

# Do We Need to Revisit the Word of Faith Message in This Hour?

Faith is required to receive any benefit in this life. Hope is necessary to receive benefits in the life to come; yet when it comes to distinguishing the difference between faith and hope, few understand it.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Often people interchange the word “faith” for “hope,” but they are not the same. How could they be since faith is the substance of things hoped for? The New English Bible says: “Faith gives substance to the things we hope for.” You may hope for something—the baptism in the Spirit, health, prosperity—but faith gives substance to it, which means, faith makes what you hope for come true. You may hope against hope, but until you *believe* then you will not receive.

Remember Abraham, “Against all hope, he believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be’” (Rom. 4:18). Abraham did not see the promise of God fulfilled simply because he *hoped against all hope*. The Bible says that *Abraham in hope believed*. He did not simply *hope*, he *believed*. Belief is the verb form of the noun faith. He had to have faith as well as hope.

You can hope and hope, but until you have faith, your hopes will not come to pass.

Here is another clear passage that shows that faith and hope are not the same. “So now abide faith, hope, and love, these three. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). He numbered these virtues, *three*. Not two, but three. By calling

them three that would mean faith and hope could not be the same virtue.

One distinct difference is that faith and hope operate in different time zones. Hope is in the future, faith is in the present. "For we are saved through hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for why does a man still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Rom. 8:24-25). Hope does not have anything now, but waits in the future for it.

Contrast that with faith: "Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for" (Heb. 11:1, AMP). You get a *title deed* for the thing you currently own. For example, you purchase a car from a dealer and place a down payment. You are not given the title until it is completely paid for. You may claim it is your car, but it really is not yours until it is paid off, and then the bank sends you a title deed. At that time you own it. The title deed is proof it is yours.

Faith can only trust God for the things that can be obtained in this life. Faith is the ingredient to receive the things promised in this age—salvation, the Holy Spirit, good health, peace and many other present blessings.

Hope waits for the things God has promised will come later, such as the rapture. Paul writes: "... as we await the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13, MEV). Jesus will come back at the end of this age, so we cannot "exercise our faith" to bring Him back. Whether we believe He is coming is irrelevant. He is coming back! His return is called the *blessed hope*. Not the blessed faith, but hope. Hope looks for the future glory that will be revealed; faith claims the present glory that is available in this life.

**Jesus Teaching on Faith**

Look carefully at our wonderful Lord's teaching on the present tense of faith: "Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God'" (Mark 11:22, 24).

The impact of this promise should grip any sincere believer. The riches in this passage are absolutely enormous. The simplicity and subtlety are both transparent.

The promise is simple: You simply need to ask and believe.

The subtlety is tricky: You mustn't simply believe that God will give you the answer, but you must believe He has *already* given you the answer—before you can see any evidence of it.

It is the subtlety of this passage that many glance over. They hope and pray! Unfortunately they confuse faith with hope. They think because they have some expectation that God will someday give them the answer that they really believe. They are not believing, but hoping. Jesus said, "Have faith in God." He is not talking about hope, but faith.

Faith believes *you have received it, and it will be yours.*

### **Three facts**

There are three obvious facts about the present tense of faith:

**1. Faith believes before it receives.** Many want to believe when they see, but faith works in reverse. You must believe if you want to see.

There is a story in the Old Testament that shows this truth. Israel had experienced severe famine. The bread lines were long, and the bread was scarce—and expensive. The word of the Lord came to Elisha and gave him a promise that bread would be real cheap. An officer of the king said, "Look, even if the LORD should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?"

The man of God had replied, "You will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat any of it!" "So it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate, and he died" (2 Kin. 7:20). The officer did not get to enjoy the blessings of God because he did not believe. Many have this kind of faith: *I'll believe it when I see it*. That may work fine in the world, but it does not work well with God. God wants us to believe before we see.

Thomas once had this kind of attitude: "Unless I see the nail prints in His hands, and put my finger in the nail prints, and put my hand in His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). We don't call him "Doubting Thomas" for nothing. Yet, many doubt like he did. They want to *feel* and see before they believe.

Later Jesus appeared before Thomas. He grabbed his hand and forced him to touch his side, "Stop doubting and believe." I could see Thomas trying to pull his hand away, but the Lord made him confront his doubts. Finally he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!"

Don't be forced to believe by having to see. Be willing to believe before you see.

For example, many Christians doubt their salvation because they do not "feel" the same as they once did. Unfortunately they are going by their feelings, not their faith. As long as their feelings become supreme, they are likely to backslide and worse, go too far and become an apostate.

The same mistake is made when it comes to the baptism in the Holy Spirit; people want God to make them feel something before they believe in it. Some have said, "Well, if speaking in tongues is of God, then God knows where I live, and He can give it to me anytime He wants. I'm open."

The truth is they are not open. For them to receive they must believe in speaking in tongues before they can speak. Some try to test God, "Okay, Lord, I really am not sure about all this,

but I will pray and ask you to give it to me if it is real.” Then when nothing happens, they assume tongues is not real or not for them.

They are waiting for some sign or feeling that it is real. However, it *is* legitimate because Jesus promised the Spirit. The Spirit has come and will fill anyone who wants all of the Spirit. You must believe first, then you will receive.

**2. Faith receives at the instant it believes.** F.B. Meyer translates Mark 11:24: *“What things so ever you desire, when you pray, believe that you have taken it.”* When is the answer yours, before or after you have seen the answer? You must believe it is yours at the moment you have believed. Believing makes you a receiver.

Joshua was given the reign of leadership after Moses’ death. He had his first test as the newly appointed head. How was he going to conquer the biggest city in the promise land?

As he contemplated this massive undertaking an angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him, “See, I have given Jericho, its king, and mighty men of valor into your hand” (Josh. 6:2, MEV). Jericho was still standing when the angel made this statement. The angel was speaking in the present tense even though the walls were still surrounding Jericho.

Joshua had to believe that Jericho was theirs before he could see it falling. The same must be true of successful pastors. They must believe their church is growing even if they do not see their numbers growing. Just because nothing is happening now does not mean God is not working.

I have learned to believe for success regardless of what I am currently seeing. What I see is subject to change, but God’s Word will never change. He has declared that the church of Jesus Christ is like a mustard seed and it grows to become the largest garden plant. True leaders take up Joshua’s view point: they believe the city they reside in is theirs even if

few show up to church.

My declaration of faith is: "Almost the whole city is gathering to hear the word of the Lord" (see Acts 13:44).

I believe it. It is God's Word. I may not see it right now, but I will see it, because I believe. It seems quite impossible to believe that a city can be won to the Lord, but it can. It was impossible for walls to tumble down solely by the power of God, but it happened to Jericho.

It occurred when the people gave a loud shout. They shouted, "Shout the battle cry, for the Lord has given you the city!" (Josh. 6:16). As they shouted, the walls fell. They did not wait for the walls to fall, and then shout victory. Victory must be received at the instant you believe.

Another story vividly illustrates this second principle. Jesus was in a synagogue teaching the Word, when a woman caught His eye. Her back was deformed. She was known in the whole city as a "cripple" but not to Jesus. He saw something else. He did not see a cripple but a daughter of Abraham.

"Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity," Jesus boldly declared (Luke 13:12). Notice carefully His exact words: He saw her free before anyone else did. She did not look free! Jesus did not promise her freedom in some indefinite future time, but said that she was free now! Afterward "He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight and glorified God" (v. 13).

Many lay hands on the sick, hoping that God will heal them in His perfect timing, but few understand the Jesus-principle of laying hands on the sick. He saw everyone healed before it was manifested.

I had done a study on the ministry of healing from the life of Christ, and I noticed that Jesus never asked anyone to declare their infirmities or their problems. He did not ask a sick

person, "So, what's wrong with you?" Yet, that is the common question that ministers ask before prayer.

Instead Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" That is a far different question than asking them, "What is wrong with you?" Jesus wanted them to believe *not* in what they could see, but what God had said was reality. He did not see cripples or blind people. He saw them whole. To a man who was paralyzed He told him, "Pick up your mat and go home." He believed in the man's health, even if it looked like he was sick.

To a woman who looked like a prostitute, he said, "Your sins are forgiven." She had not changed her seductive clothes to more modest ones. She looked the same to everyone, but not to Christ. He declared her forgiven, even if one could not see the immediate change.

He smiled, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (Luke 7:50). Did others applaud? No, they did just the opposite. Some questioned Jesus' discernment; others thought He had blasphemed God to make such a bold pronouncement.

Today people do the same. A very wicked person can come forward in church and pray for forgiveness. And what should the minister say? The same that Christ said, "Your sins are forgiven." Others criticize the minister for promising salvation without proof. What evidence do we have that they are forgiven? They have not yet proven their repentance with good deeds, but we accept their forgiveness at the instant of the sinner's faith. We do not need evidence. We take it by faith. Faith receives at the instant it believes.

**3. Faith must act as though the answer is given.** Suppose you prayed for \$500 and while you were praying someone handed you the money, what would your response be? That is how you should act the moment you have believed God.

If you believe that you have taken the answer when you pray,

then you will stop worrying over the situation. You will be joyful and happy. There will be a note of praise in your speech. However, if you are still fearful, unhappy, and critical of your circumstances, then you are not acting as though the answer is given.

*Pastor*, if you believe your church is growing, then you will build!

*Bible school student*, if you believe God has filled you with the Spirit, then you will witness.

*Wife*, if you believe that God has changed your husband, then you will treat him with respect and kindness.

*Child of God*, if you believe God has forgiven you, then you will serve worthily in your church.

If you believe God has set you free from the fear of flying, then you will board the airplane.

There is no point to pretend that we believe when we refuse to act as though the answer is given.

### **Ask and keep on asking?**

Consider also how you should pray if you believed you had received the answer. Should you continue petitioning God for the same thing or should you change the way you pray? Some people think you should continue asking God over and over again. However, Jesus warned against this type of attitude: "But when you pray, do not use vain repetitions, as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their much speaking. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matt. 6:7-8).

Others have ignored this warning based on a faulty understanding of certain statements and parables that Christ gave. Example: "(A)sk, and it will be given you" (Luke 11:9). The Amplified Bible reads, "Ask *and* keep on asking." The

assumption is to keep asking for the same thing over and over again. On top of these statements Jesus gave a couple of parables to illustrate the need to persevere:

He told about the unjust judge who finally gave in to the widow because she pestered him to death. And then He told about a man coming to his friend at midnight asking for bread, and because he kept disturbing him the friend finally got out of bed and gave him what he wanted.

Because of these two parables, some have assumed that we should keep asking God for the same thing over and over again. These statements and parables are not meant to teach that we should ask for the same thing over and over again, but rather that we should always keep praying.

“He told them a parable to illustrate that it is necessary always to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). “Prayer” is the subject, not “petitioning.” People assume that prayer is only “petition.” There is so much more to prayer than that. The Apostle Paul mentioned: “Pray in the Spirit always with all kinds of prayer and supplication” (Eph. 6:18). There are different kinds of prayers. Some are petitions, others intercessions, still others thanksgiving. Jesus is teaching about the need to keep on praying, not to keep on “petitioning” God for the same thing.

The Bible tells us how to petition God: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

There are different ways to pray other than asking. According to this passage, we should present our request *with* thanksgiving. We thank God for what He has given us. In other words, while we pray and ask God for something we should believe that we receive it, so it is natural to thank God for it in advance.

Suppose someone promised me a dinner at the end of the week.

Would I say to him, "Well, when I eat the meal I will thank you for it?"

No! I would immediately thank him for the meal, even though I had not eaten any of it. What if at the end of the first day I call him on the phone and say, "Now, brother, you remember the meal you promised? Are you still taking me out to eat?" He would consider that a strange call. Later, at four in the morning I wake him up, "Brother, I woke up early thinking about the meal you promised. Is it still on?" For sure, he would think I was crazy.

Unfortunately, that is how many approach petitions. They keep asking God for the same thing over and over again. However, instead of asking God again and again, and sounding doubtful, why not thank God for the answer? Rejoice in the Lord! Tell the Lord how grateful you are that He has answered your prayer. Take the full armor of God and cut the devil inside and out. Release your angels to work for you. Stand on God's Word!

*Note: Excerpted from **Tom Brown's** newest book, How to Receive From God. Tom Brown is the founder and pastor of Word of Life Church in El Paso, Texas.*