

# Faith of the Heart

Jesus spoke to His disciples and many other listeners in His Sermon on the Mount. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21). Living faith is a gift from God. Only God can give this gift, and we can only receive it by seeking God’s kingdom and, through one of His children accepting the proclaimed gospel, believing our sins forgiven.

## **Hold Fast to Faith**

Holding on to our faith is the most important thing we need to do to get to heaven. Faith of the heart and trust in God has many temporal blessings as well. God blesses our lives in so many ways that we may not even realize. We strive to be obedient to God’s Word and hear the voice of the Holy Spirit in the congregation, even though at times it can feel like our head is barely above the water. Later, when we look back from where we have come, we see how God’s guiding hand has led us and blessed us.

Personal faith of the heart is permanently tied together with the Holy Spirit. Luther writes: “The Holy Spirit teaches faith to eat of the bread of life so our souls would not die of hunger or thirst.” Jesus said to His disciples and followers, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:54). Jesus’ words are comforting and refreshing to the child of God, but to the ungodly they are painful and hard to hear. Thus, many of Jesus’ disciples left Him and never returned to God’s kingdom, but when Jesus asked the twelve disciples if they will also go away, Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

## **Faith Cannot Be Forced**

What does faith of the heart mean to you? Have you been forced to be a child of God? Jesus instructed His disciples to go and preach the gospel to all nations. Those who believe will be saved; those who do not believe will be condemned. Jesus says simply, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matt. 7:7). His instructions are so clear. God’s Word also teaches, “The just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4).

Personal faith is the only way each one of us will make it to heaven. Not the faith of Noah, Abraham, Peter, or Mary will get us to heaven. Each one of us individually can only make the journey to heaven by believing our own sins forgiven. Throughout history many people have given up faith, and the underlying reason is always unforgiven sin. If we put all our sins under the blood of Christ, we have no sin; and, thus, the faith of our heart is acceptable to God and our name is recorded in the Book of Life.

## **Faith Is God’s Work**

How does a person receive this faith of the heart? Every person born into this world receives this very special gift from God. It doesn’t matter what our race, color, or nationality is, or if we are male or female. God does not discriminate or show favoritism. He is a God of love and wishes that all people would remain as His children until they are called from this life to eternity. Sadly, most people of this world reject this treasure.

The problem is that an evil beast called Satan or the devil wants to take away this gift from our hearts so that we would live after our sinful flesh and not after God’s Spirit. He does this by placing obstacles or temptations before us to try make us fall into sin. When he is successful, he wants us to cover up the sin and act like it never happened. If we listen and obey the devil, we will eventually lose our heart’s faith. “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin,

when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15).

So, it is sin that causes unbelief. Unbelief is the opposite of faith. Unbelief is also the same as spiritual death. Apostle Paul writes about the destructive powers of sin, but also the way in which we can escape from under the bonds of sin. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

Jesus continues to call lost sheep into His fold. He has not left us without hope; rather, He came into this world and allowed himself to be the perfect sacrifice. He rose on the third day, victorious over sin, death, and Satan. This is the good and perfect work of God, done on our behalf.

### **Faith Is Easily Injured**

How is it possible to keep faith of the heart when we are so sinful? “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Grace is the free, unmerited favor of God that He serves us with daily when we live of the gospel and put our complete trust in Him to heal our wounds by the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

Do not be afraid or ashamed to even use the grace-privilege to confess your sins and ask to have your sins forgiven. The gospel “is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). We often feel our poorness and can doubt—am I even a believer? But then when we attend the services of God’s Word, have fellowship with believers and visit about the way and the journey, hear and believe the good message of salvation, our weak faith is again strengthened. “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed” (James 5:16).

### **God Strengthens Faith**

We find ourselves to be just like the apostles when they cried out to Jesus, “Lord, Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). Our faith does not register as a big amount no matter how we measure it. Jesus said to His disciples, “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you” (Luke 17:6). It is comforting to know that even a little faith is all that is required to make it to heaven. We will never make it to heaven with our own knowledge, strength, or abilities. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil” (Prov. 3:5–7).

It is an amazing phenomenon to believe and trust in the living God. Faith is not comprehended with knowledge or ability, but through faith we believe that God created all people, Jesus is our Savior, and the Holy Spirit is our sanctifier. When one believes upon these three, the Triune God, faith is born and lives in the heart of man. To many, it is foolishness, but to the believer it is eternal salvation through Christ. Jesus calls each one of us when He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). After a good night’s rest we have new strength in the morning. So it is with faith. Each time we rest on the saving gospel, through faith we are given new strength to travel another day on our journey to heaven.

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### **Questions to Discuss:**

1. In John 6, Jesus explains what the true bread from heaven is. What is that true bread that a believer enjoys each day?
2. Have you ever wished that you could make someone else repent and believe? What does God’s Word speak of this?

3. What are some of the obstacles that can take away faith and the hope of heaven?
4. We all know that sin is close to each of us. Discuss how we can overcome the temptation when it is right in front of us.
5. In what ways have you had to put your complete trust in the Lord and not in your own understanding? Share examples.