

Faith and Wisdom

If only you had paid attention to My commandments! Then your well-being would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea (Isaiah 48:18).

While all the requirements of the covenant are opportunities, they still remain requirements. In other words, those who will not keep the requirements will not enjoy the blessings.

Faith is the first requirement. Without faith, we cannot fulfill any of the others. With faith, all the other requirements become easy. Without faith, they are impossible.

Because all the principles of God are good for us, others, and the Kingdom, we would automatically desire to walk in them if we believed they were good. If you will be honest, you will realize to the degree you have a hard time following any of God's specific requirements, to that degree you have a hard time trusting those commandments are good for you.

Since the fall, you, I, and every other person who has ever lived will do what seems to be best, or good, in our own eyes. This is the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We make our decisions about what is good based on our own radically incomplete information so that our decisions become erroneous and then sinful. The tree of life represents seeing things from the more complete viewpoint offered by God. This viewpoint does not override our own mind so much as it fills out our understanding, making it complete so that we can see the big picture and make correct decisions.

Faith is being willing to see the full picture instead of just our own viewpoints and preconceived notions. A Greek term in 1 Corinthians 14:16 illustrates faith's true opposite and the essence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This verse refers to people who are unlearned (KJV) or ungifted (NASB). The Greek term is *idiotes* from which comes the corresponding English word. The meaning of the Greek term is illuminating. In this context, *idiotes* means "one who can only see their own viewpoint" (although in other contexts it can also mean "one who has to have his own way," which ends up being the same thing). An idiot, or

fool, is simply a person who will only listen to their own thoughts and therefore always has to have his own way. Wisdom, by contrast, begins by listening to and respecting God's viewpoint.

Faith is not difficult. But it does require that we listen to and eventually trust ideas and thoughts other than our own. As we listen to God, those who are honest will realize that God is always true and always trustworthy. Honesty, however, is perhaps the single ingredient in faith which is the most necessary – and the most missing.