

3 Marks of Those Truly “Living by Faith”

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What does it mean to “live by faith?”

The phrasing of the question is important for at least two reasons. First of all, notice that the question isn’t, “*What does it mean to have faith?*” That’s because phrasing it like this – living by faith – emphasizes the fact that true faith is not confined to the realm of intellect. True faith is not just agreeing with a certain set of facts, but instead is about walking, moving, deciding, and acting in a specific kind of way. As Christians, we aren’t just people who “have faith” as if *faith* is merely something to be possessed like the latest model of phone or a piece of art we hang on the wall; instead, as Christians we know that real and true faith works itself out in big and small ways every single day. Or to put it another way, we don’t just possess faith – faith possesses us.

But there is a second reason the phrasing of the question is important, and that’s because this is how the Bible talks about it. Not once, not twice, but three times the New Testament quotes a somewhat obscure Old Testament reference from Habakkuk. In fact, so important is this little phrase that it serves as a part of Paul’s main idea statement for the entire Book of Romans.

Of course, if you asked a random set of people that question – *what does it mean to live by faith?* – you might get all kinds of answers. Some might say it means that you never have any questions or doubts. Others might argue that you regularly stand in the presence of miracles. Still others might say it means you are able to call things into being that aren’t there – health, wealth, financial prosperity and the like. But once again, if this phrase is so important in the Bible, then we should look to the places where it’s specifically mentioned to know – and then to live – by faith:

1. Confidence.

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: **The righteous will live by faith** (Rom. 1:16-17).*

To live by faith means to live in confidence. But the confidence is not just an overall sense of self-worth and accomplishment. The confidence the Christian lives in by faith is confidence in the gospel. That’s what Paul was referring to here – not that he was a good preacher, or that he could accomplish anything, or that he would never meet opposition, but rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful. So powerful, in fact, that it will be used in the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the purposes of God.

When we live by faith, it means we live in confidence that the gospel is not only true, but that the gospel is powerful.

2. Rest.

*For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written, Everyone who does not do everything written in the book of the law is cursed. Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law because **the righteous will live by faith** (Gal. 3:10-11).*

Oh, how exhausting it is to try and live to justify oneself. How utterly tiresome it is in every relationship, in every conversation, in every meeting to feel as though you have to prove that you are smart or clever or worthwhile in some way. But when we live by faith, we are freed from that compulsion. We are freed from the need to try and justify ourselves before God, and because we are, we can live in a state of rest that Jesus has done all the justifying there is to do.

Living by faith, then, means we live in a state of rest because of the finished work of Jesus Christ.

3. Endurance.

For you need endurance, so that after you have done God's will, you may receive what was promised.

*For yet in a very little while,
the Coming One will come and not delay.*

But my righteous one will live by faith;
*and if he draws back,
I have no pleasure in him.*

But we are not those who draw back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and are saved (Heb. 10:36-39).

And then there's this. Perhaps the simplest mark of living by faith – that we just keep going. We persevere. We endure, all the way to the end. Certainly, all of us have had a good, hard lesson in endurance over the past year. We have all been hit with challenges from all sides – financially, emotionally, relationally, and more. And though we might not experience the same overt challenges to just give up in the near future, they will still be there.

But those that live by faith continue in the faith. They endure.

Let us then, Christians, not think that living by faith means a lack of challenges, lack of questions, or lack of trouble. But instead, let us embrace this confidence in the gospel, this resting in Jesus, and this endurance that comes through living in faith.