

# Faith in What?

Facts & Foundations  
to Believe in from  
the Bible

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Chapter One:  
STEADFAST FAITH

Is there such a thing as “blind faith?” How about the “leap of faith?” Certainly faith involves trust, and it will eventually cause you to act on what you believe in, but is faith simply a shot in the dark? Is there any stability, any reality to it? Like a small child implicitly believing in a flesh-and-blood Santa Claus, we may be in for a very big disappointment if the *basis* of our beliefs is not reliable.

But how can we determine if it is reliable or not? You have, no doubt, experienced the disappointment of relying on a friend or relative who failed to come through for you when you really needed it. Not only that, we all at one time or another have let down other people. Let’s face it: we simply are not one hundred percent reliable.

So how can we have any hope of finding a basis for our faith that is completely, absolutely steadfast? It must be obvious at this point that such a foundation can not be of human origin. It is human nature to fail, to make mistakes, to disappoint people. So is there any hope of finding an established, immovable foundation for our beliefs, one that will never fail us?

Yes, there is. The apostle Paul wrote about the basis of this kind of steadfast faith in I Corinthians 2:1-5: "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of

power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”

These verses very clearly point out a distinction between human wisdom and the only real, adequate basis for a stable, steadfast faith -- *the power of God*. Nothing else will do. Not human wisdom, not trust in the goodness of ourselves or our fellow men, not reliance on the tenets of science. All these will ultimately disappoint us, but God’s power will never let us down. Where can we find God’s power?

The Word of God itself -- the Bible -- is the revelation of God’s power (see Romans 1:16,17; and Hebrews 4:12). There are many passages that teach us that God’s Word cannot fail. “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail” (Luke 16:17). “You know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words

which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed” (Joshua 23:14). How many people do you know about whom you could say, “Not one of his words has ever failed?”

God’s Word -- His promises, precepts and plan -- cannot fail because His Word is the revelation of His character, of Himself. And God Himself is incapable of failure or unreliability. God is always, and in every situation, utterly faithful. “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6). As the prophet Zephaniah said, “The Lord is righteous within her, He will do no injustice. Every morning brings His justice to light; He does not fail.”

Many people balk at being confronted with the Bible as God's Word -- as pure, absolute and trustworthy truth. Some feel that it is too harsh, too judgmental to insist upon a concept like "absolute truth" -- one that applies to all people everywhere, under all conditions. Others believe that it somehow undermines their own intelligence to accept the Bible as a reliable source of information. Let us briefly address these concerns.

In the first place, we are surrounded by absolutes. For example: you must have oxygen to live. No matter how much you *think* you don't need it, question its existence, believe that it is judgmental of others to insist that it is necessary, you still need oxygen. Consider that you will one day die. You may not like to think about it, you may wish that it were not so, but that does not change the fact that one day, you will inevitably die.

In fact, there are absolutes on every hand: they all spring from the ultimate Absolute: God Himself. As far as the reliability of His Word is concerned, did you know that there is not a single error or contradiction in all the 66 different books of the Bible? Did you know that prophecies recorded in the Bible occurred exactly as God predicted them, sometimes more than 700 years after they were written?

Consider also the relationship between knowledge and faith. God never asks us to leap into the dark. He always gives us the facts we need for a secure basis for our faith. Just because you cannot explain all the events or truths recorded in the Bible does not mean they are not accurate. Can you tell me why like-charged particles in the nuclei of atoms do not repel each other? Just because you cannot explain it, does that mean you do not believe in

atoms? Nuclear physicists cannot explain it either. But it is nonetheless true.

In fact, God does not need you to approve of His Word. It is true, and will continue to be true, whether you think so or not. The only question is whether or not *you* will be lined up with the truth.

There are many counterfeit foundations for your belief system. There is tradition: what you have been taught. Many people have certain beliefs because that is what their parents believed, that is what their church teaches, or that is what their minister has told them. But are you willing to stake your eternal destiny on second-hand information? Many others believe in the ultimate ability of human reasoning. Science and advancing human knowledge seem to be the most solid thing on which to base life, for them. Yet how frequently our scientific the-

ories have to be modified, how often we discover our reasoning is simply wrong!

It is important at this point to ask the question, is your faith based on the Word of God? It is crucial to analyze honestly the foundation of your beliefs about yourself, your character, your destiny and your life. *Why* do you believe the things you do about these important matters? Is it because you were raised that way? Because your church taught those particular things? Or can you sincerely say that you know what the Bible says about your condition, your life, and your eternal destination. Can you say that you have believed *God*? The answer to this question is the most significant in all your life.

Human wisdom is prone to error. Human reliability is unreliable. But God's Word is always accurate and always trustworthy. What are the facts about life, death and

eternity? To find the answers to these vital questions, first complete the study guide on the next page, then proceed to chapter two, Saving Faith.

## Thought Questions for Chapter One

1. Think of the most reliable, trustworthy person you have ever known. Has this person ever failed you or disappointed you or others?
2. Have you ever let someone down or failed in a promise?

3. In your judgment, has there ever been a human being who was completely reliable, trustworthy and failure-free?
4. Is it necessary to be able to explain something in order to believe that it is true?
5. What is the only reliable foundation for faith?
6. What is the connection between God and the Bible?

## Chapter Two:

## SAVING FAITH

In the last chapter we discussed the foundation for faith and found that only God's Word, which never changes, fails or disappoints, can be considered a reliable basis for beliefs. Now we will turn our attention to the **object** of faith. Having seen that the Bible is faithful and reliable because God wrote it, let us now look at what we should believe in.

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved...” (Acts 16:31). The first question we might ask about this Bible statement is *why*? Why do we need to believe in Jesus? This verse uses the word “saved.” You may have heard the terminology of “being saved,” “getting saved,” or “being born again.” What do these phrases mean? Why would anyone need to “be saved?”

The Bible says that all human beings are sinners. “There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, not even one” (Romans 3:1-12). “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). These true statements include all human beings: young and old, men and women, decent citizens and terrible criminals. Everyone is a sinner before a holy God.

We might object that we know people who have very high moral character and are upright in their behavior. Perhaps we might even claim to be that sort of individual ourselves. From our perspective, this may appear to be true. But remember, God sees the *heart*. He knows the reality of human nature. He knows that all our “good” behavi-

or is a thin covering over a very wicked heart. In the book of Jeremiah, God speaks over and over of the “evil” heart (Jeremiah 3:17; 7:24; 11:8; 18:12). From His own character of absolute, perfect holiness, God looks at us and sees who we really are: sinners. Sin is the violation of God’s standard and character: each one of us must admit that we have done wrong; we have sinned.

And sin carries consequences. One of the great tragedies in our society today is the attempt to remove consequences from wrong-doing. Children are not held responsible by parents or educators for wrong behavior, so they grow up into adults who are unaware of the connection between sin and consequences. But the Bible says very plainly, “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). The penalty for sin is death.

Have you ever wondered why people have to die? The answer is, that death is a

consequence of sin. God told Adam and Eve that if they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, “you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). We all know how Adam and Eve took the fruit and, disobeying God’s command, ate it. God always keeps His word, and in Genesis 5:5 we find Adam’s death. Physical death has been the lot of humanity ever since.

But sin’s consequences are not limited to merely physical death. When Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating the fruit of that tree, they began the process of physical death, but they immediately died *spiritually*. Spiritual death is the separation of one’s being from God. In II Thessalonians 1:9 we find the ultimate destiny of those who have not been “saved”: “And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence and from the glory of His power.” These awesome words describe the

location that we know as hell, or the lake of fire, the final dwelling place of sinful humanity. To be “away from the presence of the Lord” will be the most awful punishment imaginable, for it is God Who gives life to all things. Any kind or amount of joy, peace, happiness, satisfaction or goodness that comes to us in this lifetime is from Him. And to be away from Him is to be forever cut off from life, in conscious and permanent pain. All of this is what we deserve, because we have sinned against God: this is the deserved, just punishment for violating God’s standard.

We can see now why Paul said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and *you shall be saved.*” We need to be saved from the penalty of our sins -- from spiritual death, from the lake of fire, from eternal punishment. For this reason, Jesus told Nicodemus, “...you must be born again” (John 3:7). But

how can we be saved from the penalty of our sins? How can we be “born again?” And what does this have to do with faith?

There is a single answer to all of these questions. It is found, once again, in the Word of God. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 tell us: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as the result of works, that no one should boast.” These verses make it clear that God’s grace -- His unconditional love to us -- is the **source** of salvation; and that our faith is the **channel** for receiving it. Faith has everything to do with salvation, because trusting in Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved from God’s eternal wrath.

A majority of the world’s religions make faith in Christ important, but only genuine Christianity as found in the Bible acknowledges that faith is the *single* means of

receiving God's gift of salvation. Many religious people sincerely think that faith -- along with good works -- will result in their salvation. They are sadly mistaken. Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah: "For all of us have become unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment..." (Isaiah 64:6).

Good works, such as praying, going to church, giving money to charitable causes, community service, trying to be a good person...all these are fine things. But the Bible says very clearly that they will never give anyone entrance into heaven. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ***not as the result of works***" (Ephesians 2:8,9). And Titus 3:5-7 says, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy...that being justified by His

grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” You see, salvation is the gift of God. Its purchase price was the death of Jesus Christ, Who took upon Himself all of your sins and paid your debt of righteousness to God the Father. You cannot earn salvation or pay for it yourself: it has already been purchased for you through the wonderful love of Jesus the Son of God. You now can do only one of two things: you can receive the gift of eternal life with Jesus in heaven through placing all of your faith in Him, and Him alone; or you can reject the gift and thus choose the lake of fire.

Over and over again the Bible repeats the theme of faith in Jesus Christ as the sole requirement for salvation from the penalty of our sins, and for the security of knowing that a place in heaven has been reserved for us. Jesus told Nicodemus, “...even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever be-

believes in Him may in Him have eternal life. 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” (John 3:14-16). God loves you, even though you may never have thought about Him or realized that He sacrificed His own Son so that you might have eternal life. He offers you this free gift: glorious, abundant and eternal life through trust in Jesus Christ, His Son.

John 11:25 says, “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies.’” We all face death. But for those who know Jesus as personal Savior from the penalty of their sins, the entrance into heaven is just beyond the doorway of physical death, and we *know* that we will be with Him in glory.

We return to one of our first-mentioned Bible texts, Acts 16:31: “Believe in the

Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved.” Have you ever done this? Have you ever admitted that you are a sinner, in violation of God’s holy standard, and that you need a Savior -- the Lord Jesus Christ -- to rescue you from the punishment for sin? Have you ever placed all of your confidence, faith and trust in Him for forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life? If you never have done this, you are still under the sentence of death -- eternal death. Why not trust Him now?

## Thought Questions for Chapter 2

1. What is sin? (Read I John 5:17.)

2. What are the consequences of sin?  
(Read Romans 6:23 and Revelation 20:11-15)
3. How many people have sinned? (Romans 3:23.)
4. Are people that we would consider to be “morally upright” still sinners in God’s eyes? (Read Romans 3:9-18; Jeremiah 17:9,10.)
5. Why is it not possible to earn salvation?  
(Read Isaiah 64:6.)
6. What is the source of salvation? (Read Ephesians 2:4,5; Titus 3:4,5.)
7. What is the only channel for salvation?  
(Read Ephesians 2:8: “through \_\_\_\_\_?”)

8. Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior?

## Chapter Three: SUSTAINING FAITH

If you are reading this chapter as a child of God, then you already know that you belong to the most privileged group in the world: the family of God. It is by God's grace that we have seen ourselves as sinners, have recognized the work of Jesus Christ on the cross as the payment for our sins, and have trusted in Him as our Savior.

Not only does God's gift of salvation through faith guarantee us eternal life, it in-

roduces us to the peace, power and plan of God for daily living right now. For the child of God, the heavenly Father provides all that is necessary to live and be satisfied. Faith in Christ is the cornerstone of salvation; and in the believer's walk with God it continues to be the keystone of daily living.

This trust -- sustaining faith -- is pivotal in several contexts of the Word of God. The book of Galatians is one of these. The churches of Galatia evidently fell prey to the thinking that Christianity could be improved upon by the addition of Judaistic legalism. That is, the Galatian believers had come to believe that a system of good works was crucial in obtaining God's favor.

The apostle Paul addresses this fallacy with unequivocal bluntness: "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I

want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?...Does He then, Who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do so by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" (Galatians 3:1-5).

Paul himself answers these scorching questions in the following verses. "Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness...So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer" (Galatians 3:6-9).

The issue is this: having been accepted into a relationship with God through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, how is the believer to continue and progress in his walk with God? The false teachers who had infiltrated the churches of Galatia were

claiming that it is necessary to combine adherence to a legal formula -- the Mosaic law -- with faith for real Christian progress. But Paul vigorously denies this heresy with the testimony of Old Testament scripture. It is faith, and faith alone, that justifies an individual in the presence of God; and it is by faith that we continue to grow in the Christian walk. "The righteous man shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11). If we are saved from God's wrath by simple faith in Him, then it is also by simple faith in His daily provision that we grow and learn to please Him.

We should note at this point that the Bible certainly does have much to say about good works, patience, experience and growth. God expects us to do good works; and our trials and experiences are certainly an instrument which God uses to help us grow. We will address these matters in the next chapter. The point we are attempting to

make here is the same one Paul was hammering into the Galatians: it is faith, and not works, which remains the bedrock of Christian life and growth.

In fact, the author of the book of Hebrews was also vitally concerned with this point. One of the great themes of this book is the ongoing life of faith in God for the Christian. The author uses the example of the faithless Israelites in the wilderness to demonstrate the need for faith in our heavenly Father to overcome daily obstacles and problems. He uses rather harsh terminology, like “And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?” (Hebrews 3:17). And, “...so we see that they were not able to enter [the Promised Land] because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19).

You see, the Israelites had already come to trust in God’s plan of salvation (see

I Corinthians 10:1-4; Exodus 12). They had already believed in God to redeem them and forgive their sins. But when it came to trusting God to help them enter Canaan and conquer the nations that lived there, the Israelites faltered and fell. They simply could not believe that God could or would drive the enemy before them and bring them into the “land of rest.”

The author of Hebrews uses this background to issue a warning to us: “Therefore, lest us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to come short of it...Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:1,11). If God is able to save you from the penalty of hell, isn't He also able to take care of your needs *today*? If simply believing in the blood of Jesus the Savior can cancel out your indebtedness to God, why

can't we trust our all-wise, all-powerful Father to care for our needs *right now*?

Our faith in Jesus Christ for salvation is a one-time commitment of trust; but our life of walking with God is a continuing, progressing communion of confidence in Him. A growing, maturing believer in Christ is one who is daily trusting Him. God wants us to "enter into that rest" -- the place where the child of God stops fighting and struggling, and simply allows God to work out His perfect will in our life.

We might raise a practical question at this point. How exactly does a Christian grow in faith? What practical steps are there that can help us increase our reliance on God?

The end of Hebrews chapter four teaches us about two great tools to help build our faith. The first is the Word of God, noted in that well-known verse, Hebrews

4:12: “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

This often-quoted Bible verse tells us great things about the power of the Bible. But the connection to the preceding context is frequently overlooked. The word “for” at the beginning of the verse indicates a connection to the verse before, a junction point in the author’s argument. He has just been exhorting us to enter into the rest of God, to trust Him for our daily needs as well as our eternal salvation. Now he directs our attention to the Word, which, he reminds us, is alive -- life-giving; and active -- literally, “energized.” Furthermore, the Word of God is capable of judging and discerning the internal workings of the heart. The Bible will be

our judge as to whether our actions arise from a heart of simple faith in our Father's tender provisions, or from selfish ambition, hypocrisy and self-promotion.

The Word of God will increase faith in God as we allow its message of the faithfulness of God to come to control our minds and hearts more and more.

The last three verses of Hebrews chapter twelve call our attention to the second great tool for increasing our faith and entering into the life of "faith-rest" that God desires for each of His children. This tool is prayer.

"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may

find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15,16).

These great verses tell us that we can be at rest and exercise our faith in God because of our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful thought that we need not go through a human intermediary to come before God and voice our deepest needs, heartaches, trials and problems! Through the intercession of our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, our petitions and prayers are immediately heard in the throne room of God Almighty!

Prayer is a great boost to our faith because not only can we turn to God at any time, but as we look at our own history of prayer and dependence upon our heavenly Father we can see that He is utterly faithful and trustworthy. Nothing builds faith so much as faithfulness. God answers prayer, and the child of God with an active prayer

life is very much aware of the way in which God answers prayer and meets needs.

Faith continues to be the bedrock of our relationship to God, even after trusting in the Son of God for salvation from sins' penalty. It is on the basis of faith in Him that all the great blessings of God become available to us.

The next chapter deals with how God wants us to put faith in Him into action, but first complete the questions on the next page.

## Thought Questions on Chapter Three

1. How do we enter into a relationship with God -- by our good works or through faith in Jesus Christ? (Read Titus 3:4,5.)

2. How do we continue to grow in the Christian life -- by our hard work and determination, or through trusting in God's daily provision? (Read Galatians 3:2.)
  
3. What does the Bible have to do with ongoing Christian growth? (Read Hebrews 4:10-13.)
  
4. What is the other tool that can help us to increase in faith? (Read Hebrews 4:15-16.)

## Chapter Four: SERVING FAITH

In the last chapter we discussed the importance of faith as the foundation for a life that is pleasing to God. It is by faith that we accept God's gift of salvation and eternal life through Jesus Christ. There is no substitute, addition, or modification to this great truth: faith, and faith alone, is the channel through which we have a relationship to God. Our good works are of no account whatsoever.

But we might ask a pertinent question at this point: What about good works in the life of the believer? What about acts of kindness and love? What about sacrificial deeds and conduct? Don't they count for anything with God? The answer - as with all answers

-- is found in the Word of God. The apostle James was concerned with this question and with translating faith in Christ into action in the life of the Christian. He was interested in the proof of saving faith as *faith which serves*.

It is to this issue, and thus to the book of James, that we now turn, to explore the nature of the relationship between faith and works in the Christian life.

James poses a startling question for the complacent believer in Christ: "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but has no works? Can that faith save him?...Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead being by itself. But someone may well say, 'You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'.. You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected" (James 2:14-22).

We need to first make a clear statement before we begin to study this passage in detail. There are no contradictions in Scripture; and there is no conflict between the great truths of faith we have studied in the last two chapters, and James' teaching here on faith and works. God authored the Scriptures, and God does not contradict Himself. Rather, the more closely we examine the Bible, the more precisely we find it to complement and coordinate with itself. Let us see how faith and works dovetail in the Father's design for the Christian life.

Observe first of all in James 2:14 that James is addressing "my brethren." The persons to whom he is writing are presumed to be brothers and sisters (see also verse 15). In the family terminology of the New Testament, this means that James is speaking to *Christians*. These are people who have already put their faith in Jesus Christ

for salvation from the penalty of sin, have the promise of eternal life and the indwelling Holy Spirit. He has already inferred this in chapter two, verse one, “My brethren do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.” Notice similar wording in chapter one, verse three: “...the testing of your faith...” The addressees are believers.

Second, observe that when James says, “Can that faith save him?”, his use of the word *save* may not be identical to our usual concept of “salvation from the punishment of our sins in the lake of fire.” In fact, *save* or *salvation* is a broad term in the Bible, meaning *to rescue from bad circumstances*. (Remember when Peter was sinking in the waters of Galilee, he cried “Lord, *save* me!” [Matthew 14:30]? He was not thinking of spiritual salvation, but of physical rescue.)

James uses the word *save* five times in his letter, but it seems to have a different shading of emphasis than spiritual salvation from the penalty of sins. For example, in James 1:21 he says, “Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” Notice once again here that he opens this discussion with “*my beloved brethren*” (verse 19), identifying his audience as believers. The reception of the Word engrafted (indicated by the use of the command form of “receive”), subsequent to saving faith in Jesus Christ, results in the salvation of our souls. This does not seem to be the same as salvation from sins as resulting from faith in Christ as Savior. It has to do with rescuing us, as believers, from a life of uselessness, emptiness and worthlessness. As Christians, our souls (“lives”) may be saved from

this kind of existence through receiving the Word, implanting it in our minds and hearts, and putting it into practice in our behavior (1:22-27).

So we see that it is not really the issue of salvation from the penalty of sins that James is addressing; he is really more interested in our activities, and how we are applying the Bible to our Christian lives.

Coming back to our discussion of faith and works in James chapter two, observe a third point with me. In verse eighteen, James says, "...*show* me your faith..." His point is that he wants to see faith in action. What good is Christian faith if you can't identify it and see it doing something? All kinds of people claim some kind of divine truth, or some sort of relationship with God, or a god; if our faith in the only true and living God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe isn't showing in our behavior, ac-

tions, attitudes and words, then what good is it?

This leads us to a fourth and final point in this text in James. Verse twenty-two says, “You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected.” The word *perfected* in the language of the New Testament means completed, finished, mature. Faith reaches its maturity when works result.

There is much more that could be said in studying this text of James, and the relationship of faith to works, but let us draw this matter of faith and works to a practical conclusion. We, even as believers, do not have the power in and of ourselves to live a godly life, to produce lasting spiritual fruit, to do good works. We are, after all, still only sinners saved by grace. We still have the sin nature and apart from the Vine (see John 15) we can do nothing. Therefore, we must

continue to have faith in God to produce spiritual fruit in us.

Part of this fruit is good works. God wants us to be diligent in good works; in fact He made us to do them (Ephesians 2:10, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”). And we must obey His commands to be fruitful, to obey, to love one another, and to behave in a godly manner. But we can only do this if we are walking in faith in Christ, because He is the Source for all things in the believer’s life. If we are truly trusting in Him, looking to Him every day, every hour, then we will see good works being produced in our lives.

Complete the thought questions on this chapter on the next page, then proceed on to our final study, *Celestial Faith*.

## Thought Questions on Chapter Four

1. Is there a conflict between faith for salvation from sin, and works resulting from faith in the believer?

2. What does James mean by “salvation”?  
Is it the same as we usually mean - salvation from the lake of fire?
3. Why is faith important for good works?
4. Does God expect you to do good works and to live in a godly manner?
5. How can the believer produce spiritual fruit and grow in grace?

## Chapter Five: CELESTIAL FAITH

Thus far in our study we have talked about the foundation for belief, the Word of God. It is reliable and stable because it is the revelation of the character of God Himself. We have dealt with the only trustworthy object of faith -- the Lord Jesus Christ. He, Who gave Himself for us, is the One in Whom we must believe for deliverance from the punishment and wrath of God upon our sins. It is simple trust in Him that changes us from hell-bound sinners to heaven-bound saints. We turned to a discussion of sustaining faith in the books of Galatians and Hebrews, and found that we must continue to trust in Jesus Christ for overcoming daily

problems and meeting needs. We can have rest in the wonderful security and provision of our loving heavenly Father. In the last chapter we handled the doctrine of faith and works -- one that can be confusing, but is a real blessing when properly understood from the Scriptures.

We could perhaps summarize our study up to this point by pointing out three “**P**s.” The first **P** is, *Faith is the channel for our Position in Christ*. This has to do with our salvation and the fact that once we have received God’s gift of eternal life through believing in Jesus as our Savior, we have a secure position in Him. An interesting exercise to emphasize this point is to read through Ephesians chapter one and note or circle every time you see the word *in*. Over and over there God says, “in Him,” “in Christ,” “in the Beloved,” and so on. In fact, verse fourteen points out this wonderful, unchanging

position that we occupy in Christ very clearly. “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation -- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.” Our faith secures a position in Jesus Christ that assures us of eternity in heaven with Him.

The second **P** is the *continuing faith of the believer through which the Holy Spirit provides Power*. Remember Paul’s words of warning to the Galatian churches: “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:2). What started with faith in Christ must continue with faith in Him. God will provide the power of the Spirit to those who daily trust in Him.

The third **P** is the *believer’s faith in Jesus that causes a Practice of good works and godly fruit*. God expects us to obey Him, produce character traits and influence others for Him. But this will only occur if we are fo-

cused in faith on Him. Remember that faith without works is dead -- good for nothing, as far as service for Christ is concerned.

Now we can introduce our final chapter, and one last **P**. *Faith in Jesus Christ gives us glorious Prospects for eternity*. There is a meaningful word found dozens of times in the Word of God: a word that thrills the heart of the true Christian. That word is *hope*.

Hope, in English, comes across as a weak and insipid word. But in Greek, the language of the New Testament, the word *hope* is actually very closely related to the terms *believe* and *faith*. It is a term of conviction, strength and assurance. It comes from a root word meaning to tie, bind or knot with cords. And in the New Testament, *hope* is nearly always connected with our confidence in God for our future existence; thus the title for this chapter, *celestial faith*.

The very first thing we note about this special word, hope, is first that it is once again rooted in our relationship to Christ. Colossians 1:27 speaks of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” If it were not for Jesus Christ, His work on the cross, and His effectual love in our direction, we would be hopeless, without any hope for the future. Surely we can sympathize with the plight of the world apart from a saving knowledge of the Savior: “...strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). But because of Him and His work in our hearts, we have the “hope of glory”! The joy of His character being produced in us through the Spirit, and the riches of His presence in heaven!

In fact, this hope that we believers have is very much connected to the coming of our Savior for us. “Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory

of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13). The wording in this particular verse makes it clear that the “blessed hope” *is* “the appearing” of Christ. You see, our hope is not pinned on some intangible concept, some vague aspiration that in the future things might “get better.”

Our hope is in Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth, Who has promised to come back for us and take us home to be with Him forever! “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). What Jesus promises, He completes. Therefore, our hope is a steadfast anchor for our lives which cannot be moved (see Hebrews 6:16-19). One day, my friend, if you have trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior for the penalty of your sins, you and I will greet each other in the courts of heaven and bow

in worship and love before the consummation of our hope -- our Lord and King, Jesus Christ.

This hope is so sure because it is founded in the ability of God to keep His promises. And God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). He has promised you eternal life (John 10:28,29); and that He will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5); how certain is our hope!

In addition to the solidity of our hope in Christ, we should note another distinctive feature. The Bible teaches that the return of the Savior for His saints – all those who have trusted in Him for salvation – could be at any moment. (Read I Thessalonians 4:13-18.) We are now “waiting for His Son from heaven” (I Thessalonians 1:10), and His appearance to take us home with Him could be at any time.

If, as you travel the Christian road, you become weary and discouraged, look ahead to the Hope! It is not far away: His coming could be at any moment. Indeed, His presence and power are with you at this moment, to conquer sin, overpower selfishness and pride, lift up the despondent and energize the weak.

The more that we look to Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, the less distracted we will be with the temptations of the world around us, or the old nature within us. Let us therefore fasten our eyes – and our faith on Him Who died for us and for Whom we now wait. Let us continue to grow in grace and knowledge, through the Word and prayer. Let us be diligent to perform good works, always acknowledging that it is His power, through the Spirit, and not ours, that will accomplish genuine growth and

godliness. And let us be faithfully watching for Him, Christ in you, the Hope of Glory!

## Thought Questions for Chapter Five

1. Can you name the four Ps to summarize what the Bible teaches about faith?

2. To what biblical words is the word, *hope* related?
  
3. Is *hope* a “weak” concept in the Bible or a “strong” one?
  
4. Upon what is our hope founded? (Read Colossians 1:27.)
  
5. How can we be sure that our hope will not fail? (Read Hebrews 6:18,19.)
  
6. What is another distinctive feature of the Christian hope? (Read I Thessalonians 1:10.)

Faith is in general the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true (Phil. 1:27; 2 Thess. 2:13). Its primary idea is trust. A thing is true, and therefore worthy of trust. It admits of many degrees up to full assurance of faith, in Easton's Bible Dictionary. faith W2 [feɪθ] n (trust/confidence in somebody/something) 2 (religion) 3 break faith with somebody/something 4 keep faith with somebody/something 5 good faith 6 bad faith 7 an act of faith [Date: 1200 1300; : Old French; Origin Faith, derived from Latin fides and Old French feid, is confidence or trust in a person, thing, or concept. In the context of religion, one can define faith as "belief in a god or in the doctrines or teachings of religion". Religious people often think of faith as confidence based on a perceived degree of warrant, while others who are more skeptical of religion tend to think of faith as simply belief without evidence. Examples of faith in a Sentence. Noun Faith without doubt leads to moral arrogance, the eternal pratfall of the religiously convinced. Joe Klein, Time, 17 May 2004 Nick wiped at the moustache of sweat droplets that was as much a part of his face as his eyes and nose and gave a shrug that indicated a certain lack of faith in our judgment. Nothing is more important to her than her faith in God. She says that her faith has given her the courage to deal with this tragedy. See More. Faith. Quite the same Wikipedia. Just better. Faith. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. confidence or trust in a particular system of religious belief. This article is about religious belief. For trust in people or other things, see Trust (emotion). For other types of faith, see Faith (disambiguation). Faith (Armani), by Mino da Fiesole.