

# What Is Faith?

Some 2,000 years ago the angel Gabriel visited a young virgin called Mary.

**Luke 1:26-33** [NIV] *“In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.” Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end.”*

An awe-inspiring message given to a very “level headed” young lady, who must have had a close relationship with her Creator God not to be dumbstruck by such a visit and statement.

**Luke 1:34** [NIV] *“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”*

Mary could not figure out how this could happen.

**Luke 1:35** [NIV] *“The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”*

**This answer was within the realm of the supernatural, therefore a mystery to human beings, totally without physical proof.**

**Luke 1:37** [NIV] *“For nothing is impossible with God.”*

Physically this was an impossible occurrence.

**The question is, did Mary believe this physically impossible thing would happen?**

**Luke 1:38** [NIV] *“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.”*

**Yes, Mary did believe God. Mary believed the angel so she believed God who had sent him.**

**Nothing has changed over the last 2,000 years; faith is still believing what God says He will do.**

**Faith is more than believing in God. Faith is believing God.**

**It is one thing to say we believe in a person, that they exist.**

**It is very different to believe a person, that is to believe everything that person says or does.**

**This shows a high level of trust in their words and actions.**

**Genesis 15:6** [NIV] *“Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”*

**Abram believed God’s Word long before the promise was fulfilled.**

Mary believed God’s Word **before** the conception took place.

# **Belief in and submission to God's Word always precedes our being used by our Creator**

**Faith is described if not defined in Hebrews.**

**Hebrews 11:1** [NIV] *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”*

**This is a description of what faith is, the rest of the chapter describes what faith does.**

Faith is being certain of God's Promises without physical sight or physical evidence.

The normal physical mind wants faith in reverse.

**Humanly we only believe after sight and evidence.**

**Mark 15:31-32** [NIV] *“In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can't save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.”*

Such an action by Jesus would not have left any room for faith.

## **Faith is far more than Biblical understanding, pure faith is believing without seeing, that is, believing God**

Faith is based purely on God's integrity.

**If we believe that The Bible is God's Word, we are then believing Him, for The Bible is God putting His integrity on the line.**

**2 Timothy 3:16** [NIV] *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...”*

**2 Peter 1:20-21** [NIV] *“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

## **Why is this study of faith important?**

a) Faith is a vast subject and one all of us should explore and try to understand.

b) **Hebrews 11:6** [NIV] *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

**Faith is the only way we can please God, therefore we should seek to understand and express faith in our lives.**

c) There is more than one kind of faith, not only a faith that saves, but also a faith that achieves great things for God.

d) This study will give us a better understanding of the gospel message and how faith must be exercised after we are saved by faith.

e) This study will help us to increase our faith.

## Saving faith

This is believing God with regard to our salvation.

**John 3:16** [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

This is what Martin Luther called *“The Bible in a nutshell”*.

The Greek preposition translated *“in”* or *“on”* is *“eis”* which refers to a meeting in time and space but is **not** permanent, indicating just a starting point.

**Belief in what Jesus the Son of God has done for us saves us from eternal death but is only a starting place for achieving faith that must follow.**

**Hebrews 11:1** [NIV] *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”*

**This initial saving faith is our first step into the spirit realm, where we have assurance without our physical senses being satisfied.**

Such faith has to be a gift from the One who lives in the spirit realm.

**Ephesians 2:8** [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...”*

**As with everything pertaining to our salvation the initiative is with God.**

**Romans 1:17** [King James] *“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”*

*“Faith to faith”* we start with the faith we receive from God to our own faith.

*“Justifying faith”* and *“saving faith”* are interchangeable to justify means to be made righteous.

**Romans 3:22** [King James] *“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:”*

Our justification or salvation comes only by the faith **of Jesus not our own faith.**

**Galatians 2:16** [King James] *“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”*

**The faith of Jesus saves us but we have to believe and accept this fact.**

Read these three scriptures over and over in the A.V. which is based on the literal translation of the Greek and the full meaning will become clear.

**We can never take any credit for our calling or salvation, all are totally dependent on our Creator God.**

## The faith of Jesus

This is the personal faith of Jesus.

**Jesus was a Believer with perfect faith.**

How was this?

**John 3:34** [King James] *“For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”*

**God gave to Jesus the Son of Man the Holy Spirit without limit, in time or power.**

**Just as Jesus’ death is a substitute for our deserved death so His faith assures our salvation [justification] as a substitute for our lack of faith.**

**Everything Jesus did was for us, He did everything we could not do for ourselves, this includes:**

- a) Perfect believing faith.
- b) Perfectly fulfilling the law by His personal obedience.
- c) Satisfying God’s justice by the sacrifice of His perfect life.

The “*faith to faith*” Paul mentioned is

- a) The faith of Jesus – His believing perfectly on our behalf.
- b) To our faith – trusting in what Jesus did for us.

**The object of our faith is God** [Jesus the Son of God]

We believe God, that is what He says and promises in His Word [written and the Living Word Jesus]

**Romans 4:3** [NIV] *“What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

**When we put our faith and trust in the Son of God, we are like Abraham credited with His [Jesus’] righteousness.**

This is a result of transferring our trust in ourselves to what Jesus has done for us.

When we are convinced that it is only the life and death of Jesus that saves us.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no-one can boast.”*

**Faith in Christ alone is the only comfort that is possible when our time to die comes.**

## Achieving faith

This is believing God with regard to His Will.

**If believing God is the best way to die, it is also the best way to live.**

- a) Saving faith secures us eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

b) Achieving faith enables us to achieve things on the way to eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

**Hebrews chapter eleven describes this life of achieving faith not how we are saved by faith of Jesus.** [With the possible exception of **Hebrews 11:4**]

**Hebrews 11:2** [NIV] *“This is what the ancients were commended for.”*

It was *“achieving faith”* that these people were commended for.

**They were ordinary people but God made them unusual by what they did by faith.**

**Galatians 2:20** [King James] *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

Paul lived by the faith of Jesus the Son of God.

**Galatians 3:19-21** [Message Bible] *“What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn’t work. So I quit being a “law man” so that I could be God’s man. Christ’s life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not “mine”, but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back to that.*

*“Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate God’s grace. If a living relationship with God could come by rule keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.”*

**The degree to which we live by the faith of Christ will be the degree to which we accomplish what God has in mind for us.**

**Romans 8:34** [NIV] *“Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”*

Jesus as our High Priest intercedes for us with perfect faith. No wonder Paul says that he now lives by the faith of the Son of God.

**Habakkuk 2:4** [NIV] *“...the righteous shall live by His faithfulness.”*

**The “His” means God’s faithfulness, that is trusting in God to be faithful to His Word and His Promises.**

**Habakkuk 2:2** [NIV] *“Then the LORD replied: “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.”*

**This revelation was to be written down but –**

**Habakkuk 2:3** [NIV] *“For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.”*

**Its fulfilment had to wait for a certain time to come.**

**Hebrews 10:32-39** [NIV] *“Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathised with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you*

*knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.*"

This is the introduction to "achieving faith".

**The discouraged Hebrew Christians were exhorted to trust God's faithfulness regarding their future.**

This is why the writer of Hebrews refers to Habakkuk! They were to wait on God's intervention "just a little while". The totality of our physical life is no time at all compared with the promised eternity!

**The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is given to encourage us in the trials we face in life.**

**We read what these people did by believing God and realise that is what we can achieve in our day with the same faith of God.**

**One important thing to note is that no person mentioned repeated what was done before.**

Each faith was an "original" faith, there were no imitations. Each had to achieve on their own what God led them to do.

Noah did not do what Enoch did, Abraham was not commissioned to build an Ark.

**We cannot look over our shoulders and do what others have done, we have to fix our eyes on Christ.**

**Hebrews 12:2** [NIV] *"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

## **Conclusion:-**

Saving faith is believing God.

Achieving faith is believing God.

We need to experience both.