

Eternity Daily Bible Study

Searching For The Truth

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Number: 04

Topic: Faith, Truth and Our Spiritual Nature

Bible Verses: Proverbs chapters 1 and 8, Hebrews chapters 4 and 12

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The study on "Faith and Truth" provoked the following question from one reader:

In this study you state: "Faith is a personally chosen reaction to God's revelation." This, to me implies that I choose how much faith I want to have. Believe me, I have tried to have faith, I pray every day for more faith, but sadly up to now, I have had very little growth in faith. What I like about your studies is that you never state anything without supplying proof by referring to bible verses, but you did not do that for this statement. I'd appreciate it if you can shed some light on this for me.

The previous paragraph of that particular study had listed and defined various "faith states" found in Scripture such as faith, doubt, unbelief, presumption, a spirit of stupor, spiritual rebellion and so on. My point was that each of these "faith states" is a result of a personal internal decision we make when God's word encounters our lives. We believe it or scorn it, doubt it, get offended by it and so on. (See Study 03)

The decisions we make when God's Word comes into our life are critical. They are the turning points! The Word that matters is God's Word. This is the word that continually shapes us as creatures of the Creator.

When God told Saul what to do to the Amalekites and Saul disobeyed, that was the end of his Kingdom (1 Samuel 15:7-28). When the northern prophet disobeyed the instructions of God, he was eaten by a lion (1 Kings 13:1-23). And when the Israelites refused God's command to enter in, they perished grumbling in the Wilderness (Numbers 13& 14).

The reaction to revelation is sometimes a very fast decision, but is nonetheless a decision, just as the decision to get angry is still a decision. Eventually these decisions about God's Word become pathways in the mind, habits of thought, and entrenched impulses within us.

These pathways in the mind become habits and reflexes and eventually harden into “spiritual natures” such as folly, loudness, covetousness, and impulsivity, or alternatively into good natures such as patience, forbearance, and holiness.

[Now the whole idea of faith states and spiritual natures is almost totally foreign to modern Christians yet it is found in the Bible and in nearly all theology before about 1900. It has largely been replaced by the false notion of “personality”.]

Modern humanity really wants to believe that we can choose our destiny, our character and personality, that we are self-assembled; or perhaps even that we are solely determined by external factors such as our luck, our genetics and circumstances. However the Bible tells us that our personality and our destiny is mainly formed by our reaction to God and to His Word!

It is almost as if we are always bumping up against the eternal, and the shape we assume after the eternal has made its impact upon us, is the shape we take throughout life!

1. If we decide to believe in Jesus then we are saved and have eternal life, however if we do not believe in Jesus we perish (John 3:16-18).
2. If we choose to listen to wisdom we become wise, however if we ignore wisdom we become foolish (Proverbs 8).
3. If we decide to accept God’s discipline we receive peace and righteousness and healing and healed and holy, but if we ignore God’s discipline we are broken by it and may end up like undisciplined and profane Esau unable to find repentance (Hebrews 12:4-29).
4. We have the choice to believe and obey and prosper (enter God’s rest) or to harden our hearts in unbelief just as the Israelites did at Meribah and miss God’s rest entirely. (Hebrews 4:1-16)
5. If we deliberately ignore good advice and God’s warnings and choose bad company we will end up with our good morals being corrupted and our life destroyed. (1 Corinthians 15:33, Proverbs 29:3)
6. Wisdom calls out to people continually, those who resolve to stop and listen and learn are blessed but those who ignore her voice become foolish and ignorant and are destroyed and God will mock them in their pain (Proverbs 1:22-33)
7. When people consciously and deliberately suppress the truth about the knowledge of God they become degraded and immoral and corrupted (Romans 1:18-32, Ephesians 4:18,19)

Ephesians 4:18-19 *They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. 19 They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.*

So our reaction to God's revelation shapes us just like bumping into a chisel (or a two-edged sword) will shape us! If we ignore the sword it chops us into pieces!

Our spiritual nature is the result of hundreds of encounters with our conscience. If our lusts continually extinguish our conscience we will end up corrupted and defiled. If our conscience is listened to, then we become wise and righteous.

Human nature is malleable. It is not set in concrete. And the good news is that the damage is reversible! God can change our spiritual nature! When we repent and listen to God the ignorance and corruption is dispelled and we can even be made holy!

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 *Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or anyone practicing homosexuality, **10** no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. **11** And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

God does not give you a fixed spiritual nature from birth. You can repent, you can become sanctified, you can listen, and you can choose to obey, or you can harden your heart, refuse wisdom and faith, and perish!

Our spiritual nature changes slowly in one direction or another throughout life. For instance we can all think of a once pleasant person who become deeply bitter and stayed that way for years, unable to forgive some person or event in their life. They changed, and they stayed changed. On a more positive note we can probably also think of a hard and selfish person who found grace in Christ and became loving and kind. Their nature changed for the better!

Charles Reade once said: *"Sow a thought, and you reap an act; Sow an act, and you reap a habit; Sow a habit, and you reap a character; Sow a character, and you reap a destiny"*

This shows a process, a gradual, but rather inevitable process. Faith is built, or lost, one small decision at a time. If you keep exposing yourself to liberal scholars and skeptics, bit by bit, article by article, your faith will decrease and your doubts will increase. As you decide "Oh so-and-so might be right and the Bible might be wrong.." you decide to abandon the faith, until one day you find that it is lost entirely.

On the other hand if you make faith-filled decisions, you will grow in faith. "Yes, I will obey and trust God in that, even though I don't fully understand it yet.."

Going back to the reader's question, generally speaking, you do not pray for faith. I cannot think of any place in Scripture where God specifically gives faith in answer to prayer. Instead God gives wisdom in answer to prayer, and when you obey that wisdom from God then you demonstrate that you have faith. The more you decide to obey wisdom, the more your faith grows.

Faith is not a bit of knowledge stuck in your brain. Faith is a decision to act. Faith is the guts to take on Goliath! Faith acts upon wisdom and knowledge but does not consist solely of wisdom and knowledge. Faith is servant-like trust and humility, combined with boldness, which results in obedient action with authority:

Luke 17:5-10 *The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 6 "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed," the Lord said, "you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. 7 "Which one of you having a slave tending sheep or plowing will say to him when he comes in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? 8 Instead, will he not tell him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, get ready, and serve me while I eat and drink; later you can eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank that slave because he did what was commanded? 10 In the same way, when you have done all that you were commanded, you should say, 'We are good-for-nothing slaves; we've only done our duty.' "*

If you want to grow in faith, then go and do something adventurous for God. You will see faith grow far more on a single "risky" missions trip than in five hundred very safe weekly bible studies. Jesus grew the faith of His disciples by continually exposing them to risk and mind-stretching situations such as: miracles, healings, demons, exorcisms, arguments, persecution and dangerous storms.

When you decide that God is faithful and go and "take a risk" for Him on the basis of His Word (as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel and all the heroes of faith did in Hebrews 11). It is then that your faith will grow and that you will be rewarded.

To summarize, your spiritual nature is the outcome of thousands of daily decisions and reactions (both large and small) to God's Word touching your conscience. Every time you "bump into God" you are given a choice. The outcome of one choice will be life, the outcome of the other choice will be death. Faith comes when you decide, and then act, for God, trusting in Him. God's Word comes and examines you. Will he/she believe? Will they trust? Will they be bold and cross the Jordan?

(More on this in the next study).

Blessings,

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