

The Basic Doctrines of Christianity

Faith

How would we describe faith?

Hebrews 11:1 [NIV] *“Now faith is being **sure** of what we hope for and **certain** of what we do not see.”*

Two words describe faith.

“Sure” – Greek *“hupōstasis”* – the combination of two words *“hupō”* – beneath – *“staō”* – **to stand** – **confidence** – assurance – the substance on which we rely.

“Certain” – Greek *“ēlēgchōs”* – proof – evidence – **conviction**.

“Of what we do not see” – **the basis of faith is unseen because it is based on a spiritual being.**

If we see something we don’t need faith in that object or person.

We have to place our faith in a person we cannot see as human beings, God who is spirit.

In the Old Testament faith was placed by people in physical things that they could see.

In the rituals that took place in the temple or the acceptance of the offerings and sacrifices that they made, was the limit which their belief extended.

The idea of faith in God, whom they could not see or touch, apparently did not enter into their minds.

The faith that Jesus had in God the Father was a new idea to the Jews that Jesus Christ had contact with when on earth.

We need to be constantly asking ourselves the question, where am I placing my faith?

Is it like the Jews under the Old Covenant in physical rituals?

Just like repentance our faith must be away from physical acts and towards God as a person in Jesus Christ.

Jesus showed all He met this perfect faith in God the Father as a person.

Matthew 27:41-43 [NIV] *“In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. **He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him,** for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”*

The priests and teachers of the law [Old Covenant ritual laws] mocked Jesus because of His faith in God the Father.

Jesus Christ the Son of Man is the perfect example of total faith in God.

The example we are to follow.

Hebrews 11:6 [NIV] *“And **without faith it is impossible to please God,** because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

Paul then listed many Old Testament leaders who pleased God by having faith. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, Moses, Gideon, Barak, Samson, David, Samuel and the prophets.

There was faith in God within those whom God used in the Old Testament but not in the vast majority of people.

One of the reasons Jesus Christ, the Word, Who was and is God, became a human being was to reveal God in such a way that everyone can have faith in Him.

Faith in Jesus Christ is faith in God.

Hebrews 10:38 [NIV] *“But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”*

To be right with God we must be living by faith in God.

2 Corinthians 5:7 [NIV] *“We live by faith, not by sight.”*

If we rely only on what we can see we are **not** living by faith in God.

James 2:14-24 [NIV] *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, **faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.** But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that, and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? **Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did** when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? **You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.** And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘**Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,**’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.”*

Faith in God will prompt us to do loving deeds for other human beings who are in need.

Matthew 25:31-40 [NIV] *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ‘Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘**Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.**’” “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’” “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, **whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.**’”*

Here we see an example of people whose faith in God was worked out in deeds of love and compassion.

These deeds of love and compassion need to be both physical and spiritual.

Lift each of the listed deeds to a spiritual level for all the spiritual needs every human being has.

Reach out to all those who do **not** know God and all He has done and desires to do to show His great love for every human being He has given life.

This is how we live by faith as a Christian.

Luke 18:8 [NIV] “... *when the Son of Man comes* [the second time], *will He find faith on the earth?*”

For there to be a positive answer to this question every one of us whom God has called to be His disciple [a Christian] at this time, must be living by faith and all that entails.

How then can we have faith and increase our faith?

Ephesians 2:8 [NIV] “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through **faith**, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God,*”

Faith is a gift from God.

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*”

Faith or faithfulness is a fruit received by allowing the Holy Spirit into our lives to direct our lives.

How does the Holy Spirit do this?

Romans 10:17 [NIV] “*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*”

The Holy Spirit generates faith in us as we read the promises that Jesus Christ as God made.

John 14:26 [NIV] “*But the Counsellor, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*”

The Holy Spirit will bring to mind the promises of God when we face tests and trials that are beyond us to overcome.

John 16:13 [NIV] “*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*”

The Holy Spirit will open up the scriptures in the Christian Bible so that we can live by them.

How do we increase our faith?

Luke 17:5 [NIV] “*The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”*”

Christ’s disciples asked the same question, how did Jesus reply?

Luke 17:7-10 [NIV] “*Suppose one of you had a servant ploughing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? Would he not rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”*

In every Christian act of love, compassion and service do more than is expected of us by others.

Matthew 5:41-42 [NIV] “*If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*”

The same faith increasing principle is being taught by Jesus Christ in this discourse.

To the Jewish crowd who was hearing this it sounded strange, as their lives were directed by specific laws that stated exactly what was needed.

Matthew 5:38 [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’”*

This summed up all the Old Covenant laws.

Matthew 5:43-48 [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you**, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**”*

Jesus was extending the same “second mile” principle to areas of life beyond the scope of the Old Covenant.

Such actions demanded faith in God to accomplish this dramatic change in our normal human nature.

This truly was taking on the nature of our loving and compassionate Creator God.

Our becoming God’s created children in His “likeness”, His very character.

1 Peter 1:3-7 [NIV] *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, **though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.** These have come so that your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and **may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.**”*

The trials that will come to us by living by faith will test and strengthen our faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ.

The end result will be praise, glory and honour at Christ’s return to rule this world as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Faith in God is the key that unlocks that glorious future.