

Faith, Hope, and Truth

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Faith, Hope, and Truth

Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ. And after that he came, men also were saved by faith in his name; and by faith, they become the sons of God.

Moroni 7:24-25

Whether we believe in God or not, many people struggle with faith, even devout Christians can experience moments of doubt or periods of questioning. Regardless, there are some individuals who write off faith as foolishness, while others might ask why they must have faith in order to know that God is real or why it is that He cannot simply appear to everyone and let the world know that He is true and that He exists. Ultimately, many of us struggle with the concept of faith and are left to ponder what exactly faith is and how we go about obtaining it.

The 1828 Webster's Dictionary defines the word faith, as a belief or "the assent of mind to the truth of what is declared by another, resting on his authority and veracity, without other evidence; the judgment that what another states or testifies is the truth. [For an example] I have strong faith or no faith in the testimony of a witness, or in what a historian narrates." It is important for the reader to notice how faith is not defined as the belief in the existence of something, but rather that it is defined as the acceptance of whether it is true or not true. For example, if we were to state that we have faith in our earthly father, what exactly are we saying? Are we saying that we believe that our father exists, or rather, that we have trust in him?

Does the reader know that we exercise faith every day? For example, how do we know that the stories which we have read in history textbooks are true or not? Were any of us there to witness the landing at Jamestown in 1607, the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, or the Gettysburg address in 1863? Of course not, then how do we know that these events unfolded as told in history? The reader may say, "Well, we have evidences of those events through primary sources and archeology," in which case the reader would be correct.

Nonetheless, we would ask the reader if they were there for the creation of these primary sources, or even when these primary sources were discovered? Have they seen the evidence with their own eyes, or touched them with their own hands? If the reader has done this, how does the reader know that these sources are what they claim to be? If we bury down deep enough, we realize that we exercise faith in many things. How do we know that the sun will rise again tomorrow? The truth is that we do not know if the sun will rise again, but we have faith that it will because of the evidences which we have witnessed.

These are extreme examples, but that does not diminish their truth. We can say that we know that the sun will rise again tomorrow because it has every day of our lives, but this does not necessarily mean that this will always be true. Even if the reader does not believe, or rather trust, in the Holy Scriptures, perhaps we can agree on the Scriptures' definition of truth. The Scriptures define truth as the "knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come."¹ However, we again ask the reader how could we know what things were true in the past and will be true in the future, if we are not there to experience it to a surety? The simple answer is that we cannot.

For an illustration, the author believes that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, but if he were not there in the beginning, how can he know that this is true? [For more on the creation read **Chapter Fifteen**]. Once again, the simple answer is that he cannot, and that is where faith enters in. All of mankind, from those who believe in God to those who do not, exercise some level of faith every day. The difference between the two is that those who believe in God exercise their faith, trust, and belief in God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Scriptures, by striving to keep the commandments of God. It is important to understand that faith is not the perfect knowledge of a thing, but instead that faith can grow into a perfect knowledge.

Faith Guides to Perfect Knowledge

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews defines faith as "the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."² As discussed above, faith is not the truth or perfect knowledge of something, but is the trust or assurance of things that are not seen, such as God as the Creator of heaven and earth, but are true. For another example of such a kind of faith, even though millions of people have never visited Antarctica, we presume that most people still trust in fact that it is there, and this we do because of the evidences of its existence. Similarly, we believe in God because of the many evidences, or in other words the many testimonies, that we have seen, heard, or experienced ourselves. In Genesis, chapter six, we read that all things bear witness of God. Please read the following Scriptures from Genesis 6:66 and Romans 1:20:

6:66 And, behold, ***all things have their likeness***; and all things are created and made to bear record of me; both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath, ***all things bear record of me***.

1:20 For God hath revealed unto them the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, ***which are clearly seen***; things which are not seen being ***understood by the things that are made***, through his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse;

In other words, those things which are clearly seen, such as the sun, the moon, and stars, all bear record of a Supreme Creator. Thus the things which are not seen, such as God, are understood and comprehended by those things which are made. While we might hear the testimonies of others, it is important that the individual person determines their faith in a thing, as we cannot and should not

¹ DC 90:4b

² Hebrews 11:1

believe on a thing solely because of what others believe. Of course, this does not mean that we cannot believe simply upon their words, or that the testimonies of others cannot support and bolster our own faith. Jesus said, “Blessed are they who shall believe on me; and again, *more blessed* are they who shall *believe on your words*, when ye shall testify that ye have seen me and that I am.”³ The Master told doubting Thomas, “because thou has seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and *yet have believed*.”⁴

Likewise, we should not believe in a piece of information or in a random news article simply because we read it on the internet, but instead because we ourselves have faith or trust that it is indeed true. The fact that the same information might be found in books, newspapers, and other websites can help support and bolster our faith and assurance that it is true, but in the end, we as individuals have to exercise our agency and determine where we will place our faith. It is important for the reader to know that we can seek for additional testimonies, as Jesus Christ has said, “But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”⁵

The Book of Mormon is another witness of Jesus Christ and in particular it helps us to further understand the concept of faith. Specifically, “Faith, is not to have perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith, ye hope for things which are not seen, *which are true*.”⁶ Once again, we read that faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of a thing. Instead we find that as we nourish our faith and as it grows in a thing, it begins to increase until we come to a perfect knowledge. “And now behold, is your knowledge perfect? Yea, your knowledge is perfect in that thing, and your faith is dormant; and this because you know.”⁷ Please read the following passage from Alma 16:149-152:

16:149 Now as I said concerning faith - that it was not a perfect knowledge, even so it is with my words. **16:150** Ye can not know of their surety *at first*, unto perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge. **16:151** But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an *experiment* upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith; yea, even if ye can no more than *desire to believe*, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words. **16:152** Now we will compare the word unto a seed.

In the sixteenth chapter of Alma, we read an effective and beautiful dissertation on faith. Prior to the Scripture passage above, Alma, who was a righteous man of God, preached to the people about repentance, humility, and faith. Alma said to the people, “Yea, there are many who do say, If thou wilt shew unto us a sign from heaven, then we shall know of a surety; *then* we shall believe. Now I ask, Is this faith? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for if a man knoweth a thing, he hath no cause to believe, *for he knoweth it*. And now how *much more cursed* is he that knoweth the will of God and *doeth it not*, than he that only believeth, or only hath cause to believe, and falleth into transgression? Now of this thing,

³ Matthew 5:3

⁴ John 20:29

⁵ Matthew 18:16

⁶ Alma 16:143

⁷ Alma 16:159-160

ye must judge.⁸” In other words, as Jesus told the disciples, “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom the Lord has committed much, of him will men ask the more.⁹”

Similar to how scientists conduct various experiments, Alma asked the people to experiment on his words, that they might gain a truth of his sayings for themselves, which is what each of us should do. Moreover, Alma compared faith with the planting of a seed in our heart. For if we give place for the seed, and if it is a good or true seed, then it will begin to enlarge our soul and understanding. The seed will begin to swell within our breast, and if we nourish it, the seed will sprout and continue to grow until it becomes a perfect knowledge. Once we receive a perfect knowledge, our faith in that thing is no longer needed and it becomes dormant.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, teaches us that our faith grows through our trials and in particular, that these trials should be precious to each of us because they also help to grow our joy in the Lord. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with *joy unspeakable* and full of glory.¹⁰” Please read the following testimony:

Now, I don't mean to say that we should go looking to make bad choices so that we will have trials, and I understand that most people don't like to experience tribulations. We tend to cringe when we think about those tougher times in our life, and we don't look forward to facing more in the future. Nonetheless, I thank God that he has given me trials and tribulations, because without them I wouldn't have known the love, mercy, and joy that only comes through Jesus Christ. Those trials have taught me to grow, and they have changed my heart. I wouldn't be in the church today if I didn't have them, and I wouldn't give them up for anything in the world.

In all honesty, if I had been allowed to see God and Christ, and had been simply given a perfect knowledge of the Lord without a trial of my faith, then I know I would have fallen away. In fact, it was something that scared me often as child. As I got older, I used to think that if I saw an angel of the Lord like Laman and Lemuel¹¹ did, then I would have to believe and I was afraid that I would have to change how I was living.

However, this is not the same for everyone. Some people have the faith to believe in God without needing to be compelled as I was. Some people have that gift of faith to believe on the word of others such as King Laman.¹² Jesus taught his disciples in Matthew, chapter five, that

⁸ Alma 16:139-141

⁹ Luke 12:57

¹⁰ 1 Peter 1:8

¹¹ Laman and Lemuel are two persons from the Book of Mormon, who saw several mighty miracles, including seeing an angel of the Lord, and still turned away from the truth.

¹² King Laman was a descendent of Laman, who was converted to the Lord through the words of Ammon and Aaron, two great servants of God.

*blessed are they who shall believe on me, and more blessed are they who shall believe on your words when you testify of me.*¹³

Blessed Are They Who Believe On Your Words

In fifth chapter of Matthew, Jesus Christ said to His disciples in the sermon on the mount, “Blessed are they who shall believe on me; and again, more blessed are they who shall believe on your words, when ye shall testify that ye have seen me and that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe on your words, and come down into the depth of humility, and be baptized in my name.¹⁴” In order for a person to believe on the testimony of others, Jesus told His disciples that humility is required, and this is because when we are humble we recognize our weaknesses and turn to the Lord with real intent of heart. [Humility will be discussed further in **Chapter Six**]

As Alma preached earlier, if we exercise a particle of faith or even just a desire to believe, we can receive the faith to believe the word of God through the testimony of others. “Therefore blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble, or rather, in other words, Blessed is he that believeth in the word of God, and is baptized without stubbornness of heart; yea, without being brought to know the word, or even compelled to know, before they will believe.¹⁵” In all of Scripture, there is not a more beautiful example of this than King Laman’s conversion in the Book of Mormon.

King Laman was the ruler of the Lamanites, who were a people that had been led astray from the ways of God over several generations. In fact, many of the Lamanites did not believe in God, including King Laman, and they remained in a state of unbelief until four Nephites, who were inspired by the pure love of Jesus Christ, came among them in order to preach the Gospel. Although the Lamanites and Nephites were continually at war with one another, these four men, who were the sons of the king of the Nephites, rejected their right to rule and disregarded their own safety, in order that they might preach the word of God and testify of Christ. For we read, “They were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; Yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment, *did cause them to quake and tremble.*¹⁶”

The four Nephites, Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni, who were called the sons of Mosiah, traveled to the land of the Lamanites to preach the Gospel, for which they suffered great and terrible afflictions, but also witnessed great and mighty miracles. Eventually, after much witnessing to the Lamanites, Aaron, one of the sons of Mosiah, was able to stand before King Laman and preach the Gospel. Please read the following from Alma 13:48-53:

13:48 And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things [the Gospel of Jesus Christ] unto him, the king said, What shall I do, that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? **13:49** Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be

¹³ Matthew 5:3

¹⁴ Matthew 5:3-4

¹⁵ Alma 16:137-138

¹⁶ Mosiah 12:5-6

cast off at the last day? **13:50** Behold, said he, **I will give up all that I possess; yea, I will forsake my kingdom**, that I may receive this great joy. **13:51** But Aaron said unto him, If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.

13:52 And it came to pass that when Aaron had said these words, the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily, saying, O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; **13:53** And if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day.

In the Scripture, we see that King Laman, even though he did not know God, had a desire to believe in the Lord because of the words which Aaron preached. Further, we would like the reader to note how Aaron told Laman that he must bow down before God and call upon his name *in faith* believing that he would receive an answer. In the testimony, Laman exercised a particle of faith to believe on Aaron's witness of Jesus Christ, and humbled himself before the Lord. As a result, King Laman received a mighty testimony of Christ and believed on His name. "Ask of God; ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened.¹⁷"

It is important to remember when seeking a testimony, or a witness of the truth, of God and Jesus Christ, that the Scriptures have said, "He [God] doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life, that he may draw all men unto him. Wherefore, he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation. Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying, Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith, Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price.¹⁸" It does not cost temporal money to know of the redeeming love of the Son of God, rather it only costs our sins as King Laman demonstrated. Thus, what is the price of our sins next to the gift of eternal life and never ending happiness? Please read the following Scripture from James 1:5-7:

1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. **1:6** But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. **1:7** For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

Aaron told Laman that if he desired to know God, then he must pray in faith believing that he would receive, and most importantly, Aaron told Laman that if he were to do this, then he would receive the hope of that which he desired. Truly, humility and trust are very important aspects of faith. Perhaps the biggest component of faith however is hope, because we cannot have faith without hope.

¹⁷ Matthew 7:12-13

¹⁸ 2 Nephi 11:95-99

Faith and Hope

Sadly, we place such an emphasis on the concept of faith that we too frequently gloss over the principle of hope. Many people do not realize that the two cannot be separated for without hope there cannot be any faith. “How is it that ye can attain unto faith, *save* ye shall have hope?¹⁹” How can we have faith in Jesus Christ if we do not have a hope that we will receive the promises of God? Paul wrote in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, “For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.²⁰”

The 1828 Webster’s Dictionary defines hope as “a desire of some good, accompanied with at least a slight expectation of obtaining it, or a belief that it is obtainable. Hope differs from wish and desire in this, that it implies some expectation of obtaining the good desired, or the possibility of possessing it. Hope therefore always gives pleasure or joy; whereas wish and desire may produce or be accompanied with pain and anxiety.” The 1913 Webster’s Dictionary defines hope as “to desire with expectation or with belief in the possibility or prospect of obtaining; to look forward to as a thing desirable, with the expectation of obtaining it; to cherish hopes of.”

If the reader will recall, “faith is the assurance of things *hoped* for, the evidence of things not seen.” “Faith, is not to have perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith, ye *hope* for things which are not seen, which are true.” The assurance of things hoped for, which are not seen, are the promises that God gives us through the Holy Ghost and His Holy Scriptures, and we would encourage the reader to search out these promises, because there are many and they are plain and precious.

In Romans, we read that hope works in the same manner as does faith, as Paul wrote, “For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then with patience we do wait for it.²¹” We would ask the reader however what is it that we should hope for? Is it just for a good car, home, family, etc., or are there other things that we should hope for? Perhaps the greatest promise and the one that we should hope for above all others, can be found in Moroni 7:45-48:

7:45 And again my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. **7:46** How is it that ye can attain unto faith, *save* ye shall have hope? And what is it that ye shall hope for? **7:47** Behold I say unto you, that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal; and this because of your faith in him according to the promise; **7:48** Wherefore, if a man have faith, he must needs have hope; for without faith there can not be any hope.

If the reader truly desires to have faith, even if it is a small desire, then you must have hope of eternal life. Have hope that God is and that His promises are true, that He is an unchangeable being, and that He is merciful, kind, loving, truthful, and just forever. And above all else, hope that He loved the world so much that He sent His only Begotten Son to atone for the sins of the world. If we exercise both our

¹⁹ Moroni 7:46

²⁰ Hebrews 11:6

²¹ Romans 8:24-25

faith and our hope, then we will receive the promise of eternal life. Wherefore, “seek not for riches but for wisdom; and, behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life *is rich*...Seek to bring forth and establish my Zion. Keep my commandments in all things; and if you keep my commandments and endure to the end, you shall have eternal life; which gift is the *greatest* of all the gifts of God.”²² [Learn more about Zion in **Section Two** and in **Chapter Twenty-Three**.]

Conclusion

Ether, a prophet from the Book of Mormon, preached to the people of his day from morning until night and he taught them to believe in God, to repent, and that all things were fulfilled by faith. He said, “Wherefore, whoso believeth in God, might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.”²³ Please read the following from Ether 5:5-8:

5:5 And it came to pass that Ether did prophesy great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe, because **they saw them not**. **5:6** And now I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; I would shew unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; **5:7** Wherefore, **dispute not because ye see not**, for ye receive no witness until ***after the trial of your faith***, for it was by faith that Christ shewed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; **5:8** And he shewed not himself unto them, until after they had faith in him; wherefore, it must needs be that some had faith in him, for he shewed himself not unto the world.

We would ask the reader how then can we receive a witness of Jesus Christ and God without some measure of faith? We can take hope in the fact that all that is required from us is to have faith the size of a mustard seed. Jesus told His disciples “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove to yonder place, and it *shall* remove; and *nothing* shall be impossible unto you.”²⁴ As we read earlier, even if we only have a desire to believe and exercise just a particle of faith, we can receive the knowledge of the truth as it is, and not as we would make it.

²² DC 6:3b-c and DC 12:3b

²³ Ether 5:4

²⁴ Matthew 17:20