



Faith

Note: The Scripture references in this hand-out are taken from the New King James Version.

If repentance is a first step in conversion to Christ, what is the second step as described in Acts 20:21?

Acts 20:20-21 - how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the second step in being converted to Christ. If we have truly repented of our sins, we will have faith in Christ. Saving faith is trusting in God...

John 11:25 - Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

What does Romans 1:16-17 have to say about the essentialness of faith for salvation?

Romans 1:16-17 - For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Believing in the gospel of Christ is essential for salvation and one must have faith to believe. Those who are seen as righteous by God have faith in Him and have eternal life.

What does it mean that "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith?"

Faith builds on itself... as we respond to the revelation God has given us of Himself, faith grows. Taking a step of faith results in more opportunities to respond in faith and the process causes our faith in God to grow. This is how we grow closer to Him. The more we respond to Him in faith, the more we get to know Him.

The Meaning of Faith

What is the definition of faith that the Bible gives us in Hebrews 11:1?

Hebrews 11:1 - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith is expecting a promise to be realized without seeing the proof that it will come to pass.

Can people have faith in things that are not true, that will not come to pass?

People have faith in the wrong things all the time. True faith is in God Himself, not in anything or anyone else.

Is our saving faith a blind faith?

Our faith is not blind... God reinforces our faith with evidences which can be seen such as archeology that corroborates the Bible. Such evidences are not essential to our faith but it is encouraging to learn that God has blessed us with a reasonable faith.

What does I John 5:14-15 have to say about faith?

I John 5:14-15 - Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

Faith is taking God at His Word. In prayer life, faith is the confidence we have in God, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

If God is omniscient, knowing all things, why does it say He only hears prayers that are according to His will?

God is also aware of the prayers that are not according to His will but He only considers answering those prayers that are according to His will. So the result of praying counter to God's will is the same as God not hearing these prayers.

How can we be confident that God will answer the prayers according to His will?

God's character depends on His being true to His Word and He will be faithful to it.

What is required to please God?

Hebrews 11:6 - But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Acting in faith pleases God. It does not please God when we do not trust in God's help for the outcome of things in which we are involved. It is impossible to please God if we are trusting in our own formidable resources.

How do we come by faith?

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 is a gift of God...

- of the Father: Romans 12:3 - *God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*
- of the Son: Hebrews 12:2 - *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*
- and of the Holy Spirit: Galatians 5:22 - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness*

What role does the Bible have in our having faith?

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

We grow in faith by hearing God and God speaks to us via the Bible. So therefore, studying the Bible is essential to both having faith and growing in faith.

Can people believe what Scripture teaches without faith?

True divine faith is a believing what God has revealed, because it is God who has revealed it. People may believe scripture truths, but not with a divine faith, unless they believe in the authority of God speaking His Word.

What essential teachings about salvation must we learn from Scripture?

The works of creation and providence show that there is a God, yet the Scriptures are necessary to learn the doctrines relating to the nature of God, the Trinity, God's acts and purposes, the creation of all things, the state of man at his creation, his fall, and his recovery by the work of Christ.

Thus we may infer that there can be no right knowledge of
Matthew 22:29 - Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."

Can a person have the initial saving faith without reference to Scripture?

No... where the Scriptures are not known, there can be no saving faith, look at the context of Romans 10:17:

Romans 10:14-17 - How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ...So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

What degree of faith is addressed in the following verses?

Matthew 14:31 - And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Little faith – Jesus used this term when He stilled the waves to calm the fear of the disciples... He also used this term when Peter walked on the water and began to doubt.

Doubting God is a symptom of being deficient in our faith.

Romans 14:1 - Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

Weak Faith – The church should not argue about questions of personal liberty that those with weak faith would impose on others. Those with weak faith tend to be legalists... their legalistic rules have become a substitute to acting in obedience to the Holy Spirit. How can we all get together? Those with strong faith should tolerate those with weak faith and stick to the fundamentals that all Christians can agree.

1 Corinthians 15:17 - And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

Vain faith – The person who does not believe that Jesus rose from the grave has futile faith...

1 Corinthians 15:14 - And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

Faith in the truth of the resurrection of Christ is essential. This is why we do not have blind faith, because Christ did rise from the grave... many reported this and their testimony is credible so while faith is essential to embrace the truth of the resurrection, this faith is not in vain.

John 20:29 - Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

James 2:20 - But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Dead faith – James contrasts the living faith that produces works with the dead kind that does not. It is also important to note that the reverse is not true: works never produce faith...

James 2:17 - Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

What proportion of faith is address in the following verses?

Luke 7:9 - When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

Great faith – The Roman Centurion had the faith that Jesus could heal his servant by just commanding it to be so from afar. The Roman Centurion also had great faith because he had not been exposed to God's Word as much as the average Jew. This should challenge us who have had even more exposure to God's Word to seek a greater faith than we have now.

Acts 6:8 - And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

Full of Faith – Stephen was one of the ones selected to serve as a deacon because he had a lot of faith in God. Stephen was full of faith meaning He was totally yielded to the Lord and thus able to accomplish great things. This is the kind of faith we should seek.

James 2:5 - Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

Rich in faith – Those who see their wealth in this world have no need for faith but those who are poor to the riches of the world may be rich in faith.

Matthew 5:3 - Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Those who realize that the true wealth is in a relationship with the Savior are rich indeed.

Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Living faith – Our faith in Christ is not a one time event that saves us then evaporates. True saving faith endures and becomes a part of our life leading to our taking actions that demonstrate that we are trusting in God.

1 Peter 5:8-9 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

Steadfast faith – This is the kind of faith the results from spiritual exercise... the habit of hearing God's Word then stepping out in faith in response causes our faith to grow. If you don't do these spiritual exercises, your faith will

diminish... as with many things, if you don't use it, you'll lose it.

2 Peter 1:1 - Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Precious faith – God's gift of faith to us is precious because it is what saved us, the most valuable thing in our lives.

Jude 1:20 - But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

Holy faith – Our faith sets us apart from the world... this is what it means to be holy, to be sanctified and set apart for particular purpose. God is holy, set apart from mankind... our holy faith is from God and this sets us apart from the world to glorify God.

The Christian Life is a Life of Faith

What role does our faith have in accepting the truth of Romans 8:28?

Romans 8:28 - And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Our faith helps us to understand that God uses bad things that happen to us to bring about a good result. This is counter intuitive and requires us to trust that God really is in sovereign control and is guided by love for His creation. Applying this knowledge about God to the events in our lives helps us to accept the concept that God will use bad things to bring about a greater good.

What would be the value of faith if only good things happened to God's people and bad things only happened to those who reject Him?

Faith would not be required in this case... life is a test to see who will respond to the seed of faith God gives them and, after they have responded, to what extent they will allow God to grow their faith. Faith does not insist on life being fair for this short season that we are in these mortal bodies... faith merely insists that eventually all will be sorted out and every wrong will be righted. God, the judge of all creation will do right.

Will there be a time when we don't need faith?

When we are in our eternal, resurrected bodies, we will certainly not need a saving faith because our total salvation will have been completed. Likewise, I don't think we'll need to take steps of faith because our knowledge of God will be more clear...

1 Corinthians 13:12-13 - For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

In our resurrected bodies, our relationship with God will not be obscured by a sin nature and this world. We will not need faith and hope because our hope will be realized. Love is greater than faith and hope because it will endure into eternity.

What does 2 Corinthians 5:7 say that helps us to better understand our faith?

2 Corinthians 5:7 - For we walk by faith, not by sight. Life is a test to determine to what extent a person will follow through on the faith God gives them. God is very subtle in the revelation of Himself to mankind so that acting in faith is required have a relationship with Him. So to live the Christian life, it is necessary to respond to the Lord in faith because we can not see Him during this age in our mortal bodies.

What does 1 John 5:4 say that helps us to better understand our faith?

1 John 5:4 - For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith.

Our faith is what helps us overcome the consequences of following the prevailing world view which rejects God. Those who are born of God have the faith that overcomes the world.