

The Life of Faith

The glorious prospect of living by faith for the 21st Century believer
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Introduction

What follows is a discussion of what it means to 'live by faith'. In Galatians 2:20-21, Paul made this statement,

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. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come [‘were through’ ESV¹] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Here Paul makes very clear the kind of life available to the believer this side of heaven. I prefer to use the term, 'believer' when referring to followers of the Lord Jesus as it is more definitive and implies a constant and ongoing activity of faith within us. We are believers. We are saved by faith, we live by faith, and we walk by faith. Everything in life this side of heaven is 'by faith'. It should be noted that Paul adds immediately, showing I believe how imperative it is to continue actively living by faith that he emphatically does 'not frustrate the grace of God' in this regard. He continues, '...for if righteousness come/were through the law, then Christ is dead in vain'. These are very forceful words. The grace of God is actively appropriated by the believer moment by moment and by doing so the believer takes and applies to himself the vicarious and substitutionary death of Christ on his behalf. The believer does this in total accord with the divine purpose in the death of Christ. Again and restating: We live moment by moment in active appropriation of the righteousness of Christ and doing so fulfills and completes the purpose of the death of Christ. The imperative intensity with which Paul seeks to convey how profound and important this is may be seen by the following verse where Paul says that any other mind set would be to 'frustrate' or deny this grace of God. This is a purpose and intention that is all done in our favour, for us and on our behalf. This deserves pondering and reflecting upon until the import, the potential and the application of it settles deeply into our consciousness.

This is the life of faith available to the believer. This is the way by which we enjoy it and further it and grow more deeply and experientially into it. The life which we 'live in the flesh' is lived 'by the faith of [it can equally be read as by faith *in*] the Son of God...' It's both 'in' and 'of' the Son of God. I.e. 'We live by faith *IN* the Son of God...' That is by faith in *WHO* He is and what He has *DONE* on the cross. Further, 'We live by the faith *OF* the Son of God...' That is, the faith that comes *BY* and through Him. It is 'of' Him. This is not a human originated confidence. This is not a casual inclination towards something. This is a vital and living faith that is imparted to us as a result of divine activity directed purposely towards the individual believer and that becomes active within that believing persons spirit or inner being.

The Faith that is 'OF' God.

This faith that is 'of' God is the primary and vital ingredient in our relationship with the Godhead. 'Without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God', the writer to the Hebrews tells us so very clearly in verse 6.

'But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' Hebrews 11: 6

Why is the faith of God so vital? Answer, because we must start by believing that He *is*. That He exists and is, as Francis Schaefer so memorably put it, 'there'.² Everything flows from that seminal point. Yet, as Paul makes so clear, that very act of faith in the initial stage is a gift from God. It does not arise naturally from the human heart. So, faith *comes*. It 'comes by hearing and by hearing the Word of God'. Romans 10: 17. Faith is imparted in some mysterious way by God Himself and by the action of the Word of God as it is heard by the human heart. That 'Word' of God exerts a gentle

¹ ESV or English Standard Version.

² The God Who Is There, InterVarsity Press, is a Christian apologetic work written by American philosopher and Christian theologian Francis A. Schaeffer, published in 1968.

drawing tug on the inner being of the individual. It is a 'drawing' power that is so very easily resisted, yet so lovingly and faithfully exerted by the Father. Jesus explained it thus, 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...' John 6: 44. He said a similar thing, but using a different analogy when talking to Peter and the other apostles when He asked them, "Who do Men say that I am?" and then directly to the disciples themselves, "Who do you say that I am?" Upon Peter's answer, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God', the Bible records that,

'Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven...' Matthew 16: 16-17.

The acknowledgement of Christ as 'the Son of the living God', or as is clearly the implication, as Immanuel, which of course means 'God [is] with us'. We can put Peter's profound and wonderful acknowledgement into an even simpler form and state it as, 'you are God'. This affirmation is then declared by the Lord to be the entry point or foundational confession of faith upon which the ekklesia (church) of Christ is built. Keep in mind that 'Christ' means 'Messiah', or 'the promised one' of prophecy. So, Peter's answer was literally and completely, "You are the promised one, you are God'. The 'Son of the living God' has the clear implication and echo of the Immanuel³ concepts of the Old Testament just referred to. That is to say, He, Messiah, would be 'God with us', or 'God revealed to us'. One of the many prophecies with that intent, and one of the most beautiful and complete is Isaiah 9: 6,

'For unto us a child is born, unto us a **son** is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty **God**, The everlasting **Father**, The Prince of Peace.' (Emphasis mine)

The Lord Jesus clarified this further for the disciples when Philip asked Him to 'show us the Father'. He said to them, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that **hath seen me hath seen the Father**; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?' John 14: 8-9 (Emphasis mine). Back to Hebrews 11: 6 again... to believe that He is requires an enablement directly from the Father. It requires an act of faith by a gift of faith from the Father that allows us to know Him and receive Him. This is clearly why Paul in Ephesians 2: 8-9 puts grace ahead of faith. 'For by grace are ye saved through faith...' It's simply grace upon grace upon grace all the way. Hence Ephesians 2: 8 '...it is the gift of God'. What is by grace is a free and unearned gift, '...by grace are ye saved through faith and that NOT of yourselves it is the GIFT of God'. (Emphasis mine.)

In light of this Paul's exhortation to the Colossians becomes so very pertinent, 'As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him...' Colossians 2: 6. How did they receive Christ Jesus the Lord? Answer, the same way we all do, by grace through faith. How should we continue to live and walk in this new life? Answer, by grace through faith. It's all 'by grace through faith'. This is the guiding mantra of every believer. This is our code for living. This is our one unchanging rule by which we live out our life on earth. We live by His grace through His faith.

In response to the growing hostility from the Jewish leaders over His apparent breaches of the Sabbath and claims to divinity Jesus includes these words that powerfully link the dynamic between His word and faith,

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that **heareth my word**, and **believeth** on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life...' John 5: 24.

We should note that the Lord Jesus here links His particular words that He has just been uttering concerning His divine nature to the receipt and assurance of, eternal life. Hearing this, which clearly implies accepting His claims (the Jews were rejecting them) and believing on Him that sent Him gives full and complete grounds for the assurance of everlasting life. In fact, assurance is enforced even more strongly because He adds, 'and **shall**

³ Isaiah 7: 14 and Isaiah 8: 18.

not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life...’ Fulfillment of these criteria makes our salvation a fait accompli. It’s done. It’s finished. We have passed from death to life. We are **now** living in eternal life. The body will decay and likely go into the grave, most likely sooner than we might like to think, but it simply doesn’t matter because we already have eternal life. We have the word of the most honorable gentleman of the highest possible integrity and one who alone is qualified to say so. We can place our absolute trust in Him.

Paul takes this same relationship between the word and faith further by saying it has the same power and effectiveness when the message is heard through his, Paul’s lips, the lips of others and, by implication therefore, our own. When we speak and proclaim the same words Jesus spoke, when we pass them on to others, they have exactly the same power.

‘The word is nigh thee, **even in thy mouth, and in thy heart**: that is, **the word of faith**, which **we** [all believers] **preach**; That if thou shalt confess [the word concerning who He is] with thy mouth **the Lord Jesus** [Jesus is Lord i.e. God], and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead [the resurrection is the Father’s affirmation of the finished work of salvation], thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed [i.e. they won’t believe in vain].’ Romans 10:-8-11

This authority to speak the same word and see the same results in the hearts of our listeners should motivate us to share His word with renewed enthusiasm and urgency. Paul says that this word is, ‘in thy mouth’, ‘in thy heart’, and ‘which **we** preach’. The ‘we’ embraces his preaching, the preaching of the other apostles, the believers of his day and generation, and can be happily taken to include you and me today. So, go and preach, witness, testify, proclaim and make Him known in every way and in every situation.

The confession of the word, the message of the gospel concerning the vicarious death and resurrection of Christ and of who He is, God, Paul assures us, results, exactly as Jesus said in John 5: 24, in salvation. We can have full and complete assurance of this. The dynamic action of the word and the faith that results from its mysterious action within the human heart, produces full and complete assurance of salvation –because that is, in and of itself, salvation. If it didn’t happen there would be no salvation and most certainly no assurance of it. The faith of God is the salvation experience. Receiving it, the divine deposit of divine faith, is salvation.

Metaphors: Sweat & Works

We are called to ‘live by faith’. The Christian life is a ‘walk of faith’. It is a daily, minute by minute act of trust in the grace and the goodness of God. The same faith we place in Christ for salvation the day we first believed, is the same faith we continue to place in Christ every single minute of every single day that follows until faith gives place to sight and we become like Him because we ‘see Him as He is’. 1 John 3: 2.

Grasping exactly what this means, to live by faith, is a challenging thing. Yet, gaining a grasp of what the scripture teaches us about this life of faith is essential if we are to be fruitful and faithful during our so very brief sojourn in this physical life.

Three verses scattered at random throughout the Bible are worth thought in this connection; the believer’s life of faith. All speak of ‘sweat’ which is a metaphor in the Bible for self effort. Below are the three passages with a comment below each one.

Genesis 3:19 KJV

'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return .'

Here sweat sums up the effects and result of the curse brought about by the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Ezekiel 44:18 KJV

'They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat.'

In this passage we have the instructions for the priestly attire contained in the ecclesiastical law of Old Testament. The need for clothing that did not produce sweat is a graphic illustration and type teaching us that in the presence of God there must not be any expression of self-effort. Why? Because we cannot by our own righteousness be good enough. We need to be 'made righteous' by the gift of justification on the grounds of the finished work of Calvary. The Old Testament sacrifices were a picture pointing forward to the anti-type of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf at the Cross. Our pride struggles and argues with this wanting so desperately to have something to justify itself. This 'old nature' must be 'nailed' to the cross and 'crucified with Christ'. Romans 6: 6 and Galatians 2: 20.

Luke 22:44 KJV

'And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.'

This last reference brings us into the garden of Gethsemane where we get a small insight into the 'agony' He endured to secure our salvation. He 'sweat as it were great drops of blood'. Sweat is again typical of work. In this case, it is His work. His unique and particular work of salvation which He effected at the Father's behest and on our behalf. This is the only 'work' that is acceptable to God. It was His work, the work of Christ on the cross. It was acceptable to God because it was the work of the only sinless, pure, perfect man who ever lived and thereby fulfilled the essential type of 'a lamb without blemish and without spot'. Exodus 12: 5 et al and 1 Peter 1: 19. Our 'sweat' or work cannot be acceptable because we are not 'without blemish and without spot'. We cannot make atonement for our own sin, or any one else's for that matter. That is why it is so important we confess Christ this side of eternity. If we pass through the portal of death without appropriating the death of Christ on our behalf we will be lost forever without hope of redemption. There is then only, 'a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation...' Hebrews 10: 27. We should notice that the writer is speaking of those who 'sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins...' Verse 26. It is in that context that we read, '...how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God...' Verses 29-31, I am comfortable in my own mind that this refers to those who 'have received the knowledge of the truth', but have not accepted it or responded by acknowledging Christ and being born again by the Spirit of God. The passage in Hebrews 6: 6 may seem to argue against this, however I feel we should take this as not just a warning, but also a clear statement of fact. By that I mean, if someone were to commit this terrible thing then 'renewing them again to repentance' would most certainly be 'impossible'. However, is this something that can or will happen? I'd like to think not because of the Lord Jesus' own words in this regard in, John 10: 28, 29 which I feel are very helpful,

'And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man **pluck** them out of my hand.' John 10:28

'**My Father**, which gave them me, **is greater than all**; and no man [including the individual being contemplated] is able to **pluck** them out of my Father's hand.' John 10:29

The wonderful thing about this passage is that John records the Lord actually repeating the statement. Those He has given eternal life to 'shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand'. This assurance is emphasized by saying, 'My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all...' To the argument that it is the action of a 'man' in plucking them out of His hand and not the individual falling away of his own volition, I reply that I take comfort in the words, 'My Father...is greater than all...' That must include the individual themselves. He, God is greater than all, including the person who may sin so grievously. Ultimately, as the whole thrust of this article is focused upon, our security is based upon the His grace and the faith that comes from Him. Further, I freely acknowledge that I cannot know with absolute certainty the answer to this so very vex question and I feel that all believers should humbly be always conscious of these words by Paul to Timothy, 'Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' 2 Timothy 2: 19. The lesson here is clear enough. Only the Lord ultimately knows those that are 'His' and each individual believer needs to take to heart the following admonition by Paul, 'Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' In other words live in such a way that there can never be any doubt either in your mind or in the minds of others that you are a child of God and a follower of the Lord Jesus. Most certainly we should all endeavor to live that way before the eyes of the Lord.

Now leaving that brief digression into the eternal security of the believer, let us go back to the work of Christ on the cross and the price that only the pure and spotless Lamb of God's provision, the Lord Jesus could pay on our behalf and for us. Peter's wonderful words say it perfectly,

You were redeemed, '... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot...' 1 Peter 1: 19

The Lord Jesus shed His precious blood for us on at least seven occasions from the scripture record. This occasion, in the garden is the first of those. It is humbling to realise that it was linked to a struggle in the area of the will. 'Not my will but thine be done'. Luke 22: 42. We know that He always did those things that pleased the Father. John 8: 29. We also know that He laid down his life freely and without coercion of any sort. John 10: 18. Therefore we can know that this was a struggle made on our behalf. Just as He 'was made sin for us who knew no sin', so He endured the conflict of will between our will and the Father's will **'for us'**. Because He endured that conflict, we can appropriate by faith His victory and walk in the Father's will ourselves without conflict. I feel we can see a pattern in this order of events. If He had not endured this agony at the very start of His sufferings on our behalf, the way would not have been made clear for us to make that initial response of faith and trust that results in turning away from 'our own way', or our own self-will. This is clearly seen in Isaiah's wonderful prophecy concerning the suffering Saviour, 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have **turned everyone to his own way**; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' Isaiah 53: 6. (Emphasis mine). This self-will Isaiah plainly calls iniquity. Iniquity in Isaiah 53: 6 is the Hebrew word *avon* and is more accurately rendered 'perversity'.⁴ The Oxford Dictionary gives us this definition, 'a deliberate desire to behave in an unreasonable or unacceptable way; contrariness'.⁵ What a remarkable insight into the self-will of our old, sinful nature. The 'deliberate' quality reveals the clear direction of the will. We choose to behave in a manner that is both unreasonable and unacceptable to God. We have, as Isaiah states so clearly, 'turned ...to our own way'. It's our way and not His way. So, to be redeemed the Lord Jesus had to be 'made self-willed' on our behalf. No wonder the struggle involved Him sweating 'great drops of blood'. The agony was beyond comprehension. 'He who knew no sin was made [self-willed] for us'. When we contemplate this we are treading on holy ground. No wonder C.T. Studd⁶, that great missionary to

⁴ Robert Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible, Eighth Edition, United Society for Christian Literature, Lutterworth Press, London, 1939, page 516.

⁵ OxfordDictionaries online, URL: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/perversity>, Accessed 26 November 2011.

⁶ Stephen Ross, Wholesome Words, Worldwide Missions page Missionary Biographies, Charles Thomas (CT) Studd, URL: <http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/biostudd.html>, Accessed: 26 November 2011.

Africa and a former English Test Cricketer was compelled to make his famous statement explaining why he gave up his inheritance and abandoned wealth and prestige for the dark continent, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice that I can make can be too great for me to make for Him".

There, in Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus shed his precious blood so that you and I could be freed from the tyranny of self-will by grace and be saved through faith 'and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God'. Ephesians 2: 8.

Faith vs Work(s) in the Life of Faith

We need to grasp the relationship between faith and works because human nature is very prone to placing value on self effort. The old nature is essentially characterized by pride. Sin is at its root an expression of pride. This can be traced back to Lucifer whose heart was 'lifted up' (Ezekiel 28: 17) in pride against God. Pride seduces us into trusting in our own wisdom and effort. We begin to think we have to get up early in the morning so that God can raise the Sun!

Of course, there is a sharp distinction between what we are discussing here and laziness. Proverbs gives us a good picture of laziness, 'The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing'. Proverbs 20: 4. The life of faith does not avoid work and doing what is required. The Lord Jesus said of Himself, 'I must work...' John 9: 4. Later He was able to say, 'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' John 17: 4. This does not contradict the life of faith. The life of faith involves diligence, stickability, reliability, steadfastness and so on. It is anything but lazy. The difference is that the life of faith involves a total trust and dependence on the Lord for the outcome and final results. The believer knows that acceptance with God is not based on what we do or even what we don't do. It is not based on how hard we work, or don't work. It is based upon His grace and His mercy which is ultimately expressed in the work He accomplished at the cross. Paradoxically, the life of faith may sometimes require us to actually 'stand still' and do nothing. (Consider these two references in connection with this: Exodus 14: 13 and 2 Chronicles 20: 17) The important thing is that we seek to follow the leading of the Lord in the many particulars and issues of life. Because we, like Moses must often 'endure as seeing Him who is invisible'. Hebrews 11: 27. On such occasions the priority is not that we 'get it right', but that we trust fully in the Lord. Getting the leading right and perceiving exactly how we are being led by the Spirit is not the important thing. We may get it totally wrong. The Lord is not concerned with our ability to perceive the things of the Spirit totally correctly. He is very concerned that we trust Him. He will work out the details and sort out our ability to grasp and understand. One would hope that as we progress in our walk of faith that we would learn to hear the voice of the Spirit and follow His direction with greater clarity, however, our success or ability in this regard is simply not the issue. Again, it's not of works. It does not depend on my wit and perspicacity and intelligence, or lack of it. It does depend totally upon Him. He 'upholds all things by the word of His power'. Hebrews 1: 3. This is what faith is all about. It acknowledges His sovereignty and absolute power. 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him'. Job 13: 15. He 'worketh all things after the counsel of his own will...' Ephesians 1: 11. This is the most liberating and wonderful truth. It is, in fact, what it really ultimately means to be saved. We place our absolute trust in Him. He is the Saviour. We abandon ourselves to His love, care and provision. This is the opposite of being unsaved. An unsaved person does not trust Him. He cannot trust Him because He does not accept Him as the God who loves and cares for him. Until we do, we are not saved.

Consider the words of Jesus in light of this when, after feeding the five thousand and to avoid the crowds making a demonstration over this great miracle and attempting to 'come and take him by force, to make him a king,' the Bible says that 'he departed again into a mountain himself alone'. John 6: 15. Time passed and John tells us the evening came and they decided to cross over the Lake of Galilee and look for him over in Capernaum. The story is interesting because it appears from the simple, factual way that John tells it that two rather wonderful miracles happened en route. The first was that after it had gotten dark, the wind and sea became rough and dangerous and they were making hard work of the rowing the boat. They had rowed about 'five and twenty or thirty furlongs,' and they saw 'Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and', the scripture says, 'they were afraid.' This was pretty scary, first the storm, then getting exhausted with battling the elements, and suddenly there's the Lord walking calmly on the water.

The Bible tells us that he came near to the ship and spoke to them, 'It is I; be not afraid'. So, of course they immediately and 'willingly received him into the ship'. What a lot can be said and implied in one or two words. I imagine they were very 'willing' for him to get into the ship. More than willing I imagine. Then we come to the second miracle of the evening, 'and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went'. John says this without any other comment. It's just there. One moment the boat was stuck out in a storm and they are battling hard to get somewhere, the next thing Jesus arrives and 'immediately' they are where they want to be. Just like that. In one simple act of divine power the laws of time and space were set aside and they were instantly where they wanted to be. This is not the only time this is recorded in the Bible. There are several of them. I'm not going to spend time on them here however they are all worth meditating on and being encouraged by.⁷ The point of this mention is to draw attention to what Jesus said the next day in direct reference to the miracle feeding of the five thousand. The crowds had followed him and the disciples to Capernaum and the Lord Jesus said to them,

'Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, **not** because ye saw the miracles, but **because ye did eat** of the loaves, and were filled. **Labour not** for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto **everlasting life**, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, "What shall we do, [or what sort of 'labour' is acceptable and what is this meat we should labour for?] that we might work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said unto them, "**This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.**"' John 6: 26-29 (Emphasis mine)

Notice that the Lord associates their interest in following and finding Him with having been fed, not even, surprisingly with the visible manifestation of miracle power. This most basic driving force, the fleshly need or desire to eat was what motivated them. We must be honest and assess our own motivations in light of this. How much of our aspirations and desires, our lifestyle and the way we live our life and order it from day to day is driven, even dictated by these basic human passions or needs? We take them for granted. We accept them as perfectly legitimate without any analysis or evaluation. They are unwritten laws that explain behaviour and psychologists and psychiatrists make large salaries by working in these areas and endeavoring to sort them out when they get out of hand and out of balance. Others have become famous and make their living by studying them and teaching about them and applying their discoveries to business, marketing, science and nearly every endeavor that occupies human attention. Yet, here the Lord Jesus, in whom the scripture tells us 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Colossians 2: 3) that we must not give them priority and allow them to dictate to us. 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth'. Pretty blunt. Very challenging and something we are now bound to take on board and consider in light of our own motives and inspirations. This is not an exhortation to go away and wall yourself up in cave as many misdirected monks and religious people did in the middle ages, and indeed still do today by going into monasteries and nunneries and even, on occasion Christian communities. The Christian life is not one of withdrawal; it is one of involvement and participation. It belongs in the market place. It is designed to be lived out in the full view of the entire world. Our 'light' is not meant to be put 'under a bushel', but 'on a lampstand' where it can be seen and give light to the entire world so that 'they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven'. Matthew 5: 16

So, in light of that, what is the 'work of God'? Here's the answer. This is what it means to 'work' in the life of the believer.

'This is the work of God, that ye **believe** on him whom he hath sent.' John 6: 29

The work of God is to believe. Further, the focus is also important as it is not just a mindless believing. It is to 'believe on Him whom He hath sent'. That one 'whom He hath sent', is Jesus, the Lord Jesus, he who is the Son of God, our Immanuel, God with us. That's the focus and the work of God, or literally, the work that wins God's approval. Let me

⁷ Philip, after discussing Isaiah 53 was 'caught away' and found himself at Azotus (Acts 8: 40), and Jesus after His resurrection appeared and disappeared on various occasions, to mention just a few. C.f. Luke 24: 31, Luke 4: 30, et al.

refer again to the previously mentioned passage in Hebrews 11: 1 where the writer states, 'without faith it is impossible to please Him'. We can say, quite emphatically that this work is the act of believing, which we can expand with a series of synonyms that give the clear sense of the Greek word 'pisteuo' cleaving to, trusting in, adhering to and placing the entire weight of our personality upon⁸, the Lord Jesus.

That's what the life of faith is all about. Salvation is just that –trusting Him absolutely. We 'bet our lives' upon Him because we come to realise that He is utterly trustworthy and we become aware that outside of His grace and love is just simply nothing. To be without God is to be, as the scripture so graphically states, '...without hope'. Ephesians 2: 12. But when we come into relationship with Him as our Saviour, we suddenly have hope. Hope of eternal life based on forgiveness for being self-sufficient and arrogantly independent –whether we fully realised it or not. Essentially this is what repentance is all about. We turn away from self-reliance. We turn away from independence. We turn away from self-direction or 'going our own way', the sheep nature of Isaiah 53: 6. This act of faith and trust is what the life of faith is all about. It's no wonder the result is to be full of 'joy and peace'.

'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Romans 15: 13.

Welcome to the life of faith.

About Sweat

Anything that causes sweat is symbolic of self effort/work. We are called to a life of faith and trust. This is the wonder of grace. Ephesians 2: 8-9 'For by grace are ye saved through faith... It is NOT of works lest any man should boast'. The lesson of Hebrews 4: 1-16 reinforces this. The picture is of the Sabbath rest instituted by God after He had finished His work of creation, v4. V9 applies this to justification by faith and v10 underscores the lesson, 'For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his'. V11 is a paradox: 'Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest...' The labour is faith, the rest is a rest of faith. All we are called to do is 'come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need', v16. This is the life of faith.

Faith responds to the Word. This is seen in v1 where we read the words, 'the promise', referring to the Word. Again in v2 'the gospel' and 'the word preached', are all references to the Word of God. Finally, in v7 'hearing his voice' is another clear reference. All of these references to the Word require a response from us. It is so important that we do respond and that we do so the right way. What is the right way? It is by faith. This is so crucial that the writer warns us that we are to 'fear' in case we 'come short of it'. Come short of what exactly? Answer, lest we come short, or fail in, 'entering into his rest' which is living by faith. To live by faith is to enter into the 'rest' as God did Himself when he 'rested' from His creation work. The writer is telling us that God's creation work is a metaphor for self-effort. The difference is that God is the only being who can look on what He does and pronounce it 'very good'. We simply can't. Why is that? Because all that we do is tainted by sin and pride and rebellion against God Himself. We may think we are pretty good, but we simply don't know the truth. 'All our righteousness's are as filthy rags in His sight'. Isaiah 64: 6. For that reason God, in His great mercy made a way of escape and invites us to enter into a relationship of total trust and dependence upon His great power, goodness and mercy. We are invited to enter into rest, the rest of faith. This faith is a rest. It is a resting in Him and His power and goodness and in His provision. As little children we lean the weight of our entire personality upon Him because He cares for us. How beautiful.

This is so important that we can say it is our prime concern this side of heaven, to live as Jesus said, and in His exact words, 'by every word/promise that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'. Matthew 4: 4. What are we to live by?

⁸ Robert Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible, Eighth Edition, United Society for Christian Literature, Lutterworth Press, London, 1939, page 86 and also, The Amplified Bible, Zondervan Publishing House, 1965, Grand Rapids.

Answer, by 'every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'. Again, referring back to Hebrews 11: 6, 'But without faith is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him'. There again is the link between the Word and faith. We live by faith in 'every Word', knowing that 'without faith it is impossible to please him'. Let me link Hebrews 4: 16 to our train of thought again here where the writer encourages us to 'come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain...'. The conclusion is clear enough I think. Our life is to be spent 'at the throne of grace'. We live constantly in His presence. We do this in this life by faith and until faith gives place to sight. The only thing that changes when we are with Him physically is that we will be able to physically see Him with our own eyes. He will still be providing for us totally and in every way. We will continue to dependent beings. We will still 'live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'. We will just be physically present with our physical Lord. More than that, this life we live by faith in the here and now is, in fact, Christ IN us. The living Christ is the life that is inside us. It is His life that pulses and breathes within our inner being. It is 'Christ in us the [very] hope of glory'. He lives in us by His spirit and He is breathing His resurrection life into our spirit every moment of our existence. That also does not change when we move from this physical plain of existence. He will always be 'in' us our 'hope of glory'.

'To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory...' Colossians 1: 27

This is one of the great Pauline mysteries revealed to him by special revelation directly from the Lord and in particular the mystery of the church which is His body.⁹ See verse 24. In Colossians 3: 1-3 Paul develops this revelation,

'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.'

The question is, are you dead? If so, are you grasping the reality that you are NOW, this minute living the resurrection life in your inner man and by the momentary power of the indwelling spirit of Christ? Have you grasped that your life is actually 'hid with Christ in God'? Paul is telling us that this is the wonderful and exciting reality for the believer. To live by faith is to live the Christ life at the throne of God and to be momentarily seeking 'those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God'. How could words be more explicit? We are not hear, we are there. The old adage used to keep the feet of the fanciful on the ground and rooted in common sense and earthly reality with which I am sure the reader is familiar runs something like this, 'Don't be so heavenly minded that you are of no earthly use'. Sadly, it is in fact back to front. It should read, 'BE so heavenly minded that you will and can be of GREAT earthly use!' Use to who? Answer, of use to the Lord and to His purposes. What are His purposes for us this side of heaven -to be useful and fruitful in winning men and women to Christ (1 Corinthians 9: 22) and doing 'good unto all men especially the household of faith' Galatians 6: 10. In summary we can say that we are to 'hold forth the Word of life', Philippians 2: 16. Doing this will mean that we are living faithfully for Him 'as becomes the gospel', Philippians 1: 27.

'Only let your conversation [way of life] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.' Philippians 1: 27

It is salutary to be aware that this does not necessarily mean a life of triumph, happiness and ease. Hebrews 11 contains 40 verses and includes not only those who 'subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again:' vs. 29-

⁹ For more on the Pauline mysteries see, The Mystery of the Gospel available from www.jbc.gen.nz/important/articles/mysteryofthegospel.pdf

35. The last phrase in that passage at the end of verse 35 adds, 'and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Hebrews 11: 35-40

The lesson is clear

We are called to a life of faith that trusts God regardless of circumstances, good or bad. We endure like Moses of whom the record states in verse 27 of Hebrews 11, 'he endured, as seeing him who is invisible'. Again, we endure like Sara who the scripture says in the eleventh verse, 'judged him faithful that promised'. The truth is it is likely we will 'die in faith' not having received even much of a foretaste of those great promises of triumph and victory, but 'having seen them afar off' and are nevertheless 'persuaded of them', and embrace them, and confess, as they did, that we are 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth.' v13. We do this because 'we desire' that 'better country, that is [the] heavenly one'. v16.

Our great goal is to obtain, 'a good report through faith, [and]...be made perfect' v39-40, not live a life of wealth, success, popularity or any other bauble associated with this life. God may provide those earthly measures of apparent success, but we need to realise that they are 'slippery places', Psalm 73: 18.

Consider Peter's words,

'...live for the rest of the time in the flesh [in this life] no longer for human passions [aims, desires, ambitions etc] but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, [ways of living and aspirations that are similar to the Gentiles/unbelievers, etc]' 1 Peter 4: 2-3

Peter is saying; don't live the rest of your life in a 'this life only' way of thinking, philosophy or mind set. Live with a heavenly perspective. Live with a perspective that practices seeing things from the throne, 'where Christ sits' because that's where we really are. This life passes with breathtaking speed. What occupies our thinking and efforts this side of heaven is so very fleeting. Consider Psalm 39: 4,

"O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!"

Live this life 'by the faith of the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you', Galatians 2: 20. Follow Enoch's example, 'Enoch walked with God' and one day he 'was not for God took him'. Genesis 5: 24. If I read Colossians 3: 4 correctly that is how it will be for the church which is His body.

'When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will **appear** with him in glory.'

So, make certain that 'Christ is your life'. In Peter's words,

'...therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:' 2 Peter 1: 10

Live every moment of every day 'by the faith of the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you'.