

Chapter 10

Defining Faith

Part 1: What It Is

We want to define the principle of faith, define what faith is, and apply these principles to the prayer of faith. As we continue looking at James 5, we come to the all important phrase and promise regarding prayer for the sick. We are calling it THE PRAYER OF FAITH. James says, *“the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up.”*

It is the prayer of faith that affects healing. It is the prayer of faith that believes God for the impossible. This really is the focal point of James’ message to the sick and suffering.

Faith, true faith, is the all-important ingredient in the Christian’s life.

“Without faith we cannot please God.” (Hebrews 11:6) *“The just shall live by faith.”* (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38) *“This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”* (1 John 5:4) *“Whatever is not of faith is sin.”* (Romans 14:23)

First, there is saving faith.

“By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8) We come to God by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son. There is no other way to come to God but by him. *“I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes unto the Father but by me.”* (John 14:6) *“There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) This faith is saving faith. It is putting your life into the hands of Jesus Christ. It is a commitment to him as Savior and Lord.

Second, there is growing faith.

Our faith starts out small, but it must grow. It is a simple child-like faith to trust Christ as your Savior. But from that seed faith, we must nurture faith so that it grows strong. *“As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.”* (1 Peter 2:2) But *“grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.”* (2 Peter 3:18) As we learn more about our Savior so our faith in him grows strong and mature. This includes the doctrines of the word of God. The word of God is what builds us up. So we must add to our faith by study of the word of God. *“Study to show yourself approved unto God a workman that needs not be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth.”* (2 Timothy 2:15)

Third, there is living and active faith.

This is a faith that is active and taps into the promises of God. It is not a passive doctrinal faith but a living active faith that trusts God to do what He promised. It is the miracle working faith. It is a faith that moves mountains. It is a faith that clings to the promises of God and says, "It shall be done." It should be the goal of every Christian to be a BELIEVER, that is, to be a person of bold faith.

This faith is not believing half-heartedly or partially. It is believing completely and totally that God does not lie and He will do what He promised. **This is the PRAYER OF FAITH that saves the sick and raises them up out of sickbeds.**

Look at James 5:14-18.

Let us remember the context. James is coming to the end of his letter, a letter he wrote to the church. He was concerned about many people backsliding and pretending that they were trusting in Jesus, yet they really weren't. They weren't exercising any faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were going back to the old laws. They were still trying to earn their salvation.

As he comes to the last two chapters, he is speaking to us about faith in particular. In chapter four, he spoke about asking for things because we want to consume them on our lusts. That was the prayer that doesn't work. When we pray for selfish wants, we are just wishing, treating God like Santa Claus. Then he gave us the principle for drawing near to God, that guarantees that God will draw near to us. That is the prayer that works.

In James 5:14 asks a question. He addressed the issue of sickness.

"Is there anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man subject to passions like we are. He prayed earnestly that it might not rain and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. He prayed again and the heaven gave rain. The earth brought forth her fruit.

I want you to underline "the prayer of faith." It is important in this issue of trusting God for healing. It is THE PRAYER OF FAITH THAT SAVES THE SICK AND RAISES HIM UP.

WHAT FAITH IS NOT

I want us to think about what faith is not. First, we're going to talk about faith in general. Later, we will be more specific about the prayer of faith for healing. We need to understand what faith is not before we can understand what it is.

Faith is not positive thinking .

I think we live in a society that has eroded faith down to be positive thinking. I want you to know, according to the word of God, faith is not positive thinking. It is not maintaining a positive attitude. It is good to have a positive attitude, but having a positive attitude is not necessarily faith. Faith is not just thinking and hoping that you will have better days. Faith is trusting God and his word.

It is not positive confession.

Positive confession is a philosophy that says you shouldn't confess with your lips any negative thing because that would spoil your Yin Yang or your positive aura. Nowhere in the Bible can you find that idea. Positive confession has nothing to do with reality. Faith is not blindly avoiding negative thinking.

It is not hoping and wishing.

I dare say that most of us as Christians view faith as hoping something good is going to happen. The Bible's faith does not convey to us the idea of wishing well. We don't come to God in prayer and throw our coins into the wishing well hoping God might answer. Hoping God will hear and answer is not the faith of the Bible. You can go to a casino and put your coins into the one-armed bandit and hope that you might hit the jackpot. It can happen, but it's not likely. And if it does happen, it is pure luck, not faith. How much of your praying is genuine faith, believing God and his promises, and how much is bogus faith?

How much of our prayer is wishing and hoping? You see, the word "hope" in English doesn't convey the meaning of hope in the Bible. The word "hope" in the Bible really should be translated as assurance. It is never wishful thinking. We, as Christians, sometimes think of prayer as positive wishing. It is "the prayer of faith that saves the sick, that raises him up," not the prayer of the wishing-well that thinks, "I hope that God hears me. I hope God answers my prayer. I hope that God heals me." Real faith is absolute faith, unwavering faith, steady faith, not tossed to

and fro, not a double-minded faith, but an absolute certainty in the promises of God.

Faith Isn't Pretending

The Apostle Paul used a particular expression called in the King James Version, "unfeigned faith." To put that into a modern paraphrase, it is "unfaked faith." Paul said it twice to Timothy, in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy 1:5. That is interesting. Both chapters and verses are identical. He's talking on the same theme in 1 Timothy 1:5 and in 2 Timothy 1:5. He tells Timothy,

*"I thank God for your unfeigned faith that's in you,
and was in your grandmother, and it was in your mother."*

That means it's a faith that's genuine, it's not put on, it's not pretense. It's not sugar-coated, it's not icing on the cake. It is deep and genuine. It is not phony. It's not a pretending. It is genuine faith.

D.L. Moody Story

Many years ago, I heard a story. It's probably an apocryphal story that's been told many times by preachers. It's allegedly from D.L. Moody's life, as he preached the word of God, he challenged people to believe the Lord. Jesus said, *"If you have faith as the grain of a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'be removed', and it will be removed and cast into the depths of the sea."*

So, two little old spinster ladies were sitting there and these two sisters really got their heads together and said, "Hey, that is a wonderful principle. We have this load of dirt out in the backyard. We haven't been able to move that for years and we don't have money to have somebody move it for us." They got home, and discussed it and said, "Mr. Moody said that we can trust God and if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, we can say to that mountain be removed and it will move and it will be cast into the sea."

The two ladies sat at their table, and had their prayer time, and they said, "Lord Jesus, right now, we speak to the mountain in the backyard and we tell it, in Jesus' name, be removed into the sea, in Jesus' name. Amen." After that, they went to bed.

When they got up in the morning, both of them rushed to the window and opened the curtains to see if the mountain had been removed. They looked, and the mountain was still there. The one sister turned to the other and said, "I knew it wouldn't work."

Isn't our faith sometimes like that? It's a hope, a wish, a wing and a prayer, but it's not an assurance. An assurance doesn't run to the window to see if it really happened. Genuine faith knows it happened even without checking out the window.

"Without faith, it's impossible to please God. for he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."— Hebrews 11:6

WHAT FAITH IS

Without this genuine faith, it's impossible to please God. There are two sides to it. Is the faith that is in you real genuine faith or is it just pretending?

1) Believing God is (who He says He is)

2) Believing God rewards those who seek Him. (He answers prayer.)

In the next two chapters we will look at this more closely.

Think About It

Chapter 10:

Defining Faith – Part 1: What Faith Is and Is Not

Take the quiz on faith found in the Appendix. Do you have much faith?

What faith statement do you struggle with?

What promise, or promises, of God do you struggle with?

On a scale of 1-10, where's your faith level? (10 highest)