

# You Can't Possess Faith

**2 Timothy 2:22** (NASB) - Now flee youthful lusts, and pursue after righteousness, **faith**, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord with a pure heart.

We like to use the expression, "I have faith!" But what does that mean? This promotes the idea of possessing faith, but faith is demonstrative, not a possession. Skip Moen explains:

*"Do you have faith? It's a fair question—if you are thinking like a Greek. You see, in Greek thought it is possible to possess something, to have it, to own it. "I have faith" is a Greek construction. It presupposes that faith can be acquired. But Hebrew has no word for this kind of possession. In Hebrew "to have" is expressed in the form of "to be in relation to" or "to be to". In Hebrew, I don't own it. I am connected to it through my actions. So when the Hebrew authors of the Greek apostolic writings needed to express the idea of "have", they were forced to use Greek words that actually missed the entire point of the Hebrew idea. In the process, faith was converted to a noun. Faith was something I received as if it were a trophy I put on my spiritual shelf. The dynamic of faithfulness seen only in acting faithfully was gone. Now all I needed was the membership card.*

*But, of course, Paul's comment about pursuing faith doesn't make any sense at all if faith is something I have! Why do I need to pursue something I already own? There it is on my bookshelf. It's been there since I said the Sinner's Prayer. Why do I need to chase after it? I don't, of course. I can prove it to you. I have a baptismal certificate.*

*"In the OT a theocentric view prevails. Hence faith is the human reaction to God's primary action. At first faith is collective, and a wealth of usage appears only when individuals break free from the collective bond. The prophets give a new creative impulse to the vocabulary and imagery of faith. The greatest expansion takes place in the Psalms. Faith and fear are closely related in the OT; although contradictory, they shade into one another, and together they express the living tension and polar dynamic of the OT relationship to God."<sup>1</sup>*

*If Weiser's study of 'pistis' is correct ('pistis' is tied to the Hebrew 'hesed', 'batach' and other dynamic roots), then pursuing faith is the equivalent of placing more and more trust in God. It is deliberately and decidedly determining that God's sovereignty is an immediate and present element of my action. Every time. Pursuing faith is letting Him have His way with me in every circumstance. And this requires effort because it is not something I have but rather something I do! I do faith. I am faithful. My actions show it.*

*By the way, the righteous man shall live by faith. Therefore, a man who does not demonstrate faithfulness is not righteous. A man who pursues a way not given by God is not righteous. I don't care what card he carries."<sup>2</sup>*

Laurence  
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1 – Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (849). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

2 – <http://skipmoen.com/2014/08/03/chasing-the-dream-2/>

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