



Faith is an extremely important quality because "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Do you have faith? How much faith do you have? Is your faith weak or strong? If you would like more faith, how do you get it?

The best place to start this topic is by asking the question "What is Faith?" And of course the answer is in this same chapter, Hebrews 11, often called the "faith chapter."

Heb. 11:1 "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

You've heard the saying "seeing is believing." If you're not sure about something, the answer is to see it. Once you see it happening, then you can believe it!

In Christian things, the opposite is true: you believe it, and because you believe it is true, you can see it. Believing is seeing. If you truly believe God and have faith in Him and His promises, you will see Him. But not in the flesh, in the spirit. To have faith we have to see things that are invisible. After the resurrection of Jesus:

John 20:25 Thomas said "If I don't see I won't believe."

Verse 29 Jesus said it is better to believe and therefore see.

How can you see spiritual things? The only way is through the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is working with you, you will see spiritual things. No one knows the thoughts of God except by the Spirit of God.

1 Cor. 2:11 "For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."

So the way to have faith is to have the Holy Spirit. In other words, faith is a gift of God. It comes from Him. It isn't something we can come up with and develop on our own, without God giving it to us through His Spirit. We'll look more at that aspect later.

Hebrews 11:6 "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."

Faith is believing God exists, and that He rewards those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11 is a great illustration of this. The people listed there all believed in God and followed Him through all kinds of difficult circumstances, because they looked to His rewards in the future.

Niagara Falls has some lessons for us about faith. One of the things that is pointed out to you on signboards etc at Niagara Falls is that a number of people have crossed the Falls on tight ropes.

Back in the 1800's there was a wire-walking craze at Niagara Falls. More recently, a trapeze artist called Nick Wallenda, who had been walking tightropes since age 2, walked across. With a 15kg cross bar in his hands to steady him, a tether strapped to his back, step by step he walked across the Falls as torrential waters raged under him and the great mist engulfed him.

Sometimes our spiritual life is like that, as we walk across the waters of trials in our lives worried that we might fall. That's where we need faith to keep us going. Nick Wallenda is a Christian. Quoting from Wikipedia:

"Wallenda credits God for his success, saying that what he does on the high-wire is a gift from God. He grew up in "a Bible-believing, God-fearing family" and describes himself as a "born-again Christian." "Faith is the most important part of my life" he says. According to family friend Michael Mascitto, "When he started doing some of these bigger stunts, he realised that he was developing a platform, or rather God was giving him a platform, to use his abilities for God's glory." He truly believes God has given him this platform for a reason – to glorify Him ... Him with a capital H."

Before every wire walk, Wallenda joins his family in prayer. He remarks, "The Bible says pray without ceasing, and I'm always praying." He denies that his stunts "test" God. "To test God would be to never train, never practice, and then to walk across the Grand Canyon; or to jump off a building, or throw myself in front of a truck," he says. Wallenda says he tries to live "an upright life" and be a good example. "I think challenges are what life is about," he remarks. "We all go through challenges. But once we get through them, we look back and say "look how much our lives have changed by going through that challenge."



Wallenda revealed a great secret of his success when in an interview afterwards, he said that he never focused on the Falls, never focused on the wire, or on the mist or the raging water below him. He never looked back, nor down, nor around him. He focused on the other side, on the destination.

That's why Hebrews 11:6 makes mention of the reward. It is okay to look ahead to the reward of the Kingdom of God, because that is the goal that can keep us going.

Hebrews 11:8 "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."

Abraham is the father of the faithful. Notice in Verse 10 what helped him in his faith...

"For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

A tightrope walker doesn't want any extra burdens. They could cause him to overbalance and topple! Hebrews 12:1 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,"

Verse 2 “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Fix eyes on Jesus Christ! Concentrate!

He is the pioneer and perfecter of faith. So how did He do it? The same way – by considering the joy set before Him, by fixing His eyes on the goal!

One other companion with Nick Wallenda: he was tethered on the back. If he fell off the wire, he wouldn't fall into the water. That's what happens with us. We have to walk the walk of faith, but Jesus is our tether. If we walk with Him, we don't have to worry about falling – He will hold us up!

By the way, Wallenda carried his passport on his trip and was required to present it on arrival at the Canadian side of the Falls! (I guess if he hadn't brought it, they would have sent him back!)

The first person to cross the Falls on a tightrope was Charles Blondin, in 1860. He walked along a hemp rope several times, each time with a different, daring feat! Dressed in a sack, walking on stilts, pushing a wheelbarrow full of potatoes, riding a bicycle. One time he stopped midway and cooked an omelet on a small portable stove!

On one occasion there were 10,000 people watching, crowded on the banks on both sides. He went out on the tightrope, inch by inch, step by step, concentrating totally, knowing if he made one mistake he would fall off the rope into the raging torrents below. (No safety harness in those days.)

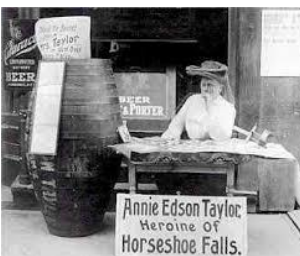
When he got to the other side, he said he was going to push a wheelbarrow next time. “Do you think I can make it?” he asked. “Yes, you'll do it no problem,” said someone in the crowd. “Ok,” he said, “you get in the wheelbarrow.” That's the real test! And that's what God is saying to us. We have to be willing to trust our lives with Jesus. That is a good illustration of real faith – are you willing to get into the wheelbarrow?

Real faith means putting your money where your mouth is and doing something. James 2:14-19
¹⁴ “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

Verse 18 “But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”

We show our faith by our deeds. Faith isn't just an intellectual belief God exists, but it involves living God's way and in fact staking our lives on it. If all we do is believe in God, but not do anything about it, we are no better than the demons – they believe God exists!

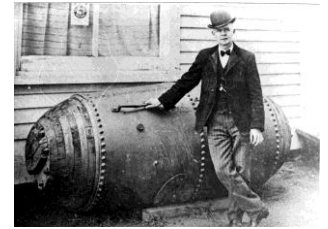
Getting in the wheelbarrow – that's what makes the difference! Living in a way that shows we have faith, trusting in God when we have trials. Since 1850, over 5,000 bodies have been recovered from Niagara Falls. Some of the deaths were accidental, many were suicides, and a few were daredevils who tried to ride barrels or other contraptions over the Falls.



The first person to attempt to go over the falls was a woman, Annie Taylor, in 1901. She used a 4½ foot oak barrel packed with pillows, a mattress and an anvil (for weight). She was fished out an hour after she went over the falls, bruised and shaken, but alive. She told onlookers “No one ought ever to do that again.

The most recent attempt was by Robert Overacker who went over on a jet ski in 1995. He died because his “rocket assisted parachute deployed at the brink of the falls as planned, but wasn’t tethered to his back.”

Bobby Leach went over the falls in a steel barrel in 1911. “The first man to go over the Falls, he survived, only to die 15 years later after slipping on an orange peel in Christchurch, New Zealand.”



We go through rough waters in our spiritual life too. Having faith doesn’t mean our life will be trouble-free and comfortable. Hebrews 11 shows that! If you have an easy life, it is harder to have real faith. “It takes more faith to be a Christian in a wheelchair than a Christian in a Rolls Royce.”

Our faith is strengthened by enduring trials. God is with us as we go through difficulties, and that gives Him the opportunity to perform miracles in our lives. Isaiah 43:2 “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”

So how can we have more faith?

Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.”

It is the gift of God, so we need

1. To ask God for more faith

1 Cor.12:7-9 ⁷“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,”

It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. We mentioned earlier that faith is seeing spiritual things, and that can only come from the Holy Spirit; we can’t drum it up ourselves.

2. Romans 10:17 “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”

Faith comes from hearing. From studying God’s word, from drawing closer to God. The more you know something or someone, the more faith you can have in them (if they deserve it – you’ll find out by getting to know them better.) The more we are immersed in God, the more faith we have.

So the first two keys are prayer and Bible study. And also:

3. Keep your eyes on Jesus – focus on the reward.

There’s another Niagara Falls story that illustrates this.

It’s fascinating to read how the first bridge was built over the Niagara River near the Falls. To build a bridge over a giant gorge, first of all you have to get a line over the canyon, from one side to the other. Easier said than done at Niagara Falls.

The engineers couldn’t cross the river in a boat to take the line from one side to the other, because the boat would go over the Falls. And the airplane hadn’t been invented yet. The distance was also way beyond the bow-and-arrow range, which had been a common method at the time of getting the first line across to build a bridge.

The designing engineer, Charles Ellet, pondered the question until he came up with a revolutionary idea. He decided that, while solving the problem, he would also have some fun and generate some

publicity for the project. Ellet sponsored a kite flying contest and offered five dollars to the first person who could fly a kite across the gorge and let it go low enough to the ground for someone to be able to grab the string. In 1849 5 dollars was a prize similar to a small lottery today. The boy who won the prize relished his accomplishment until his death, nearly 80 years later.

It all began with an idea and one thin kite string. The kite string was used to pull a cord across, then a line, then a rope. Next came an iron-wire cable and then steel cables, until a structure strong enough to build a suspension bridge was in place.

That string is like our relationship with God. The more you come back to it, the more you pray and study and concentrate on God, the stronger that relationship becomes, and the stronger your faith becomes – like the string to the rope to the cable. Each time you develop that relationship, particularly as you depend on God to take you through trials, you are strengthening that relationship and that faith, which is a bridge over the troubled water of your trials.

I'll conclude with a final illustration from Charles Spurgeon, the great British preacher of the 1800's. It's amazing how many times the Niagara Falls is used as an example pointing out things about faith. Here's another one!

“Union to Christ is the great point in salvation. Let me tell you a story to illustrate this: the stupendous falls of Niagara have been spoken of in every part of the world; but while they are marvellous to hear of, and wonderful as a spectacle, they have been very destructive to human life, when by accident any have been carried down the cataract.

Some years ago, two men, a bargeman and a collier, were in a boat, and found themselves unable to manage it, it being carried so swiftly down the current that they must both inevitably be borne down and dashed to pieces. Persons on the shore saw them, but were unable to do much for their rescue.

At last, however, one man was saved by floating a rope to him, which he grasped. The same instant that the rope came into his hand a log floated by the other man. The thoughtless and confused bargeman instead of seizing the rope laid hold on the log. It was a fatal mistake; they were both in imminent peril, but the one was drawn to shore because he had a connection with the people on the land, whilst the other, clinging to the log, was borne irresistibly along, and never heard of afterwards.

Do you not see that here is a practical illustration? Faith is a connection with Christ. Christ is on the shore, so to speak, holding the rope of faith, and if we lay hold of it with the hand of our confidence, He pulls us to shore; but our good works having no connection with Christ, are drifted along down the gulf of fell despair. Grapple them as tightly as we may, even with hooks of steel, they cannot avail us in the least degree. You will see, I am sure, what I wish to show to you.”

2 Cor. 5:7 “For we live by faith, not by sight.”

So let us walk by faith, not by physical sight, but by spiritual sight. That's what faith is – spiritual sight.

Believing is seeing. By believing in Jesus, we will see Him. Let's continue to fix our spiritual eyes on Him, and keep on walking the walk of faith.

