

# FACETS OF FAITH

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*Hebrew 11:6 Without faith it is impossible to please God*

Do you think you know what faith is? What is faith? Define it. There are lots of ideas to choose from.

*Luke 17:5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Show us how to increase our faith."*

*<sup>6</sup>The Lord answered, "If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'May you be uprooted and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you!"*

The amount or size of your faith is inconsequential, because it is not your faith that does the work; it is God who does the work. Your faith is the connector that links your life to the power of God.

This is a standard North American electric plug. It cannot do anything for you. It has no power in itself. It is just a connector.

And if you've traveled overseas, you know other countries use other styles of electric plugs. Even if you have a perfectly good North American plug, it will do you no good in Europe.

Your faith is the connector that links your life to the power of God. We toss the word "faith" around pretty freely, yet, definitions will vary, and usage will vary, and applications will vary.

As a matter of fact, in a brief search of the Bible, I was able to identify 29 kinds of faith. The Bible mentions at least 29 kinds of faith. Do you see how confusing this can become?

If I ask you to bring me a soda, you will ask, "What kind?" You will ask that because there are so many kinds available. In many parts of the world, you'll be fortunate to find fresh apples in the produce market. But here, at Safeway, you can select from at least seven different varieties!

I was able to identify 20 kinds of faith, just in the life of Abraham, from Genesis 12 through 24, each kind applying to a different life issue or circumstance. I won't discuss each one, but let me read the list to you:

- Blind faith - Gen 12:4
- Worshipping faith - Gen 12:7
- Faltering faith - Gen 12:13 and Gen 20
- Conciliatory (yielding) faith - Gen 13:9

- Warring faith - Gen 14:15
- Grateful faith - Gen 14:20b
- Integrious faith - Gen 14:22-23
- Saving faith - Gen 15:6
- Overcoming faith - Gen 15:11
- Human faith - Gen 16:2
- Skeptical faith - Gen 17:17
- Sacrificial faith - Gen 17:23
- Obedient faith - Gen 17:3
- Interceding faith - Gen 18:23-33
- Rejoicing faith - Gen 21:2; Php 1:25
- Submissive faith - Gen 21:14
- Enduring faith - Gen 21:34
- Tested faith - Gen 22; Jas 1:3
- Resting faith - Gen 22:19
- Strategic faith - Gen 24

Today, I'd like to speak of four of these facets of faith. Not one, but four kinds of faith that each of us needs in our life.

The first of these is, of course,

### **Saving Faith**

The salvation I'm thinking of is the salvation of a human soul. Your rescue from sin, from your estrangement from God, and from eternal condemnation.

Saving faith is the kind of faith that introduces us to our Savior and reconnects us with our Creator.

We need this kind of faith because there is no other way to be saved (by God's own design). We may wish there was another way, we may propose another way, but the Bible teaches that there is only one way in all the world to be saved—no matter where you come from, or what you've done (or failed to do), or what your tradition has been, whether religious or irreligious.

Saving faith counteracts our every effort to please God or earn His favor by what we do or avoid doing.

Instead, saving faith answers to God's initiative to show us mercy and grace through Jesus Christ. The Bible says, *"God's promise... was based not on... obedience to God's law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. The promise is received by faith."* (Romans 4:13-16)

That promise was given through the person of Jesus Christ. And that's why Apostle Peter declared, *"Only in [Jesus Christ] is there salvation; for of all the names in the world given to [human-kind], this is the only one by which we can be saved."* (Acts 4:12)

This proclamation was driven home repeatedly:

*Acts 16:31* They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household."

*Romans 3:22* We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

*Galatians 2:16* Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law.

*Galatians 3:26* For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Saving faith is not a deeply intellectual faith. One doesn't require a degree in Bible knowledge or theology. Saving faith is so accessible that even a young child can exercise it. In Western culture, where Christian teaching and fellowship have been so readily available, many full-time vocational ministers received a definite call to lifelong service to God between the ages of 8 and 12.

Saving faith is childlike. The psalmist wrote: *"The Lord protects those of childlike faith; I was facing death, and He saved me."*

Jesus Himself said, *"The Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it."* (Luke 18:16-17)

It's common to have many questions arise as you approach the saving message of Jesus Christ. But it is not necessary to have *all* of your questions resolved *before* you begin your relationship with the Savior. Leave some of the mystery for the honeymoon!

Instead, like a child, simply accept God's graciousness and receive His love. Say, "Yes!" to His promise, and receive forgiveness. Say, "Yes!" to His power and receive everlasting life.

Be saved today! (Will you? Simply put your life into Jesus' hands with a prayer that declares your sorrow for messing up, your new confidence in His saving intervention through His death, and your gratitude for forgiveness and newness of life.)

Over the years, I have met some people who spoke as though saving faith was the only kind of faith there is, the only kind that mattered. As I've already said, there are many other kinds of faith, and each of them has its place.

If you have never surrendered your heart and life to Jesus Christ (no matter how religious you may have been), then saving faith is what you need, because without saving faith, most of the other kinds of faith are either impotent or inaccessible.

I mean, anyone can have "useless faith," but who would choose it? And anyone can have "counterfeit faith," but it's all show and accomplishes nothing. And anyone can exercise "blind faith," but it won't take you far.

So saving faith is definitely the place to begin. But it's NOT the place to stop! That would be like buying a ticket, but never boarding the plane. Or, calling for an Uber vehicle, but never getting in.

Saving faith is the place to begin, but it's just the beginning.

Because life is messy, and frustrating, and difficult, and uncertain, and fragile—you need more than saving faith. You also need

## **Overcoming Faith**

When facing the storms of life, you need a faith that is determined to stay the course. You can't give up. You've got to keep on keeping on. You need to press through until you taste victory.

Jesus and His disciples were on their way to an appointment with a leader of a synagogue, whose daughter had just died. In desperation, this grieving father had reached out to Jesus for a miracle—to raise his daughter to life again.

As they were hurrying to the rabbi's home, a woman who had a constant flow of blood for 12 years came up behind Jesus. She shouldn't have been there. Her condition rendered her ceremonially unclean, and threatened to defile everyone she came in contact with. She was supposed to avoid crowds.

But she ignored the traditions. She was desperate. As she saw Jesus walking by, she saw her one opportunity for wholeness slipping past her. She couldn't let that happen. She was desperate.

She gathered her garment tightly around herself and pressed through the heavy crowd until she was within reach of Jesus, for she had been thinking to herself, "If I can just touch His robe, I will be healed."

Had she touched any other faith leader, she would only have made him unclean also, but when she touched Jesus...

Jesus stopped. The crowd was confused. The desperate rabbi groaned at the delay. Jesus turned around to look at the desperate woman, and said, "*Daughter, be encouraged. Your faith has made you well.*" At that very moment, as He spoke those words, her bleeding stopped and she was completely healed.

Overcoming faith faces down the opposition, which sometimes is inside of us and sometimes outside of us. Overcoming faith presses through resistance, presses past obstacles. Overcoming faith persists until victory is achieved.

Sometimes our own faith is too weak to persist. We need help. We need the faith of others. We don't need their saving faith, but we need their overcoming faith.

One time, while Jesus was preaching in a house in Capernaum four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above His head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus.

Seeing *their* faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!" And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!"

Whose faith did Jesus recognize? The four friends. Because they showed determined overcoming faith.

Persistent determination to take hold of a promise from God is a key characteristic of overcoming faith. It refuses to be denied.

Even the saving faith with which we began our journey with Christ is subject to malnourishment, decline, and loss. However, Jesus taught clearly that only "*the one who endures to the end will be saved*" (Matthew 24:13).

Overcoming faith is necessary to keep saving faith alive and fruitful!

Overcoming faith casts out all doubting thoughts and imaginations. Doubting thoughts will come. In order to overcome, such doubts cannot be ignored; they must be cast out. They must be replaced with believing thoughts.

Jesus taught: *“I tell you the truth, if you have faith and don’t doubt, you can do things like [I have done] and much more. You can even say to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it.”* (Matthew 21:21-22)

Too many people yield to doubts, instead of yielding to God, and, instead of resisting their doubts, they resist God’s will. Overcoming faith is about spiritual warfare.

It’s not enough to own a shield of faith; you must *lift up* the shield of faith in order to stop and quench the fiery arrows of the devil (Ephesians 6:16). This is how we fight our battles.

What slings and arrows have you been wounded by? When the enemy assaults, you need to lift your shield and declare your faith. And if the arrows are flying furiously, you may have to lift the shield higher and shout for victory!

“I believe in Jesus, and I will not doubt.”

“In Jesus’ name, I am more than a conqueror!”

“Jesus Christ is my Healer, and I am made whole by His power!”

“I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength!”

“Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world.”

Of course, in most wars, every battle does not end in victory. Some strategies of war require multiple offensives to accomplish their endgame. So, in addition to overcoming faith, we also need

## **Enduring Faith**

You have been saved for the long haul. So, set your mind on things above (heavenly things), not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:2), because that’s where your citizenship lies, and that’s where you’re going.

If you just try to get the most out of life in this world, you’ll be frustrated and confused, because you’ll be working *against* God, who is preparing you for life in heaven. That’s why Jesus said, *“If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it”* (Matthew 10:39).

In order to live life that way, we need enduring faith.

Life is full of challenges—some we may reasonably expect, and some we will never have imagined. God asked the prophet, *“If racing against mere men makes you tired, how will you race against horses? If you stumble and fall on open ground, what will you do in the thickets near the Jordan?”* (Jeremiah 12:5). In other words, if your faith falters in the face of what is normal, how will you survive what is really difficult?

We all need a faith that endures; a faith that won't give up, a faith that keeps on pressing forward—at a crawl, if not at a run.

God told the prophet, *“Unless your faith is firm, I cannot make you stand firm.”* (Isaiah 7:9) God will always work with you, to amplify what you can offer, but He will not work against you, and He cannot multiply what you will not put in His hands.

Enduring faith holds on and won't let go, whether slogging through the mud, or stuck, temporarily, in one place. Jesus said,

*John 15:18 “If the world hates you, remember that it hated Me first. <sup>19</sup> The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. <sup>20</sup> Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted Me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to Me, they would listen to you. <sup>21</sup> They will do all this to you because of Me, for they have rejected the One who sent Me.*

*<sup>26</sup> “But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about Me. <sup>27</sup> And you must also testify about Me because you have been with Me from the beginning of My ministry.*

*John 16:1 “I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith.*

That last sentence is an appeal to hold fast to your saving faith; do not cast it aside. But the challenge of being hated by the world simply because you follow Jesus Christ implies the need for enduring faith. Enduring faith is necessary to sustain saving faith.

Paul and Barnabus encouraged the Gentile believers to *continue* in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). This is enduring faith.

Enduring faith sometimes looks like comeback faith. (Simon) Peter's impetuosity, mixed with faith, made him the only disciple to actually walk on water. But, mixed with fear, it turned to panic, and he denied knowing Jesus three times in as many hours.

*Luke 22:31 “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.”*

Peter was not cast away for his failure. He needed only to repent and return to his saving faith in Jesus. It is the “underground river” of enduring faith, seeming to disappear for a time, only to re-surface through repentance, which revives saving faith once again.

*Hebrews 10:36 Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that He has promised.*

And so goes the life of faith—sometimes battling to victory (which is glory for us), and sometimes enduring hardship like a good soldier for Christ (which is glory for Him).

Yet, there is one more kind of faith which we must engage in order to fulfill God's call upon our lives. It is

## **Resting Faith**

Thank God, all of life is not warfare. There are sunsets and beaches and delicious foods and good friends. There are periods of rest. Jesus is our Sabbath.

For those who have trusted Christ to save them, have also ceased to trust in their own works. They don't perform in order to be approved, but they serve willingly because they have already been approved in Christ. For us, service is not a struggle, but a privilege. And even when we work hard, we are at rest.

*The highly valued slave of a Roman officer was sick and near death. When the officer heard about Jesus, he sent some respected Jewish elders to ask Him to come and heal his slave.*

*The elders earnestly begged Jesus to help the man, describing how deserving he was. "If anyone deserves your help, he does," they said.*

*So Jesus went with them. But just before they arrived at the house, the officer sent some friends to say, "Lord, don't trouble yourself by coming to my home, for I am not worthy of such an honor. I am not even worthy to come and meet you myself. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, 'Go,' and they go, or 'Come,' and they come. And if I say to my slaves, 'Do this,' they do it."*

*When Jesus heard this, He was amazed. Turning to the crowd that was following Him, He said, "I tell you, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel!"*

*And when the officer's friends returned to his house, they found the slave completely healed. (Luke 7:2-10)*

Resting faith understands God-given authority. When authority is in play, those who understand the nature of it and who know their place in response to it, are at rest. They don't need to make a big scene, when just a word will do. They don't need to be told over and over. They don't require appeals and incentives. They hear and obey. Their faith is at rest.



After His resurrection, Jesus told His disciples, *“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”* (Matthew 28:18-19). His command was based on His authority. Therefore, we *can* do what He asked. He authorized us. People may disagree with us, they may differ with us, they may oppose us, but we have been authorized to tell the story of Jesus love and bring people to saving faith. We can do this. *You can do this!*

What is the worst that can happen to us? Whatever you think that is, know this: *nothing* can happen to us if it has not been permitted by God in Heaven. All authority is His. He will keep us here as long as He wants. And He will take us home as soon as our work here is done. And not a moment sooner.

Job, who suffered miserably, still rested in his faith that God would vindicate and deliver him. He cried out,

*Job 19:25 “But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last.  
26 And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! 27 I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!”*

Resting faith is necessary to safeguard saving faith. If you will not rest in the Lord, your saving faith will be crushed. But if you learn to rest in God’s providential grace, you cannot be crushed.

- Saving faith
- Overcoming faith
- Enduring faith
- Resting faith

All are necessary. All are vital. I encourage you to pick up or download the printed notes and consider for yourself some of the many other kinds of faith that the Bible describes.

Every facet reflects another beauty and glory of the Lord! And every facet sheds light upon your heart and circumstances, to keep your saving faith alive and fruitful to the very end.