

Concerning Faith (Part 2 of 2)

Romans 10:17 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Introduction

Let me tell you a story. A certain Christian man slipped off the cliff by accident. He was hanging on a branch for life. If he would lose his grips on the branch, he would fall into death 100 yards below. He was crying out for rescue: “Help! Help!” “Is anyone out there?” All of a sudden, there came a voice from Heaven: “Did you call Me?”

“Yes, Father.” the man replied. “Please send your angels and get me out of here.” “Do you really want Me to help you?” said God. “Yes, Lord. Please!!!” “Then, let go of your hands.” “What?” “Let go of your hands and everything will be fine.” The man thought for a split second, then, started shouting, “Is anyone **else** out there?”

We often act like that, don’t we? We confess that God can help us in any life’s situation. We even cry out to Him for help. However, when it comes down to trusting and obeying Him, we choose our own wisdom and might, don’t we? Anyway, today I will continue my series on faith.

Content

Last Sunday, I talked about two sides of faith: first, intellectual understanding of God, His attributes and power. It involves our mind. The second aspect of faith is the actual practice of our belief by trusting in God. Trusting in the Lord requires our heart—letting go of our fear and anxiety and throw ourselves ‘all-in’ into God’s mighty hands. As someone put it, faith is not like the climbing of the Mount Everest; it is rather letting go of the last branch we are holding onto for life like the story of the man I just told you about.

This morning, we are going to think about two more characteristics of faith and three ways to nurture our faith.

Two more aspects of faith: *everyone’s faith is different. Faith never stays the same.*

A. **Everyone’s faith is different.**

Did you know that we have a variety of faith (or different shapes and sizes of faith) in the Body of Christ? Strong faith (Romans 14:2) and Weak faith (Romans 14:2). Great faith (Matthew 8:10) and Little faith (Matthew 8:26). Full of faith (Acts 6:5) and Lack of faith (Matthew 13:58). Did you also know that God never wants us to judge others’ faith nor put any stumbling block before them?

Some have strong faith to move the mountains; others have weak faith that, before life's crisis, they crumble. Some are mature in faith. Others are babies in faith. Yet, never judge others' faith, God commands. If you are blessed with strong faith to walk on the waters, give God the glory and use your faith for His kingdom. But never be arrogant to criticize the others' weak faith. E.g. In Paul's times: food in the market, especially meat, had been offered to idols before they were sold. Being afraid of partaking in the idol worship by eating the meat sacrificed to idols, some Christians refused to eat any meat and criticized those believers who ate anyway believing that their prayers before the meal had the power to cleanse the food offered to the idols. Paul's instruction was to accept each other's faith and not judge, because God alone is the Judge, not us, in such faith matters.

B. Faith never stands still.

Faith never stays the same. The faith you had 10 years ago is not the same as today. Either it grew or weakened. Either it got stronger or weaker. It never stays the same.

Imagine a boat floating in the Ocean. Without being anchored, no matter how hard your boat may try to stand still, it can't, because the waves move it back and forth. Likewise, many factors in the world, such as the worldly principles, will push and pull your faith in all directions, mostly negatively.

For instance, the world promotes revenge on your adversary. Some believers follow such a principle for years and later wonder what happened to their faith. An unforgiving spirit quenches the Holy Spirit in you and smolders your faith in Christ.

Another example. Some people, without thinking, blindly follow the New Age teaching and practice. E.g. The New Age teaching calls the inner voice in you the Holy Spirit. Wrong. Terribly wrong. Here's why. Because that inner voice of yours can be either your own conscience, your own desires and thoughts, or even the thoughts the devil prompted in your heart. Furthermore, not everyone has the Holy Spirit in them. Only those who confess that Jesus Christ is their Savior and Lord have the Holy Spirit: *no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the **Holy Spirit*** (1 Corinthians 12:3). False teaching destroys your faith.

Here is the third example. Fear and anxiety work against your faith. If you keep worrying about things in life, it will choke your faith, even kill it. E.g. Remember the Parable of the Sower? The worries of life, the deceitfulness of riches, and sinful desires choke up the Word of God, and kill the faith in Christ.

For the rest of my sermon, I am going to explain the ways we can keep our faith growing. How can we nurture our faith every day? Through God, each other, and leaders.

Three ways to nurture our faith: God's Word, Church, and Role Models

a. **Be rooted in God's Word the truth.** Listen to today's text one more time: *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.* Hearing of God's Word, faith

grows. No hearing of God's Word, no faith. If you are serious about nurturing your faith, you ought to take God's Word seriously, because it is the food to your spirit. Take advantage of every single opportunity to listen to God's truth. Be diligent about it. Spare no efforts for it. Listen to sermons, join Sunday School, and Bible studies. Most importantly, though, spend time with God's Word daily. Structure your daily routine so that you have time to listen to the Lord in His Word. 15 minutes a day. Your faith will grow.

b. Surround yourself with same minded believers. No believer is an island. We need each other's company in our faith journey. Mutual encouragement is the key: E.g. Romans 1:12. *12 that is, that I [Paul--kc] may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.* Think of Paul here. Despite the fact that he was an apostle and had a closer relationship with Jesus the Lord than most believers, and despite the fact that He was much more advanced in faith than the believers in Rome, he prayed and longed for the fellowship with the fellow believers. Because, he knew there's God's blessing wherever the believers meet in the name of Jesus (Matthew 18:20). In every single gathering and worship in His name, Jesus Himself is in our midst. He will bless us, refresh our spirits, and strengthen our faith in Christ. E.g. A teenager greeted me during 'Passing of the Peace' one Sunday morning during the time when I was stressed out. "What's up, Pastor Choi?" he asked. His simple greeting surely lifted my spirit and strengthened my faith.

c. Imitate the faith of leaders and forefathers: Hebrews 13:7 says, *Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.* Can you name one person in your faith journey who has rubbed off on you? You can also enhance your faith by reading the stories and testimonies of great Christians before us and even today. E.g. the story of Polycarp, the martyred bishop of Smyrna in the second century A.D. *"The Christians at the time were being told, under threat of death, to renounce Christ, confess that 'Caesar is Lord,' and offer incense to the Emperor"* (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Martyrdom-of-Polycarp.html>)

On his final day on earth, Polycarp was taken into a stadium full of spectators; As he entered into the stadium, a voice came to him from heaven; *'Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man.'*... *"When then he was brought before him, the proconsul enquired whether he were the man. And on his confessing that he was, he tried to persuade him to a denial saying, 'Have respect to thine age,' and other things in accordance therewith, as it is their wont to say; 'Swear by the genius of Caesar; repent and say, Away with the atheists.'* [Christians were called 'atheists' because they did not believe in the gods of Rome.] Then Polycarp with solemn countenance looked upon the whole multitude of lawless heathen that were in the stadium, and waved his hand to them; and groaning and looking up to heaven he said, *'Away with the atheists.'*

"But when the magistrate pressed him hard and said, 'Swear the oath, and I will release thee; revile the Christ,' Polycarp said, 'Fourscore and six years have I been His servant, and He

hath done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?'" (Polycarp 9:1–3). Realizing that Polycarp would not recant, his captors threatened him with wild beasts. When that did not work, he was threatened with burning alive. That did not frighten him, either. ... A pyre was made, and the wood caught on fire but Polycarp was unharmed. Then a man stabbed him in the heart, and a great gush of blood came out and extinguished the remaining flames. After his death by stabbing, his body was burned" (ibid.).

Conclusion

Hebrews 12:2 says, Jesus is *the author and perfecter of our faith*. He loves to see and help us to grow in our faith. Therefore, let us ask Him to increase our faith by all means and whatever it takes. He is the Author of faith. He is the Perfecter of faith. He is the Master Weaver and Sculptor of our faith. He will perfect our faith upward and onward to Heaven. Until the Day we stand before Him in Heaven. Amen.