

## Keeping the Faith

Ponder: What does it mean to “keep the faith”?

Scripture: “I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7, NKJV).

I sometimes conclude an email or letter to a fellow-Christian with an exhortation to “keep the faith.” Paul said he had kept the faith. What does that mean?

Paul’s word for “keep” is sometimes translated “observe,” which is a very good synonym. The process of making disciples of Christ includes “teaching them to ‘observe’ [keep] all things that I have commanded” (Matthew 28:20). By contrast, our Lord was critical of the Pharisees because they rejected “the commandment of God, that you may keep [observe] your own tradition” (Mark 7:9).

Revelation 14:12 refers to “those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” The faith of Jesus refers not to our Savior’s own personal, individual trust in the Father, but rather to that body of teaching of which He is the author. Acts 6:7 tells us that “a great many of the priests were obedient to ‘the faith.’” That is, they obeyed the gospel. The “faith of Jesus” and the “gospel of Christ” are one and the same. Just as we refer to the “Law of Moses” (that law which God gave through Moses), so we refer to the faith of Christ” (that body of teaching authored by Jesus).

To keep the faith, then, is to observe the teachings of Jesus. Paul kept the faith; he consistently and reliably taught the truth of the gospel, and he behaved himself in keeping with what Jesus commanded.

Keeping the faith is not easy! It requires diligent dedication and selfless sacrifice. Paul wrote of those who refused to provide for their aged parents as having “denied the faith” and being worse than unbelievers (1 Timothy 5:8). Denying the faith amounts to the exact opposite of keeping the faith. Jesus commended the Christians at Smyrna because they “did not deny My faith” even when threatened with martyrdom (Revelation 2:13).

Can you honestly say along with Paul, “I have kept the faith”? Live in keeping with what Jesus commanded. Teach it consistently and reliably. Keep the faith!