

Necessity of Faith

Does *anyone* have faith today? Do any place their trust and reliance upon the *creator God*? Jesus talking about His forthcoming return asks, "when the Son of Man (Jesus Christ) comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) Most do not have faith in God, *any* faith, much less the *true* faith. The Bible talks about the faith that is necessary for salvation, and there are explanations how to obtain this faith. It is found in God's word, the Bible. With the Bible as our source, let's begin.

Lay a foundation first

If we do not build on a solid foundation all subsequent understanding will be wrong. If you start with a wrong premise you cannot end up with a correct result, no matter how badly you want to. The *correct* premise is to stick to *God's word*! The sequence we should follow is found in the list of basic doctrines, they are even called foundational.

Hebrews 6:1-2 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

It starts with repentance, a word that simply means *changing* our *thinking* and *actions* upon seeing we are wrong, and remorseful for it. The key is *changing* what we have done wrong in the past. Many people are *sorry* for doing wrong, so they resolve never to get caught again! No change in their thinking, no reversal of opinion and desire never to do that again. (See information on repentance elsewhere on site.)

If you have truly arrived at that point, and have truly repented, the next step is faith. How do we proceed from here? And how can we continue in the future without losing it?

This is a big subject and only the essence can be covered here. It is a lifetime study that you can start *today*.

Does God want blind faith?

Most people's idea of "faith" is to believe something without *any* reason whatsoever to do so! Like wishing on a star, you just hope what you believe will work, though you have no basis at all for thinking it will. This is NOT what God would have us do. Our faith must have a solid foundation. We are told by God to evaluate and put to the test what we come to understand, what we believe. This is true whether we read something, or hear someone giving a talk, all trying to convince us of this or that viewpoint. Every one of them claiming "the Bible *says* so!" OK. What *does* the Bible say?

1 Thessalonians 5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

God is saying just the opposite of holding blind beliefs. We are to *prove* everything, and we can! Faith is not just saying "I believe" without any reason to.

Defining our terms

What is Faith? How does the Bible define it? Is there a summary of things we should believe found anywhere?

Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

So there is a system of beliefs, "once for all delivered." (Saints are simply those God has called and are being converted, trying to become clean morally and spiritually with His help. Not some dead "pious" person allegedly in heaven.) Faith is most basically "belief," but not groundless belief. It's belief *in God* and that He exists. This is the starting point for faith. (See "How to Prove God Exists" elsewhere on site.) It also, more importantly, is to *believe God!* That is believe what He says, and what He tells us to *do*. And trust in the resulting promises he has made.

Doesn't it say we need to believe in Jesus?

Yes! But we need to be careful *exactly* what we believe. We must believe in the actual Jesus. Not the long haired, weak, effeminate, guru appearing "Jesus," with a "holy" sick look on his pallid face. The one taught by most professing Christians, images and idols of which adorn their churches and literature. We need to believe in the Jesus of the Bible, who had short hair (1 Corinthians 11:14) and looked so normal he couldn't be picked out of a crowd! (Luke 4:30) No halo! He kept the *law* of God as an example for us (Matthew 5:17), so we should do as He did. (1 Peter 2:21)

What is the difference between "faith *in*," and "faith *of*?"

There is a difference between faith *IN* Jesus, and the faith *OF* Jesus! The Bible uses both expressions. We need to be careful which translation we use; some newer translations incorrectly use *IN* as opposed to *OF*. The New King James Version (NKJV most often used here) for example. Faith *IN* Jesus means that we believe that He came, He lived a sinless life, and died for us. This is definitely something that we need to believe. But, the faith *OF* Jesus is the same faith He had! Do you see the difference? (He didn't have to believe that he came and died, that is absurd!) Let's see exactly how this works.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified [impaled] with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

This is quoted from the King James Version (KJV), a for the most part accurate word for word translation. (No single translation is perfect.) Many people have faith *in* Christ, believing that He did come, and died. Islam has this belief, yes they do! They believe in Jesus, that He was a great prophet! Some scientists do. Even the devil and demons do! (Matthew 8:29; Luke 8:28) But what we want is to believe just *as* He did, have the *same faith* that Jesus had, the faith *of* Jesus. Total trust in the Father and what He had promised. Christ had been with the Father for eternity, they had developed a strategy, and agreed to execute it in a certain way.

Both had full assurance and trust that each, the Father and the Son, were going to do everything they agreed to in total. When on earth, Jesus lived knowing fully how everything was going to turn out.

With that background, if you were Jesus, would you have any doubt or fear that what God said was not true. How would you like to have that faith? The total and complete faith Christ had in the Father? Jesus had always existed with the Father, something hard for us to grasp. Never *once*, in all prior *eternity*, had the Father not done exactly as He said He would. Nor had the Son. Both trusted each other completely.

Are there any verses that spell out what faith is?

Yes, it's in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for [expected], the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is the complete assurance that you will receive what you foresee you will have, according to God's promises, God's will. Faith is the absolute knowledge you will have it, even before you *see* it.

But I don't have faith

Ah, but you do. *You have faith!* Faith is not something unknown to you. You have *absolute faith* in powers you cannot see. *Yes you do!* One of them is gravity! I will guarantee that you have *complete faith* that you will hit the floor if you sit down and there is no chair under you. That water runs down hill, and that rocks are heavy. So there, you see, you *do* have faith! You have a lot of faith. You have faith in many things. Aerodynamics, chemical bonds, magnetism, and electricity. You *believe in* and have *faith* in all of these. So much so that you trust your *life* to them. Yet you have never *seen* one of them, you've only seen their effect. And God is the one that keeps all these working. They are entirely His invention! (Romans 1:20)

When it comes to the promises of God, *faith* has to come before we actually receive what we believe we shall have because of those promises.

Romans 8:24-25 For we were saved in this hope [Greek: to anticipate or expect], but hope [for] that [which] is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Hope doesn't mean a baseless "wish," like blowing out birthday candles. The Greek word translated "hope" means "to anticipate, *expect* or confide." So *if* faith comes before we receive what we expect, then it is a *condition* to that promise being fulfilled.

Will we get everything promised now?

No, there are some things that have to wait.

Hebrews 11:13-14 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

What they did not receive in their lifetime they still knew they will get. They continued to have hope right up to the (their personal) end. Retaining full expectation of: the resurrection, a glorified body, life in the kingdom of God, inheritance of all things, and many other things promised by God. Remember that the Father and Jesus the Son are working out their objectives for all people, and timing is involved. Some things just can't be granted until the time is right.

How can I obtain faith? Do I have to "work it up" somehow?

It is a gift of God, not something we can accomplish on our own.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace [kindness or favor] you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We must go to the source, and God is the source of everything good. Yet we do have our part. We are to "walk," i.e. the way we live our lives, in doing good works as Jesus did. What are those works?

John 9:4 "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

Doing the will of God! We are to be living sacrifices, proving what is good. God gives us each a "measure" of faith.

Romans 12:1 I beseech [call upon] you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to [the same pattern as] this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

It's learning and proving God's will, how He would have us live our *daily lives*. It's not about us thinking we have been given some great significance, thinking of ourselves *more highly* than we should. We need to learn from the source of our faith, that is God. We have His word, and beginning with that we need to learn about who and what He is. And what He expects from us.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Bible, the Holy Scriptures reveal God's will. Note that this is referring to the *Old Testament* portion of the Bible. The New Testament hadn't been written yet!

The Bible is full of promises, which He cannot and will not break. We can only claim a promise if we know what they are. Where do we find them?

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

In God's word! Faith comes by hearing the word of God. Faith, trusting God, becomes a part of us. The word of God changes the way we think. So it is important to pay attention to it when read and correctly explained.

How do we know that we have faith?

If faith is the evidence of things hoped for, then what is the evidence of faith? How do we know if we have it? How do we know others have it? How does someone else know that we have it? Since faith is spiritual it cannot be perceived by the physical senses. How do we know if anyone has faith? Someone could (and many do) claim that they have faith, and how would we know? We *can!* There is a test for it. The evidence of faith is *action!* What we *do* demonstrates our faith, or lack of it. Just like gravity or electricity, we know it exists because of what it *does*.

By our *works* (or by another's works,) we can see if we (or they) have the faith of Christ. The faith that only God can give.

Belief alone is not enough

James 2:14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

If we just *say* we "believe," it is not enough. Action follows *true* belief. If we really believe something we will act on it.

Verses 15-17 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Faith requires action to accompany it, otherwise it is dead, dormant and lifeless. So you see, faith is not a matter of just *saying* you believe. A lot of people who *say* they believe, will not enter the kingdom of heaven! Even though they seem to be doing great things, they are not doing the *will* of God, keeping His law, His commandments.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear [morally, to revere] God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

Matthew 7:20-24 "Therefore by their fruits you will know them. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Fruits, results, actions, what one does, that's how you *know*. Not by what is said.

True faith must have works

James 1:25-26 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

If we don't *act* in accordance with God's will, with His law, what God asks of us, then our religion is empty. If you are in outer space, where there is no gravity, nothing will fall! There is *no effect*, nothing happens, showing the absence of the force. So with faith.

James 2:18-21 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

This is the proof that we have faith! Faith comes alive through works, actions, and it is complemented and made complete by our godly behavior! We see this in the next verses:

James 2:22-23 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." And he was called the friend of God.

Major religions, professing Christian religions, believe and teach it is by faith *only*. Is that so? What does God say?

Verses 24-26 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

NOT by faith only! That is what God says! This is the only place the words "faith" and "only" occur next to one another in the entire Bible! (Authorized Version.) True faith is belief, confidence and trust in what God says. Resulting in our *doing* what He says. Keeping the commandments, the law, in other words. Faith then is the motivation for obedience to the law.

Faith and Law

Romans 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish [make stand] the law.

The law, that which defines right and wrong, is not done away with – it can't be if faith is to be perfected as we read in James 2:22. This is *not* talking about the ceremonial "law" of sacrifices, which was added because of failure to keep the commandments. (Jeremiah 7:22) Lawful works are necessary. Works validates a living faith, which is the keeping of the law. Notice what is still being said at the very end of the Bible:

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Keep the commandments *and* faith, no separation. To believe in God is just the beginning. We must go on from there. Faith is a deep conviction in Gods Word, that *all* He says is true. (When properly translated and understood.) Faith is living and active; not indifferent, doing nothing, having no effect. We don't receive the gift of faith, and that's it. We grow in it, learn more about it. It is a living faith able to grow. As we learn more about God's way from His word we *grow* in faith. Our faith becomes stronger as we diligently seek him and live by His ways.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Strive for that peace with a right understanding of faith!