

“Be Thou Faithful Unto Death”

Introduction. Christ gave the church in Smyrna a very important command in Revelation 2:10. My usual exposure to Revelation 2:10 when I was younger was simply one of the steps of obedience to Christ. But you can see the importance of the concept and command to God by noting that “faith,” “faithful,” or “faithfulness” occurs 348 times in the Bible.

If faith is not maintained, it will be lost. We must not only be saved from our sins, but we must stay saved. We must not only obey Christ, but we must keep on obeying. The life of faith begun is worthless if it is not completed (Colossians 2:5; Hebrews 6:11-12; 12:1-2). What happens to our faith is crucial, so it is critical to see how you can have lifelong faith.

I. ***The Growth Of Our Faith***

- A. Even after experience should have matured our faith considerably, it may in fact still be small (Matthew 8:25-26; 14:31).
- B. Desire for greater faith characterizes the faithful Christian (Mark 9:24; Luke 17:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:3). Our faith grows by hearing (Mark 4:20; John 8:47; Romans 10:17) and meditating (Psalm 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 148) on the word.

II. ***The Testing Of Our Faith***

- A. We should not feel remorse for circumstances or shrink from any hardship that strengthens our faith (Hebrews 12:4-11; James 1:2-3; 1 Peter 1:6-7). They sharpen our focus for eternity (2 Corinthians 4:8, 16-18).
- B. It is not easy in crisis to develop strong faith, but we prepare for “big” tests of faith by daily triumphing in “small” tests of faith (Matthew 25:21; Luke 19:17). The exhortation of Revelation 2:10 involved enduring persecution for a short time to win a crown of life (2 Timothy 3:12; 4:7-8).

III. ***The Addition Of Our Faith***

- A. People’s definition of “faith” is too limiting. It is more than conviction or confidence in something unseen. It compels us to work (James 2:26; cf. Luke 3:8-14; 7:47-50).
- B. Faith by itself is not enough. It is complemented and added to with other qualities in our inner character (2 Peter 1:5-11).

IV. ***The Steadfastness Of Our Faith***

- A. It is possible to have believed “in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:1-2), so every Christian needs to be exhorted to “stand fast in the faith” (1 Corinthians 16:13).

B. We cannot always control circumstances, but we can decide to stand firm. Faith like Job's cannot be shaken, because it is the result of having been shaken (Job 1:22; 2:10).

Conclusion. Faith itself looks forward. It has to do with future realities (Romans 8:24; 2 Corinthians 5:6-7). If we concentrate solely on the past and the present, we could lose our salvation (Hebrews 3:6, 14). The "end" of our salvation awaits those who have remained faithful (1 Peter 1:5, 9). J. Oswald Sanders said, "Every one of us is as close to God as he or she has chosen to be." The basis of that choice is faith.