

## Faith in Christ the Cure (Psalm 42:11)

### Introduction: *Review*

“The kingdom of God is ... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17, see Matt 13:44). However, we don’t always experience this joy for a variety of reasons. There is no good reason for us to be discouraged, even in the case of great sins, and weak grace, temptation, desertion, and a lack of assurance, and so forth: Humbled and grieved, we should be; but discouraged, no! All these things are brought into our lives by our loving Father in heaven for good and holy purposes, to show us our hearts, to humble us before him and others, to draw us to a closer dependence upon himself, to make us more gracious and useful servants of others, to cause us not to trust in ourselves but in him alone for all things, and countless other good and holy purposes. “Faith is the help against all discouragements. Hoping, trusting, waiting on God, is the special, if not the only, means appointed against all discouragements” (William Bridge, *A Lifting Up of the Downcast*, p. 262; see Isa 26:3-4, Ps 27:13).

### 1. What faith is

*Faith* can sometimes be used as a synonym for the truth we believe. In Jude we’re called to contend for “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). There *faith* refers to the truth we believe. But most of the time in the Bible, faith is the confidence, the trust we place in the truthfulness and the power of God in Jesus Christ. Faith involves a personal commitment, the trust that the Lord is able, and the expectation that the Lord will be willing. It involves relying upon him, placing our lives in his hands. It’s sometimes called “receiving Christ” (Col 2:6, see John 1:12). Or faith is described as “*putting on Christ*” (Gal 3:27), laying hold of Christ and fleeing for refuge to Christ (Heb 6:18), *eating and drinking* Christ to be sustained by Christ (John 6:47, 53-56), *looking* to Christ (Isa 45:22, Heb 12:1, John 3:14-15), and *committing ourselves* to Christ (2 Tim 1:12). Ryle says that faith is the hand of the soul by which we take hold of Christ; it is the mouth of the soul by which we feed on Christ; it is the foot of the soul by which the righteous run to him and find safety; and the eye of the soul by which we look to him and live. Elsewhere we read that “faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb 11:1, NIV). Closely related to *faith* are these words from the psalms we’ve read, *hoping, trusting, and waiting* on the Lord: “To hope in God is to expect help from God; to trust in God is to rely or rest upon God for help; and to wait on Him is to continue ... in this expectation” (Bridge, pp. 262-263).

### 2. How faith works

What we are embracing when we put our faith in Jesus Christ are the greatest things in the world, the greatest things that have ever occupied the mind or stirred the heart of any human being. Faith in Jesus Christ is believing that Jesus is God the Son, believing that he was sent by the Father into the world to save his people from their sins, believing that by coming to him, trusting in him, loving him, and following him, we shall have his salvation and live forever. Faith obviously doesn’t exempt us from overwhelming problems. Too often, it leads us into such problems. But faith is also our deliverance. “This is the victory that has overcome the world,” writes John, “our faith” (1Jo 5:4).

### Conclusion: *The practice of faith*

(1) Seek the **person** of God (42:1-2, 6, 8, 9, 11, see 43:2, 4, 5).

(2) Seek the **presence** of God (42:2, 5).

(3) Seek the **praise** of God (42:5, 8, 11).

(4) Seek God with the **people** of God (42:4; 43:3-4).

## The Test of Obscurity (Genesis 40)

### Introduction: *The nature of the test*

It seems like not only the cupbearer but the Lord himself has forgotten Joseph (see Gen 40:23, Psa 105:18). Aren’t there dark times in our Christian lives when everything seems to be going wrong, when people are thoughtless toward us, and we feel like the Lord himself has forgotten us?

### *Biblical resources to pass the test of obscurity*

#### 1. God is with you, and will not leave you nor forsake you.

The scene opens with this comment at the end of the last chapter: “But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy” (Gen 39:21). Everything that takes place now is inside that frame of the mercy of our compassionate and faithful God, who doesn’t forget his servant Joseph. Compare 39:1-6 with 39:21-23. See Heb 13:5, Gen 50:20, Rom 8:28.

#### 2. God’s blessing isn’t necessarily related to favorable circumstances.

We are mistaken when we think that if everything is going well, God is blessing us, but that when trials or problems hit, He has withdrawn His blessing. If you have God’s blessing, you have everything, even if you’re poor and unknown; if you lack God’s blessing, you have nothing, even if you possess everything now. God’s blessing often comes through trials. Every person God uses must go through the test of obscurity (e.g. Moses, David, Paul, and Jesus himself).

#### 3. If you learn to be faithful in little, you will also be faithful in much.

True success is not where you are, but whether God is with you where you are. Worldly success is fickle. This is a major purpose of God’s test (see Luke 16:10).

#### 4. If your hope is in God, you can serve Him and others without self-pity.

You can’t control many of the things that happen to you, but you can control your attitude in response to what the Lord brings into your life. Joseph doesn’t become bitter or sink in self-pity. He’s a model prisoner, a devoted administrator, and sensitive and compassionate man of God toward two prisoners (Gen 40:6, 7).

#### 5. Through disappointments, God teaches us to put our hope only in Him.

God sometimes strips us of every human hope until our hope is centered on Him alone. We’ve got to come to the place where we know experientially that God alone is to be trusted, that He alone is our hope of salvation. To do that, He uses disappointments. “Joseph—who was sold as a slave ... Until the time that his word came to pass. The word of the LORD tested him” (Psa 105:17-19, see Psa 146:3-5). Compare David (1 Sam 27:1) and Paul (2 Cor 1:8-10).

### Conclusion: *Remembering the Lord who’s remembered us*

How good it is to work for a Master who doesn’t forget us or overlook what we do, who always remembers us, who rewards every cup of cold water (Mar 9:41). “God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Heb 6:10). Compare Gen 40:14 and Luke 23:42-43. “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands” (Isa 49:15-16).

<b>Tests of the Godly Young</b> The Test of Home The Test of Injustice The Test of Purity <b>The Test of Obscurity</b> The Test of Popularity The Test of Power The Test of Justice The Test of Grace Joseph as a Picture of Christ
--