

Importance of **FAITH**

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Faith is the absolute sure knowledge that God exists and He will accomplish those things He promised. **Faith** in God—

- **trust** in His promises and
- **belief** that He is in overall control

is a major characteristic in the Christian life and is absolutely necessary for salvation.

Romans 1:17; 10:17; Ephesians 3:17; Hebrews 11:1–2; James 2:22–24

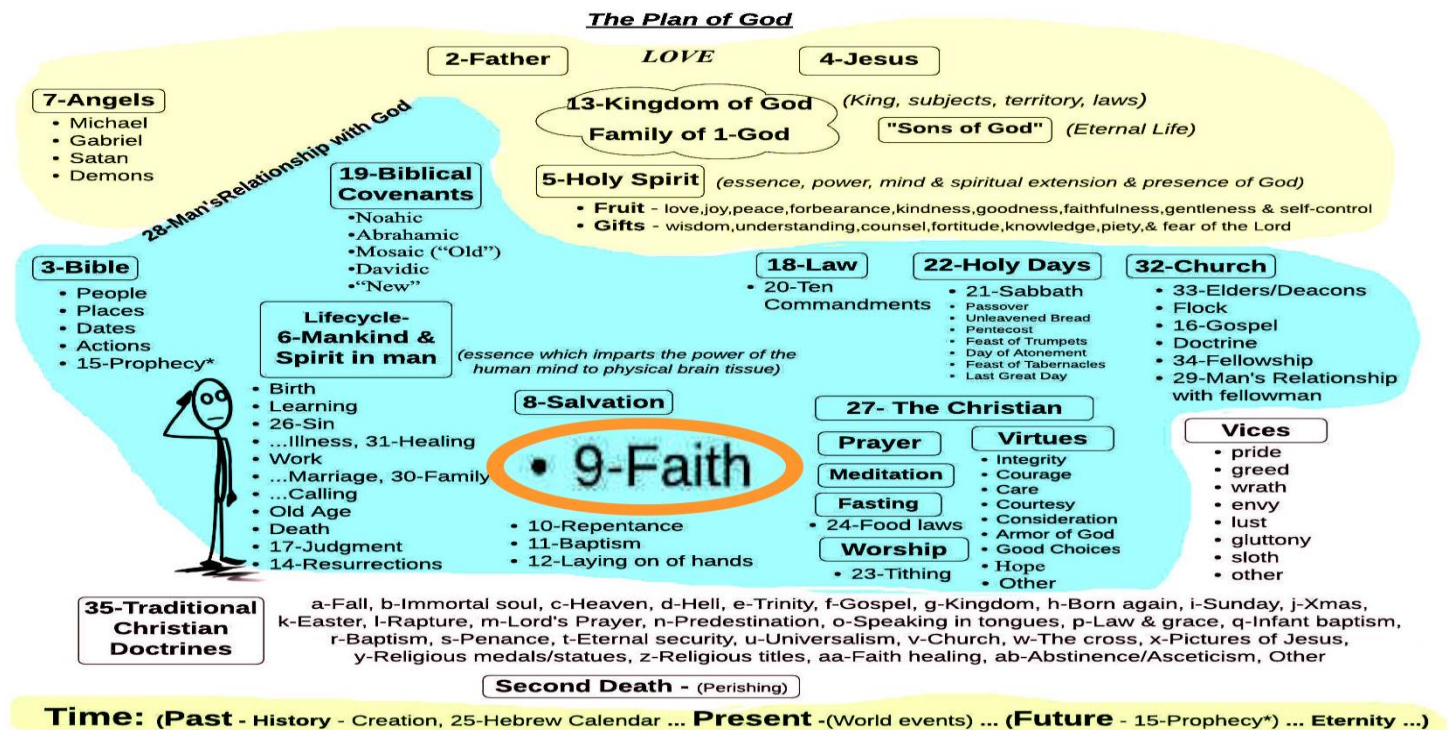
Rom 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed **from faith to faith**; as it is written, "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY **FAITH**."

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

Eph 3:17 ... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through **faith**...

Heb 11:1-2 Now **faith** is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony (kjb - **good report**).

James 2:22-24 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. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by **faith** only.



Topics covered... “Faith”

- Importance of **faith**
- Two definitions of **faith**
- **Faith is ... forward looking** and NOT “blind”
- **Faith in** Christ and **faith of** Christ
- **Faith of** Christ ... comes with Spirit after baptism
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- **Faith motivates actions**
- **Faith and works**
- True **faith** can surmount **doubt**
- **Faith in resurrection**
- Foremost *frontier* of **faith**
- **Faith that moves mountains**
- **Living by faith** we realize life is in God's hands
- Building and growing faith
- **Bible** filled with **examples of faithful**



Importance of faith

"...the just shall live by his **faith**." These words were uttered first by the prophet Habakkuk and quoted three times by the apostle Paul. Living **faith** is at the heart of true Christianity. It is *absolutely essential* for salvation (I Pet. 1:5-9). Christ described **faith** as a weightier matter of the law (Mt. 23:23). Paul listed it among the three greatest Christian virtues (along with hope & love). Without **faith** it is *impossible* to please God (Heb. 11:6). Far from being simply a feeling in his heart, the Christian's **faith** motivates his entire pattern of living. **Faith** functions as the key of true Christian thought & behavior.

Two definitions of faith

The two distinct meanings of the word "**faith**" are found in the English translation.

- When preceded by the definite article ("the **faith**") it means the overall system of doctrine and belief accepted by the Church, and by extension, the Church itself (Acts 6:7; 13:8, 14:22).
- When used without the article it means "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), which perhaps is the *clearest* biblical definition of **faith**. **Faith** is an *absolute belief* God exists and a total trust in His statements (Heb. 11:6).

Faith is ... forward looking and NOT “blind”

Ultimately, **faith** deals with God's promises—with the future. It is the *trust* in "things not seen." Of course, belief cannot be blind. It must be built on genuine conviction. It has to come from perceiving God's hand in creation, His work in history & the experience of His fulfilled promises in one's own life. This is the *foundation* of **faith**. But one does not need **faith** in what has already been accomplished. Therefore **faith**, is the willingness to believe **God won't fail** even though He hasn't actually fulfilled what is promised (Heb. 11:1).

Faith in Christ & faith of Christ

True **faith** *must come* from God and has many facets, though the primary ones relate directly to Jesus Christ. **Faith** in its simplest but most profound manifestation is a deep personal belief in Jesus Christ; that

- **He is our Savior &**
- **that His death paid the individual penalty for our personal sins.**

Faith is having full confidence in the message Jesus brought. This **faith** in Christ is the belief that leads us to baptism. (Baptism is merely an outward symbolic expression we have inward **faith** in Christ.) Paul speaks of this **faith** in Galatians 2:16 when he remarks we "have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the **faith** of Christ."



Faith of Christ comes with Spirit after baptism

After baptism, one receives God's Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. At this point Christ, through the Spirit, lives in us and empowers us with a growing and internalized godly **faith**. Since **faith** is not self-generated, but is rather the **faith** of Christ's Spirit in us, it is termed the "**faith** of Christ" (subjective genitive). It is this **faith** of Christ that we must express & live by in every facet of life.

God grants salvation to those with living faith

But **faith** is not an end in itself. It is rather the *vehicle* by which we may obtain salvation. Of course, salvation cannot be earned, either by obedience or **faith**—*nothing* man can do would obligate God to grant salvation had He not decided to give man this gift by His own volition (and according to certain terms). But God has obligated Himself to grant salvation if one has living **faith**. God says the presence of this **faith** is counted as righteousness in His eyes, and indeed justifies us before God (Rom. 4: 1-7).

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been **saved through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Faith motivates actions

Faith *is the motivator*. It causes us to live godly lives and by it, we understand that one who has real belief and hope in God's promises will demonstrate this fidelity by his actions and obedience. Indeed, "whatsoever is not of **faith** is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

Faith AND works

The true Christian will obey God and do good works, for "**faith** without works is dead" (Jas. 2:20). Our good works do not save us, but they do demonstrate **faith**. James wrote, "I will show you my **faith** by my works" (Jas. 2:18), directly contradicting the notion that **faith** can maintain an exclusively mental / spiritual existence devoid of any physical action and behavior. One who does not obey God is said to possess "dead" **faith**, a trait no better than that of the demons themselves, who also believe God exists, but refuse to obey Him (Jas. 2:19). Real and true **faith** *with compel* a Christian to action.

True **faith** can surmount doubt

To have real living **faith**, does **not** mean one will never doubt. Doubt is a normal human characteristic & emotion, & admittedly, the truly begotten Christian is not immune from it. Yet one must contest doubt, not by deluding oneself but by rehearsing reality.

- We should return to the fundamentals of biblical belief,
- to our first love,
- by thinking thoughts &
- doing the works we did when originally converted.

Doubt should not undermine **faith**. Instead, true **faith** *can* surmount doubt.

Faith in resurrection

God commands: "the just shall live by **faith**" in every facet and area of his life. One must fully *live by faith*, because God made promises, which affect virtually every part of man's existence. He has promised to help us in trials and answer every prayer according to His will if we are **faithful** in **faith**. These expressions of **faith** are again not ends in themselves. Actually they are secondary when compared to a Christian's *main thrust of faith*, which is the belief in God's promise of the salvation by the resurrection from the dead. Other areas of **faith** are important, but only as they contribute to our **faith** in the resurrection, which underscores eternal life. Paul says one who does not earnestly hope for the resurrection has "**faith** in vain" (I Cor. 15:14), because if we have no hope of being resurrected, then we have no hope at all! It is a Christian's **faith** in the resurrection from the dead which provides a powerful motivation to their earthly actions. It is this **faith** and hope in the resurrection, which encourages, motivates, and compels the Christian to press onward toward this salvation in spite of trials and disappointments.

Foremost frontier of **faith**

God's ultimate design is to bring every human being from the **human** level to the **divine** level—from *flesh to spirit*—from a temporary **physical** existence to an eternal **spiritual** existence. This is the *foremost* frontier of **faith**. It involves the development of character, by implementing the use of **trials** and a variety of **experiences** in our human life. God's promises for the "good life" on the physical level *are always* subordinated to His ultimate purpose of fulfilling His main promise on the spiritual level—because for God, **it's all about our spiritual development.**

Faith that moves mountains

Jesus makes a powerful statement about **faith**, that puzzles Christians today:



Mat_17:20 So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have **faith** as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

We believe Jesus, because we know (Matt 19:26) ... with God, "ALL things" are possible! **We also know** God is working out His plan here on earth, so its

understandable not everything "man wants" is good for us, or good for fulfilling God's plan in our personal lives. For example, we see Paul was not healed (2 Cor 12:7) and yet, Paul explains God had a purpose for this - so that he would not be too exalted. We know millions of people pray they would win a lottery ... yet scripture says it is hard for a rich man to enter God's Kingdom - because cares for riches can choke away one's time and relationship with God. A loving God will not destroy His child, by giving them foolish or excessive things that would corrupt them. Perhaps one of our *greatest statements of faith* is when we pray "Thy will be done", which shows God we trust His wisdom and vision of what is best for us. **Faith that moves mountains** can be ...

- **hyperbole**, (*exaggeration not intended to deceive - ie... I could eat a horse!*)
- it can be **metaphor**, (*figurative way of comparing things- ie ... drowning in work!*)
- & perhaps someday there will be a mountain in the way, and God will "**literally**" grant one of his children to move it "from here to there" – just to demonstrate what **faith** in God can really do!

Living by **faith** we realize life is in God's hands

A Christian who is **living by faith** realizes physical promises *may be delayed* for his spiritual benefit, because he knows his life is absolutely in God's hands, but assuredly with our best interests at heart. Some by their **faith** have been delivered, while others by the same **faith** have been martyred (Heb. 11) or allowed to die without seeing the ultimate fruit of their endeavors in this life—God only knows why these differences occur—we have no choice, but to allow God those prerogatives.

2 Corinthians 5:7 - "For we walk by faith, not by sight."

Building and growing **faith**

"**Faith**" in Gal 5:22 should be translated "**faithfulness**." The "fruits" are produced in the lives of people who have the Spirit. The Spirit does not infuse any of these fruits within us; we produce them by *following* the Spirit's lead, which is spelled out in the Bible. The **faith** required for salvation is belief in Jesus Christ (John 20:29-31); it is not a gift that is supernaturally given to us (There is a gift of

faith, but that's different from "saving **faith**.") Saving **faith** is comparable to a starving man reaching out to gratefully receive the free meal offered to him. The man did not have to be fed first in order to accept and deeply appreciate the free food being offered. The lesson is **faith** should never be static but must compel and be active, expecting, constantly growing and expanding, in every aspect and area of life. This **faith** may be built and grow in different ways, through experience, through trials (Rom. 5:1-5), by reading the inspired Word of God (Rom. 10: 17), through the interaction with the **faith** of others, etc. **Faith** must be constant, unfeigned, based upon true promises, without time limit, consistently growing and being exercised: but *vigilant* about *guarding* against drawing back (Heb. 10:38).





Bible filled with examples of **faithful**

The Bible spotlights and illustrates how the **faith** of the patriarchs and men of God throughout history are examples of encouragement to us. We are told of Abraham, the father of the **faithful**. We are reminded of Enoch, Elijah, Samson, Jephthah, David and the prophets. We see the *awesome example* of Jesus Christ Himself, who gave up and willingly surrendered His exalted position as God, emptied Himself into a human form and was sacrificed in **faith**, so He could become the

Savior of mankind after the Father resurrected Him. Likewise, we look at the examples of the apostles and of fellow brethren who were martyred for the sake of Jesus Christ. Finally, we learn that God will grant these **faithful** men salvation and eternal life in God's kingdom—why? Because they *believed* they would receive it, and because they *had real faith*. They will receive the reward they hoped for, because they believed God existed and He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Our task is to follow their example, endure in **faith** until the end, and receive this same reward.

Faith Strengthens Us in Trials

- **1 Peter 1:6-7** - "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your **faith**, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
- **James 1:3** - "Knowing that the testing of your **faith** produces patience."

Faith Unites Believers

- **Ephesians 4:4-5** - "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one **faith**, one baptism."
- **Philippians 1:27** - "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the **faith** of the gospel."

Faith Brings Healing and Restoration

- **James 5:15** - "And the prayer of **faith** will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."
- **Mark 10:52** - "Then Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your **faith** has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road."
- **Mark 6:5-6** Now He **could do no mighty work** there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. & He **marvelled** because of their **unbelief**

Luke 18:8 (*Jesus concluding the parable of the Unjust Judge*)

... Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, **will He really find **faith** on the earth?**