

Jesus Christ Is the Truth—Faith in Jesus Christ

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“Stand Forever” Episode 21

Of all the principles of redeeming truth, of all the laws of the gospel, is there one, which if more fully understood and applied, would generate the greatest return and benefit? In the last episode we discovered what the Lord has described as His Gospel, His doctrine, His word, and the commandment beginning with faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, ordinances and covenants beginning with baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost and endure to the end building up the kingdom of God. Those are the waypoints along the course that leads to eternal life and every good thing between here and there.

Hello, my name is Larry Corbridge, and this is Episode 21 of the *Stand Forever Series*. The focus of this episode is the first of those waypoints: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

“We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.”¹ First faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This brings us back to ABC, the central message of the Old Testament (from Episode 4). Only God can bless you. He will bless you if you remember Him to keep His commandments. Therefore, remember Him to keep His commandments. ABC is essentially equivalent to “thou shalt have no other gods before me,” which is essentially equivalent to “remember Him always,” which is essentially equivalent to first faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As defined in the Bible Dictionary, “Faith is to hope for things which are not seen, but which are true and must be centered in Jesus Christ in order to produce salvation.”² Faith is to look to Him, learn of Him and trust Him.

Three Things Are Necessary to Exercise Faith in God

In the *Lectures on Faith*, Joseph Smith taught that three things are necessary for faith: “First, the idea that (God) actually exists. Secondly, a *correct* idea of his character,

¹ Articles of Faith, 4

² “Faith,” Bible Dictionary, p. 669

perfections, and attributes. Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will.”³

1. The Idea that God Actually Exists

First, the idea that God exists is not knowledge or even belief, rather only the idea of God’s existence. You can’t exercise faith in a god about whom you are either oblivious, ignore, or deny.

2. A Correct Idea of God’s Character, Perfections, and Attributes

Second, a correct idea of God’s character, perfections and attributes. This is a step up from the first. Your idea or understanding of God’s character, perfections, and attributes must be correct.

You can’t exercise faith in a god who is incomprehensible and unknowable, or a god who is remote, inattentive, and uncaring, or a god whose job is to grant your every wish, or a god who will excuse sin because of His unconditional love for His children,⁴ or any other of the false notions in a very long list of false notions about who God is. A correct idea of God’s character, perfections, and attributes is the second step toward knowing God, which ultimately is eternal life.

In the Bible Dictionary, we have this: “The Lord has revealed himself and his perfect character, possessing in their fulness all the attributes of love, knowledge, justice, mercy, unchangeableness, power, and every other needful thing, so as to enable the mind of man to place confidence in him without reservation.”⁵

Paul said, “But without faith it is impossible to please [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”⁶ That is the combination of the first two elements of faith, i.e., believe (1) that he is and (2) He will bless you as you diligently seek Him.

God reveals His character and His relationship to His children that they may have faith in Him. He said to Moses, “Behold I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless? And behold thou art my Son And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son: and thou art in

³ *Lectures on Faith* 3:2-5

⁴ Russell M. Nelson, “Divine Love,” *Ensign*, February 2003

⁵ “Faith,” Bible Dictionary, p. 670

⁶ Hebrews 11:6

the similitude of mine Only Begotten: and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all.”⁷

The Lord also revealed that, “[God] comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever.”⁸

The Jews held false hopes and expectations for the Messiah. They looked for a political king as much as a spiritual king to free them from Rome’s bondage. Their suffering under the heavy boot of Rome, coupled with some of the prophecies of the Messiah, gave rise to those false hopes and expectations. The Psalmist, for example, recorded that the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth would be the inheritance and possessions of the Messiah who would “break them with a rod of iron ... (and) dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”⁹ Isaiah prophesied that “the government shall be upon his shoulder,”¹⁰ and Daniel said His kingdom would fill the whole earth and “break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and stand for ever.”¹¹

The Jews foresaw His kingdom as their kingdom also raising them in power and glory with Him, to dominate and rule the earth instead of Rome. When Jesus of Nazareth appeared in their midst, they would not accept or exercise faith in Him, even as he stood before them, because He did not fulfill their flawed expectations of His character, perfections, attributes, and mission.

Our expectations and beliefs must also be correct or true. “Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore, if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, *which are true.*”¹²

There is a stubborn arrogance in turning away from God because of disappointment of not being blessed as hoped. It is a broken-hearted, miserable arrogance that wets its pillow with tears at night, but arrogance, nonetheless, losing faith in God and His word. That kind of thinking is reasonable only if you know everything, only if you know

⁷ Moses 1:3-4, 6

⁸ Doctrine and Covenants 88:41

⁹ Psalms 2:7-9

¹⁰ Isaiah 9:6

¹¹ Daniel 2:35, 44

¹² Alma 32:21, *emphasis added*

better than God. But if you don't know everything, then you must allow for disappointment and trust in God who does know everything, which is faith.

Christ did not get everything He asked for either. He prayed three times that the bitter cup pass from Him. It didn't happen, and He drained the dregs of that awful cup. It wasn't because His faith was weak or that God did not hear Him. Rather, God had another purpose. Many righteous petitions have not been granted, suffering has gone unabated, sicknesses have been prolonged, and lives have not been spared. These outcomes are not for the want of faith but rather reflect the will of God exercised in the bright light of His love for all His children and His knowledge of all things.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, "The point is that faith means trusting God in good times and bad, even if that includes some suffering until we see His arm revealed in our behalf." He continues, "That can be difficult in our modern world when many have come to believe that the highest good in life is to avoid all suffering, that no one should ever anguish over anything. But that belief will never lead us to 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'"¹³

Faith is not necessarily the power to get your way, rather the power to go on when you don't. It is not the means to bend God to your way of thinking, rather the means to bend your thinking to His. It includes submission.

People persist in measuring God against the standard of themselves. They wonder why God doesn't do what they think best, why there is suffering in the world, and why bad things happen to good people. They turn the truth on its head. The people are the standard by which God is measured. *How much better if we measured ourselves by God!*

One who has faith in God may say, "I don't know why things didn't work out better, but I know God is good, loving, and wise; therefore, there must be a good reason. I will continue to trust in God, hold to my faith, and not slacken my pace."

When Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego refused to worship the golden idol of King Nebachadnezzar at the threat of a horrible death if they refused, they said, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. *But if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up."¹⁴

¹³ Jeffrey R. Holland, "Waiting on the Lord," *General Conference*, October 2020

¹⁴ Daniel 3:17-18, *emphasis added*

Faith in God the Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ, is not faith that they exist, rather faith to follow them not knowing exactly how things will unfold. The highest expression of faith is faithfulness in uncertainty, faithfulness not knowing the outcome, faithfulness regardless of the outcome, faithfulness when things go wrong.

God declared His purpose for the creation of the heavens and the earth saying, “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”¹⁵ The question is not whether we will be faithful when things go well. Rather, will we be faithful when they don’t? That’s the question, and that is faith.

3. An Actual Knowledge the Course You Are Pursuing Is According to God’s Will

The third foundational element of faith is “an actual knowledge the course you are pursuing is according to God’s will.” This is a big step up from the first two requirements, which only involve ideas—the idea of God and then a correct idea of who God is. Here we are at the level of “actual knowledge.”

The first two requirements (the idea of God and a correct idea of who God is) blend together as “believe in God,” while to have an actual knowledge that the course you are pursuing is acceptable to God, is “believe in yourself.” It is not enough to only believe in God, you must also have a correct understanding about your relationship with Him. You must know you are not only His child but are worthy to receive His help and blessings. You must know you are okay in your imperfection and weakness.

Usually when your faith is weak it is not because you don’t believe in God. Rather, you don’t believe in yourself—that’s the greater challenge! You accept God and His power to bless others, but you may doubt He will bless you.

A man with a long and dark history said, “I did not ever lose my testimony of the Church or the restored gospel, but I did lose any confidence in being able to live those standards and opted instead for a different lifestyle.” He could not exercise faith necessary to reform his life because he did not have an actual knowledge that the course of life he was pursuing aligned with the will of God, because it didn’t. As a result, he did not believe in himself and couldn’t have faith.

From whence does this assurance, this “actual knowledge,” spring? It comes from two sources. The first is the Holy Ghost, sometimes referred to as “the Holy Spirit of

¹⁵ Abraham 3:25

promise,”¹⁶ which cannot dwell in an unholy temple. The companionship of the Spirit is evidence of one’s worthiness to receive the blessings promised by ordinances received and covenants made. That gives rise to hope, even the hope of eternal life, thus, “the Holy Spirit of promise.”

The second way to know you are acceptable to God and pursuing the course acceptable to Him is simply to honestly make this statement: “I’m a fool. I’ve made mistakes I wish I could undo. I am weak and imperfect, but one thing I can say: I am on the path of the gospel and pressing forward with all my heart, might, mind, and strength, (that’s not superhuman, it’s just everything you have and are, your best) and I’m not covering anything; I’m not hiding anything in my life.”

If you can honestly say that, you may know, you must know, you are okay. You are on the path acceptable to God and you will arrive at its destination which is eternal life, God’s life, provided you don’t stop or get off. What more could you ask?

A woman who suffered severe depression became involved with a man who was not her husband, ultimately resulting in the dissolution of her marriage. She repented and later said, “I no longer blame myself for his decision to divorce me; there is no part of me that wanted that. But I am responsible for my own choices and moving forward. I am turning over my heartache to the Savior. I am grateful I don’t need to feel ashamed, and that Heavenly Father is patient, kind and loving. This year has been much better as I’ve transitioned out of marriage into being the best single, confident mom I can be.” She knows she is on course which enables her faith.

You don’t have to be perfect to believe in yourself. Believing in yourself is to know that you are imperfect but worthy. It is to know that even in your weakness and imperfections you are on the path of the gospel, pressing forward, doing the best you can do, without covering sin. That’s it!

The First Book of Nephi may be the greatest book written on the subject of faith, particularly when read with those three foundational elements for faith in mind.

For example, on one occasion Nephi’s brothers, presumably Laman and Lemuel, were arguing about a matter their father Lehi had taught. Nephi asked them, “Have ye inquired of the Lord?” to which they responded, “We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Ephesians 1:13; Doctrine and Covenants 76:53; 88:3; 132:7, 18-19, 26

¹⁷ 1 Nephi 15:8-9

They were right—the Lord did not make such things known unto them, not because He refused them, rather because they lacked the faith to ask and get an answer. They lacked the faith to ask because they did not have an actual knowledge the course of life, they were pursuing was according to God’s will, because it wasn’t. They at least lacked the third foundational element for faith to receive an answer from God.

One other example is Nephi’s famous declaration of faith: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.”¹⁸ That statement has all three elements, the idea of God, correct idea of His power and willingness to prepare a way, and Nephi’s knowledge He was on the Lord’s errand.

If you read the First Book of Nephi with those three elements in mind, you will discover how frequently they appear. Faith springs from believing in God and His power to enable you to do whatever He calls you to do, trusting He knows better than you and believing in yourself, knowing the course you are pursuing is acceptable to Him. The greater your understanding of the character of God and the greater your confidence in the course you are pursuing, the greater your faith.

The Monster of Fear

If you don’t believe in monsters, you should. One of the worst is fear. Fear and its cousins, “worry” and “shame,” are the Terrible Trio. They are monsters which will eat you alive if you let them. They will rob you of peace, happiness, and success.

The measure of good that goes undone because of fear is monumental. The measure of words never spoken, the things which are never taught, the talents that are buried and never developed, the knowledge that is never gained, the development and progress that are never realized because of fear are immense.

Do you remember the Parable of the Talents? Do you remember why the third, unprofitable servant hid up his talent and did nothing with it? He said, “I was afraid.”¹⁹

You don’t have to live sinfully for Satan to win. He wins when you are afraid. Much of life is learning to overcome fear. Jesus said, “Be not afraid, only believe.”

¹⁸ 1 Nephi 3:7

¹⁹ Matthew 25:25

And yet we are also commanded to be “*anxiously engaged in a good cause.*”²⁰ We often experience anxiety in the Lord’s service. The Lord, through the Church, calls us to do things we are not comfortable doing, even fearful. Most callings are to do things and serve in ways we would not do if left alone. In so doing, the Lord stretches and pulls us in ways we do not want to be stretched and pulled and would not, if left to our own. Facing fear, then, is often a natural consequence of doing what the Lord calls us to do.

When I was called to be a stake president, I was afraid. I did not want to be the stake president, and I was filled with doubt and fear. I turned to the scriptures and made a list of all the scriptures that speak about fear. They are many. I was surprised by the singular, consistent message woven throughout scripture beginning with the Old Testament down through the Pearl of Great Price. The Lord has revealed a singular message about faith and fear from the beginning of time and down through the ages. It is “fear not, I am with thee.” It may be the most repeated command in the Bible.

Here is one of the first iterations, spoken to Isaac: “I am the God of Abraham ... fear not, for I am with thee.”²¹ In our day the Lord declared, “Wherefore, be of good cheer and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the Living God, that I was, that I am and that I am to come.”²²

One of the most helpful instructions the Lord has given about fear was given to the Prophet Joseph Smith after the first 116 pages of the translation of the Book of Mormon were lost by Martin Harris. He simply said, “You should not have feared man more than God.”²³ This is helpful because although we may or may not totally conquer fear in this life, we can learn at least to “fear God more than man.”

“What does it mean to fear God?” It means the same as fearing man. You know what it means to fear man, to be concerned with what other people think about you. It is wanting to be accepted by others, trying to please other people. To fear the Lord is to be concerned about what He thinks of you. It is wanting to be accepted by Him, trying to please Him.

To fear God more than man, therefore, means that we choose to please God first (no other gods before Him, first faith in the Lord Jesus Christ). When your focus is to do

²⁰ Doctrine and Covenants 58:27

²¹ Genesis 26:24

²² Doctrine and Covenants 68:6

²³ Doctrine and Covenants 3:7

what is pleasing to the Lord, the fear of man diminishes and sometimes dissolves away altogether.

If you are worthy, and you know it and if you focus on pleasing God more than seeking the praise of man, then fear will not rule the day.

Trust in the Lord

It is dark in the early hours of the morning and the wind is howling, whipping the sea of Galilee. The ship is in the middle of the sea, tossed with the waves. The disciples have been rowing most of the night. Through the darkness they see what appears to be a man walking at a distance crossing the sea. He is supported only by the water on which he walks.

It is too dark to tell who or what it is. Those in the boat are amazed and afraid at what they see. They think they see a spirit. The man turns towards them. "Be of good cheer," he says, "it is I; be not afraid." It sounds like the voice of Jesus. Peter cries out, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water, to go to thee." Jesus says, "Come." With little thought Peter steps out into the darkness and onto the water, he begins to walk toward the Lord. He takes a few steps but when he looks at the wind and the waves rather than the Lord, fear rises up and he begins to sink. He cries out, what we must all cry, "Lord, save me." Jesus takes him by the hand and says, "Oh, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"²⁴

Why do we doubt? Why do we doubt God? Why do we doubt ourselves? Why do we fear? Often it is because we take our eyes off the Lord and focus on the threat, the problem, the obstacle—first faith in Christ, look to Him.

A desperate father looks for Jesus. He is one of the rulers of the synagogue. His name is Jairus. When he sees Jesus, he falls at his feet and begs. "My little daughter is at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live."²⁵

Jesus consents and they leave for the home of Jairus, but there are many other people who follow. As they make their way through the streets, they are crowded by masses of people who press to see, hear, and marvel at this singularly remarkable man.

²⁴ Matthew 14:27-31

²⁵ Mark 5:23

There is also one who has come in hopes of healing. She is a woman of quiet faith. She has been ill for many years, having suffered many things at the hands of many physicians, exhausting all her resources, and now she is worse than ever. She does not want to delay Jesus. As He passes by, she wonders, “can I just touch His garment?” No one will notice. She quietly reaches out and it brushes her hand as He passes by. She is healed. Jesus stops and asks, “Who touched my clothes?” His disciples are perplexed. They say, “Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?” But the woman knows. She is frightened. She didn’t want to be noticed. She didn’t want to detain the Lord nor draw attention to herself. She only wanted to be quietly healed, unnoticed. Has she done wrong? She steps forward trembling and falls down before the Lord. She explains what she did. Jesus says, “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.”²⁶

At this moment, servants of Jairus arrive with the dreaded news, the words which Jairus most feared, “Thy daughter is dead.” It’s all over—too late. Maybe if they hadn’t been detained, maybe if they had hurried faster, she might have been saved. Now she is dead. It is suggested that they trouble Jesus no more. But Jesus says to the heart-broken father, “Be not afraid, only believe.”²⁷ Later the little girl is raised from the dead. “Be not afraid, only believe.”

On another occasion Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”²⁸ Here is a doctrine of great hope. He says, don’t let your heart be troubled, don’t let it be afraid. This means that we can learn how to control and conquer fear and worry. Only believe.

Those Who Learn by Faith Learn More

There are two ways to learn: by observation and by faith. Those who learn by faith learn more than those who learn by observation (sight). Jesus taught that those who believe having not seen are *more blessed, not less*. He said to Thomas, “because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”²⁹ To the Nephite people He said, “blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am. And again, *more blessed are*

²⁶ Mark 5:25-34

²⁷ Mark 5:35-36

²⁸ John 14:27

²⁹ John 20:29

*they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am.”*³⁰

If Jesus were to appear to you this day, as marvelous and sacred as such an experience would be, what would you learn? You would learn that He lives and that He has a body of flesh and bones. But you probably already know or at least believe those things. More importantly, what would you not learn? You would not know His mind and His heart. You would not learn what He thinks and what He feels. You would know He lives, but you would not know Him.

The process of coming to know Him is what you learn by faith. As you rely on Him, as you worship Him, as you try to think to do what He would do from one circumstance to the next and from day to day, the Holy Ghost will reveal to you what He would do. The scriptures repeatedly reveal that Jesus Christ “will manifest Himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost”³¹ within the intimate context of your experiences. By that process you may not only know He lives but come to know Him.

Therefore, the greater miracle is the less dramatic. To one day stand in His presence and to know Him as He knows you, is only the natural consequence of exercising faith to follow Him as He is revealed to you by the power of the Holy Ghost from one situation to the next, day to day.

Those who learn by faith learn more than those who learn by observation/sight. As you come to learn of Christ by faith you will learn more by the Holy Ghost than Thomas ever knew as a result Christ’s appearance. You will be blessed as one who has not seen and yet believed.

Our Greatest Need Is Greater Faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith is premised on the knowledge of truth as to God’s character, perfections, and attributes and your relationship to Him. It gives one a vision above that of his fellows—*a power to see and know Him for whom he is looking*. You must know who you are looking for, to recognize Him when you find Him. *Faith is not only the first principle of the gospel it is also our greatest need.*

³⁰ 3 Nephi 12:1-2

³¹ 2 Nephi 26:13; *See also* 1 Nephi 10:11; 3 Nephi 15:23; 1 John 3:24

Of all the principles of redeeming truth, of all the laws of the gospel, is there one, which if more fully understood and applied, would generate the greatest return and benefit? Yes, faith in Christ.

If there is a single key, central, foundational principle to the gospel, it is faith in Jesus Christ. If there is a single key that opens the door to every other redeeming truth and every other good thing under heaven, it is faith in Jesus Christ. If there is a single principle which will ensure success, happiness, and peace, it is greater faith in Jesus Christ.

Do you want to be happier? Focus on faith in Jesus Christ. Do you want peace of mind? Focus on faith in Christ. Do you want to overcome fear? Focus on faith in Jesus Christ. Do you want to be more successful? Focus on faith in Jesus Christ. Do you want to be a better person? Focus on faith in Jesus Christ.

Is there any problem, or any dilemma the Lord cannot resolve? Is there any wound or heart He cannot heal? Is there any pain He cannot remove or make you able to bear? Is there any truth He cannot reveal? Is there any soul He cannot reach? No. No one else can. But He can and will, if you will have faith in Him.

He is the answer. He is the key. He is the Way. Why knock on any door but His? Why walk any path but His? He is bread, and water, and light, and life. He is the *summa bonum*. Alpha and Omega. The beginning and the end. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Of that I testify in the name of Jesus Christ.

Finally, let's just take our bearings as to where we have been and where we are going in the *Stand Forever Series*.

The essential problem in life is separation from God Our Father. The consequences that flow from that separation are chaos, darkness, and death. Jesus Christ bridges the gap and qualifies us to be endowed with divine power and return to God's presence if we will believe and follow Him to the end. He is the Way, offsetting chaos, He is the Truth, offsetting darkness, He is also the Life, offsetting death.

We have considered Christ as the Way. We are in the middle of looking at Him as the Truth. In this episode we have looked at faith in Jesus Christ, the first waypoint along the path that leads to God's Son, His Spirit, and His life. In the next episode, we will consider the second—repentance and forgiveness. I hope you will join me then.