

. . . your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

(1 Pet. 1:7)

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Fireproof Your Faith

I GREW up in a typical Baptist church. We started at eleven o'clock sharp with the prelude and ended at twelve o'clock dull with the benediction. It seemed the pastor never expected God to do anything. No one expected anyone to respond to the invitation. The church, for most of my growing up years, was dull, dead and faithless.

Little of faith, discipleship or commitment was ever mentioned. I recall a lot of hot air but no wind of the Spirit.

Manley Beasley was the greatest man of faith I ever met. Two of his children served on our staff, and we often talked about their dad's faith. Manley's youngest son, Jonathan, once said to me, "The hardest thing about being dad's son is learning to develop your own faith. When dad was alive, we depended so much on his faith for us. Now that he's gone, we're having to learn what it means for us personally to walk by faith."

Manley had survived numerous (I'm not exaggerating) incurable diseases. He was as sure as dead more times than anyone can count. He wrote a fantastic workbook on faith

that will take you places you've never been. Manley often asked people, "What are you trusting God for today?" Many

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Christians haven't trusted God for anything since trusting Him for salvation, which is why the saints burn out. They walk by sight, and not by faith.

We all want great faith. We just don't want to pay the price. When I saw the faith of

Manley Beasley, I wanted it—but to be honest I didn't (and still don't) want to go through the fires he went through to get it.

What Faith Looks Like

Ron Dunn said, "All that believes is not faith, and much of what is being called faith today is not faith at all. Any day now someone is going to sue God for breaking a promise."¹ I would dare say, in light of much we hear today about faith, many are confused about what Biblical faith looks like. When you listen to the "health-and-wealth" crowd, faith would seem to mean a new car, on-the-spot healing, lots of money and the repentant return of prodigals. That's not reality. Faith is not a *carte blanche* to supernatural power.

The other extreme is the failure to believe God altogether. Four times in Scripture we are told "the just shall live by faith." I came to Christ by faith, and I continue in Christ by faith. But what is faith? How would we define it from a Biblical perspective?

Ron Dunn explained it this way:

“One, faith is an affirmation. It’s our ‘amen’ to all God has revealed about Himself.

“Two, it is an act. We obey all God commands.

“Three, it is an attitude. It is believing that God is actively interested and involved in our daily existence. And it is this attitude of faith, this resting in Him, that God desires most.”²

What do others say when they try to define faith?

- At the end of the day, faith means letting God be God. (John Blanchard)
- Faith is the capacity to trust God while not being able to make sense out of everything. (James Kok)
- Faith is the sight of the inward eye. (Alexander MacLaren)
- Faith is the power of putting self aside that God may work unhindered. (F. B. Meyer)
- Faith is reason at rest in God. (C. H. Spurgeon)
- Faith does not look at itself. It has no value save as it links us with God. (Vance Havner)
- Faith is not idle; it works while it waits. (Ron Dunn)³

Faith is not wishful thinking, presumption, a denial of reality, the power of positive thinking or positive confession. Faith, according to Hebrews, is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). As you study the Scriptures you find faith tied to words like “knowing,” “believing” and “obeying” the truth. If you don’t believe that our God is trustworthy, you’ll never be able to walk by faith. Psalm 9:10 says, “Those who know Your name will put their trust in You.” The emphasis of the Bible is not on our subjective experiences but on the object of our faith—God Himself.

Mustard Seed Faith

We are to have faith in God and His Word. In my office I have a very small jar filled with mustard seeds. Although it

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is only an inch-and-a-half long and about a half-inch wide, it contains hundreds of mustard seeds. I bought the jar in Israel as a visible reminder of one of the great teachings of our Lord.

I've often looked at that little jar and wondered, *What could I do if I had faith the size of one of those tiny mustard seeds? What could my church do if we had just a few hundred people with mustard-seed faith?* The possibilities are limitless. The embarrassing reality is that most of us fail the tests of faith.

Faith is the starting point on the road to obedience. It is our foundation and sustaining strength in the storms of life. I don't really have faith if I'm not living according to what I say I believe about God and His Word. Too often we can talk a better game than we can live.

Think about just a few of those who were called to put their faith to the test. Remember, they obeyed God in spite of the circumstances or public opinion. They acted apart from rational explanations or physical evidence. They believed God because they knew that authority for faith is the revelation of God.

Noah, build an ark.

"Are You kidding, Lord? What's an ark?"

Abraham, set out for a city.