

The Faith Files

The Letter to the Romans

September 2, 2001

1. Romans 1:5

Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from **faith**. (NIV)

- Faith and obedience—that's an interesting combination. Faith isn't just agreeing with some doctrine, but changing your lifestyle to reflect that doctrine. I can believe in generosity, but until I am generous, my "belief" isn't worth anything. I call faith without action "mental assents." Are you holding any "mental assents" that haven't made their way from your mind to your heart, legs or arms?
- Paul knew his purpose in life: to work among all the Gentiles. What is your life purpose? If you don't know, how hard are you willing to work to find out? There are numerous resources on my website that can help you in your search. Go to <http://www.purposequest.com/> and see what you can find to help you know your purpose.

2. Romans 1:8

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your **faith** is being reported all over the world. (NIV)

- You never know when God will use your story to touch people in other places. Everyone has or should have a faith story that they can tell. Do you? How are you telling it? To whom? Don't get into a "false humility" that if you tell someone, you are bringing attention to yourself. You are giving God glory and *magnifying*—enlarging so more people can see—what God has done in your life.
- Your faith will encourage others to have faith. God may want you to pioneer some faith project that will start a whole movement. You don't know what God will do until you do what you can do.

3. Romans 1:11-12

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong--that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's **faith**. (NIV)

- You cannot live off someone else's faith. You can be encouraged in your own faith through their faith. This is how you can strengthen someone else. This is why I am

writing *The Faith Files*: to encourage you. When you write and tell me how God has used these studies in your life, then I'm encouraged—we have mutually encouraged one another. That's a healthy cycle. How can you perpetuate that cycle? By using your ideas to initiate the process with other people.

- You must be in a place—church, home group, Bible study—where that dynamic of mutual encouragement through gifts of faith takes place, or you're missing out on a large part of what God wants to do in your life. Are you in such a place on a regular basis? If not, what are you prepared to do about that?

4. Romans 1:17

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by **faith** from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by **faith**." (NIV)

- You can't start in faith and finish your journey with God in any other way—"faith from first to last." (see Hebrews 12:1-2)
- Righteousness is connected to faith; righteousness is from the old English combination of right-wise-ness. You know you are wise toward right when you operate in faith.
- Remember that "the righteous will live by faith" is found in the Old Testament. The law also required faith, but that was buried under an avalanche of legalism (see Habakkuk 2:4, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 2:20, 3:17, and Hebrews 10:38.) Jesus came to restore the essence of a relationship with God and that essence is faith.
- All progress in our walk with the Lord is made through faith. Is that a true statement?

5. Romans 3:3

What if some did not have **faith**? Will their lack of **faith** nullify God's faithfulness?

- The answer here is "no." My faith doesn't control God. God has done things I didn't have faith that He would do. God is full of faith or faithful even when I'm not. But my faith allows me to partner with God! But my lack never nullifies God's faithfulness.
- I call faith our currency with which we make transactions with God. You give Him faith and He gives you something in return. But there are special gifts of faith and God slips faith into my pocket for me to "spend." He also gives me a gift when my faith pockets are empty.
- How do you feel about those statements? Are they accurate? Why or why not?

6. Romans 3:25-31

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through **faith** in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished--he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have **faith** in Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of **faith**. For we maintain that a man is justified by **faith** apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by **faith** and the uncircumcised through that same **faith**. Do we, then, nullify the law by this **faith**? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law. (NIV)

- The law was good, but it was impossible for any man to follow perfectly. God's plan was for the Jews to turn from this law to another law of faith, but they became so comfortable with a law of works that they rejected faith. That's easy for any religious person to do. Are you more comfortable with law than faith?
- While we obey God, our obedience doesn't save us. Our faith in the God who told us what to obey is what saves us.
- Faith is the "only act in town" where God is concerned. He will not justify some by law and some by faith. He will justify all by faith and that faith must be in Jesus.

7. Romans 4:5

However, to the man who does not work but **trusts** God who justifies the wicked, his **faith** is credited as righteousness. (NIV)

- That's a hard truth for a religious person to comprehend. God justifies the wicked, not through the good works they do, but only through faith.
- Hebrews 11 is full of men and women who were less than "good people," but they had faith and that became the basis for their righteousness. God commended them for their faith, not their moral perfection.
- I do good deeds that come forth out of my faith, but those good deeds aren't the basis for my righteousness. The basis is my faith. Is this confusing to you?

8. Romans 4:9-21

Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's **faith** was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by **faith** while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all

who **believe** but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the **faith** that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by **faith**. For if those who live by law are heirs, **faith** has no value and the promise is worthless, because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. Therefore, the promise comes by **faith**, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the **faith** of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he **believed**-- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. Against all hope, Abraham in hope **believed** and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his **faith**, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead-- since he was about a hundred years old-- and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through **unbelief** regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his **faith** and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. (NIV)

- There is so much in this passage, which may be my favorite passage about faith in the entire Bible.
- Abraham is the father of all who have faith. So we need to study his life because our faith heritage is found in him. I thought my study of faith would end when I finished the New Testament, but I guess that's not true.
- Abraham wasn't a Jew; he was a man who believed God when He spoke to him.
- Abraham faced the facts that he was dead without weakening in faith. That is a powerful statement. Faith doesn't ever cause you to deny reality; but it doesn't make reality bigger than God's ability to deliver on His promises.
- Our greatest enemy is death and God is more powerful than death! He also talks about things to be as though they already are. That's faith. God has faith and wants us to have it as well.
- God talks faith-talk. If you are going to talk to God, you need to talk faith-talk, too.
- Study this passage and list five additional insights of your own:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.

- Study Abraham’s life in Genesis and record what your “father” has to teach you about faith.

9. Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified through **faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by **faith** into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. (NIV)

- Justification, peace, grace, stability (standing), joy and hope are all ours through faith. Why would anyone want anything else? Men and women have tried to get those things from legalism but to no avail.
- Peace with God—that has a good sound to it. That also means that some have no peace with God. I’m glad I’m not in that place.

10. Romans 9:30-32

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by **faith**; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by **faith** but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." (NIV)

- The pride of man wants to earn right-standing with God. But it is available by faith. Legalists get angry when God justifies someone through faith. The legalist believes that person isn’t worthy of God’s grace.
- The legalists were so mad at Jesus that they killed Him. They were angered over his lack of respect for their legalistic rules. Legalism kills, but faith gives life.
- Are you angry when God’s grace is given to someone who isn’t worthy in your mind? Is there any group of sinners that you don’t want to see God’s grace come to until they have paid a price or proved their worthiness? If so, you are operating under a works mentality. Yet you were saved by grace through faith.

11. Romans 10:6-8

But the righteousness that is by **faith** says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of **faith** we are proclaiming: (NIV)

- This is exciting! There is no need to go searching for Christ. He is near us, even in the words of faith we are speaking. When you have faith, Christ comes to you; you don't have to go looking for Him.
- There is no need to work at finding where Christ is or at getting to a place where He can hear us. He is near. Faith brings Jesus near to where we are. We can indeed rest from our works and trust in God.

12. Romans 10:17

Consequently, **faith** comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (NIV)

- Saving faith comes from anyone hearing the word of Christ. So you and I must talk for others to have faith. You never know how God will use your testimonies until you speak them.
- I always pray before I speak that I would speak the words that Jesus would speak if He were standing before the people. I guess I am praying to deliver the word of Christ. If I do that, then people can have faith.
- “The word of Christ”—are the words that stimulate faith in others our words or are they words that are initiated by God Himself. Since His word will not return to Him void, your words of faith have tremendous power. This almost sounds like faith “double talk.” Do you agree?

13. Romans 11:20

Granted. But they were broken off because of **unbelief**, and you stand by **faith**. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. (NIV)

- This is referring to Israel and the Gentile church. Any faith accomplishment cannot be a source of pride for it is the grace of God. But many who have received something in faith believe they have found a secret path to God and look down on others who aren't as spiritual.
- Faith isn't an occasion for arrogance or pride. It's an occasion for fear because anything less is unacceptable to God.
- If God didn't hesitate to break off the Jews due to unbelief, He will do the same for anyone who meets the same criteria. That should cause us all to fear God, for without faith, it is impossible to please Him.

14. Romans 12:3-6

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of **faith** God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his **faith**. (NIV)

- It doesn't say not to think of yourself highly, just not more highly than you ought. If you can do something by the grace of God, it's permissible to say "I can do that well" without fear of pride.
- I can administrate; I cannot lead worship. That is a sober assessment of who I am and who I am not.
- God gives everyone a measure of faith. This measure differs from person to person. It's important that you live in the full measure of the faith you have, but not try to imitate the measure of faith someone else has. Do what they do, but do it to the level of faith that you have. I tried to imitate a rich person's generosity one time and almost went broke. What I needed to do was give generously according to what I had, not according to what they had.
- We utilize our spiritual gifts in the context of faith. So is it the size of the gift that is important or the size of the faith out of which the gift is operating that is important?

15. Romans 14:1-2

Accept him whose **faith** is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's **faith** allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose **faith** is weak, eats only vegetables. (NIV)

- There are disputable matters that should not divide believers. We must determine what those are, so we can maintain the unity of the faith.
- If there are those who are weak in faith, there must be those who are strong.
- Love requires that the one who is weak in faith not judge the one who is strong for what he or she can do; love requires the one who is strong in faith to be considerate of the one who is weak for what he or she cannot do. Love is the context in which faith operates. Is that a true statement?
- This means that we must know who we are, who God made us, what our gifts are, what measure of faith we have, and what measure of faith those around us have. This is healthy self-awareness and self-knowledge.

16. Romans 14:23

But the man who has **doubts** is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from **faith**; and everything that does not come from **faith** is sin. (NIV)

- *Everything?* That covers it all.
- There seems to be some room for individual decisions based on where some people are at in their walk of faith. Of course, this pertains to unessential matters like worship style, food and drink, and matters of conscience. But this is a very difficult matter to define. That is why Paul said that if someone takes offense at what you do, don't do it!

17. Romans 3:22

This righteousness from God comes through **faith** in Jesus Christ to all who **believe**. There is no difference, (NIV)

- My righteousness is from God. That makes it as good, perfect and acceptable as it can be.
- And it is available to *all*. There are no exceptions.
- Jesus is available to all. There are no exceptions.

18. Romans 4:23-24

The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness-- for us who **believe** in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. (NIV)

- Little did Abraham realize how what he was doing would impact people 4,000 years later. The more difficult the trial, the more significant is the breakthrough. You can take encouragement from that truth, although it is hard to go through your difficulty it at the time.
- I want God to credit my account with righteousness. That means I must have faith.

19. Romans 6:8

Now if we died with Christ, we **believe** that we will also live with him. (NIV)

- We are in and with Christ. If we die in our baptism, we will live with him as well. But the life we now live is a life of faith. Christ is everything to the people of faith.

20. Romans 10:9-14

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and **believe** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you **believe** and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who **trusts** in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not **believed** in? And how can they **believe** in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (NIV)

- If you trust in the Lord, you will never be disappointed or be put to shame. This is in the context of salvation. Whether you are Jew or Gentile, God will save those who believe and speak.
- No one is beyond God's saving power, not Gentiles, transvestites, murderers, child molesters, or abusers of women or children. Is that a fair statement?
- It is absolutely critical that believers preach the gospel to nonbelievers; otherwise the unbelievers cannot ever hear and have faith unto salvation. It says nothing of skill in speaking; the issue is speaking, pure and simple.
- Isn't it time to revive your interest in seeing people come to the Lord? Make a list of all those you know who need to know the Lord. Pray for them. Believe God for opportunities to share the Lord with them. Their salvation is up to the Lord, but you are part of the process.

21. Romans 14:22

So whatever you **believe** about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. (NIV)

- What a novel idea—keeping some of your faith opinions to yourself. You can come to a faith conclusion and be right, and then share it with others, offend their faith, and be wrong.

22. Romans 16:26

But now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might **believe** and obey him-- (NIV)

- All nations are to believe in the Lord. The word here is literally ethnic groups, not nations. There seems to be biblical evidence that there will be believers representing all people groups, but not evidence that whole nations will turn to the Lord. I pray that happens. Historically, it has not.

23. Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you **trust** in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (NIV)

- Joy and peace are available through trusting the Lord. Haven't we seen that promise before? If you don't have joy or peace at this time, you must examine your faith and not pursue those two things on their own. They are byproducts of something else.