

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

Unit II Key 2

FAITH

SCRIPTURE PRINCIPLE: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

Faith is truly an awesome power. By faith we are saved from our sin. Faith changes our lives. Faith makes us willing to be obedient to the Lord. Faith assures us that God loves us, and it makes us willing to love others. Faith tells us that we can call upon the Lord in every situation in life, and expect His help.

Faith cannot be earned; it is a free gift given by God's mercy. Nothing in us has the ability to have faith; the Holy Spirit brings every bit of it to us. Nothing in us makes it possible to have faith in Jesus, repent of our sins, accept His forgiveness, or see the need of Him. The Holy Spirit plants faith in our hearts and grows it through the Word of God.

One common mistake is the idea that if we have accepted Jesus as our Savior, all our temptations will simply go away. When this does not happen, many people lose their faith, doubt their salvation, doubt God's power to change their lives, or wonder if they were "born that way".

These temptations do not easily go away for several reasons. One is because we are still sinners, even though we have been saved by Grace. We have received a new nature; but the old nature is still with us, has been with us since we were born, and has had a head start. The old nature has had lots of time to develop sinful habits, which have been reinforced by pleasurable sensations, and those habits are wired into the nerves of our brains. The new nature has to go to war against sinful habits that have had plenty of time to become entrenched.

Another reason temptations do not just go away is because we live in a sinful world. People will invent almost any idea to defend their self-will and oppose God's will. Unproven scientific theories are widely accepted because they protect human self-interests. History gets re-written to justify a life of sin. Empty philosophies make us feel better about ourselves, no matter how we are living. Society gives very little help to one who is sincerely seeking to live God's way.

The devil teams up with our own sinful nature and our environment to tempt us. Our temptations are no accident; the devil planned them. He knows all our weaknesses and triggers, and uses other people to persuade us to give in to temptation. He even uses people in the Church, who have weaknesses and triggers of their own, to trip up their brothers and sisters in Christ.

In spite of all the forces lined up against our faith, the Holy Spirit continues to grow it in our lives. Our part is to stay in the Word. When we use the Word to fight against temptation, we can have victory. Over time we experience our temptations becoming weaker and bad habits disappearing. Faith is truly the victory that overcomes the world (I John 5:4), because Christ has overcome sin, death, and the power of the devil on our behalf.

Faith grows in difficult circumstances. Faith is like a muscle; we grow physical muscles by resisting gravity or isometric force, and we grow our faith while resisting temptation. Sin often appears to be the path of least resistance; faith realizes that the path of least resistance leads only to trouble. Faith does not automatically resist temptation at first; only after persistently resisting temptation are we able to get rid of the sinful habit. Faith grows when we see Jesus showing Himself strong on our behalf.

For many years, *ssa/ma/tx* fantasies, lusts, and actions were how we comforted ourselves in order to avoid painful emotions. When we resist those temptations, we then have to face those emotions. Faith brings joy, but faith does not mean that we can avoid facing pain. Facing pain is often necessary to overcoming a habitual sin, is a sign that God is

working on our hearts, and is therefore a blessing. In the middle of pain, we can hear God speak to us. In the middle of pain, we can identify the lies of the enemy. In the middle of pain, the Holy Spirit can teach us things that we have no other way of learning. Jesus is waiting to meet us in the pain. We need faith in order to persist through the pain to the truth that will set us free.

Faith assures us that we can move mountains (Matthew 17:20-21). We have mountains of personal habits, negative thoughts, lies of the devil, wrong motivations, anger, anxiety, shame, depression, hostility towards others, grudges, and the list could go on. To overcome all of this, we may need to accept pain and believe by faith that the pain is both necessary and temporary. Faith tells us that we are weak and God is strong. Faith tells us that Jesus has already had the victory. He is right there in the trenches with us, warring on our behalf. He does for us what we could never do for ourselves.

SCRIPTURE Write out what each of these verses or passages mean to you and your situation.

Psalm 30:5

Hebrews 11:1

Proverbs 15:29

Romans 4:18-25

____growing

____dynamic

Please explain your answer.

6. Check which best describes the use you make of your faith during temptation:

____ never use it

____ use it on occasion

____ use it about half of the time

____ use it more often than not

____ use it most of the time

____ use it consistently, it has become an automatic reflex

Please explain your answer.

7. Are there any specific problems you are having with faith?

8. Can you give a specific example of where using your faith helped you?

9. What new things have you learned about faith?

10 On a scale of 1-10, how victorious have you been lately? Please explain your answer.

11. On a scale of 1-10, how much memory work have you done?

12. Did you use any memorized Scripture to battle temptation lately? What was the result?

13. How is your spiritual life in general, how are your private devotions, and how are things at your church/fellowship group?

Plan of Action: