

Faith 4102-03; the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ...all those who believe...there is no distinction; Rom. 3:22

We, in the church, hear a lot about the importance of possessing faith. But, how many of us really understand what true faith really is, or possess the faith required for our salvation? When we are asked if we have it we will all fire back without any hesitation that we do, because we know that all good Christians have faith and we want to be counted as such. When we are asked to define it most of us would point to ***Hebrews 11:1, now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*** If we don't take the time to investigate this verse, that is, take the time to rip it apart from the original meanings and let it speak to us, and we read it literally, even the verse that defines faith doesn't sound like it has much faith "*assurance of things hoped for?!*" When I hear this verse literally spoken it reminds me of the time in my youth when I desired something and crossed my fingers and everything else that I was capable of crossing, until my wish came true. Literally when we think of things that we are "hoping for" it sounds like a wish list that we may or may not get, usually dependent on outside circumstances that are out of our control! Is that faith or a fingers crossed wish??? Hebrews 11 is commonly referred to as the "faith chapter," it makes many references to faith and its importance to us, therefore it would make a great Bible Study. To understand this verse the way that it was meant to be understood requires *at least* two things which will be the rule for this study.

1. We must keep the verse within the context that it was written.
 - a. Read the verses before and after as a minimum. I would suggest that you read the whole book through in order to answer the 5 W's of grammar.
2. We must look up each English word in the language that it was written to understand the original meaning of the words and the verse.
3. As a back-up pick out at least three reputable commentators to confirm and affirm what you believe the Bible is telling you.

Verse 1 is not really a formal definition of faith; rather it is a description of what faith does for us. So let's take verse Hebrews 11:1 and define the words as they were meant to be understood: *On the contrary, we are persons who have a realistic hope based on the facts and the reality of the resurrected Christ; that act which provides the trust and a firm, solid confidence in spiritual things that we desire and expect to receive and we have the certainty and persuasion to receive those things that we have been told through God's word, but have not yet witnessed, such as our future reward and the second coming of Christ.* We have noticed that the amplified verse starts out with "On the contrary." That is because the preceding verse tells us what we are not, ***Heb. 10:39; "those who shrink back to destruction."*** Faith makes things hoped for as real as if we already had them, it provides unshakable evidence that the unseen, spiritual blessings of Christianity are absolutely certain and real. In other words, it

brings the future within the present and makes the invisible seen. Faith is confidence, (hoped for), in the trustworthiness of God. It is the conviction that what God says is true and that what He promises us will come to pass. Faith must have some revelation from God, some promise of God as the foundation. It is not a leap in the dark. It demands the surest evidence in the universe, and finds it in the Word of God. It is not limited to mere possibilities but invades the realm of the impossible. *Difficulties are food for faith to feast on, (George Miller).*

In the original language of the NT, the noun “faith” and the verb “believe” are different parts of the same word. Although faith involves belief, by far the most important characteristic of faith (in a Biblical sense), is reliance, or trust. To have faith in a person or thing is to rely wholly on that person or thing, and not to rely on one’s self. The Bible usually speaks of faith in relation to people’s trust in, or dependence on, God and His works. This dependence may concern aspects of physical life such as God’s provision for food, health, protection from harm and victory over enemies. ***Ps. 22:4-5; In Thee our fathers trusted; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. To Thee they cried out, and were delivered; in Thee they trusted, and were not disappointed. Ps. 37:3-4; Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Ps. 46:1-3; God is our refuge and our strength, a very pleasant help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change; and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Matt. 6:30-33; “But if God so arrays the grass in the field. Which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? “Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘what shall we eat?’ or what shall we drink?’ or with what shall we clothe ourselves?’ “For all of these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need these things. “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all of these things shall be added to you. Heb. 11:33-35, (the prophets) who by faith conquered kingdoms. Performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection.*** In these verses in Hebrews we are shown a continuation of examples from the OT where God’s people put their faith in God for physical needs and how the Lord responded to such faith by giving them what they needed. Let’s unpack these verses in Hebrews to get a better understanding: *There is not enough time or space to teach of all of the examples of faith shown by God’s through prophets and kings, who by means of their faith contended against a people in a territory under a kingly rule, dispensed justice to all of the nations and practiced as a way of life acts of fulfilling the claims that were the same as God’s claims by treating everyone as equals, doing what is equitable in God’s sight and being impartial, and who, in order to obtain the promises of salvation in Christ, silenced the mouths of*

cruel adversaries, extinguished the spirit of opposing powers, escaped the danger or punishment from the edges and points of weapons, recovered from physical weaknesses and sicknesses and then they were made strong, and had become to be in a state of being powerful in fights, putting to flight hostile heathen enemies. Women receiving back those that were given to them during their life after their loved ones death, having been returned to life; and others besides who were scourged, beaten, and tortured, not wanting to receive their deliverance from imprisonment, because in their death they might attain a better more valuable more dignified more excellent return to life, not one that would return them to this life, but to God's eternal kingdom.

The writer of Hebrews goes now from naming the persons of faith to citing their situations and circumstance in which their achievements were accomplished by means of faith. We can have a tendency to believe that for some reason or other God was more benevolent to the OT faithful, or even more benevolent to the persons of Jesus' time here on earth, than He is at this present time. But the God that was with them through their sufferings and eventual deliverance is the same God of today, unchanged, that is just as willing to be just as benevolent to us as He was to the Biblical characters that we read about. God will and does respond to our faith and quite possibly His response to our requests is proportional and restricted by our faith or lack thereof. But above all faith concerns itself with aspects of one's spiritual life such as God's provision of salvation and eternal life, ***Ps. 18:2; The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Ps. 40:4; How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust, and has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood. Ps. 71:5; For Thou art my hope; O Lord God, Thou art my confidence from youth. Ps. 73:26; My flesh and my heart might fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Prov. 3:5; Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. Jer. 17:7; Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is in the Lord. John 3:16; For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Rom. 1:16; For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Rom. 5:1; Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*** Let's take a closer look at Jeremiah 17:7: *God greets with a salutation the essence of the man who finds his strength in his spirituality which is found in Him, who is confident in his safety and security that is felt when He relies on the Lord, his Master; and whose safety and security is in his Master, the Lord.* Verse 7 shows us the companion of faith is the blessings when we trust in the Lord, that is, the genesis of his strength and security. Figuratively this man spreads forth his roots by the brook to gain more and more strength for growth. He has no fear for the heat in the year of drought, because the brook by which he grows does not dry up.

Literally when we reach toward God for our help, instead of things of this world, we gain more strength and feel more secure knowing that He is aware of our plight and He is taking care of it according to our best interest, not necessarily what we want at the time, but what we need at the time. This man does not feel uneasy when the world turns up the heat on worries and anxieties, because he knows that the resource that He has in God is not finite and is there forever.

Whether in the era before Christ or after, people have been saved only through faith in the sovereign God who in His mercy and grace forgave our sin; and the basis on which God forgives sin is in the death of Jesus Christ, **Rom. 3:24-26; *Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Rom. 4:16; For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. Rom. 4:22-25; therefore it was reckoned to Him as righteousness. Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification. 2 Cor. 4:13; But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I believed, therefore I spoke, we also believe, therefore also we speak. Gal. 3:11; Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, the righteous man shall live by faith.*** Let's unpack verse 2 Cor. 4:13: *Therefore having as a continual possession of the same rational spirit and mind of Christian faith, a firm and confiding belief in Jesus Christ and His good news, and are conformable to what has been committed to writing, "I trusted that it was the Word of God, so therefore I spoke of what is written as truth," we also trust in and rely on what is written in the Holy Scriptures as the true word of God, so therefore we also speak of what is written.* Paul has been speaking of the constant frailty and weakness of the human as a vessel to which the gospel is entrusted. What then is his attitude toward all of this? Is he defeated, discouraged and dismayed? No, faith enables him to go on preaching the gospel, because he knows that beyond the sufferings of this life lie unspeakable glories. In Psalm 116:10 it says "I believed and therefore I spoke." He trusted in the Lord, and therefore what he said was the result of that deep-seated faith. Paul is here saying that the same is true in his case. He has the same spirit of faith which the Psalmist has when he uttered those words. Paul says, "We also believe and therefore we speak." Paul's sufferings did not silence him when he felt the need to speak the truth of the gospel. The same should be true of us, wherever there is true faith, there must be an expression of it; it cannot remain silent.

People can never be saved from sin, never accepted by God, on the basis of their good works or their law-keeping. They can do nothing to deserve or win God's favor. **Rom. 4:1-5; What then shall we say that Abraham, our fore-father according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. Rom. 9:30-32; what shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, pursuing law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. Rom. 10:3-4; For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.** Let's see if we can digest Rom. 10:3-4 a little better through the translation from the Greek: *Because they were not familiar with or acquainted with God's claim upon man, which is realized through faith and stands in opposition to the righteousness of the Law, since man tends to accept his own standards concerning what's is right or wrong, creating his own righteousness. Since they sought to set in place their own standards, they did not recognize that God's dealings with them were just and so consequently they would not submit themselves to Him. Because Christ is the means to the goal of the law to God's claims upon man to all that trust in and rely on Jesus Christ.*

This is where the Jews and all unbelievers have failed. They are ignorant of God's righteousness, ignorant of the fact that God *imputes* (puts to His account) righteousness on the principle of faith and not of works. They went about trying to produce a righteousness of their own, by law keeping. They tried to win God's favor by their own efforts, their own character, and their own good works. They steadfastly refused to submit to God's plan for reckoning righteous those ungodly sinners who believe in His Son. If they had only believed in Jesus Christ, they would have seen that He is the end of the law for righteousness.

The purpose of the law is to reveal sin, to convict and condemn transgressors. It can never impart righteousness. The penalty of the broken law is death. In His death, Christ paid the penalty of the law which men had broken. When a sinner receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, the law has nothing more to say to him. Through the death of his Substitute, he has died to the law. He is through with the law and with the futile attempts to achieve righteousness through it. God saves His people solely by His grace, and they receive this salvation by faith, **Eph. 2:8,9; for by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.** *So it is through a favor of God which He does without any expectation of return that you are saved. It is an absolutely free*

expression of the loving kindness of the Lord to men finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the Giver. This grace affects man's sinfulness and not only forgives the repentant sinner, but brings joy and thankfulness to him. It changes him to a new creature without destroying his individuality. This grace is attained by trusting in and relying on Jesus Christ as the grounds of our justification to be present before God, and this cannot be accomplished in our own strength: because it comes from His gratuitous character ; not from the results of obeying laws, because that would give man a reason to exult in himself.

Paul presents to us God's simple plan of salvation. It all originates with the grace of God: He takes the initiative in providing salvation. It is given to those who are utterly unworthy of it, on the basis of the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is given as a present possession. Those who are saved can know it, **1 John 5:11-12; And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.** When Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians he says "you have been saved." He knew it, and they knew it. The way that we receive the gift of eternal life is through faith. Faith means that man takes his place as a lost, guilty sinner, and receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his only hope of salvation. True saving faith is the commitment of a person to a Person. Any idea that man can earn or deserve salvation is forever exploded by the words, "and that not of yourselves." Dead people can do nothing, and sinners deserve nothing but punishment. Salvation is a gift of God. A gift of course is a free and unconditional present. That is the only basis on which God offers salvation. The gift of God is salvation by grace and through faith. It is offered to all people everywhere.

Faith in itself does not save. It is simply the means by which the sinner accepts the salvation that God offers. God's salvation is not a reward for a person's faith; it is a gift that no person in any way deserves, but he can receive it by faith, **Rom. 3:23-25; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. Rom. 5:15; But the free gift is not like the transgression. For by it the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.** Let's take a deeper look at verses Rom. 3:23-25: *Because everyone, including everyone whoever was created, is aware that he has done wrong as far as being drawn into errors concerning faith in God, and in doing so has failed to obtain divine favor and falls short of the true recognition of God, that is, we fail to attract the gaze of God, meaning what God intended us to be, in the lacking of His image and character; but, being declared righteous as a free gift, not in appearance, but through faith in Jesus Christ through the means of His favor, benevolence and goodwill He provided forgiveness of our sin or for not being what He intended us to be and*

provided reconciliation to a holy God by means of the deliverance procured on account of the ransom He paid for the deliverance from the power and consequences of sin by laying down His life as a ransom. He is the One whom the Father set before the eyes of the public as a true mercy seat, that is, Jesus Christ, Himself is the place where sinners deposit their sin in or by means of believing in the truth of Christ's death and resurrection as the ground for justification before God. This was to manifest His uprightness or standard by which man is expected to conform to, which God approves, requires, and bestows for the temporary suspension of His wrath which He put aside for the punishment of our sins that were previously committed. The availability of the gospel is as universal as the need. And the need is universal because all of have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Everybody has sinned in Adam, when he sinned he acted as the representative for all his descendants. But men are not only sinners by nature; they are also sinners by practice. They fall short in themselves, of the glory of God. Sin is any thought word or deed that falls short of God's standard of holiness and perfection. It is a missing of the mark, a coming up short of the target. An Indian whose arrow fell short of its target was heard to say, "Oh, I sinned." In his language the same word was used to express sinning and falling short of the target. Sin is lawlessness (***everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness; 1 Jn. 3:4***), the rebellion of the creature's will against the will of God. Sin is not only doing and being what is wrong, but the failure to do and be what one knows is right, (***therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin, James 4:17***). Whatever is not of faith is sin, (***but he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin, Rom. 14:23***). This means that it is wrong for a man to do anything about which he has a reasonable doubt. If he does not have a clear conscience about it, and yet goes ahead and does it, he is sinning. (***All unrighteousness is sin, 1 John 5:15***). And the thought of foolishness is sin, (***The devising of folly is sin, Prov. 24:9***). (It was hard for me to find a strict Biblical definition of "folly," but, in my opinion, the one that would most fit as sin is this one: wickedness or evil; lewdness; action that ends or can end in disaster; (Webster). It applies to those who are careless, thoughtless, stupid, foolish, wicked or easily lead. It is applied also to those who rely entirely on their own understanding and ability rather than relying on God, (World's Bible Dictionary).

Sin begins in the mind. When encouraged and entertained, it breaks forth into an act, and the act leads on to death, ***James 1:14, 15; But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust; then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death***. Sin is often attractive when first contemplated, but hideous in retrospect. Paul has shown that all men have sinned and fall short of God's glory, and then he goes on to present the remedy. Paul teaches us how God justifies sinners as a free gift and by an act of unmerited favor.

But what do we mean when we speak of the act of justifying? The word for *justify* means to reckon or to declare to be righteous. For example, God pronounces a sinner to be righteous when that sinner believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and is all that this righteousness suggests. This is the way that the word is most often used in the NT. However a man can learn of God's righteousness and declare Him to be righteous by believing and obeying God's word, that is, he uses God as an example of how he should live his own life; **Luke 7:29, And when all of the people and the tax-gatherers heard this, they acknowledged God's justice having been baptized with the baptism of John.** And, of course, a man can justify himself; that is, he can profess his own righteousness, **Luke 10:29, But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor."** But this is nothing less than a form of self deception. To *justify* does not mean to actually *make* a person righteous. We cannot *make* God righteous; He already is righteous. But we can *declare* Him to be righteous, that is, acknowledge His righteousness. God does not make the believer sinless or righteous in himself. Rather God puts righteousness to his account. A popular definition of justification is *just as if I'd never really sinned*. But this does not go far enough. When God justifies a believing sinner, He not only acquits him of guilt but he also clothes him in His own righteousness and thus makes him absolutely fit for eternal existence with Him in heaven. Justification goes beyond acquittal to approval; beyond pardon to promotion. Acquittal only means that a person is set free from a charge. Justification means that positive righteousness has been imputed. The reason that God can declare ungodly sinners to be righteous, is because the Lord Jesus Christ has fully paid the debt of their sins by His death and resurrection. When sinners accept Christ by faith, they are justified. When James teaches us that justification is by works, **James 2:24, You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone,** he does not mean that we are saved by good works, or by faith plus good works, but rather by the kind of faith that results in good works. It is important to realize that justification is a reckoning that takes place in the mind of God. It is not something a believer feels; he knows it has taken place because the Bible says so. *Justification is that act of God whereby He declares righteous all who believe in Jesus. It is something that takes place in the mind of God; not in the nervous system or emotional nature of the believer, (Scofield).*

In Romans 3:24 Paul teaches that we are justified freely. It is not something that we can earn or purchase, but rather something that is offered as a gift. Next we learn that we are justified by means of God's grace. This simply means that it is wholly apart from any merit in ourselves. As far as we are concerned it is undeserved, unsought, and unbought. In order to avoid confusion later on, we should pause here to say that there are six different aspects to justification in the NT. We are taught that we are justified by grace, faith, blood, power, God, and by works; yet there is not any contradiction or conflict, they are mutually inclusive. It is a combination of all of these that justifies us and not one specific aspect. It can be compared to the fruit of the Spirit, all nine attributes are the fruit and not one individual attribute, and thus they are not "*fruits* of the Spirit."

- a. We are justified by grace—that means that we cannot earn it nor do we deserve it.
- b. We are justified by faith—that means that we have to receive it by believing in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- c. We are justified by the blood—this refers to the price that our Savior paid in order that we might be justified.
- d. We are justified by power—the same power that raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.
- e. We are justified by God—He is the One who reckons us righteous.
- f. We are justified by works—not meaning the good works earn justification, but they are the evidence that we have been justified.

We read that we are justified through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Redemption means buying back by payment of a ransom price. The Lord Jesus bought us back from the slave market of sin. His precious blood was the ransom price which was paid to satisfy the claims of a holy and righteous God. If someone asks, “To whom was the ransom paid?” he misses the point. The Scriptures nowhere suggest that a specific payment was made either to God or to Satan. The ransom was not paid to anyone but was an abstract settlement that provided a righteous basis by which God could save the ungodly.

God set forth Christ Jesus as propitiation. Propitiation is a means by which justice is “satisfied,” God’s wrath is averted, and mercy can be shown on the basis of an acceptable sacrifice. “Propitiation” can be generally defined as *the putting away of sin and the establishing of righteousness*, satisfying the requirements to be called sons of God. Four times in the NT Christ is spoken of as propitiation. Here in Romans 3:25 we learn that those who put their faith in Christ find mercy by virtue of His shed blood. Also in **1 John 2:2, (and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.)** Christ is described as the propitiation for our sins, and for those of the whole world. His work is sufficient for the whole world but is only effective for those who put their trust in Him. Finally, in **1 John 4:10, (In this love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.)** God’s love was manifested in sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The prayer of the publican in **Luke 18:13, But the tax-gatherer standing some distance away, was unwilling to even raise his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast saying, God be merciful to me, the sinner!** Is literally saying, “God, be propitious to me, a sinner.” He was asking God to show him mercy by not requiring him to pay the penalty of his aggravated (a grave form of an offense) guilt. The word propitiation also appears in **Hebrews 2:17, (therefore, He has to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make**

propitiation for the sins of the people). Here the expression “to make propitiation” means to put away by paying the penalty.

The OT equivalent of the word propitiation is “mercy seat.” The mercy-seat was the lid of the ark. On the Day of Atonement the high priest sprinkled the mercy-seat with the blood of the sacrificed animal. By this means errors of the priest and of the people were atoned for or covered. When Christ made the propitiation for our sins, He went much further. He not only covered our sins but did away with them completely. Now Paul tells us in Rom. 3:25; that God displayed Christ publicly as propitiation by His blood through faith. We are not told to put our faith in His blood; Christ Himself is the object of our faith. It is only a resurrected and living Christ who can save. He is the propitiation. Faith in Him is the condition by which we avail ourselves of the propitiation. His blood is the price that was paid. The finished work of Christ declares God’s righteousness for the remission of sins that are past. This refers to sins committed before the death of Christ. From Adam to Christ, God saved those who put their faith in Him on the basis of whatever revelation He gave them. Abraham for example, believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness, **Gen. 15:6, Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.**

But how could God do this righteously? A sinless substitute had not been slain. The blood of the perfect sacrifice had not been shed. In a word, Christ had not died. The debt had not been paid. God’s righteous claims had not been met. How then could God save believing sinners in the OT period? The answer is that although Christ had not yet died, God knew that He would die, and He saved men on the basis of the still future work of Christ. Even if OT saints didn’t know about Calvary, God knew about it, and He put all of the value of Christ’s work to their account when they believed God. In a very real sense, OT believers were saved on credit. They were saved on the basis of a price still to be paid. They looked forward to Calvary; we look back to it.

This is what Paul means when he says that the propitiation of Christ declares God’s righteousness because He had passed over the sins that were previously committed. He is not speaking, as some may think, of sins which an individual person has committed before his conversion. This might suggest that the work of Christ took care of sins before the new birth, but that a man is on his own after that. He is dealing with the seeming leniency of God in apparently overlooking the sins of those who were saved before the cross. It might seem that God excused those sins or pretended not to see them. But this is not so, says Paul. The Lord knew that Christ would make full expiation (*to pay the penalty*), so He saved men on that basis. The OT period was a time of the forbearance of God. He held back His judgment on sin. Then in the fullness of time He sent His Son to be the Sin-bearer. When the Lord Jesus Christ took our sin and the penalty of our sins upon Himself, God unleashed the full fury of His righteousness,

His holy wrath, on the Son that He loves. This means the Law as a demanded obligation has come to an end because Jesus has fulfilled its demands and imparted His righteousness to those who believe in Christ. Christ has freed believers from tyranny. The standards of righteousness now come not from without by imposition, but from within by the Spirit who writes the Law upon our hearts.

In our finite capacity of understanding it is hard for us to comprehend that we can have God's righteousness without having to do anything for it. This is where the Gentiles and the Jews failed. They were ignorant of God's righteousness, ignorant of the fact that God imputes (to put into another's account) righteousness on the principle of faith and not works. They tried to produce a righteousness of their own by law-keeping. They tried to win God's favor by their own efforts, their own character, and their own good works. They steadfastly refused to submit to God's plan for reckoning righteous those ungodly sinners who believe in His Son. If they had only believed in Christ they would've seen that He is the fulfillment of the law of righteousness. The purpose of the Law is to reveal sin, to convict and condemn transgressors. It can never impart righteousness. The penalty of the broken law is death. In His death Christ paid the penalty of the law which men had broken. When a sinner receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, the law has nothing more to say to him. Through the death of His substitute, he died to the law. He is through with the law and with the futile attempts to achieve righteousness through it.

People are not saved by works. And they are not saved by faith plus works. They are saved through faith alone. The minute you add works of any kind or in any amount as a means to the equation of gaining, salvation is no longer by grace, and "faith" is no longer "faith," it has become religion. **Rom. 11:6, But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.** One reason that works is totally excluded is to prevent humans from boasting. If anyone could be saved by his works, then he would have a reason to boast before God. This is impossible, **Rom. 3:27, where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, by a law of faith.** If anyone could be saved by his own good works, then the death of Christ was unnecessary, **Gal. 2:21, I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.** But we know that the reason He died was because there was no other way by which guilty sinners could be saved. If anyone could be saved by his own good works, then he would be his own savior, and could worship himself. But this would be idolatry, and God forbids it, **Ex. 20:3, You shall have no other gods before Me.** Even if someone could be saved through faith in Christ plus his own good works, you would have the impossible situation of two saviors—Jesus and the sinner. Christ would then have to share the glory of savior-hood with another, and this He will not do, **Isa. 42:8, I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.** Finally, if anyone could contribute to his own salvation by works then God

would owe it to him. This too is impossible. God cannot be indebted to anyone, **Rom. 11:35, Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again?** In contrast to works, faith excludes boasting, as previously quoted in Rom. 3:27, because it is non-meritorious. A man has no reason to be proud that he has trusted in the Lord. Faith in Him is the most sane, rational, sensible, thing a person can do. To trust one's Creator and Redeemer is only logical and reasonable. If we cannot trust Him, whom can we trust?

Faith in itself does not save. It is simply the means by which the sinner accepts the salvation that God offers. God's salvation is not a reward for a person's faith; it is a gift that no person in any way deserves, but he can receive it by faith, **Rom. 3:25, whom God displayed publically as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. Rom. 5:15, But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift of grace of the one Man Jesus Christ, abound to the many.** We have already looked deeper at verse Rom. 3:25, so let's take apart Rom. 5:15: *however, the gift of redemption and salvation through Christ cannot be likened to the willful transgression of a known rule of life because that involves guilt. Because if by the willful transgression of a known rule of life, by Adam, the multitudes would be dead to the law, i.e., they would have no more dependence upon mere legal righteousness for justification and salvation than a dead man would have, by comparison, the absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God to man, of which there was more than enough, that is, the gift of the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, serve everyone ever created.* The first contrast in this verse is between the sin of Adam and the free gift of grace from God. By the willful transgression of Adam of the known rules of life, many died both spiritually and physically. The "many" in this verse refers to Adam's descendants. The free gift of grace abounds much more to the many. The free gift is the marvelous manifestations of the grace of God abounding to a race of sinners. It is made possible by the grace of the one Man Jesus Christ. It was amazing grace on His part to die for His rebellious creatures. Through His sacrificial death, the gift of eternal life is offered to the many.

The two uses of the word "manys" in this verse do not refer to the same people. The first "many" includes all who became subject to death as a result of Adam's trespass. The second "many" means all of us who became members of His new creation, of which Christ is the Head, that is, one that all of His subjects agree to submit to Him. It includes only those to whom God's grace has abounded—that is, true believers. While God's mercy is showered on all, His grace is appropriated only by those who trust in the Savior. For example, if someone out of the goodness of his heart decides to give a friend a gift, the friend must accept that gift if he wants to make it his own. But the gift is given freely; it is not a reward for the friend's act of acceptance. Again, faith is not something that we can boast about. There is no merit in faith. All

the merit lies in the object of faith, God, who through Jesus Christ has become the Savior of mankind, ***John 3:16, 18, For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. He who believes in Him is not judged; He who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 7:31, But many of the multitude believed in Him; and they were saying, "when the Christ shall come, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He? John 17:20, "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word. Acts 20:21, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 John 5:12-13, He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.*** In 1 John 5:12, 13 we have the assurance of our salvation, so let's take a closer look at these verses, 12 and 13: *Anyone and everyone who continually holds onto firmly in their mind and acknowledges with love and devotion the Son of God, that is, the One who derived His human nature directly from God, has that eternal life of bliss and glory in the kingdom of God which awaits true believers after their resurrection; those that do not continually hold onto firmly in their mind and do not acknowledge the One that got His human nature directly from God with love and devotion does not actively possess this life of bliss and glory in the eternal kingdom of God. I have laid down these things before you who trust in and rely on the character and reputation of the Son of God so that you may understand and believe that you have the eternal life of bliss and glory in the kingdom of God.* From this, the conclusion is evitable. He who has the Son has life; and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. The teaching is un-mistakable. Eternal life is not found in education of philosophy or science or good works or religion or the church. To have life, one must have the Son of God. On the other hand, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life, that is, true life. Eternal life is inseparable from Jesus Christ.

This verse comes at the concluding portion of John's Epistle. John wants to make sure before he ends his letter that there is no misunderstanding. First of all, John states in the clearest terms why he has written the preceding passages. The purpose is that those who believe in the name of the Son of God may know that they have eternal life. If you have the evidence in your daily living and that includes a relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, then you can know that you are counted as of those who are children of God, and then you can know that you have been born into the family of God. This verse also teaches another precious truth, namely, that assurance of salvation comes through the word of God.

John wrote these things in this verse so that people could know that they have eternal life. In other words, the Scriptures were written so that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ may have assurance that they are saved. There is no need for all of the hoping and

guessing that we hear from so many people that seem to be feeling or groping in the dark. It is not presumptuous for one to say that he is saved. John states it in the clearest possible manner that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ may know that they have eternal life. Consider another example. If a person in a sinking ship jumps into a lifeboat, that life boat will mean everything to him. His faith in jumping into it, far from being an act of merit, is an admission of helplessness. It is the lifeboat, the object of the person's faith that takes him to safety.

Faith in God is not effort, but the ceasing of effort. It is not doing, but relying on what Jesus has done. It is an attitude whereby a person gives up his own efforts to win salvation, no matter how good they may be, and completely trust in Christ, and in Him alone, for his salvation, **Acts 16:30-31, and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." Gal. 2:16, nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.** Like John, it is imperative that in our teaching that we make sure that everyone has a clear understanding of how we acquire salvation. There are so many false teachings going around that we must make sure that that our disciples understand the truth of salvation. So let's look closer at verse Acts 16:30, 31: *And so the jailor lead them out of the jail, then he began to interrogate them by using these words, "I respectively inquire of you; what is it that is necessary for me to do to be rescued and preserved from that spiritual death that is common to all men because of Adam's sin?" And they laid this before him with these words; "Trust in, rely on, and have faith in the Master Jesus Christ, and you shall be rescued and preserved from that spiritual death that is common to all men because of Adam's sin, not only you, but those of your family that live together with you as they follow your leadership as head of the house."* A new revelation has swept over the jailer. His fear of losing his job and perhaps his life has given way to his conviction of his sin. He was not afraid to meet God in his sins. What caused this change of heart in the jailer? The Bible doesn't tell us for sure, but we do have some hints in the preceding verses that tell us what Paul and Silas did in verse 16:25; ***about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God; and the prisoners were listening to them.*** If the prisoners were listening to them the jailor could quite possibly have heard their prayers and hymns also; this could've caused a stirring in his heart and an encouragement to repent. The jailors response to this is written; ***what must I do to be saved?*** This question must precede every genuine case of conversion. A man must know he is lost before he can be saved. It is premature to tell a man how to be saved until first he can say from his heart, "I truly deserve to go to hell." The only people in the NT who were ever told to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ were convicted sinners. Now that the jailor was thoroughly broken over his sins, he was told: ***Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.*** There is no suggestion here that his family would be saved automatically if

he trusted Christ. The meaning of that is that if he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, he would be saved, and his household would be saved in the same way. This verse could read like this: *“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved and let your household do the same.”*

Sometimes when we read the epistles we can get confused because reading certain verses out of context can make them seem to be contradictory, as could be the case with the verse we read above in ***Gal. 2:16; nevertheless knowing that a man I not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be in Christ, and not by works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.*** Then we have an example of being judged by our works; ***Rev. 20:12; and I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.*** When we read these verses we must hold onto the fact of this truth that will never changed “man I justified the faith of Jesus Christ, i.e., the faith that Christ generates in the human heart.” Negatively stated, we read ***Rom. 3:20; by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*** On the other hand there is written; ***James 2:21-24; was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.*** This last verse apparently states that man is not justified by faith only but also by works. The difficulty of the seeming contradiction is accentuated by the statement of Paul himself in this verse; ***Rom. 2:13; for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.*** So how can we reconcile these verses that seem to contradict each other?

One way to resolve this apparent contradiction is to go back to ***James 2:14; what use is it my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?*** This verse does not say “what does it profit a man to have faith?” It says, “What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, (in the Greek means “to make a reasoned statement). A mere profession of faith does not mean the possession of faith or the natural accompaniments of faith. Faith that is not accompanied by its inevitable and expectant fruits of faith is no faith at all. It is a mockery. James calls such a faith “dead faith.” We call a corpse a body, but a living body can breathe. A body that does not breathe is necessarily dead.

Paul speaks of a true, lively faith which purifies the heart and works by love, ***Gal. 5:6; for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.*** James in this instance speaks of a profession or presumption of faith, barren and

destitute of good fruit. Such a faith is dead, **James 2:17; even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.** It is a faith as the devils may have, **James 2:19; you believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe and shudder.** This kind of faith consists only of an intellectual belief of God's being or existence, not consenting to His offer of salvation through repentance and turning from sin, nor reliance on His promises. When Paul speaks of faith, he speaks of it as including the works of faith. When James speaks of faith in this instance, he speaks of false faith that does not result in the works of faith. When any Apostle speaks of works resulting from faith as saving anyone, inherent in those works is included the faith that is the only way whereby those works can be produced. When I speak of fruit, the whole process of development of the fruit is included. When works, however, are spoken about as the works not resulting from faith, they are meant to be false works or fruits, fruits of a nonexistent faith. One cannot have the fruits of faith that are true and real without true and real faith, no more than oranges can come from pine trees.

This sort of reasoning would bring light upon a statement such as that which we find in **1 Pet. 3:21; baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.** This kind of baptism results from the exercise of living faith in Jesus Christ. It is not actually the baptism that saves, because the act of physical baptism without the antecedent living, spiritual faith in Christ is nothing but an empty and ineffective act. Here the baptism mentioned in 1 Pet. 3:21 as saving a believer presupposes the root which produced it, i.e., living faith in Jesus Christ.

Many people today seem to have difficulty knowing what it means to believe, because like the Jews of old, they have added to God's morality their own sense of what is moral. However, when a sinner knows that he is lost, helpless, hopeless, hell bound, and when he is told to believe in Christ as his Lord and Savior, he knows exactly what it means. It is the only thing left that he can do or become. Without such an attitude, a person cannot receive God's salvation, **Heb. 11:6, And 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 seek Him.** In this verse we should recognize the importance of having faith, "without faith it is impossible to please Him." So this verse deserves a deeper look: *also, if we have separated ourselves from the basis of our realistic hope that results from the reality of Christ's resurrection, then being entirely gratifying to God cannot be done, because he who approaches God needs to absolutely trust in Him as the Recompenser of those who seek earnestly after Him with a sincere and earnest desire to obtain His favor. No amount of good works can compensate for a lack of faith.* After all is said and done, when a man refuses to believe in God, he is calling Him a liar. **1 John 5:10, He who does not believe in God has made Him a liar,** and how can God be pleased by people who call Him a liar? Faith is the only thing that gives God His proper place, and puts man in his place too. It

glorifies God exceedingly because it proves that we have more confidence in His eyesight than in our own. Faith not only believes that God exists, but it also trusts Him to reward those who diligently seek Him. There is nothing about God that makes it impossible for men to believe in Him or anything about Him. The difficulty is with the human will.

The faith by which people receive salvation is not merely an acknowledgement of certain facts (though this is necessary, since the believer must know who and what he is trusting in), ***John 2:22, when therefore, He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken. John 3:12, "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" John 6:69, And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God. John 8:24-25, "I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins." And so they were saying to Him, who are you? Jesus said to them, "What I have been saying to you from the beginning." Rom. 10:9-10, That if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved, for with the heart a man believes resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 1 John 5:20, And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him as true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*** Above and beyond these certain facts faith is a belief by which a person commits himself wholly to Christ in complete trust and dependence. It is not just accepting certain things as true, for even God's enemies may have that sort of belief; ***James 2:19, You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe and shudder,*** but also trusting in a person, Jesus Christ. A person may say that he has a "general" faith in God, but if he refuses to have specific faith in Jesus Christ, his faith is a form of self-deception, ***John 5:24, Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. John 14:6, Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. 1 John 2:23, whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.*** In my opinion, John 14:6 states a truth that all of us should be aware of, that is, there is only one way to the Father and it is through the Son. Some are preaching that there are many ways to gain salvation; these verses refute that position.

We football fans always used to say, back in the days of the Big 8: "The way to the Big 8 championship goes through Oklahoma." The way to eternal life goes through Jesus Christ. You can't have eternal life without believing in the Son our Lord Jesus Christ. So let's take a closer look at this verse in John 14:6: *Jesus the Christ laid this before him as He spoke these words, "I, Myself, am the only author and medium of access to God and eternal life, and I Myself also am the only truth incarnate and the teacher of divine truth, and I Myself am the only author and*

giver of eternal life; not one of you moves toward the person of the Father except by means of faith in Me. This verse makes it very clear that the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the way to heaven. He does not merely show the way; He *is* the way. Salvation is in a Person. Accept that Person as your own, and you have salvation. Christianity is Christ. The Lord Jesus is not just one of many ways. He is the only way. No one comes to the Father except through Him. The way to God is not by the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, ordinances, church membership—it is through Christ and Christ alone. Today many say that it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. They say that all religions have some good in them and that they all lead to heaven in the end. But Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Then this verse in John says that our Lord is the truth. He is not One that just teaches truth; He is the truth. He is the embodiment of truth. Those who believe in Christ have the truth. It is not found anywhere else. Christ Jesus is the life. He is the source of life, both spiritual and eternal. Those who will allow Him to be the Lord of their life have eternal life because He is the life.

So basic is faith to Christianity, that the NT uses the name “believer” as another name for Christian, ***Acts 5:14; And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number. 1 Tim 4:12, Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech and conduct, love faith and purity, show yourself to be an example of those who believe.*** As Paul gives instruction to Timothy about how to conduct himself, this verse in 1 Tim. is a great instruction for us as Christians as far as how we are suppose to conduct ourselves, not only while we are around other Christians, or not just on Sundays, but at all times every day: *Do not allow not even one man to minimize your wisdom and knowledge concerning your maturity in Christ due to your youthful age; but rather in the meanings of your discourses, mode of life, goodwill, practical faith, that is the Christian life and morals, and purity from defilement, be a pattern or model to be imitated of those who trust in, rely on and have faith in Jesus Christ.*

At the time of this letter Timothy was probably between thirty and thirty-five years old. In contrast with some of the elders in the assembly at Ephesus, he would comparatively be a young man. That is why Paul says here, “let no one despise your youth.” This does not mean that Timothy is to put himself on a pedestal and consider himself immune from criticism. Rather, it means that he is to give nobody occasion to condemn him. By being an example to the believers, he is to avoid the possibility of justified criticism. He is cautioned to watch his conversations, and to remember that his speech should represent a child of God. He should not only avoid such speech as strictly forbidden, but also any conversation that is not edifying to his hearers. He is also cautioned to watch his demeanor, in other words the actions of his works should match his words of conversation. In all of this love should be the motivating factor and the foundation of who he is and how he carries out the work of being a teacher and a disciple. It is easy for us to read these admonitions and apply them to our preachers, Sunday School

teachers, and the leadership in our congregation, but we must keep in mind that the reason these letters were preserved was because of the importance of the content applying each one of us also, no matter what our position in the church.

Likewise “faith” is another word that is used for Christianity, **1 Tim. 5:8, But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Tim. 6:10, For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some, by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many pang. 1 Tim. 6:20-21, O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.** It seems to me that 1 Timothy 6:10 is a verse that has been repeated often in conversation even by unbelievers and interpreted by believers to suit their lifestyle, so let’s take a deeper look at this verse to get a full grasp of its meaning: *Because the plans of fraud and extortion may be said to be the root from which sins grow, the longings and lusts of the creature, which has forsaken God, to fill itself with the lower objects of nature, the lovers of money have been seduced away from the right course of their belief in the truth, veracity, reality and faithfulness, and pierced themselves with many distresses of their body and mind.* Not all evil springs from the love of money. But it is certainly one of the great sources of many varieties of evil. For instance it leads to envy, strife, theft, dishonesty, lack of restraint, forgetfulness of God, selfishness, embezzlement, etc. It is not money in and of itself which is spoken of, but the *love* of money. Money might be used in the service of the Lord in a variety of ways where only good would result. But here it is the inordinate desire for money that leads to sin and shame. One particular evil of the love of money is here mentioned in this verse, that is, a wandering from the Christian faith. In their mad striving after gold, it has taken priority over everything spiritual, men neglect spiritual things, and it becomes difficult to tell whether they ever were really saved at all. Not only do they lose their grip on spiritual values, but they “pierce themselves through with many sorrows.” Think of the sorrows that are connected with the greed for riches! Too often we think that money is going to solve all of our problems, or even some of our problems, but every coin has two sides. There is the tragedy of a wasted life. There is the sorrow of losing one’s children to the world. There is the grief of seeing ones wealth vanish overnight. There is the fear of meeting God, either unsaved or at least empty handed. Realistically, money, in truth, is one of the most unsatisfying of possessions. It does not keep its promises. Money takes away some cares, no doubt, but it brings with it quite as many cares as it takes away. There is trouble in the getting of it and there is anxiety in the keeping of it. There are temptations in the use of it and there is guilt in the abuse of it. There is sorrow in losing of it and there is perplexity in the disposing of it. Two-thirds of all strife, quarrels, and lawsuits in the world arise from one simple cause--money.

Christians are not only saved by faith, they live by faith. They continue to rely on the promise and power of their unseen God rather than on what they see and experience in the visible world, **1 Cor. 2:5, your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. 2 Cor. 5:6-7, Therefore, being always of good courage and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith not by sight. Col. 1:23, If indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and which I, Paul, was made a minister. Col. 2:7, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.** Sometimes we can lift our mentors and teachers to a higher plain than we are or higher than they deserve; we have a tendency to elevate them because of the spiritual wisdom and knowledge that they possess. We must remember not to treat our Christian mentors as gods. They are as human as we are and sinners as we are, any wisdom that comes from them did not originate with them, but was given to them by the power of God, we see this in 1 Cor. 2:5: *In your firm and confiding belief in Jesus Christ and His gospel you should not be dependent on the knowledge of how to regulate your relationship with God by way of sinful man, but in the almighty energy imparted from God.* Paul knew that there was an upmost danger that his hearers might be interested in himself or in his own personality rather than in the living Lord. Conscious of his own inability to bless or to save, he determined that he would lead men to trust in God alone rather than in the wisdom of men.

All who proclaim the gospel message or teach the word of God should make this their constant aim. A Christian's life is lived in constant dependence on God. Christ has borne the penalty of sin on their behalf and now lives within them. Only as they trust in His power can they experience in practice the victory, peace and joy that their salvation has brought, **Gal. 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 delivered Himself up for me. Gal. 5:6, For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. Eph. 1:18-19, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.** To get a more clear understanding and to know the full implications of what it means to be crucified with Christ let's look at verse Gal. 2:20: *I, myself, am continually being spiritually crucified with Christ by putting to death my worldly and fleshly lusts by the repentance and forgiveness that I find at cross of Christ; also it is no longer I who live by the power of faith but Christ in me is the operating power of life, and the power of life which I at this present time submit myself to in the mortal body empowers me by means Christ's death as the ground for my justification before God, who willingly exposed Himself to death for me, and*

gave up His life for my salvation. As a believer we are identified with Christ in His death. Not only was He crucified at Calvary, I was crucified there as well—in Him. This means the end of me as a sinner in God’s sight. It means the end of me as a person seeking to merit or earn salvation by my own efforts. It means the end of me as a child of Adam, as a man under condemnation of the law, as my old, unregenerate self. The old, evil “I” has been crucified; it has no more claims on my daily life. This is true as to my standing before God; and so it should be true as to my character and conduct as well.

The believer does not cease to live as a personality or as an individual. But the one who is seen by God as having died is not the same one who lives. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The Savior did not die for me in order that I might go on living my life influenced by fleshly choices. He died for me so that from now on He might be able to live His life in me. The life which I now live in this human body, I live by faith in the Son of God. Faith, in this sense, means reliance or dependence in Jesus Christ to be your Sustainer. The Christian lives by continual dependence on Christ, by yielding to Him, by allowing Christ to live His life in him. Thus the believer’s rule of life is Christ and not the law. It is not a matter of striving, but of trusting. He lives a holy life, not out of fear of punishment, but out of love to the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him. If we have not by now prayed the prayer to have our life turned over to the authority of Jesus Christ, allowing Him to administrate the affairs of our life for us, it is important to do this so that His life might be manifested in your life.

The strength of the faith by which Christians live depends largely on the strength of their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, ***Rom. 14:1, Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. 2 Thess. 1:3, We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater. 2 Pet. 1:5-8, Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness, love. For these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Pet. 3:18; But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity, Amen.*** Let’s amplify verse 2Pet. 1:5-8 because it shows the progression to spiritual maturity. Even though Christianity is not a “step” program, still it causes changes in your character as you progress to maturity, this is also called “the sanctification process”: *So because of the depravity of the world that is corrupted by lusts, you should apply a total earnest effort in your appropriating what God has in Christ for man to distinguish your Christian character from your old character, in your efforts add to it by being pleasing to God in the goodness of your actions, and in your being pleasing to God by the*

goodness of your actions add intuitive knowledge of all things spiritual, and add to the things you intuitively know about spiritual things contentedness, and add to your contentedness, constancy in your suffering and duty and add to your constancy in suffering and duty, devotion toward God, and add to your devotion toward God, love for one another out of the common spiritual life that you share, and from the common spiritual life that you share in love add, having affectionate regard, goodwill, and benevolence toward your fellow man and God as a result of God's love for you. For if these qualities are continually yours and are growing ever more, they will have the effect of making you neither lazy nor produce bad fruit in the true knowledge of Christ Jesus which very powerfully influences the character of your spiritual life. If we would've started with the preceding verses 3 and 4 we would've read that God has given us all that is necessary for the divine life. Because He has, we must be diligent in cultivating it. God does not make us holy against our will or without our involvement. There must be desire, determination, and discipline in our part. In the development of Christian character, Peter assumes faith. After all, he is writing to Christians—to those who have already exercised saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So he does not tell them to acquire faith; he assumes that they already have it, (“in your faith supply moral excellence”). What is necessary is that faith be supplemented by seven elements of holiness, or seven evidences of a changed character, not adding these one after another, but manifesting all the graces of them all the time.

We could identify these characteristics in these verses with figures in the Bible as we recite this verse; add to your faith the virtue or courage of David, and to the courage of David the knowledge of Solomon; and to the knowledge of Solomon the patience of Job; and to the patience of Job the godliness of Daniel; and to the godliness of Daniel the brotherly kindness of Jonathon, and to the brotherly kindness of Jonathon the love of John.

The first characteristic is “moral excellence.” This can mean piety, goodness of life, or virtue, though these seem to be covered later by the word “godliness.” It may also be that “moral excellence” here means spiritual courage before a hostile world, the strength to stand for what is right. Then courage is to be supplemental with “knowledge” especially the knowledge of spiritual truth. This emphasizes the importance of studying the word of God and obeying its sacred precepts. Through an experiential knowledge of the Bible we develop practical skills in the details of Christianity. God calls every Christian to a life of discipline. Some have defined this as the controlling power of the will under the operation of the Spirit of God. There must be discipline in prayer, discipline in Bible study, and discipline in the use of our time, discipline in the curbing of our bodily appetites, and discipline in sacred living. Paul exercised such self-control, **1 Cor. 9:26, 27; “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”** Because of the example of others, the urgent needs of a perishing world, the personal peril of wrecking our testimony,

we should discipline ourselves so that Christ will have the best of our lives. Self-control should be supplemented with perseverance, that is, patient endurance of persecution and adversity. We need to be constantly reminded that the Christian life is a challenge to endure. It is not enough to start off in a blaze of glory; we must persevere in spite of difficulties to the end. The idea that Christianity is an unending round of mountaintop experiences is unrealistic. There is the daily routine, the menial task, the disappointing circumstance, the bitter grief, and the shattered plan. Perseverance is the art of bearing up and pressing on in the face of all that seems to be against us.

The next virtue is godliness. Our lives should be like God, with all that this means in the way of practical holiness. There should be such a supernatural quality in our conduct that others will know we are children of the heavenly Father. The family likeness should be unmistakable. Paul reminds us in **1 Tim. 4:8, *godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of life that is now and is of that is to come.*** Brotherly kindness identifies us to the world as Christ's disciples: **John 13:35; *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*** Love of the brethren leads to love for all mankind. This is not primarily a matter of the emotions, but of the will. It is not a sentimental exhilaration to experience but a commandment to obey. In the NT sense, love is supernatural. An unbeliever cannot love as the Bible commands because he does not have divine life. It takes divine love to love one's enemies and to pray for one's executioners. Love manifests itself in giving. For example, ***God so loved the world, that He gave, Christ also loved the church and gave.*** We can show our love by giving our time, our talents, our treasures, and our lives for others. All of these seven graces make a well-rounded Christian.

There is either advance or decline in the pathway of discipleship—no standing still. There is strength and security in moving forward; danger and failure in retreat. Failure to persevere in the development of Christian character leads to barrenness, unfruitfulness, blindness, shortsightedness, and forgetfulness.

“Barrenness, “in that only a life lived in fellowship with God can truly be effective. The guidance of the Holy Spirit eliminates barren activity and insures maximum efficiency. Otherwise, we are shadow-boxing, or sewing without thread. We will be unfruitful in that it is possible to have considerable knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and still be unfruitful in that knowledge. Failure to practice what we know leads inevitably to barrenness. Inflow without out go killed the Dead Sea, and it kills productivity in the spiritual realm as well.

Shortsightedness in that there are various degrees of impaired vision which are spoken of as blindness; shortsightedness here specifies the form of blindness in which men live for the present rather than preparing for the future. He is so occupied with material things that he neglects the spiritual. We are blind to the vision that Christ is trying to present to us. We suffer

blindness in that whoever lacks the seven characteristics listed here in verse 5-7 is blind. He is not aware of what is central in life. He lacks discernment of true spiritual values. He lives in a dark world of shadows.

We suffer forgetfulness in that the man who lacks the seven virtues has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. The truth of his redemption has lost its grip on him. He is going back in the direction from which he once was rescued. He is toying with being the person that caused the death of God's Son.

A professed faith that does not produce a change for the better in a person's behavior is not true faith; it is not a faith that leads to salvation. Those who have genuine faith will give clear proof of it by their good conduct, ***Gal. 5:6, And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father! 1 Tim. 5:8, But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever. James 2:18-26, But someone may well say, you have faith and I have works; show me by your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*** I lived many years of my life trying to complete my "salvation list" (my spiritual "bucket list"), by works, that I was taught that I had to do and I was getting nowhere. All that I accomplished in my works was an ability to put another notch on my belt while I remained the same man spiritually, that is, I was not growing spiritually. That is because of what James teaches us in these verses when he tells us that our works do not produce anything in us to bring us to a greater faith; but our works are evidence of the depth of our faith, that is, it is a natural outcome of our faith, so we no longer need a list of works because works will be naturally produced from our faith, that is, they will become a part of what God puts in front of us to do every day while He makes changes to our character. So let's take a deeper look at these verses in James to get his full meaning: *But, let's say, just for the sake of argument that a certain person will declare to you, "I continuously hold to my position of possessing the means of appropriating what God in Christ has for man, which results in a transformation of my character and in my way of life, without any visible evidence that my claim is true, which opposes your position that the obtaining of what God has for man is shown or evidenced through your pious acts": to which I respond: "point out to me your ability*

to possess the means of appropriating what God in Christ has for man that transforms your character and way of life by excluding your pious acts, if you can't then show me by any other means or methods of the means of appropriating what God has for man, etc. Make it appear to me or to anyone else that you have the means of appropriating what God has for man in Christ that you speak of; and I will point out to you the means of appropriating what God has for man through Christ as evidenced by my pious acts." You are firmly persuaded that there is one God. You practice your faith properly: the authors of moral evil to mankind also are firmly persuaded that there is one God, and quake from fear. But, do you, you who seems to have some presence of moral evil in you, do you have a desire to receive the knowledge that leads to the means of appropriating what God has for man in Christ, which results in a transformation of his character and way of life while excluding any visible evidence that springs from that faith, and which shows that your faith is inactive? Wasn't Abraham our ancestor, model, and mentor declared to be righteous through the demonstration of his faith, when he brought Isaac, his son, up to the altar to be a sacrifice? You can perceive with your mind that his faith was active by the works that he did that sprung out from his faith; his faith was made complete or fulfilled by the works of his righteousness. And the Holy Prophetic Writings were accomplished which related this to us, AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS, and he was described by the name "Loved by God." You perceive with your mind that a person is declared righteous by his works that are evidence of his faith and not only by Christian knowledge and character. Also, wasn't Rahab the prostitute also declared to be righteous by the evidence of her faith, when she received her guests the explorers, hospitably, and saved their lives by sending them out of the city by a path different from the one they knew. Because just as a corpse that had the vital spirit of life in it but now has left and is inoperative, so likewise the means of appropriating what God has for man, which results in the transformation of a man's character and way of life without having the evidence that springs from faith is also inoperative. James starts out this dissertation by showing us the hypocrisy of some who may say they have faith, but the fruit of their living doesn't show it. There are those, even in this day, who claim to be Christian; (both terms, i.e., having faith and being a Christian, in this case I believe are interchangeable), but they don't show themselves to be Christian by the way they conduct themselves.

Does this mean that you can't call yourself a Christian of faith if you're not perfect? Of course not, Christians are sinners like everyone else, but what we are talking about are the habits of our daily living. On the one hand if we are continually living in sin and have no desire to change our way of living, it would be hard to be convinced that you are a Christian. Just as James relates to us, on the other hand, if we live what seems like a "moral life" by obeying all the laws of the state and country, but we know of a person that we have become acquainted with that is truly struggling in some sort of way and we have the means to help, but we don't, this case would also not be very convincing that the person is a Christian.

James' point in this verse is that if you truly have life changing faith, the way that it is defined in the amplified version, it will, as a natural result, be evidenced in our deeds. The words of James are somewhat sarcastic and kind of jest with the man, and yet very justly call upon him to do that which is impossible. Faith is an inward principle of the heart, a hidden thing, and can't be seen or known excluding external acts. And where faith is right, it is operative, and shows itself by the works that are impossible to be done by those who do not have faith. There may be an appearance of good works where there is no faith as non-believers will show, but true acts of faith have no concern for the payback that might come as a result of these works, which is the difference. So, even works are not an infallible proof and evidence of faith, some persons never get an opportunity to demonstrate their faith through works; such as a person converted on his death bed, yet they are the best in their capacity of giving to others or their receiving of a witness of faith. In short, though works may deceive and do not infallibly prove the truth of faith; this much is certain, where works of faith are non-existent persons live in a continual course of sinning.

All of these words in verse 19 are a continuation of the address to the man who claims to have faith without any manifestation of such in his works. He tries to convince us of his faith by telling us that he believes that there is only one God, and of that God there are three persons, which is true but proves nothing because even the demons believe that. Yet these demons will not be saved, their damnation is certain and inevitable. A man can have the "faith" of this sort and be damned.

Believing in God goes far beyond knowing of the existence of God; it needs to be the kind of faith that trusts in, relies on, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ in every aspect of our life. It needs to be the kind of faith that changes our character to a point where we can be identified with Jesus Christ and we are repentant when we are not. Anyone who claims to have faith but does not display these characteristics is described by James as being useless, and unprofitable; he is a vain man, empty sounding brass and a tingling cymbal: such empty metal objects make great noise when they are empty! He is vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind, but his mind is empty of the true knowledge of God and the faith of Christ and the grace of the Spirit.

If we truly have faith we, and others, will be able to see it because true faith is always accompanied by good works and is shown by it and not just on Sundays. James goes on to give us examples in the next verses of persons that had true faith and how they demonstrated it. We also must be careful to understand that there is no salvation in our faithful works. Our faithful works can neither save nor justify, nor prove that a man is justified or saved. Just as a body, when the spirit or the soul is departed from it, or the breath is gone from it, is dead and

without motion and useless, so faith without works is dead also. If we say that we walk in faith, that is, that faith is a part of our everyday life, then, it needs to be manifested.

This should beg the question of how do we manifest our faith? We manifest it by living the fruit of the Spirit, **Gal. 5:22-26**, the Sermon on the Mount, **Matt. 5-7**, expressing love to one another as described in **1 Cor. 13:4-13**, we monitor our spiritual growth as determined in **2 Pet. 1:5-11**, we discipline ourselves according to **Rom.5:3-5**, **Phil. 4:8**, **1 Tim. 6:11, 12**, **Titus 2:2-10**, and we must keep our composure as saints, **Prov. 12:25**, **1Pet. 6, 7**, **PS. 139:23**, **Phil. 4:6**, **Isa. 35:4**,

Sometimes the Bible speaks of faith in the sense of trust in God to do something unusual or supernatural, **Matt. 9:22**, **But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well. And at once the woman was made well. Matt. 9:28; And after He had come into the house, the blind man came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes Lord." Matt. 17:19-20; Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" And He said to them "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, "Move from here to there, and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you." Mark 2:5; And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 9:23; And Jesus said to them, "If you can? All things are possible to him who believes." Luke 7:9; Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." Luke 8:25; And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?" James 5:14-15; Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him." There are many examples of Jesus doing what we refer to as the supernatural; that is, exhibiting the power of God that is over and above the power of the natural realm that we live in. But He tells us also that this power is available to us also, if we have faith to believe without doubting, **James 1:6**, **But let him ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.** Let's take this verse and amplify it, that is let us bring to the surface to see all of the nuances (shades of meaning) of what James is teaching us; **But also let him pray while remaining in the confidence of a child of God excluding any hesitation, because the person who hesitates is comparable to the raging of the sea, impelled and by the wind, agitated by the waves.** We must approach God in faith without doubting. Faith and doubt are mutually exclusive. We must believe that He cares and loves us, and that nothing is impossible with Him. He does not work under the same limitations as we do. He is the Creator,**

anything that He has made to function He can make to function as He pleases. If we doubt His goodness and His power, we will have no stability in time of trouble. One minute we might be resting quietly on His promises, and the next we will feel that He has forgotten us. We will be like the surge of the sea, rising to great heights, then falling back into valleys—troubled and tossed. God is not honored by the kind of faith that alternates between optimism and pessimism. He does not give divine insight to such vacillating, unstable men. We must remember that the source of all of our wisdom is God; it is obtained by prayer; it is available to everybody; it is given liberally and without reproach; the crucial condition is that we ask in faith, with no doubting.

To some Christians God gives a gift of special faith that enables them to do what they otherwise they could not do, according to the grace supplied, which is always sufficient. **Rom. 12:3; for through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. Rom. 12:6; And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly; if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith. 1 Cor. 12:9; To another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by one Spirit.** Let's amplify Rom. 12:6: *And also since we indeed possess gifts of grace imparted to us as Christians, particularly to teachers, through and by the Holy Spirit, gifts that are diverse and proportionate to the favor given to us by God, let each exercise them accordingly: if teachers in the church, proportionate to a certain measure of his conviction.* In this verse Paul gives us instructions on how to use certain gifts. His list does not cover all of the gifts; it is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. Our gifts differ according to the grace that is given to us. In other words, God's grace deals out differing gifts to different people. And God gives the necessary strength or ability to use whatever gifts we have. So we are responsible to use those God-given abilities as good stewards.

Those who have the gift of teaching should teach within the boundaries of their God-given conviction. He is to declare the mind of God as it has been revealed in the Bible. A modern prophesy that is true is just a republication of Christ's message—the proclamation and expounding of truth already revealed in Scripture. Those of us who have the gift of prophesy (defined as "teaching" in the context of this verse) should only teach within the doctrines of true faith as found in the Scriptures. Anything over and above that is *opinion* and should be stated as such during the course of the teaching. Opinion can be right or wrong and it is essential that if we are going to include this opinion in our catalogue of beliefs that we need to search it out ourselves before we form or agree to an opinion that we are going to pass on to others.

We must remember the caution that is in **James 3:1; Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.** Do not let a lot of you desire to be appointed to the office of the special function of teachers, my brethren in Christ, being aware of the greater condemnation that shall be imposed on us. Verse one introduces us to a warning against the hasty desire to be a teacher of the word of God. Although the tongue is not specifically mentioned, the underlying thought is that one who uses his tongue in teaching the Scriptures assumes added responsibility before God and man. The words “let not many of you become teachers,” may be paraphrased: *do not become unduly ambitious to be a teacher.* Do not try to become a teacher if you have not been called by God to do so. This should not be interpreted as a prohibition against the use of his gift by one who has been actually called of God to teach. It is simply a warning that this ministry should not be undertaken lightly. Those who teach the word of truth will receive heavier judgment if they fail to practice what they teach! It is a great responsibility to teach the Bible. The teacher must be prepared to obey what he sees and hears from God in the word. He can never hope to lead others beyond what he himself practices. The extent of his influence on others will be determined by how much he himself has progressed. If he dilutes or explains away a clear meaning of any Scripture, he hinders the growth of those he is teaching. If he condones sin in any form, he fosters lives of un-holiness. In other words he becomes a stumbling block rather than a teacher. The Bible calls for a total a commitment to Jesus Christ. It insists that He must be the Lord of every phase of the believer’s life. It is a serious matter to teach from such a book!

In summary of this study let’s go over three types or degrees of faith that a person may possess; the first of these is *ineffective faith*. I hesitate to even call this “faith” because “true faith” will not be ineffective, but for the sake of those who may be self-deceived I will attempt identify these spiritual positions.

So, how can we know that our perceived faith is ineffective? We read about certain people in Scripture that had faith in God but did not practice it as a continual way of life, **Gen. 16:3; And after Abram had live ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram’s wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.** We can see in this passage that the result of ineffective faith is that we can attempt to anticipate God’s plans for us and move ahead of Him and His timing. Since God did not act to give Abram a son with Sarai in her timing she got impatient with God and thought that she needed to take matter into her own hands and provide Abram a fertile wife. This kind of thinking is commonly called the fast food mentality that can cause us to get impatient waiting on the Lord to accomplish things in His anointed time. Time can be a test of our faith, do we jump out ahead of God to do what we think He has promised to fulfill or when He is not performing within *our* designated time. God’s timing is perfect while our sense of time is influenced by sin, thus corrupted and not

capable of God's (or our) desired results, which in turn leads to our frustration and inability to perform God's will.

Ineffective faith is evidenced by a lack of trust in God, **Exodus 14:10-11; And as Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us this way, bringing us out of Egypt?"** Usually when we are going through some kind of dramatic or traumatic event in our life and we are trying to persevere in our faith by not worrying, Satan will see this as an opportunity to attack our faith. At this time we have a tendency to fall back on what we are familiar with and that is usually despair and vacillation; going between praying and being fearful trying to imagine the worst of the outcomes that could occur. We get so caught up in our worrying and fretting that we miss what God is trying to teach us through this experience and the time is wasted. God would rather that we fall back on past experiences of faith that prove that God really is in control and the outcomes are never as bad as we imagined.

Ineffective faith can be made visible by our lack of a changed life, **Matt. 3:8; Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance.** "Fruit," as it is used here, can mean an effective visible growth, deeds, works, or conduct. If we are a person of true faith we will have a repentant heart, that is, we will not wish to continue living in our sin. A repentant heart will recognize a sinful lifestyle through the conviction of the Holy Spirit and agree with God that it is sinful and turn away from that lifestyle and turn toward God, choosing and desiring to live according to His definition of morality; not one that we have chosen for ourselves. This obviously will cause both a visible change in our conduct and an invisible change in our disposition. So we can equate a lack of change, especially in how we perceive things, as evidence of possessing ineffective faith.

We can also recognize ineffective faith by the way it seldom walks the talk, **1 Cor. 4:19; But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power.** People can know all of the right words to say to make them sound faithful, to put up a front of being someone that they are not, but as in everything else in life, people are more interested in being shown rather than being told. Jesus refers to such people that don't walk their talk as hypocrites; they have all of the right dressing, both in attire and in words, to look like a person of faith, but in their natural environment we don't see much evidence of faith in their daily living. They talk one thing while practicing another. Faith is about a way of conducting our way of life, not a way of making you appeal to the worldly masses that seek out their gratifications in the applause of men and the fleshly lusts of this present evil age.

Our length of time as a disciple has no bearing on the depth our faith, even some of Jesus' disciples that followed Him had ineffective faith, **Luke 8:24, 25; And they came to Him and woke Him up saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. And He said to them, "where is your faith?" And they were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"** Sometimes when we find ourselves in a perilous situation our first instinct or reaction is to be fearful; these disciples that were in the boat with Jesus had been His followers and should have had faith enough to remain calm, especially knowing that Jesus was with them. Why should disciples, who had followed Jesus and seen the demonstration of His powers, be terrified of natural forces knowing that the One that has this omnipotent power is with them? Why do we subject ourselves to fear when we know that the Omnipotent One is with us? Fear is a clear evidence of ineffective faith.

We also can have faith that is effective, but like the weightlifter who doesn't exercise and his muscles atrophy, if we don't exercise our faith it can become weak, **Matt. 14:28-30; And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come." And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord save me!"** There are times when we can start out with confident faith, but then fear sets in as we focus in on our surroundings or when we begin to focus on the natural consequences of our trust, rather than staying focused on the source of faith. Then the fear that we experience replaces our faith and we do not have the enduring faith to continue and succumb to the consequences that we feared. To remain strong in our faith we must keep our focus on the source of that faith, Jesus Christ; if we begin to focus on our own abilities or lack thereof, we become fearful.

We should not become discouraged when we realize that our faith is weak, because even weak faith is a part of the process to strong faith, **Luke 24:11, 12; and these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. (But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what has just happened).** When Peter heard that Jesus was no longer in the tomb his weak faith refused to believe it. Although Jesus told His disciples that this would happen, some were still skeptical, but after he saw the evidence for himself his faith grew stronger. Young believers, that is, those who have an immature faith (no matter what their age or length of discipleship) may refuse to believe at first that they can trust in the power of God; they are not sure that it is actual or real. But as they live out their faith in small things they see for themselves that faith is real and grows as living faith is revealed in their own life

experiences. It builds trust in the Word of God and the faith process continues to grow and strengthen as it becomes a part of our everyday living.

All weak faith can become stronger as we pursue God's help, **Mark 9:24; Immediately the boy's father cried out and began saying, "I do believe; help my unbelief."** The first thing we need to know about faith is that it is strictly a gift from God. We do not and cannot produce it within ourselves. How do we obtain faith? Simply by asking for it and then begin to practice it in our daily living. In this scripture it seem as though, by the words that the father spoke, that he used Jesus as a last ditch effort to get some help for his son. The father's faith was initially weak, but after he witnessed God's power at work in his son he asked Jesus to give him stronger faith and Jesus gave him encouraging words to help him in his task of acquiring stronger faith by telling him that "all things are possible to him who believes (or, has faith)."

Our weak faith only remains weak and is only limited by our own failure to trust and believe, **2 Cor.12:9, 10; And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.** In these verses Paul recognizes that in his times of weakness of faith he can call on the power of God to intercede into his situations and circumstances to give him the faith required to endure. Just as Christ told Paul, He tells us also that He has more than enough grace to see us through any situation if we will call on Him to help us. As He walks us through these circumstances He supplies the faith that is needed to block out the voices that are trying to discourage us from trusting and believing in the power and grace of God.

Of course our Lord Jesus Christ would desire that we would all come to the point of having effective faith, but how can we know that our faith is effective? **Luke 17:5; and the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"** Effective faith is a dependence on God. The apostles wanted to have more faith after they saw what power faith can have in their ministries. Of course, like any other attribute of God, to receive it and to be effective with it, we must remain humble. Anything that is accomplished by our faith is by means of the power and permission of our Lord. The amount of faith that we have is not as important as the veracity of our faith. We must adopt an attitude concerning faith that we are totally dependent on God for everything and we must become willing to do His will to do whatever and to go wherever He has called on us.

Effective faith is more concerned about its life rather than its size, **Luke 17:6; And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea;' and it would obey you."** A mustard seed is small, some say the smallest of all garden seeds that grows to a point of being among the biggest of garden

plants, but the important thing is not its size but that it is alive and growing. Like a tiny seed it only takes a small amount of faith to begin the process growing into something bigger than all of our life's concerns and worries. By being encouraged to use our faith we will see the power that it has and thus it will grow by seeing the effective power grow also.

Effective faith rests on what Christ has done, **Rom. 5:1; therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.** Like many of the other spiritual attributes, such as faith hope and love, that Paul mentions in other Scripture, my faith is a gift from God. Jesus Christ has done all of the work necessary for me to have this faith, there is nothing left for me to do but to receive what He has done, not from a point of view of reward for what I have merited by being a good person, but as a gift freely given as a believer in the effectiveness of what Christ has done. This is the beginning of a relationship with God.

Effective faith grows when it is under pressure, **Heb. 10:39; But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of our soul.** We should not think that as we grow in our faith that it grows unnoticed by our enemy the devil who will try to discourage us. But we should see these challenges to our faith as opportunities to grow and to persevere in what we believe. None of us like to see or experience persecutions and harassment as opportunities but these things will come and the facts are this; that our suffering and persecution is directly proportional to the depth of our faith. But we should not lose sight of this fact also; we need never to think that we have to go through these atrocities alone. Jesus promises us that He will *never* abandon us and He will not forsake us and He will *always* give us what we need to come through any situation spiritually unscathed.

Effective faith becomes stronger through endurance, **Gal. 3:14; in Christ Jesus the blessings of Abraham might occur to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the gift of the spirit through faith.** The longer we go through the "faith building process," the more we experience it and rely on it, trust in it, and believe in it, the stronger it gets. There is nothing that can compare to "faith in action" to help us to persevere and endure in faith to the end of our time here on earth and to help us cope with this present evil age as we look forward to the promises of our eternal life. As we grow in faith we begin to realize that persecution and struggling is not something that we need to fear but as something that we have come to expect and are prepared to handle it.

Effective faith is hopeful anticipation, **Hebrews 11:1; Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.** When we read these words "hoped for," many of us think of it in the context of "wishing for." We do not need to wish for faith, if we want it, it will be provided, this "hoped for" would better be translated as "having confidence in." In our faith we can have confidence to expect that we will receive whatever we need to get us through the day, from the point of view of being related to God's will for us. If we ask for

something that God sees as harmful to us, even if we see it as something good, He will, of course, not give it to us. We need to believe that God is omniscient and knows the outcome of everything that we ask and will provide what is beneficial to us.

Effective faith is quiet certainty, ***John 20:29; Jesus said to him, “because you have seen Me, have you believed?” Blessed are they who did not see and yet believed.*** One of the hardest things that Jesus Christ asks new believers to do is to believe in something that we cannot see. As we exist in this present evil age that does not know God, we are taught and have become accustomed to such things as “seeing is believing.” We need to see evidence, just as Thomas did in this Scripture, in order to believe that Jesus was who He said He was; we want a visible sign. The facts are, that as we grow in faith and utilize our faith we *will* “see” results. But to believe only after seeing does not take faith, this is to only ask for scientific proof of the existence of something. God is not restricted to the realm of science; if He was it would be impossible for us to accept His gift of faith.

I realize that in my personal journey of faith I have not reached nor do I practice faith to its fullest potential and I don’t know if any of us will until we are glorified by God. What I pray for myself and for you is that we will not hinder the growth of our faith by listening to those who are non-believers trying to convince us that faith is a fallacy, reserved only for the physically and mentally weak who cannot survive in the reality of this present evil age.