

GREAT FAITH

IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

- "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7); "the just shall live by faith" (Heb 10:38); "without faith it is impossible to please *Him*" (Heb 11:6); "whatever is not of faith is sin" (Rom 14:23); "pursue after...faith" (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22)—pursue (*dioko*) means to chase after something until you catch it
 - love is greater than faith (1 Cor 13:2, 13)

DEFINITION OF FAITH

- "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1)
 - faith is possible in only two areas: what is invisible or unseen ("things not seen") and what is future ("things hoped for")
 - faith is (1) believing the invisible world is just the way the Bible says it is (angels, demons, Satan, Jesus, God, heaven, hell) and (2) believing God will keep all of his promises—give us in the future what we hope for now (resurrection, rewards)
 - "faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen" (J. Oswald Sanders)

DEGREES OF FAITH

- the disciples had a little faith but not enough to cast out a certain demon ("because of the littleness of your faith" Matt 17:20)
 - Stephen and Barnabas were "full of faith" (Acts 6:5)
 - Jesus told the Canaanite woman, "Your faith is great!" (Matt 15:28)
 - of the Roman centurion Jesus said, "I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel" (Matt 8:10): this soldier believed Jesus could heal his slave at a distance without ever seeing, touching, or talking to him
 - principles from the story of the centurion: (1) the harder a thing is to do, the more faith you need to believe it can be done, (2) it takes more faith to believe the impossible than to believe the possible, (3) a great faith is willing to take great risks

ILLUSTRATION FROM THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

- when Sarah was 90 and Abraham was 100 years old God promised to give them a son (Gen 17:15–19; 18:9–14)
- how he handled a seemingly impossible situation: (1) at first he and his wife laughed (Gen 17:17; 18:12) because she was long past the age of childbearing (Gen 21:7; Heb 11:11), (2) he suggested an easier alternative, which God rejected (Gen 17:18), (3) he and his wife believed the promise (Rom 4:18–21; Heb 11:11), (4) he analyzed his situation carefully ("he contemplated his own body," Rom 4:19 NASB)—KJV says the opposite ("he considered not his own body") because the TR adds the negative *ou*, but *ou* is absent in the better manuscripts such as Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, and Ephraemi Rescriptus—"contemplated" (*katanoeo*) means to look carefully, think about intently, mull over and over, think of all the possibilities and impossibilities (Matt 7:3; Luke 12:24, 27; Acts 7:31; 11:6; 27:39; James 1:23–24):
 - you need to know how hopeless your circumstances are to appreciate how powerful God is
 - (5) he did not allow doubts to linger in his mind as he contemplated his impossible situation (Rom 4:19, 20)—lit. "he did not dispute with himself in unbelief" (doubts are arguing silently with yourself), (6) his faith grew stronger as he thought about the difficulties involved (Rom 4:19, 20), (7) he gave glory to God before he saw the baby developing in the womb (Rom 4:20), (8) he was fully convinced that God had the ability to keep his promises (Rom 4:21; cf. Matt 19:26; Luke 1:37)
- five ingredients of a great faith: (1) a great faith believes God can do the impossible (Heb 11:11), (2) a great faith doesn't ignore reality, but believes in spite of reality (Rom 4:19 NASB), (3) a great faith doesn't have any doubts about God's ability to keep his promises (Rom 4:20), (4) a great faith gives glory to God *before* he fulfills his promises (Rom 4:20), (5) a great faith is fully convinced that God is able to do all that he has promised (Rom 4:21)