

# Res · o · lute

*(adj.) Admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering*

**DEVELOPING "EVEN IF" FAITH**

## Lesson 1: At-Home Study Pages

This week's lesson took us to the Faith chapter in Hebrews, and we started with the first verse:

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1, NIV)

We briefly mentioned five Foundational Truths of Faith as being things which we can have "confidence in" and "assurance about." So, in this week's Self Study Pages we are going to look at each one of those five truths in greater detail. Each week's Self Study Pages may not be this lengthy, but this week we have a lot to cover.

\*Side Note: Don't let the length deter you from studying! I suggest you read one point each day, which would give time to pray and ponder each point anyway:)

### 1. God is in control.

But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. (Psalm 33:11, NIV)

Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails. (Proverbs 19:21, NIV)

The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will happen. (Isaiah 14:24, NIV)

"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'" (Isaiah 46:10, NIV)

These verses all have one common word: *purpose*.

God is in control, and God has a purpose. Take a second and let that sink in. I mean really stop and think about it. What stands out to you as you read these verses and think on these things?

God has a purpose, and God is in control of what he created. This is evidenced throughout the entirety of the Bible. So, if we're being honest, that's where things tend to get a bit confusing for us. If God has sovereign power and control over the universe, then comes this age-old question:

***If God is in control, why does he allow bad things to happen?***

You've heard it many times, but here's how I'm going to answer: *we live in a fallen world.*

It's likely your first thought in response to my answer is that it is cliché. Or maybe your first thought is that it is a "churchy" sentiment used by people who don't really know the answer.

And you would be right. But, it's also truth.

At the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden, the earth fell prey to sin. Adam and Eve, when tempted by Satan, fell prey to his scheming, succumbed to temptation, and disobeyed God (Genesis 3). As a result, sin entered the world; and what came with sin was evil, death, sickness, disease, etc., etc., etc.

But nothing that happens on earth takes God by surprise, including the fall of mankind. He made provisions for the fall of man *before* the fall of man!

For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake. Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory. (1 Peter 1:18-21, NLT)

\*Side Note: If you have never placed your faith in Jesus Christ and asked him to forgive your sins and be Lord of your life, please don't go another day without doing so. Reach out to someone you know, reach out to our team, or pray right now wherever you are, something like this:

*"Lord Jesus, I believe you came to earth and died on the cross to take the punishment for my sins upon yourself. Thank you for your sacrifice, and forgive me of my sins. Today I ask you to be Lord of my life, and I give my life to you."*

So we now live in the midst of a fallen world. We live in the midst of a war we can't see with our eyes, a war that most people remain unaware of their whole lives. Throughout this lesson's Self Study Pages I'm going to be sharing excerpts from Part 1 of a new book I'm writing, starting with this:

*We are born into a war, a spiritual war:*

*Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the*

*devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*

*Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:*

*“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.*

*They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.*

*Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.” (Revelation 12:7-12, NIV)*

*The war we are born into is between God and Satan. It’s a war between two kingdoms - the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13). Because of Satan’s pride and hunger for power, God banished him and his followers to the earth, defeated him on the cross (Colossians 2:15), and awaits his final judgement where Satan will be cast away and tormented for eternity (Revelation 20:10).*

*In the meantime, the enemy took up his fight against mankind. That’s right, God’s enemy is now our enemy, and he has a personal agenda against us.*

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:10-12, NIV)*

*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8, NIV)*

*It started in the Garden of Eden and remains to this day. While the enemy’s agenda is never to be our focus, to live unaware of it is foolish. It’s part of the war. We are to be alert. The enemy’s agenda is to steal, kill, and destroy, while the agenda of Jesus is to bring life to the fullest (John 10:10).*

*Period. As dramatic as it sounds, it’s life or death.*

\*Side note: But when we know Jesus Christ, we have authority over the enemy!

*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4, NIV)*

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7, NIV)

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them [the spirits which are not from God], because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1 John 4:4, NIV)

Okay, so we live in a fallen world, but if God gave Satan a certain amount of power on the earth, does that mean He is not loving? This is a second question asked equally as often as the one above:

***Since God does allow bad things to happen, is God good?***

And this brings us to our second Foundational Truth of Faith.

Yes, God is good. He is so, so good.

## **2. God is good and loving.**

I'm going to answer the above question with another excerpt from my book:

*It has been said that what we believe about God is the most paramount thing in our life, the most paramount thing about who we are. How can we love a God we don't think is loving? How can we want to get to know a God we don't think is good? How can we trust a God we don't think is just?*

*We can't.*

*So that's where we're going to start. God is good and loving and just. He is compassionate, merciful, and gracious.*

*The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
The LORD is good to all,  
and his mercy is over all that he has made. (Psalm 145:8-9, ESV)*

*God is abounding in steadfast love because he is love (1 John 4:16). God does not simply give love, he is the origination of love. We can only love God because of his love for us.*

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins...We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:10, 19 NIV)*

*God and love cannot be separated. Everything God is and everything God does is done in love. He is the God who loves mankind so much that he sent his Son to take the punishment for our sins so we could be with him for eternity (John 3:16).*

*Paul described the necessity of understanding God's love like this:*

*And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17b-19, NIV)*

*God's love surpasses knowledge because God surpasses knowledge. Yet, we can still know it personally, just as we can know God personally. We can experience it and perceive it. God's love is the foundation of our faith...*

This is our Biblical proof of God's love, but how can we personally know these things are true?

This brings us to our third Foundational Truth of Faith:

### **3. God desires all people to know him.**

While we don't know most of God's plans and purposes, we do know his purpose for mankind.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9, NIV)

God wants all people to come to repentance. The entire story of the Bible portrays God's plan to draw mankind back to himself. God desires all people to come to him so they can know him personally and experience the fullest life he created them to live (John 10:10, Ephesians 3:20). Getting to know God personally is the most amazing thing we can experience on this side of Heaven.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (Ephesians 1:17-19a, NIV)

What does this verse say are the benefits of knowing God "better?"

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When we get to know God personally, we *know* we are called. We know we have hope. We know we have a heavenly and earthly inheritance, and we know his power available to us. Here's another excerpt from my book to bring it all together:

*When we draw near to God and seek him, he draws near to us (James 4:8). We have to get to know him. How can we go on an adventure with a God we don't know?!*

*If I didn't know God personally, I would struggle. I would struggle because there are so many people I love who have suffered from cancer, alcoholism, abuse, and disease. There are so many people in the world suffering from tragedy and evil - natural disasters, human trafficking, genocide, racism, terrorism. The things we've heard, we can't unhear. The things we've seen, we can't unsee. It's just all too much.*

*It's vital that we know God. I can tell you all day long that God will work all things together for the good of those who love him, but until you've experienced him work all your things together for your good it'll just be a nice sentiment.*

*I can tell you all day long that when you seek God he'll show up in the tiniest details just to let you know he sees you and loves you. But until you've experienced him show up in your tiniest details to let you know he sees you and loves you, you'll always have your doubts. It's how we know God is real, and it's how we know God is good.*

And this brings us to our next point.

#### **4. God *will* work all things together for good for those who love him.**

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28, ESV)

Because of God's sovereignty, goodness, and lovingkindness, he takes what the enemy means for evil and works it for good. Once again, I'm going to address this point with one last excerpt from my book:

*What I do know is that pain and heartache were not God's original design for mankind. However, he created mankind with a will and an ability to make choices, and mankind chose sin. When sin entered the world, so did death, depravity, chaos, selfishness, greed, anger, malice, every form of sexual immorality, etc., etc., etc. God gave mankind the ability to choose, and people make wrong choices all the time. Some of our wrong choices have a greater effect on the lives of others, and ourselves, than other choices. Adam and Eve's choice to succumb to the cunning wiles of the enemy and disobey God (Genesis 3) had the most catastrophic effect on humanity of all time.*

*But there is something else I know: the moment sin entered the world, and everything that came with it, God reconditioned the laws of mankind to redeem those things for our good and His glory! For example, painful experiences can impart purpose, hardships can build character,*

*uncertainties can build faith, insufficiencies can reveal God's strength, tragedies can draw people to God. We could go on and on. Good grief, God used the death of Jesus Christ to bring eternal life to the world!*

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*When we choose to accept the love of God, then we can love him. Then we can know he will work everything for good. Then we can know we are called according to his purpose. What's really*

*awesome about this promise is that it's retroactive! Whether it's sin, brokenness, or both, when we accept the love of God and love him back, God promises he will work all things in our lives for good and for his purposes.*

*All things.*

*Not some things, not most things, all things. All things that were, all things that are, and all things that are to come.*

And this is something we can be confident in and sure of.

The final Foundational Truth of Faith we're going to study in today's lesson is this:

## **5. God is with us.**

God is with us corporately, and God is with us individually. God is with me. God is with you. Always.

The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. (Deuteronomy 31:8, NIV)

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b, NIV)

because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5b, NIV)

God is near to each one who seeks him. He is near - always. When we can feel him and when we can't, God is near. And just as God is with mankind corporately *and* individually, God also has a purpose for mankind corporately and individually. Each person's story is part of God's greater story. God has a plan and purpose specifically for your life.

The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. (Psalm 37:23, NLT)

We can make our own plans, but the LORD gives the right answer. (Proverbs 16:1, NLT)

We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps. (Proverbs 16:9, NLT)

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Ephesians 2:10, NLT)

Now take a second to truly stop and think about this. The same God who has a plan for the earth and a plan for mankind also has a specific and purposeful plan for you. The same God who watches over the earth and all mankind, watches over you and is with you.

This is the God we serve. This is the God we can be confident in and sure of. This is the God in whom we can have resolute, "even if" faith!