

Podcast Episode 5: Faith

QUESTION: What is faith, and how do we exercise great faith?

DENVER: Everything begins with faith. You don't skip to knowledge. You begin with faith and you progress. The first Lecture on Faith is essentially asserting the primacy of faith as an operative principle of power that exists with God and with all of us.

Okay, you've left home and you've come here. While you're here, your home exists only as a matter of faith to you. You believe it exists. You intend to drive back there. And your family that's there, and your dog that's there, and that infernal parrot that now can mimic the low battery signal on the fire alarm-- she's there too. And so it's a matter of faith that despite the fact that I am here and out of her presence, my bird is waiting for me when I get home.

What you find in really young children is that they don't have the capacity to entertain the fact that it still exists. When it's gone, it's gone forever. And the child-- it takes a while before the child has confidence that what gets removed from their sight continues to exist outside of the presence of their actual observation. It's one of those childhood development things.

Well, God's beyond that. Everything that exists-- faith and faith only-- and I'm using a compilation that was published, I don't know, it's from the Brigham Young University archive-- I just printed it out. In mine, it's verse 11-- excuse me, it's verse 10 of Lecture 1: "*It is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action, in them.*" That is, in all men, but is also the principle by which everything is moved into action.

Verse 12: "*Faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns, so it is in spiritual; for the Savior has said, that truly, that he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.*"

"*Through faith,*" in verse 14, "*Through faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God: so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*"

"*All things in heaven,*" in verse 15, "*or earth, or under the earth, exists by reason of faith as it existed in HIM*" [sic]-- Him being God.

17: "*Who cannot see, that if God framed the worlds by faith, that it is by faith that he exercises power over them, and that faith is the principle of power? And if the principle of power, it must*

be so in man as well as in the Deity? This is the testimony of all the sacred writers and the lessons which they have endeavored to teach to man."

You're acting, everything that you're doing-- the education that you got, the employment that you have, the plans that you undertake, the things that you design to do-- are all a product of your faith. You are a being filled with, animated by, and continually upholding everything in your life by your faith. And yet you don't have the faith to see it.

You are a creature of faith. All of you are. And you always have been, and you always will be. Do not be doubtful, but be believing. You are here by reason of God's faith. And you have faith to do the things that you do, continually. Every movement you undertake, every plan you make, is based upon the faith that you have.

Let's skip to the 2nd Lecture. This is the 2nd verse: *"We here observe that God is the only supreme governor, and independent being, in whom all fullness and perfection dwell; who is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life; and that in Him every good gift, and every good principle dwells; that he is the father of lights: In him the principle of faith dwells independently; and he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings centers, for life and salvation."*

Did you get that? It's not your bishop. It's not Hugh Nibley. It's not your stake president. It's not the Catholic Priest down the street, the Pope in Rome, or the President of the Church in Salt Lake. It's no man! The principle of faith must be grounded in God, the Supreme Governor. Because if your faith is grounded in anyone, or anything else, you cannot have the faith necessary to attain to salvation. You need to have a connection with heaven.

The scriptures are the authorized accounts given to us that testify to these things. The *Lectures on Faith* are trying to set it forth in a comprehensive way so that we can all get it.

Which brings us then to the 3rd Lecture on Faith. Verse 2 of Lecture 3: *"Let us here observe, that three things are necessary, in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation."* Faith in God-- not in man, not in men, not in an institution, not in some magic talisman. Faith in God. You have to exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

There are three things: *"First, the idea that he actually exists"* [verse 3]. You can get that from someone else. *"Secondly, a correct idea of his character, perfections and attributes"* [verse 4]. Any errand that prevents you from having faith; therefore, in order to get that right, it's going to require something of you in the way of study and effort. Look at the word. They italicized it. "A

correct idea of His character, perfections and attributes.” That’s what you need to study to show what it is you’re going to have faith in.

“Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing, is according to his will” [verse 5]. You must know this. And you cannot cover the gap by lying to yourself. You can’t lie to yourself pretending that you are on God’s course, and then have actual knowledge that the course of life you’re pursuing is according to His will. Nor can you depend entirely upon what other people are telling you. You’re supposed to be asking and getting answers from God. And the answers from God are going to tell you what you need to do. And the sacrifices that He will require of you are unique to you. Because the contribution that you can make for the salvation of yourself and others is unique to you.

There are things that you and only you can do. And if you will sign up with God, He will have you do them. And you may find yourself doing things you would rather prefer not doing. It doesn’t matter. If you have faith in Him and you do what He asks, you’ll know that the course you’re pursuing is according to His will. And doing things He asks of you according to His will invariably produce faith. And they produce faith unto salvation. Because it always grows. Light grows or dims. It never stays static. Therefore, when you set on this course, you never turn back. If you turn back you lose everything that you’ve gained up to that point.

Look at verse 5: *“For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding, it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness under the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Therefore, these three things you need to know: God exists. You need to study until you have a correct understanding of His “character, perfections and attributes”, and then you have to live your life so that you actually know that the course you are leading in your life conforms to what He would have.

When you exercise the required faith to permit Him to step out from behind the veil, like the brother of Jared, He’ll do that too. He’s no respecter of persons. You should not question what your privileges are, nor how far you are authorized to exercise faith in Him, or whether you’re authorized to do it at all.

Joseph Smith understood the correct doctrine and he’s trying to give you the character, the nature, the attributes of God. Because until you get that correct, you’re not going to have the power to exercise faith in Him-- which is why you’re going to encounter some amount of resistance between what it is that you need to believe in, and what it is that everyone else in your

generation may believe in. It doesn't matter. The responsibility is placed upon you to understand what is truth and what is not. And you have to choose, and you have to sort it out, and you have to come to the correct conclusion. Because it is only by exercising faith in the correct conclusion that you manage to align yourself with that narrow window through which the heavens are open, and up which Jacob's ladder is found to be scaled.

The 6th Lecture-- verse 1: *"Having treated, in the preceding lectures, of ideas of the character, perfections and attributes of God, we next proceed to treat of the knowledge which persons must have, that the course of life which they pursue is according to the will of God, in order that they may be enabled to exercise faith in Him unto life and salvation."*

You see, the course in life that you pursue, you have to know is according to the will of God. *"Such was and always will be the situation of the saints of God, that unless they have an actual knowledge that the course that they are pursuing is according to the will of God, they will grow weary in their minds and faint"* [verse 4].

That's the problem with many of us. We grow weary in our minds and faint because we don't know that the course we are pursuing is according to God. Don't grow weary. Stay on that course. We ought to fear God more than we fear the approval or disapproval, the criticism, the ostracism-- we ought to love God and fear Him. Because it's our relationship to Him and Him alone that matters. And I don't care what the cost is that you count up.

Knowledge of God is worth whatever price you pay no matter when, no matter what, no matter how often. If he takes away your family and he gives you a new family, and then he takes that family away again, it is a small price to pay. God will ask of you whatever He will ask of you. The only thing I can say is, no price you pay while tabernacled here is so great that you should withhold it from the altar. Give what He asks. Because it's only by giving what He asks of you that you can have faith in Him unto life and salvation.

You have to know-- this is verse 2 of Lecture 6: You have to have *"an actual knowledge...that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God, without which no person can obtain eternal life."* You simply can't do it. Because the place in which you find God, will always be, as to this world, lonely. You are necessarily going to become a stranger and a sojourner here. But you take up residency somewhere else. And you're not left without comfort. It's just that that comfort consists in something that is more refined and more pure, and you're left here muddling through with people who will not understand you and who will think you are eccentric. They'll misjudge your motives, they'll misjudge your heart, they'll misjudge your ambition, they'll misjudge

everything there is about you. And Christ said, *“Rejoice, and be exceedingly happy... for so persecuted they the prophets before you”* [Matt 5:12].

“This requires more than mere belief, or supposition that he’s doing the will of God, but actual knowledge: realizing that when these sufferings are ended he will enter into eternal rest; and be a partaker of the glory of God” [verse 5]. It does require more than mere belief or supposition, but it’s obtained in accordance with this set of principles. And it is purchased by the same price paid by each of us, in turn, on the same conditions. And no one gets in on any other condition.

Your life may be uniquely situated. You may be inside an environment, a group of friends, a family, a neighborhood, an association that is completely unique to you and has nothing in common with anyone else in this room. Inside of that, whatever the sacrifices are that are required, it will be exactly the same as it was for Moses, who gave up everything, and then gave up everything again. It will be the same as for Abraham, who gave up everything, and then gave up everything again. It will be the same. And you’ll be called upon to make a sacrifice. Because knowing God requires obedience to Him, and sacrifice to Him-- and not to some man. Certainly not to me; but not to a Pope, not to a President, not to a Priest-- to Him.

“When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has, for the truth’s sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make the sacrifice, because he seeks to do His will, he does know most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not, seek his face in vain” [verse 7]. And I’ll tell you what is vain-- it is in *“vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtain faith in God and favor with Him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto Him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of Him”* [verse 8].

Verse 10: *“Those, then, who make the sacrifice will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God, and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* This is the last half of that paragraph 10: *“But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependant upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith; therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority to do so, and without this guarantee faith could not exist.”* It is a cause and effect. These things are inextricably linked together.

If you make the sacrifice, you can enjoy the faith. But all of us-- every one of us-- were and are dependant upon making the sacrifice. If we don't do that, we are simply unable to lay hold upon eternal life. And the revelations of God don't guarantee you eternal life on any other condition. The way to preserve yourself consists in having faith in God. And the conditions upon which faith in God is obtained are exactly the same for you as they were for Moses and Abraham, and all of those who have ever had faith, Joseph Smith being the latest great example of that.

The 7th Lecture on Faith, 2nd paragraph: *"As we have seen in our former lectures, that faith was the principle of action and of power in all intelligent beings, both in heaven and on earth."* It both motivates you to act, and it produces power when you act. In that same 2nd paragraph, it says: *"No world has yet been framed that was not framed by faith."* God operates on the principle of faith. As I pointed out last night, all of us do, too. It's just inevitable.

"All the hosts of heaven," (this is in paragraph 4): *"It is by reason of this power (faith), that all the hosts of heaven perform their works of wonder, majesty and glory: Angels move from place to place by virtue of this power."* And then 5, it says: *"The whole visible creation, as it now exists, is the effect of faith."*

16: *"These teachings of the Savior most clearly show unto us the nature of salvation; and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them-- that he proposed to make them like unto himself; and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings: And for any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved; and to be unlike them is to be destroyed: and on this hinge turns the door of salvation."* No human can be saved until that human is like God.

This is paragraph 17, about I don't know, a third of the way down: *"It was this system of faith-- it begins with faith, and continues by faith; and every blessing which is obtained, in relation to it, is the effect of faith whether it pertains to this life or that which is to come.-- To this, all the revelations of God bear witness. If there were children of promise, they were the effects of faith: not even the Savior of the world excepted."* The savior was produced as an act of faith. *"And through the whole history of the scheme of life and salvation, it is a matter of faith: every man received according to his faith: according as his faith was, so were his blessings and privileges; And nothing was withheld from him when his faith was sufficient to receive it."*

This is the way in which God is no respecter of persons. This is the way in which you, if you will lay down your ignorance, if you will repent, and turn to God, this is the way in which you can find yourself also the inheritor of blessings and privileges which God will not withhold from anyone who understands and gathers to themselves the light and the truth that comes through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. *"By their faith, they could obtain heavenly visions, the*

ministering of angels, have knowledge of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, of God the judge of all, of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and become familiar with the third heavens, see and hear things which were not only unutterable, but were unlawful to utter” [verse 17].

Later, Joseph Smith made a comment about-- “Paul said he knew a man who was caught up to the third heaven, but I know a man who was caught up to the seventh heaven. It is sufficient, however, if you commune with those beings.”

Paragraph 18: *“How were they to obtain the knowledge of God? (for there is a great difference between believing in God and knowing Him: knowledge implies more than faith. And notice, that all things that pertain to life and godliness, were given through the knowledge of God;) the answer is given, through faith they were to obtain this knowledge; and having power by faith to obtain the knowledge of God, they could obtain all other things which pertain to life and godliness.”*

20: *“To obtain the faith,” and this is a ways into that paragraph: Because “To obtain the faith by which he could the enjoy the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, He had to suffer the loss of all things: this is the reason that the Former Day Saints knew more, and understood more of heaven, and heavenly things than all others beside, because this information is the effect of faith--to be obtained by no other means... Where faith is there will be the knowledge of God also, with all things which pertain thereto-- revelations, visions, and dreams, as well as every necessary thing in order that the possessors of faith may be perfected and obtain salvation... And he who possesses it will, through it, obtain all necessary knowledge and wisdom until he shall know God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom He has sent: whom to know is eternal life.”*

You determine how much light and truth you will receive, and it's predicated upon a law that was ordained before the foundation of the world. Anyone of you can obey it. God is no respecter of persons, and you are authorized to exercise faith in Him unto salvation. You are authorized to exercise faith in Him until you know Him. You are authorized to see His face and know that He is. Every one of you.

If you will receive it, faith in Him comes by hearing the word of God-- not by a pretender, not by someone guessing, not by someone offering up their theory of how this stuff ought to be understood, not by someone sighting you a bibliography-- but hearing the word of God delivered as He would have it delivered by whomever it is that He may choose to deliver it. If you receive it, then you might have faith, and that too, in the Son of God, that you might receive Him. But if you will not-- if you will harden your hearts, if you will blind your minds, if you will not receive

what He offers from His mouth in your day, then you don't have faith in Him. And you will fall short of that faith which will bring you to become His son and His daughter.

It is that way. It has always been that way. It will always be that way. There is no other test. Because any of you who will hear and then who will hearken unto their words, you become His seed. You have to hear it, you have to hear it from someone who has been sent. But it does you no good at all if you will not hearken to it. Because it is in the hearkening that you will meet God. You will find redemption. You will hear his voice, and you will become a holy vessel because His word will be animated in you. And you will have no doubts about your salvation, because you will hear Him declare it in His own voice. And you will know that He's no respecter of persons. And you'll know that you, like any other person, can come unto Him and look to Him and Him alone for your salvation, and not be dependant upon any other person or system.

Enoch is told at this point that in this walk that he is assuming, being a person slow of speech and a reluctant draftee, that the mountains will flee before him, and the rivers will turn their course, and Enoch will abide in Him, and the Lord, uh-- Enoch will abide in the Lord and the Lord will abide in Enoch. Well, now this is a statement that is made in 65, but you have to understand that it is some several hundred years later before the word of Enoch has the effect that the Lord says will take place at this point. Because the Lord, who has all things in front of Him, can see where this is going. But Enoch, who is down here, though a seer, isn't there yet. It's not pixie dust. It is acquired in exactly the same way in every generation, by every one who acquires it, and is acquired through the exercise of faith. And the way by which people exercise faith is to conform their actions to the things that they believe in-- even when the actions that they take are difficult, even with what the Lord asks of you something which you're very reluctant to lay on the altar, even when everyone will hate you for what it is that you do.

Saving faith is so rare precisely because it requires courage to engage the opposition in this world, and to cheerfully endure the abuse, lies, threats and fiery darts sent by those who fear your faith, above everything. Faith in God will save you through His grace. It can render every weapon in this world, and hell, powerless. But it takes courage.

Go about your life boldly, nobly, valiantly, because it is only through valiance in the testimony of Jesus Christ that you can hope to secure anything. Not valiance in your fidelity to anything other than Jesus Christ. The fact of the matter is that faith must be based in Him, and him alone. And it's time now that we stop running away from the conflict. It's time for us to be valiant once again.

Do not be fearful. Cowardice and fear are the opposite of faith. If Joseph Smith, in the ruins of 1838, can write the testimony that we find in the history of Joseph Smith, as an act of audacious

courage and faith and confidence in the work of God that he was pursuing, despite the ruin that he saw the church existed in at that moment-- if Joseph could do that, why can't you?

The foregoing remarks are excerpts from Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1, entitled "Be of Good Cheer" given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013; Talk #2, entitled "The Lectures on Faith" given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28th, 2013; Talk #3, entitled "Repentance" given the next day in Logan, UT on September 29th, 2013; and Talk #7, entitled "Christ, Prototype of the Saved Man" given in Ephraim, UT on June 28, 2014; and also his talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Revisited", given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14th, 2011 and his Opening Remarks given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, Idaho on September 3rd, 2017.