

## *Life of Faith* (1740)<sup>1</sup>

[Baker list, #18]

### **Editorial Introduction:**

This is the first major published example of Charles Wesley's propensity for versifying scripture. Charles issued it in his own name as a pamphlet on May 24, 1740, and the ledger of his printer (William Strahan) suggests that it was reprinted on June 2 on that year. John Wesley then incorporated the hymn into *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1740), which appeared in July.

The issues of the "quietism" controversy between the Wesley brothers and the English Moravians can also be discerned in this work; cf. the introduction to *Means of Grace* (1740).

### **Editions:**

Charles Wesley. *The Life of Faith*. [London: Strahan, 1740.]

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<sup>1</sup>This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under the editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the diligent assistance of Aileen F. Maddox.  
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**THE  
LIFE OF  
FAITH.**

**Exemplified in the Eleventh Chapter  
of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews.**

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**Verse I.**

- 1 Author of faith, eternal word,  
Whose Spirit breathes the active flame,  
Faith, like its Finisher and Lord,  
To day, as yesterday the same;
- 2 To thee our humble hearts aspire,  
And ask the gift unspeakable:  
Increase in us the kindled fire,  
In us the work of faith fulfil.
- 3 By faith we know thee strong to save,  
(Save us, a present Saviour thou!)  
Whate'er we hope, by faith we have,  
Future and past subsisting now.
- 4 To him that in thy name believes,  
Eternal life with thee is given,  
Into himself he all receives,  
Pardon, and happiness, and heaven.

- 5 The things unknown to feeble sense,  
Unseen by reason's glimm'ring ray,  
With strong, commanding evidence  
Their heavenly origine display.
- 6 Faith lends its realizing light,  
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly,  
Th' invisible appears in sight,  
And God is seen by mortal eye.

**Verses II, III.**

- 1 By faith the holy men of old  
Obtain'd a never-dying name,  
The sacred leaves their praise unfold,  
And God himself records their fame.
- 2 Thro' faith we know the worlds were made,  
By his great word to being brought:  
He spake: the earth and heaven obey'd;  
The universe sprang forth from nought.
- 3 The heavens thy glorious power proclaim,  
If thou in us thy power declare;  
We know from whom the fabrick came,  
Our heart believes, when God is there.
- 4 Thee thro' thy self we understand,  
When thou in us thyself hast shown,  
We see thy all creating hand,  
We *feel* a God thro' faith alone.

**Verse IV.**

- 1 Believing in the woman's seed,  
And justified by faith alone,  
Abel a nobler offering made,  
And God vouchsaf'd his gifts to own.

- 2 Witness divine he thus obtain'd,  
The gift of righteousness receiv'd;  
And now he wears the crown he gain'd,  
And sees the Christ he once believ'd.
- 3 Still by his faith he speaks tho' dead,  
He calls us to the living way:  
We hear; and in his footsteps tread:  
We *first* believe, and *then* obey.

**Verses V, VI.**

- 1 Exempted from the general doom,  
The death which all are born to know,  
Enoch obtain'd his heavenly home  
By faith, and disappear'd below.
- 2 From earth unpainfully releas'd,  
Translated to the realms of light,  
He found the God by faith he pleas'd,  
His faith was sweetly lost in sight.
- 3 God without faith we cannot please:  
For all, who unto God would come,  
Must *feelingly* believe he is,  
And gives to all their righteous doom.
- 4 We *feelingly* believe thou art:  
Behold we ever seek thee, Lord,  
With all our mind, with all our heart,  
And find thee now our great reward.

**Verse VII.**

- 1 Divinely warn'd of judgments near,  
Noah believ'd a threatning<sup>2</sup> God,  
With humble faith, and holy fear  
He built the ark, and 'scap'd the flood.

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<sup>2</sup>Ori., "threatening", a misprint; corrected in 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (1743) of *HSP* (1740).

2 He (while the world that disbeliev'd,  
The careless world of sinners died,)  
The righteousness of faith receiv'd:  
Noah by faith was justified.

3 We too by faith the world condemn,  
Of righteousness divine possest,  
Escape the wrath that covers them,  
Safe in the ark of Jesu's breast.

**Verses VIII, IX, X.**

1 Obedient to his God's command,  
And influenc'd by faith alone,  
Abraham left his native land,  
Went out, and sought a place unknown.

2 A place he should possess at last,  
When twice two<sup>3</sup> hundred years were o'er,  
Upon the word himself he cast,  
He follow'd God, and ask'd no more.

3 As in a strange, tho' promis'd, land,  
(A land his distant heirs receiv'd,)  
He, and his sons in tents remain'd;  
He knew on whom he had believ'd.

4 A better heritage he sought,  
A city built by God on high,  
Thither he rais'd his tow'ring thought,  
He fix'd on heaven his stedfast eye.

5 Whose firm foundations never move,  
Jerusalem was all his care,  
The New Jerusalem above;  
His treasure, and his heart was there.

6 And shall not we the call obey,  
And haste where God commands, to go?  
Despise these tenements of clay,  
These dreams of happiness below?

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<sup>3</sup>“Twice two” changed to “full four” in *HSP* (1740).

- 7 Yes Lord; we hearken to thy call,  
As sojourners o'er earth we rove,  
We have for thee forsaken all,  
And seek the heaven of perfect love.

**Verses XI, XII.**

- 1 By faith, the handmaid of the Lord,  
Sarah, receiv'd a power unknown,  
She judg'd him faithful to his word;  
Barren and old she bore a son.
- 2 Nature had lost its genial power,  
And Abraham was old in vain:  
Impossibilities are o'er,  
If faith assent, and God ordain.
- 3 He glorified Jehovah's name;  
(God spake the word, it must be done)  
Father of nations he became,  
And multitudes sprang forth from one.
- 4 From one old man the race did rise,  
A barren womb the myriads bore,  
Countless, as stars that deck the skies,  
As sands that crown the ocean shore.

**Verses XIII, XIV, XV, XVI.**

- 1 The worthies these of ancient days,  
By faith they lived, in faith they died:  
Not yet receiv'd the promis'd grace,  
But darkly from afar descri'd.
- 2 Assur'd the Saviour *should* appear,  
And confident in Christ to come,  
Him they embrac'd, tho' distant near,  
And languish'd for their heavenly home.

- 3 Pilgrims they here themselves confess'd,  
Who no abiding-place must know,  
Strangers on earth they could not rest,  
Or find their happiness below.
- 4 Regardless of the things behind,  
The earthly home from whence they came,  
A better land they long'd to find,  
A promis'd heaven was all their aim.
- 5 Their faith the gracious Father sees,  
And kindly for his children cares,  
He condescends to call them his,  
And suffers them to call him theirs,
- 6 For them his heaven he hath prepar'd,  
His New Jerusalem above,  
And love is there their great reward,  
A whole eternity of love.

**Verses XVII, XVIII, XIX.**

- 1 Abraham, when severely tried,  
His faith by his obedience shew'd;  
He with the harsh command complied,  
And gave his Isaac back to God.
- 2 His son the father offer'd up,  
Son of his age, his only son,  
Object of all his joy and hope,  
And less belov'd than God alone.
- 3 His seed elect, his heir foretold,  
Of whom the promis'd Christ should rise,  
He could not from his God with-hold  
That best, that costliest sacrifice.
- 4 The father curb'd his swelling grief,  
'Twas God requir'd, it must be done;  
He stagger'd not thro' unbelief,  
He bar'd his arm to slay his son.

- 5 He rested in Jehovah's power,  
The word must stand which God hath said,  
He knew th' Almighty could restore,  
Could raise his Isaac from the dead.
- 6 He knew in whom he had believ'd,  
And, trusting in omnipotence,  
His son as from the dead receiv'd,  
His stedfast faith receiv'd him thence.
- 7 O for a faith like his, that we  
The bright example may pursue,  
May gladly give up all to thee,  
To whom our more than all is due!
- 8 Now, Lord, for thee our all we leave,  
Our willing soul thy call obeys,  
Pleasure, and wealth, and fame we give,  
Freedom, and life, to win thy grace.
- 9 Is there a thing than life more dear,  
A thing from which we cannot part?—  
We can—we now rejoice to tear  
The idol from our bleeding heart.
- 10 Jesu accept our sacrifice,  
All things for thee we count but loss,  
Lo! At thy word our Isaac dies,  
Dies on the altar of thy cross.
- 11 Now to thyself the victim take,  
Nature's last agony is o'er,  
Freely thine own we render back,  
We grieve to part with all no more.
- 12 For what to thee, O Lord, we give,  
An hundred fold we here obtain,  
And soon with thee shall all receive,  
And loss shall be eternal gain.



**Verses XX, XXI, XXII.**

- 1 Isaac by faith declar'd his race  
In Jacob and in Esau blest,  
The younger by peculiar grace  
A nobler heritage possess'd.
- 2 By faith expiring Jacob knew  
Distinguish'd mercies to pronounce,  
His hands found out the happy two,  
And bless'd his fav'rite Joseph's sons.
- 3 He rais'd himself upon the bed,  
Prop'd on a staff he own'd his Lord,  
The patriarch bow'd his hoary head,  
His body with his soul ador'd.
- 4 Joseph by faith the flight foretold  
Of Israel's afflicted race;  
God their hard bondage should behold,  
And lead them to the promis'd place.
- 5 Thither he will'd his bones to go,  
And take possession in their stead;  
His bones the promis'd land shall shew,  
He claims his Canaan, tho' dead.

**Verses XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII.**

- 1 Moses by faith from death was sav'd,  
While heedless of the tyrant's will,  
His parents in their God believ'd,  
And dar'd the lovely babe conceal.
- 2 By faith, when now to manhood grown,  
A just contempt of earth he shew'd,  
Refus'd a prince's name to own,  
And sought but to be great in God.

- 3 In vain its pomps ambition spreads,  
Glory in vain displays her charms,  
A brighter crown its lustre sheds,  
A purer flame his bosom warms.
- 4 Wisely he chose the better part,  
Suff' rings with God's elect to share,  
To pleasures vain he steel'd his heart,  
No room for them when God is there.
- 5 Fleeting he deem'd them all, and vain,  
His heart on heavenly joys bestow'd,  
Partaker of his people's pain,  
Th' afflicted people of his God.
- 6 Egypt unfolds her golden blaze,  
Yet all for Christ he counts but loss;  
A richer treasure he surveys,  
His Lord's anticipated cross.
- 7 He triumph'd in his glorious shame,  
On pleasure, fame, and wealth look'd down,  
'Twas heaven at which his wishes aim'd,  
Aspiring to a starry crown.
- 8 By faith he left th' oppressive land,  
And scorn'd the petty rage of kings,  
Supported by Jehovah's hand,  
And shadow'd by Jehovah's wings.
- 9 His steady way he still pursu'd,  
Nor hopes nor fears retard his pace,  
Th' Invisible before him stood,  
And faith unveil'd the Saviour's face.
- 10 By faith he slew the typick lamb,  
And kept the Passover of God:  
He knew from whom its virtue came,  
The saving power of sprinkled blood.

- 11 With all the servants of his Lord,  
He (while the first-born victims died)  
Dar'd the destroying angel's sword,  
And, arm'd with blood, its point defied!

**Verse XXIX.**

- 1 While thro' the sea by faith they past,  
The sea retir'd at God's command,  
The waves shrink back with trembling haste,  
The waves a chrystal barrier stand.
- 2 Th' Egyptians daring to pursue,  
With horror found a wat'ry grave,  
Too late their want of faith they knew,  
And sunk beneath th' o'erwhelming wave.

**Verses XXX, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV.**

- 1 By faith, while Israel's host surrounds  
Proud Jericho's devoted walls,  
The ark stands still, the trumpet sounds,  
The people shouts, the city falls.
- 2 Rahab by faith deliv'rance found,  
Nor perish'd with th' accursed race,  
The harlot for her faith renown'd,  
Amongst the worthies takes her place.
- 3 Worthies, who all recorded stand,  
And shine in everlasting lays;  
And justly now they each demand  
The tribute of distincter praise.
- 4 Gideon, and Barak claim the song,  
And David good, and Samuel wise,  
And Jephtha bold, and Samson strong,  
And all the ancient prophets rise!

- 5 The battles of the Lord they fought  
Thro' faith, and mighty states subdu'd,  
And works of righteousness they wrought,  
And prov'd the faithfulness of God.
- 6 They stop'd the lions' mouths, the rage  
Of fire they quench'd, escap'd the sword,  
The weak grew strong, and bold t' engage,  
And chase the hosts that dar'd their Lord.
- 7 Women their quicken'd dead receiv'd,  
Women the power of faith display'd,  
With stedfast confidence believ'd,  
*Believ'd* their children from the dead.

**Verses XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII.**

- 1 Others, as in a furnace try'd,  
With strength of passive grace endu'd,  
Tortures, and deaths thro' faith defy'd,  
Thro' faith resisted unto blood.
- 2 Earth they beheld with gen'rous scorn,  
On all its proffer'd goods look'd down,  
High on a fiery chariot borne,  
They lost their life to keep their crown.
- 3 Secure a better life to find,  
The path of varied death they trod,  
Their souls triumphantly resign'd,  
And died into the arms of God.
- 4 The prelude of contempt they found,  
A spectacle to fiends and men;  
Cruelly mock'd, and scourg'd, and bound,  
'Till death shut up the bloody scene.
- 5 Or stoned, they glorified their Lord,  
Or joy'd, asunder sawn, t' expire,  
Or rush'd to meet the slaught'ring sword,  
Or triumph'd in the tort'ring fire.

**Verses XXXVII, XXXVIII.**

- 1 Naked, or in rough goatskins clad,  
    In every place they long confess'd  
The God, for whom o'er earth they stray'd  
    Tormented, destitute, distress'd.
- 2 Of whom the world unworthy was,  
    Whom only God their Maker knew,  
The world they punish'd with their loss,  
    The holy anchorites withdrew.
- 3 Lone unfrequented wilds they trod,  
    O'er mountain-tops the wanderers ran,  
With milder beasts in dens abode,  
    And shun'd the haunts of savage man.

**Verses XXXIX, XL.**

- 1 Famed for their faith all these believ'd,  
    By justifying faith made whole:  
Nor yet the promis'd grace receiv'd,  
    The Christ, the fulness in their soul.
- 2 A better gift he us provides,  
    On whom the gospel-times are come;  
And lo! The Holy Ghost *abides*  
    In us, and makes our hearts his home.
- 3 We now our elder brethren meet,  
    Their faith, and happiness improve,  
And soon with them shall shine compleat  
    In Christ, and perfected in love.