



Foundational Faith

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(Matt 12:34)



The New Testament reveals that believers are in the process of perfecting their faith, “that we might see your face, and ***might perfect that which is lacking in your faith***” (1 Thess 3:10). By those words Paul expressed that it certainly is possible for Christians to experience a lack in the area of faith! Jude added that we ourselves are part of the building process of our faith, “But ye, beloved, ***building up yourselves on your most holy faith***” (Jude 20). Notice also that Jude characterizes our faith as “***most holy.***” But how can we build-up our faith? After all doesn't the Bible say that Jesus is, “***the author and finisher of our faith***” (Heb 12:2). So how exactly are we Christians supposed to build ourselves up in faith?

Jude identified a critical need in his very short letter concerning why he was writing to Christians, “it was ***needful*** for me to write unto you, and ***exhort*** you that ***ye should earnestly contend for the faith***” (Jude 3). Jude realized by the Holy Spirit that Christians would experience lack in their belief system and that they would need to “***contend*** for the faith!” The Apostle John added even more important information about faith. He explained that our faith is the absolute source of our victory, “this is the victory that overcometh the world, ***even our faith***” (1 John 5:4).

Jesus Himself explained the importance of a proper foundation, “he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that ***without a foundation built an house upon the earth***” (Luke 6:49). All of the New Testament authors emphasized the importance of Jesus as our primary foundation, “For other ***foundation*** can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 3:11). Therefore, as we build our faith upon the foundation of the Messiah we need to realize that our personal faith is the entity that attaches us to the foundation of the Lord; (see bolt sticking out of cement as pictured in upper right corner of page) further, we ourselves are accountable for the development of our own faith.

In point of fact, the Apostle Peter actually identified faith as the basic element in our system of beliefs, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your ***faith***” (2 Peter 1:5). Now let's stop just a second

Our faith is a foundation built upon Jesus.

Jesus – the “***Sure Foundation***”
“I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a ***sure foundation***” (Isa 28:16)



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here; we need to realize that Peter commanded that we "***add to your faith!***" The point is that one can only add to something that already exists! If you don't first possess an object you cannot add to it! You wouldn't say, "I am going to build an addition to my house" unless of course you already possessed a house in the first place! By definition, addition requires the preexistence of some basic object. According to Jesus, before a wise builder builds his house he first must lay the proper foundation, "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: 48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock" (Luke 6:47-48). Therefore according to the Lord, the foundation is the most important and basic element of any type of construction. Now let's consider what Peter may have meant when he taught that we should, "***add to your faith!***"

If faith is truly the foundation of our belief system which is built upon Jesus, then we better be certain that we are securely attached to the foundation. Notice what David wrote about foundations, "***If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?***" (Ps 11:2-3). In so writing, David warned that the enemy's desire is to destroy us by detaching us from our very foundations!

According to the New Testament our faith is the entity upon which the enemy focuses his attacks, "***Above all, taking the shield of faith***, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph 6:16). Where do you think that the enemy



wants to attack

Christians? The enemy always focuses his attacks at the point where we are attached to our foundation, which is the faith of Jesus!

We need to realize that our faith is not any different from the faith of the apostles. Peter wrote "***to them (meaning us) that have obtained like (meaning the same) precious faith*** with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). There is no difference in our faith and the faith that the apostles had. The Apostle James claims that we are rich in faith, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world ***rich in faith***, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love



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him" (James 2:5). Nevertheless, sometimes we do not feel "**rich in faith!**" We sometimes wonder, "Who were those people that were so 'rich in faith?' What must they have been like?"

In this Bible Study we are going to take a look at an Old Testament individual who was clearly "rich in faith." She is listed in the faith chapter as one of those who "**through faith** subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 **Women received their dead raised to life again**" (Heb 11:33-35). Even though we do not know her name, her story can certainly teach us many wonderful lessons concerning the great faith that she exercised! Our woman of faith is actually the last individual mentioned in that previous list of Biblical heroes and heroines.

There was a certain woman from Shunem which was a small village just off of the road between Mount Carmel (*near the Mediterranean sea*) and the city of Jezreel; the prophet Elisha regularly traveled that specific road since he spent a great deal of time on Mount Carmel. In the Shunem village there was a God-fearing couple barren and without children. It is clear from the story that they must have regularly demonstrated hospitality toward strangers. In the course of time they came to know Elisha the prophet; the woman regularly invited him to eat in their home. In time she even asked her husband to build an upper room on top of their house so that the man of God could use the extra room for lodging whenever he passed through their village. Elisha received their offer and regularly stayed with them.



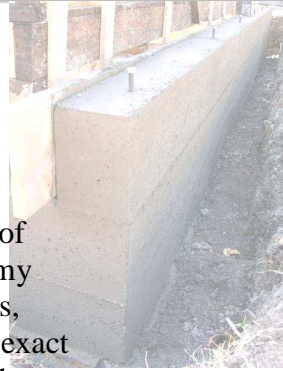
One day Elisha felt especially gracious concerning this couple. He was moved by the Spirit of God and naturally wanted to know if he could somehow perform a kindness to this woman. She replied, "I dwell among mine own people" (2 Kings 4:13). In essence she conveyed to the prophet, "all of my needs are met. I have need of nothing."

The Spirit of God was unwilling to let this issue escape from the heart of Elisha who asked his servant, "What then is to be done for her?" (2 Kings 4:14). The servant gave Elisha a discerning answer. He told Elisha that it was not any material thing that the woman could possibly desire; instead, she and her husband were without any children. The servant naturally understood that barrenness was a reproach unto that woman in her society. The whole concept of having children was to perpetuate their seed and thereby pass down the inheritance that the family obtained from the hand of God.



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Not long thereafter, Elisha told the woman, "About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son" (2 Kings 4:16). Incredulously the woman said, "Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid" (2 Kings 4:16). In other words, "Don't play with my emotions on such a sensitive subject!" A son was obviously the exact thing that this woman had most desired all the days of her life. For the prophet to get her hopes up on such an important matter and then to be denied would be more than she could bear. Nonetheless, the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, exactly as Elisha had prophesied!

The miracle child naturally grew to become a delight to his parents. One sunny morning the young boy went out into the fields to be with his father who was gathering in the harvest. The heat somehow adversely affected the child with some form of a heat stroke and the boy complained to his father of a severe headache. The father was concerned and instructed a servant to carry the boy home to his mother. The child lay in her lap until noon when he died! She took the dead boy in her arms up the stairs into the room that her husband had built for Elisha. She laid the little corpse on the bed of the man of God; she shut the door and immediately departed.

The woman ran and told her husband that she needed a donkey and a servant to drive her to find the man of God on Mount Carmel which was about fifteen or twenty miles away. Her husband asked why she was going to see the man of God since it was not a New Moon or a Sabbath. The woman in essence replied, "It shall be well. (*shalom*)" (2 Kings 4:23). At the minimum her reply was certainly an inaccurate answer to her husband's question.

A few hours later as Elisha looked out on the road that led up to Mount Carmel, he could see the familiar cart of the Shunemite woman and a servant. He knew that something was obviously wrong because the woman's presence on the mount was unusual. Therefore, Elisha sent his servant to meet her and ask, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, "It is well. (*shalom*)" (2 Kings 4:26). Now remember this is a minimum of two to three hours after her son died in her very lap and we find the woman telling Elisha's servant, "It is well!" This is yet another instance where our woman of faith spoke out something that was not entirely precise.

As soon as she met Elisha, she fell at his feet and took hold of him. Elisha's servant thought that her emotional behavior was inappropriate so he stepped in to scold her and to pull her away from the prophet. But Elisha cried out, "Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her:





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and *the LORD hath hid it from me*, and hath not told me" (2 Kings 4:27). The woman cried out to Elisha, "Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?" (2 Kings 4:28). Elisha remembered what she had long ago told the prophet when he first prophesied to her that she would have a son. We might remember that her inner thoughts were, "Don't play with my emotions especially concerning such a sensitive subject!"

Surely by this point the Lord must have revealed to Elisha what had happened to the child. Now observe Elisha's words to Gehazi, "Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child. 30 And the mother of the child said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her" (2 Kings 4:29-30). Ultimately, Elisha raised the child back to life. You should note that Elisha never once mentioned the death of the child. We will soon come back and discover why.

Did you notice throughout this entire episode that the woman never once told anybody that her son had died! Let's notice specifically every one of her statements after the death of her son:

- To her husband she replied, "It shall be well. (*shalom*)" (2 Kings 4:23)
- To Elisha's servant Gehazi she said, "It is well. (*shalom*)" (2 Kings 4:26)
- Even to Elisha she said, "Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?" (2 Kings 4:28).

The woman certainly understood that her son was a miraculous gift from heaven; further, she had faith that if the Lord had given her such a wonderful gift in the first place the Giver-of-Life would surely not have taken away that precious gift! Our woman of faith believed so strongly in God's gift from the prophet that she would not even allow her words to agree that her gift was no more! Instead she steadfastly continued to reply, "Shalom!" (*In other words, 'All is well! In my life there is complete peace! There is nothing missing and nothing broken!' If you would like to learn more about "Shalom" you can obtain a copy of the Rivkah Ministries Bible Study entitled, "Empowered to Prosper" <http://www.rivkah.org/PDFs/031023.pdf> You may obtain a copy of that study from [Http://www.Rivkah.org](http://www.Rivkah.org).) The prophet certainly understood the power of the spoken word and for that very reason he would not speak of the boy's death either! Further, he instructed his servant not to speak to anyone along the path. He told him, "go thy way: if thou meet any man, *salute him not*; and if any salute thee, *answer him not again*" (2 Kings 4:29).*

What we discover is that the woman's faith was speaking! Remember that the faith chapter says that "*through faith*" these individuals accomplished marvelous things and, "*Women received their dead raised to life again*" (Heb 11:33-35). The words that the woman of faith chose to use were actually outward expressions of her inward faith! In another place Paul teaches, "the righteousness which is of *faith speaketh*" (Rom 10:6). Paul also wrote "*I believed, and therefore have I spoken*; we also *believe, and therefore speak*" (2 Cor



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4:13). Paul was referencing in that specific passage what he had earlier revealed to the Romans, "if thou shalt *confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus, *and shalt believe in thine heart* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom 10:9). The clear message that we can dig out of the Scripture is that faith speaks! Jesus' words on this very subject are, "*but shall believe that those things which he saith* shall come to pass; *he shall have whatsoever he saith*" (Mark 11:23). The woman's words of faith were simply, "Shalom!" or "All is well!"

From this story we should learn that just like the Shunemite woman we cannot let our mouth speak out concerning any negative circumstances that our natural eyes observe; instead, we must speak out the faith which is placed in our heart from God's word! This is exactly the spiritual strategy that the Shunemite woman employed; the resulting fruit from the woman's faith was that she received her son back to life. She spoke out her faith, "That the *communication (speaking) of thy faith may become effectual* by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus" (Philem 6)! In so doing, she became an example of the passage, "The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook" (Prov 18:4).

Jesus taught that facts must give way to the truth, "thy word is truth" (John 17:17), and not the other way around! In other words truth can never be changed by contrary facts! If God's word is truth then we must believe what we read and not what our eyes see, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). Christians must learn to trust in the word of God, "God is not a man, that he should lie" (Num 23:19). It is not so much that God has chosen never to lie; as the scriptures agree, "God, that cannot lie" (Titus 1:2); instead, God cannot lie because whatever He says comes to pass, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but *it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*" (Isa 55:11). God's word is certain and as the scripture says, "For ever, O LORD, *thy word is settled in heaven*" (Ps 119:89). When God speaks, things happen, "And God said, Let there *be light*: and *there was light*" (Gen 1:3). Now remember that God promised this woman through His prophet that she would have a son, "About this season, according to the time of life, *thou shalt embrace a son*" (2 Kings 4:16).

The Shunemite woman held tightly to that promise from God! This is the secret to the power behind the woman, "Who *through faith*" (Heb 11:33) received her, "dead raised to life again" (Heb 11:35). By faith she trusted in the promise that originated with God! In spite of negative facts to the contrary, she would not allow herself to come to the point where she admitted that she did not have a son! As a result, the prophet saw her faith when she said, "*As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. (It is important for us to realize here that these specific words formed the exact phrase that Elisha had earlier spoken to Elijah on three different occasions the day that Elijah was taken into heaven! The woman essentially meant that she would never stop believing in the words of the prophet that originated from God!)* And he arose, and followed her" (2 Kings 4:29-30).



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This woman's faith is a living example of the Scripture, "***Death and life are in the power of the tongue***: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof" (Prov 18:21).

Just like the prophet saw the woman's faith, so too our faith is also visible to Jesus. Luke records, "when ***he saw their faith***" (Luke 5:20). Mark points out the events of this same event "they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5 ***When Jesus saw their faith***" (Mark 2:4-5). The point is that visible faith moves Jesus! God is pleased by faith! Notice the scripture says this very thing, "***without faith it is impossible to please him***" (Heb 11:6). On the contrary, with faith it certainly is possible to please God!

Everything changes after faith is really birthed in us! Notice what Paul says, "***after that faith is come***, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal 3:25). There was a time before that faith came, "But ***before faith came***, we were kept under the law, ***shut up unto the faith*** which should afterwards be revealed" (Gal 3:23). From those two passages we should realize that everything in life is part of two distinct worlds: "***after that faith is come***" and "***before faith came!***" We must essentially transform our mind to stop reacting to the outward world according to the rules of "***before faith came***;" instead, we must react to the situations that come up in our life according to the rules of "***after that faith is come!***" In Christ we are a new creation!

In essence, faith is the visible matter-of-fact manifestation of your confidence in God and in His Word! With confidence in God's word we will be emboldened to advance by faith, "For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel . . . ***in confidence shall be your strength***" (Isa 30:15). God wants Christians to be confident in His promises in the Bible, "***For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken!***" (Prov 3:26). God wants us to dwell from day to day in the confidence that He is everything that we will ever need, "And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; ***yea, they shall dwell with confidence***" (Ezek 28:26). When we exist in this kind of living, new meaning comes out of the familiar passage, "Now faith is the substance (*confidence*) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1).

Many Scriptures literally jump off the page when we comprehend God's role in our daily living, "***Cast not away therefore your confidence***, which hath great recompense of reward. For ***ye have need of patience***, that, after ye have done the will of God, ***ye might receive the promise***. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now ***the just shall live by faith***" (Heb 10:35-39). In that second world Christians live by faith! This means that they have confidence in every word of God!

Do you have confidence in the word of God? Honestly, do you have confidence; if you do then like the Shunemite woman, you will certainly be willing to make a practical demonstration or expression of your faith, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). Confidence is the missing substance to our faith! Have you ever said something in faith and those around you looked at you like you are absolutely crazy! We should not be afraid of others looking at us as if we were nuts. Those who are living without God in their lives are the ones who truly are to be pitied! Instead, we should be turning the tables and telling



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someone who is distraught over a bad report, "Don't you know that He came to give you life and give it more abundantly? You need to trust in Jesus who died to give you salvation, delivery, healing, prosperity, and every other promise that can be found in the pages of the Bible!"

We cannot operate in faith unless we elevate our confidence, "Cast not away therefore your *confidence*, which hath great recompence of reward" (Heb 10:35). If you honestly and confidently believe that God will give you what He has promised in His Word then your faith will exhibit a practical demonstration of that belief. What is a practical demonstration or expression of your faith? Notice Abram's particular expression of faith, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, *Get thee out of thy country*, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, *unto a land that I will shew thee*: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. 4 *So Abram departed*, as the LORD had spoken unto him" (Gen 12:1-4). Abraham did not begin to reason within himself, "Maybe that really wasn't the voice of God. I better wait for a confirmation." We need to see nothing but what the LORD has spoken! We simply must do what the LORD said! Has the LORD spoken to you? If so, that is all that you need!

Like Abraham, we must be willing to step out on faith! Abraham did not know where he was going. The Scripture says, "unto a land that I *will shew* thee!" We must realize that, "*will shew*," was clearly a future tense expression in the ears of Abraham! Neither will God show us where we are going until we first move! Abraham did not see a thing yet he moved! God first required Abraham to step out on faith. God will not show us everything from the outset when He begins to speak to us; even when we step out on faith! If we know everything then we might begin to trust in our own understanding. When God first begins to work with us in the area of faith he does not show us everything that lies ahead! If we were to see all that lies ahead, we probably would not even take the first step! "*Trust in the LORD* with all thine heart; and *lean not unto thine own understanding*. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov 3:5-6).

Once we begin to really step out on faith that path is a one-way road; and, we can never turn back. We must determine to continue, "If ye *continue in the faith grounded and settled*, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col 1:23). To continue in faith is to be, "Rooted and built up in him, (*as a sure foundation*) and *stablished in the faith*" (Col 2:5-7)! This amounts to the "good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12)! Do you really walk by faith? We all need to "*Examine yourselves*, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Cor 13:5).

A firm foundation stands; so too, we need to "stand fast *in the faith*" (1 Cor 16:13); "for *by faith ye stand*" (2 Cor 1:24). Standing in faith is not some kind of a logical exercise; rather, we grow to learn





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to expect God to perform the miraculous in our lives, “your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but *in the power of God*” (1 Cor 2:5).

But how is it possible that we can build-up our faith? How exactly are we Christians supposed to build ourselves up in faith? Of course, our faith originates with Jesus, “*the author and finisher of our faith*” (Heb 12:2). Nevertheless, we are coworkers with the Almighty. The Scripture describes us as, “We then, *as workers together with him*” (2 Cor 6:1). We cannot just idly sit by and expect the Lord to finish the house of our faith; instead, we are to exercise faith as we work with the Lord to perfect our faith! Paul noted that we must be personally involved in the process of developing our faith, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 Remembering without ceasing *your work of faith*” (1 Thess 1:2-3).

We have observed faith from a perspective that you may not have previously considered, “So then *faith cometh by hearing*, and hearing *by the word of God*” (Rom 10:17). Don’t let the devil steal the word of faith that has been sown into your heart. You are responsible to prove the word of God whether or not it says what this study has claimed, “*Prove* all things; *hold fast that which is good*” (1 Thess 5:21).