

Lesson #2

(c) Copyright AFII 2002

Faith Romans 3:23-25

Related scripture: Genesis 4:3-5; Genesis 5:22,24; Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 22:1-9, Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11; Ephesians 2:8-9

We tend to think of faith as a New Covenant concept. The actual word faith is not used that frequently in the Tanakh, however, words such as "believe, trust or hope," are used in abundance.

It is clearly conveyed through many scriptures, for example Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the L-RD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding," and Psalm 37:3-5, "Trust in the L-RD, and do good, dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the L-RD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your ways to the L-RD, Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

Many wrongly think that deeds or works were the basis of salvation under the Sinai Covenant (Tanakh), but a passage such as Psalm 26:1 "Vindicate me, O L-RD, For I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the L-RD; I shall not slip," shows a proper perspective. The Psalmist is pointing to his trust in G-d and appealing to his own "integrity" as the evidence of that trust. There are many more scriptures in the Tanakh which convey the necessity for faith and with careful study it is evident that what G-d has always desired was an attitude of the heart, one of belief, trust, hope....faith.

Look up the words "believe," "trust" and "hope" in a concordance and you will see just how many times they are used not only to emphasize that the object of faith must be G-d, but also to say what the object should not be; self, others, deeds, material wealth, armies, idols, other g-ds. A beautiful picture is seen in Psalm 18:2, "The L-RD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My G-d, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." Surely we can confidently put our faith in a G-d like that!

We can hardly talk about the Biblical faith of the Tanakh without looking at some of the heroes of the faith given to us as models in Hebrews 11. Abel, mentioned first in verse 4, brought a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Genesis 4:3-5). Why was it more excellent in G-d's eyes?

Because it was obediently given according to what G-d had revealed. Abel believed G-d, and offered Him the best of his flock by faith, and he was deemed righteous, whereas Cain's offering revealed a rebellious heart, one of going his own way and not G-d's.

By faith Enoch pleased G-d, and he was taken (Genesis 5:24). "And Enoch walked with G-d; and he was not, for G-d took him." "Walk" is the Biblical way to show the relationship, fellowship and obedience that results in G-dly approval (Genesis 5:22). Such a walk is expected from every professing believer.

Noah was Divinely warned of the coming deluge. See Genesis chapter 7. He believed G-d, put his faith into action and followed everything the L-RD told him to do. Because of this, Noah became an heir of righteousness. We see an incredible foreshadowing of the inheritance of "the world to come" for those who live by faith, in the receiving of a new world by Noah.

The great patriarch Abraham at the age of 75 received a call from G-d to leave his home and go to a strange, unknown land. It must have been hard to believe when G-d promised to make him and his descendants a great nation, since he and Sarah were childless (Genesis 12:1-3). But Abraham did believe G-d, and he obeyed without doubt or wavering. The ultimate test of Abraham's faith came later in the "Akedat-Yitzchak" (the Binding of Isaac) (Genesis 22:1-9). Isaac was the promised son through whom the blessings and promises made by G-d to Abraham would be fulfilled. And now G-d asks Abraham to present Isaac as an offering.

Abraham's faith was so great that he knew that G-d would fulfill His promises, which in Abraham's mind could only mean that Isaac would be resurrected from the dead. We can infer that was Abraham's expectation from Genesis 22:5 in which he tells his servants that he and the lad (Isaac) will return. In a figurative sense Abraham did receive Isaac back from the dead since in his heart he had given him up.

We see by these great examples of faith, as well as Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua and the Israelites, Rahab and many others in the Tanakh (Hebrews 11: 32-38) that without faith it is impossible to please G-d (Hebrews 11:6). G-d doesn't want lip-service, a confession of belief with a life void of the evidence of that belief. Such is not a true saving faith. Saving faith sees through spiritual eyes, trusts in the finished work and promises of G-d regardless of their temporal circumstances. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence on things not seen." (11:1) Faith produces action on the part of the believer that is the essence and evidence of the reality of things unseen.

Explore:

1. Is justification by faith a New Covenant concept? (See Genesis 15:6)

2. Why do you think that G-d is not pleased by a person who claims to believe, yet lacks trust?

Apply:

1. Is there an area or areas in your life where you are lacking faith, seeing things only in the physical instead of trusting in the reality of an all-good, all-powerful, faithful G-d? If yes, what steps can you take to change this? "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Moshiach!" (Romans 10:17)!