

**Winter 2021 Newsletter**  
**Detroit Bible Students**  
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Biblenewsletter.org



## TRIUMPHANT FAITH

*“And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Save Lord; we perish. And he saith unto them, **Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?** Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.” Matthew 8:24-26*

It is impossible for us to come near to the Lord except as we shall exercise faith and trust in Him, in His goodness, in His power, in His wisdom, in His love. Faith is a matter of cultivation, of development. The same apostles who cried out in terror when the storm was upon the Sea of Galilee gradually grew stronger and stronger in faith until, as the records show, they could and did trust the Lord in His absence and where they could not trace Him. Thus, Peter, who in fear denied knowing his Lord, was able to proclaim Jesus boldly on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 3) and Paul and Silas could sing hymns in prison despite wounds received from being beaten for the witness of Christ. (Acts 16:16-34)

Similarly, it should be a part of our daily lesson to cultivate trust in the Lord, and to think of the experiences in the past in our lives and all of the lessons in His Word, that thus our faith may become rooted and grounded. We have been living through unusual and frightening times and, like the disciples in the boat, many of us may be crying out in fear, “Save, Lord, we perish!” or perhaps like the father who came to Jesus to ask for healing for his son, we might implore, “I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” (Mark 9:26)

Today there are no angels descending, there are no miraculous signs and wonders to anchor our faith, there is only the Bible and it is under attack. Surrounding us is an atmosphere of skepticism regarding all things scriptural. The infection of disbelief has been most virulent and has affected us all to some degree. We are bombarded from all sides with the attacks of secularism, modernism, evolution, and higher criticism. Is it any wonder that

so many are unsure about what they believe or whether they believe anything at all? In the last several decades everything religious from Biblical narratives to standards of morality have been challenged.

The religious landscape of the United States is changing at a rapid clip. In Pew Research Center telephone surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019, 65% of American adults described themselves as Christians when asked about their religion. This is down 12 percentage points over the past decade. Meanwhile, the religiously unaffiliated share of the population, consisting of people who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” rose from 17% in 2009 to 26% in 2019.

In past newsletters we have tried to show how the Bible provides its own substantial evidence of the accuracy of its record and the truth of its claim to being the Word of God. (See [biblenewsletter.org](http://biblenewsletter.org) – Creation’s Amazing Architect; The World’s Greatest Book; Bible Prophecy-Can it be Believed?) Does it still seem risky to put confidence in a book that so much of the world, while honoring, really doesn’t believe. How does one come to have a triumphant faith?

**“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17**

Faith needs a foundation. As a child, faith in one’s parent is founded upon the parent’s consistent love and care. The

foundation of Christian faith is the evidence of God's love and his plan for all mankind as shown in the Bible, but today the Bible is being minimized and undermined. Can one rest one's faith on it nevertheless? The question is, has the Bible so shaky a base that the challenges of evolution and modernism seem legitimate?

Dr. William R. Cooper has summed up the history of the Bible in unparalleled terms: "The history of the Bible has been one of constant crises and persecution. Around the world and down the centuries it has been sought out and burned—even along with its readers sometimes. It has been miscopied by the Alexandrian Gnostics; hacked to pieces by Marcion and his followers; allegorized to the point of meaninglessness by Origen and other 'church fathers;' locked up for 1000 years or more in Latin, with a deadly ban on any attempt to translate it; and slandered and ridiculed by secular scholarship with a vehemence and determination which is unheard of for any other written work. And yet, after 2000 years and more of such treatment, it has survived it all and is with us still, unruffled, unscorched, vindicated and translated into our own and many hundreds of other languages around the world." (The Authenticity of the Book of Genesis, page 170)

After centuries of such abuse, the New Testament ranks as the best-preserved writing of the ancient world, second only to the Hebrew Old Testament. The works of writers such as Homer, Socrates, or Plato, so authoritatively taught in schools, come from a mere handful of ancient manuscripts sometimes dating hundreds of years after the lifetime of the author. Whereas thousands of manuscripts of the Gospels, letters of the Apostles and Revelation have been scrupulously copied and preserved and the earliest found, date back to the middle 300's AD. Revelation was written in 96AD. From the first, the Bible's contention has been that it is the Word of God, (2 Timothy 3:14-17) and God has been its preserver despite all the efforts of man to destroy it and its influence.

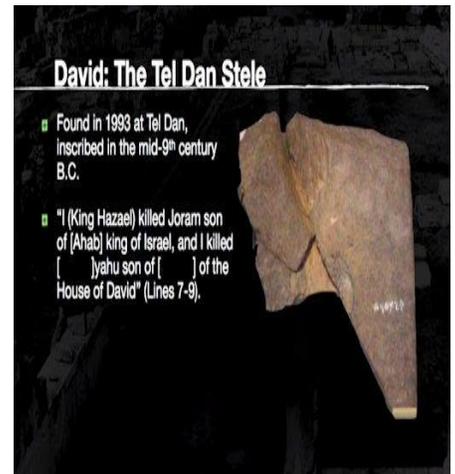
The Apostle Paul defined faith as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) He begins his examples of faith by showing us the faithfulness of God. "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible." The order and symmetry of the universe and the wonderful provisions for our life on planet Earth demonstrate the wisdom, love, and power of God. "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity" (Romans 1:20) Physicist Paul Davies, searching fruitlessly for evidence of evolution in other parts of the universe was forced to conclude, "Someone has fine-tuned the universe for life on earth." (Paul Davies, *The Cosmic Blueprint*, New York: Simon & Schuster,



1988, p.203) Anyone seeing a picture of the earth from space must agree that God made a truly beautiful home for man, provided with flora and fauna, abundant water and varied environments for man's life and enjoyment.

The Apostle continues (Hebrews 11) by recounting the acts of faith of the Ancients. He tells of Noah's building an ark because God told him he would need it to save his family. He steps us through the development of Abraham's faith until he was confident that if he sacrificed his son Isaac as God commanded him, (Romans 4:19) he would either restore Isaac from death or provide another sacrifice of his own. His faith was rewarded by being forever after called a "friend of God" (2 Chronicles 20:7, James 2:23) Then Paul tells of the works of faith of many others including Jacob and Moses, Joseph and David. Are these accounts merely fables?

Archeological evidence is coming steadily to light that confirms the historicity of the people and places named in the Bible. Until recently critics scoffed at the Bible's description of David as a great king—more likely, they thought, a petty prince. Then the [Tel Dan Stele](#) was found which refers to the "House of David" and once again the Bible narrative is vindicated.



What about the centerpiece of our faith, Jesus. Did he really exist or was he also one of the fictional characters? We have recently celebrated the birthday of Jesus and within a couple of months the Christian world will be commemorating his death and resurrection, but for some Modernists the question has been raised regarding whether Jesus ever actually walked the earth. Two first century non-Christian sources put the matter to rest—the Jewish historian Josephus and the Roman Senator historian Tacitus.

In his [Annals](#), written around AD 115, book 15, chapter 44, Tacitus describes Nero's scapegoating of the Christians following the fire of Rome. He reports that the founder of the sect was named Christus (the Christian title for Jesus); that he was executed under Pontius Pilate; and that the movement, initially checked, broke out again in Judea and even in Rome itself."

In Books 18 and 20 of [Antiquities of the Jews](#), written around AD 93 to 94, Josephus twice refers to the biblical Jesus. "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man...a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles...And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him...and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day." (*Antiquities 18:3:3, certain phrases that have been disputed as later Christian additions have been left out*) In *Antiquities 20:9:1*, he says that James was "the brother of Jesus." That the accounts of Jesus were merely a myth is no longer credited by scholars. The evidence provided by Josephus and

Tacitus have put an end to that “myth” and today the two facts that command “almost universal assent” from scholars are that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and was crucified by order of the Roman Prefect Pontius Pilate.



Even the prefecture of Pilate was at one time called into question until solid evidence of his governorship was discovered in 1961. [The Pilate stone](#) is a damaged block of carved limestone with a partially intact inscription mentioning, Pontius Pilate, a prefect of the Roman province of Judaea from AD 26 to 36. It was discovered at the archaeological site of Caesarea Maritima in 1961.

Jesus emphasized faith to the people he taught. He told the multitudes who came to hear him, “I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (Matthew 6:25,26,30) Jesus told those whom he healed that their healing was directly related to their faith. (Matthew 9:29; 5:34; 10:52) In the words of the Apostle Paul, “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Hebrews 11:6

When their Master was crucified, the disciples' faith was crushed, and they were fearful. They had been so sure that he had come to establish his kingdom. What now? Two of the disciples were going to the village of Emmaus on the very day of Jesus' resurrection. As they walked, they were discussing events and trying to make some sense of all that had happened, when a stranger joined them on the road. They told him of the recent events in Jerusalem, since he seemed not to know, and of how their hopes had been dashed by Jesus' death.

What did this stranger do? He reminded them of the Scriptures and “beginning from Moses and all the prophets” interpreted for them all the prophecies that showed that Messiah must suffer and die and then be raised from death. Then he “vanished out of their sight.” They said to one another, “Was not our heart burning within us ...while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:13-15) Their faith was renewed because “**Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God!**”

Fired by the firmness of their newly realized faith in Jesus, the Apostles went out into a hostile world to spread the gospel message to the nations. The annals of the church are full of the faith and sacrifices of the early Christians who kept the message of the love of God alive (John 3:16). Their road was not a smooth one. Opposition came first from the Jews whose leaders had instigated Jesus' crucifixion hoping to end the perceived threat to their position as teachers in Israel. (John 11:47-50) Saul of Tarsus,

later called Paul, full of faith and zeal for the Jewish Law and the promises of God, was one of those who sought to stamp out the new sect until he had a vision from the risen Lord which resulted in his conversion. (Acts 9:11-18; 22:1-15)

During the middle ages there were those who tried to keep the Scriptures locked up in dead languages in monasteries or chained to church pulpits for the sole use of priests. However, God's word was meant to feed the common people who listened to Jesus gladly (Mark 12:37). Those who were able to translate the sacred text into the languages of the people did so faithfully, but vernacular Bibles were sought out and burned and often so were their owners. Many gave their lives to be able to hear the Scriptures read in their own language. Because of their zeal and faithful sacrifices, we of subsequent generations have been assured of having the Bible. We have little conception of how great a struggle was waged to get the Scriptures into our hands, nor do we realize just how costly the Bible has been in the blood of the martyrs. Theirs was a triumphant faith.



Such a faith is not just casual believing. James uses Abraham as his example of true faith. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, trusting fully that God would restore him. (Hebrews 11:17-19) The Greek word used, *pisteuo*, means according to the Amplified Bible introduction, “to adhere to, to cleave to, to trust, to have faith in, to rely on,” that is, to have full assurance that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things, and the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. The faith that can face any hardship, faith that can trust him to know what is best for us, faith that brings peace amid life's stormy seas, can only come from immersing ourselves in the study of God's word fully convicted that it is true—**“that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth ... may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing [*pisteuo*], ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”** (1 Peter 1:7,8)

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