

Believe: The Second Step in God's Plan of Salvation

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction:

- A. Faith is often said to do many things which it does not.
- B. Faith has some limitations which many have not considered.
- C. Faith is the only means whereby humankind can approach salvation
 - 1. God saved us by reaching out to us through His grace; we reach back to Him through faith in Him and His plan of salvation.

I. THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING FAITH IS LIMITED

- A. Faith is said to come to people in a variety of ways, times or occasions.
 - 1. In a meadow, dark alley, a frightening experience, an imagined vision
 - 2. Faith is not to be confused with an exciting sensation, sudden fear, or a rude awakening.
 - 3. Faith is not some inexplicable feeling that intrudes on one's consciousness
- B. Bible faith comes from knowledge.
 - 1. Rom. 10:17 - "So then faith comes by"
 - 2. Acts 2:36-37 - They were pricked in their hearts when they heard Peter.
 - 3. Acts 8:12 - The Samaritans developed faith when they heard Philip preaching the gospel
 - a. Christianity is a taught religion. One person teaches the gospel to another, who in turn becomes an obedient believer.
 - 4. Acts 8:35-38 - Philip preached Jesus and produced faith in the eunuch
 - 5. Acts 10:33, 11:1, 13-14 - Cornelius acquired faith when he heard Peter preach "to hear all the things commanded you by God"
 - 6. Lydia believed when she, "opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul" - Acts 16:14
 - 7. The Philippian jailor was told that believing would lead to his salvation - Acts 16:30-32
 - 8. The Corinthians we saved when they "Hearing, believed and were baptized" - Acts 18:8
 - 9. Faith does not mysteriously, without explanation appear in hearts and minds of humankind

II. THE FAITH IS LIMITED TO ONE PATH

- A. 2Cor. 5:7 - "For we walk by faith, not by sight"
 - 1. Any walk claimed to be of faith which is other than by the word of God is not of faith - Matt 15:9
 - 2. One cannot walk apart from God's teaching and claim he walks by faith, for saving faith only travels God's path.
 - 3. Peter proclaimed, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" - 1Peter 4:11
 - 4. Some who err will say, "My faith led me to do this." Faith doesn't lead one astray.
- B. Everyone struggles with faith

1. How strongly do we believe?
 - a. Do we even believe at all?
 - b. Exactly what do we believe?
 - c. Do we get upset when communicating our faith to others?
 - d. Why do we struggle with our faith?
 2. Men often make faith equal to a feeling.
 - a. Faith isn't a feeling, it is a decision based on evidence
 - b. Faith stands apart from feelings; it does not depend on feelings.
 - 1) Feelings are subjective and transient
 3. It is not wrong to struggle with faith while growing in faith.
 - a. Mark 2:1-12 - You don't inherit faith, buy it, or wait for it to hit you.
 - b. You must work on it.
 4. Abraham worked on his faith - Gen. 13:14
 - a. A command to look in every direction
 - 1) North - mountains; could only imagine what was beyond
 - 2) South - Egypt, a sinful rival nation
 - 3) East - Ur, home, from whence he had come
 - 4) West - the great Sea and a land possessed by barbarians
 5. What he saw
 - a. A land belonging to others
 - b. But through faith's eye did he see his land - Gen. 13:15-17
 - c. Only a sojourner in hostile territory; however, its owner because God ordained it, and Abraham believed God - Heb. 11:8-10
 - d. Faith sees farther than man's limited sight.
- C. Upon what does faith rest? Is it blind faith, credulity, gullibility?
1. Beginning with the first sermon on the Day of Pentecost and continuing throughout their preaching and teaching, the apostles appealed to two lines of evidences upon which our faith is to rest:
 - a. The testimony of apostolic eyewitnesses - Acts 2:32, 5:30-32, 10:39-43
 - b. The testimony of Old Testament prophecy - Acts 2:29-31, 3:22-24, 10:43, 13:32-41
 - c. Peter's inspired testimony of the source of faith - 2Peter 1:16-21
 - 1) "We were not following cleverly devised legends" (Weymouth)
 - 2) "For they were no fictitious stories that we followed" (Goodspeed)
 - 3) "It was not on tales artfully spun that we relied" (NEB)
 - d. John 17:20; 2Tim. 3:14-15; Rom. 15:4
- D. The work of faith in the scriptures for salvation
1. Luke 24:44-49; John 20:30-31; Acts 10:43
 2. Every single example of conversion in the New Testament is preceded by faith... believing God not just believing in God - Rom. 5:1; Heb. 11:6
 3. Faith is the motivator, the variable that determines whether one will choose to accept salvation by obeying the gospel - Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38