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly [country]. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.” (Hebrews 11:13-16)

Faith is always positive, whether or not we receive in our lifetime what was promised us or not. Believers that believe in God know that they are strangers on this earth, are focused, and long for their heavenly land. That is why they are not cynical and negative because they are focused on Christ, and not on the things of this world. God has prepared a heavenly city – a heavenly land! This city in which “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

All these people by faith confessed that this world was not their home. Their hearts were not in this world, because they were only “strangers and travelers”. This is why it is good for us in these final and difficult days to not be tied to this world and its desires because we will not be able to answer in faith to the Lord’s commands.

These died without receiving that which God promised, but they never lost that heavenly vision. Christ spoke of them when He said, “...for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous [men] desired to see what you see, and did not see [it], and to hear what you hear, and did not hear [it].” (Matthew 13:17)

The Apostle Paul said similarly about the heavenly city, which waits for all those who believe, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also

eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 3:20) God has prepared something much greater than what this world can offer. We have experienced that which they could not experience – we know Jesus Christ. By faith we have received Him and in faith we walk with Him, we have so much more than they had. We have Jesus Christ on our side, the author and finisher of our faith!

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.” (Hebrews 12:1-3)

That cloud of witnesses was actually the heroes of faith, which we read about. Their faithfulness is a constant encouragement to us that we are not alone in our battles. There are those who have run this race of life before us and have conquered, and their testimony encourages us that we can win! What a great heritage God has left for us!

We can see that part of the Christian life is hard work. It requires of us to let go of everything that hinders us in our relationship with the Lord, to patiently run and fight against sin in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to take up our cross and follow Jesus.

God asks of us to throw off every weight that ensnares us and hinders us in our race of life and faith. The apostle Paul warned us when he said, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain [it]. And everyone who competes

[for the prize] is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a perishable crown, but we [for] an imperishable [crown]. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as [one who] beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring [it] into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Will we finish the race that we have begun with Jesus? Then we need to believe, we need to endure in faith and be disciplined regardless of our circumstances. This is the true life of faith that gives us strength so that we do not resign and become spiritually lazy, it gives us strength so that, if necessary, we forsake our momentary needs in order to win our heavenly prize.

If we want to win we must never take our eyes off of Jesus; we must not be ashamed of Him, because He is not ashamed of us. The Word says, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.” (Hebrews 12:2b) Jesus Christ said, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His [own] glory, and [in His] Father’s.” (Luke 9:26) Do we want to be people of faith? Then let us take Christ’s shame upon ourselves and walk full of confidence in Him and His words regardless of our circumstances. Faith is always positive because it is focused on Christ.

When we are confronted with difficulties we can slowly lose the big picture of the kingdom that is be-

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fore us. Many have already gone through life and left us with many testimonies of their faith. Some have even had worse circumstances than we do today, but they achieved, "having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise." (Hebrews 11:39)

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls." (Hebrews 12:3)

"Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come." (Hebrews 13:13-14)

Our focus in these times should be on Jesus Christ, "He humbled Himself and became obedient to [the point of] death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8b)

Do you know why He did this? Because He believed! He believed the Father that He would not leave Him. This is why we must believe in Him, this is enough, and then know that after suffering always comes celebration. By faith we can overcome the world! This is why we must not faint spiritually because our heroes of faith never did. Know that

we are those, "of whom the world is not worthy". He is the one who began and He is the one who will complete our faith.

Maybe you are going through many trials and tribulations, yet, I want to tell you to withstand courageously like a soldier in faith and turn your gaze to Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. Throw off every weight and sin that hinders you and do not faint spiritually. "Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." (Hebrews 12:12) In addition to heavenly promises, I believe that this attitude can help us and our future generations realize that which God has promised in His word. Faith is our assurance and evidence so that we can advance with a positive attitude regardless of the circumstances around us.

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