

Study # 7

The Cruciformity of Faith

Now **faith** is being sure of **what we hope for** and certain of what we do not see. (Heb. 11:1)

But by **faith** we eagerly await through the Spirit **the righteousness for which we hope**. (Gal. 5:5)

As discussed in Study #6, we can define “righteousness” as Christ’s cruciformity. Thus, we see in the above verses that faith gives us an assurance, a certainty, now of **the cruciform nature that we hope for** — the nature that we eagerly await to have the Spirit work in us and that we long to be able to express in every aspect of our lives. Faith expressed in hope and eagerness for cruciform righteousness is seen vividly in Paul’s statements:

I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that **I may gain** Christ and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith**. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and **the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming like him in his death** . . . straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal . . . (Phil 3:8-14)

Consider, also how this goal of cruciformity and also our eager pursuit of this goal are presented in Hebrews as both the goal and also the expression of our **faith**:

Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and **let us run with perseverance** the race marked out for us. Let us **fix our eyes on Jesus**, the **author and perfecter of our faith**, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

“Author” — αρχηγος archegos #747

. . . Jesus is called the *archegos*, the originator of faith in Heb. 12:2. This may mean that Jesus is the one who initiates (and completes) faith in the souls of men. However . . . faith is treated as a way of life. The author summons a “cloud of witnesses” whose lives testify to the reward of the life of faith. Jesus stands as the the chief witness for it was **He who blazed the trail and gave us the ideal model of “the faith”**. This is why the author urges his readers to **fix their sights on Jesus**.¹ (emphases mine)

“Perfecter”— τελειωτης teliotes #5051

. . . A completer, perfecter, particularly one who reaches a goal so as to win the prize. . . The “faith”, then is a term for the course of life dictated by faith. . . . **Jesus is presented as the supreme model of this way of life. . . . By His unerring life of faith, Jesus made a way to God for those who follow Him.**²

Furthermore, not only is cruciformity a fundamental goal of faith, faith itself is to be cruciform. Throughout Hebrews 11, the “faith chapter”, there are numerous examples of faith shown in the obedient actions of Abel, Noah, Abraham, and others, whose actions and attitudes resemble those of Christ in His suffering and death:

- Abel offered one of his lambs as a sacrifice. (11:4)
- Noah’s obedience incited persecution and cost him much hard labour. (11:7)
- Abraham’s obedience involved his giving up his home and family and comforts, and also willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. (11:8, 9, 17)
- Moses “chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt.” (11:24)
- “Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned, they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword . . .” (11:35-37)

On the basis of the list above, we see faith including obedience to God and willingness to suffer to be obedient. Jesus’ faith is seen in His being the perfect

¹Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary:New Testament*, 262.

²Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary:New Testament*, 1374.

example of obedience to the point of death and His total surrender of all, including His physical life:

Jesus' fundamental stance, as a true human being and as God's Messiah, was **a posture of faithful obedience to God, expressed supremely in his death.**³ (emphasis mine)

Michael Gorman defines faith as a "total act of total surrender of the self to God and to the demand God makes on us as persons."⁴ Jesus' Cross is certainly a paradigm for our obedience and our total surrender to Him and thus helps us to understand and appropriate the meaning of faith. The following quote from Lambert Dolphin declares the humility and sacrificial aspects of the cruciform and paradigmatic faith of Jesus during His whole life: "Furthermore, Jesus lived His entire life on earth by faith in total dependence upon the Father who dwelt in Him, . . ."⁵

In conclusion, faith in God includes our total surrender to God's desire to conform us to the cruciform nature of Jesus, absolute dependence on God to work this transformation in us, and complete confidence "that he who began a good work in [us] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Phil 1:6)

"This is the victory that has overcome the world even our faith."(1 John 5:5) This verse can only become true if "our faith" is really the cruciform faith of Christ working in and through us.

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³Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 101.

⁴Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 97, 98.

⁵Lambert Dolphin, "Jesus, Son of God, Son of Man", www.ldolphin.org/accomplish.html.