

Foundations Course

5. FAITH TOWARDS GOD By faith, not works.

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

By faith:

we are saved	<i>Ephesians 2:8</i>
we please God	<i>Hebrews 11:6</i>
we overcome	<i>1 John 5:4-5</i>
we know peace	<i>Romans 5:1</i>
we grow in character	<i>2 Peter 1:5-8</i>
we have prayers answered	<i>Mark 11:22-24</i>

Faith is the channel of salvation:

“And without faith it is impossible to please God...” Hebrews 11:6
“...by grace you have been saved, through faith... it is the gift of God...”
Ephesians 2:8-9

Before we can come to a saving faith we must experience heartfelt repentance. Faith and repentance are inseparable in salvation.

Repentance is turning from (sin and dead works) and turning to Jesus Christ.

“Dead works” are our own efforts to be reconciled to God without the work of the cross. They may involve works of charity, religious works or rituals which we think will earn us favour. Dead works rely on our own abilities and strength and lead to legalism and bondage. We can never be sure whether we have “made the grade”. *Hebrews 9:14; 2 Corinthians 1:9,10*

There are three elements to saving faith:

Knowledge comes through the preaching of the gospel, the witness of believers, from the Word of God.
Romans 10:17; John 20:30,31; 17:20

Assent means to be persuaded, to agree with God. *2 Timothy 1:12*

Trust is demonstrated by action - repentance, confession, baptism. *Romans 10:9; Acts 2:38*

Faith is a gift. *Ephesians 2:8*

God gives us faith by supplying us with his word and by the Holy Spirit working in us to persuade us of truth. We receive it through surrendering to his ways. Some have a form of "belief" but do not receive the gift of faith because they won't let go of their own ways (assumptions, ideas) which are not based on God's truth.

Faith is not:

- imagination (self-generated ideas)
- credulity (believing something because we want to, without basis, eg. some kind of miracle cure, or rumour)
- feeling (emotion, religious feelings)
- optimism (positive thinking not based on Biblical truth. Might be healthy to a point, but is not Biblical faith)
- presumption (anticipating what God is doing, taking too much upon ourselves)
- assumption (taking God for granted because of our pre-conceived ideas)
- seeing (in Jesus' day not everyone responded in faith when they saw him performing miracles, healings, etc. Seeing the miraculous will confirm faith, but not necessarily produce it.)

Real faith is not based on a person's individual attitudes and feelings. This human faith is unstable (*1 John 5:9,10*). Biblical faith is reliable because it is based on a trustworthy God.

The basis of true faith is:

God's Word
God's character

"I will bow down towards your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word". Psalm 138:2

"When God calls us to believe in Christ, he is calling us to do the most sensible thing we can ever do. He is asking us to believe the word of the only being in the universe who is entirely reliable."

James Montgomery Boice

In the Old Testament the word translated "faith" is based on four Hebrew words which convey the meaning:

- taking refuge
- relying on someone trustworthy
- letting burdens go
- freeing ourselves from our own effort.

In the New Testament the Greek word translated as “faith” means trusting God’s character and taking His word at face value.

Going on

We begin our walk with God by exercising faith and continue to walk with him in the same way. Our faith should grow as we go on learning more about the God in whom we trust.

- Living by faith means to live expectantly toward God. We have not yet received all of his promises.
Habakkuk 2:3,4
- Living by faith means to grow in reliance upon God as knowledge of him increases.
Romans 1:16,17
- Living by faith means release from all self-effort. *Galatians 3:11,12*
- Living by faith means mixing belief with patience. The Holy Spirit develops this fruit in us.
Hebrews 6:11,12
- Living by faith keeps us secure in Christ. *Ephesians 1:13,14*

We continue in faith by allowing the Holy Spirit to work freely in our lives and by living our lives now in anticipation of the fulfilment of all God’s promises.

Men who lived this way:

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| Abraham - | Left a secure life to go to a land he had never seen, which God has promised to his descendants. |
| Noah - | Spent 120 years building the ark, when no one had ever seen rain. |
| Moses - | Chose to join God’s suffering people in Egypt because he believed God’s promise of deliverance. |
| Jeremiah - | Purchased a field in the country which he had prophesied would be taken captive. He believed they would return according to God’s word. He showed his trust in God’s faithfulness by purchasing real estate. |

Our faith may be weak, but the essential fact is that our faith is in God the Father and in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. God cannot fail. If we grow in our knowledge of God, we will find that our faith will also grow from strength to strength.

*“Your word, O Lord, is eternal;
it stands firm in the heavens.
Your faithfulness continues through
all generations.” Psalm 119:89,90*