

Strengthening and Equipping the Christian Life through Faith's Work, Love's Labor, and Hope's Steadfastness

Faith's Work

*For in [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "the righteous man shall live by faith."
(Romans 1:17)*

Faith's Importance and Definition

Verses: Hebrews 11:1-6, Ephesians. 4:5, Romans 1:17, 1 Peter 1:9, Matthew. 17:20, 2 Corinthians. 5:7, Rom. 1:5

Faith is the life-blood of the Christian. There are two aspects of faith. The faith implies the basic crucial doctrines of the Christian faith, as seen in the scripture. The second aspect of faith is: complete and absolute trust in something. In scripture this faith is directed toward God. Faith accomplishes great things and accomplishes otherwise impossible things. When we put complete trust in God in many small and great areas of our life, we find both deep satisfaction and the ability to please God, for, "without faith it is impossible to please God."

Faith's Working

Verses: Romans 3:31, 4:5, 9; Romans 1:17, James 2:18, 24, Gal. 2:20, Heb 10:38, Acts 27:25, Rom. 4:19

Faith and work are often thought of as opposites in Christian thinking. This is true as it relates to the means of our initial Christian salvation. However, when we discuss experiential faith, faith and works are completely and utterly inseparable. James as well as Paul makes it clear that faith works. Faith does things, it energizes us to accomplish things, to love others, to keep his commandments. We are called to choose to live by faith, rather than living by self-rule or trusting in accomplishments. Romans 1:17 states that the righteous shall live by faith, and in Gal. 2:20 Paul states that he lives by faith. Living by faith as these verses describe means that God, the scripture and His direct speaking are the objects of our faith and they produce conduct that makes our faith visible. As we exercise our faith more and more, faith spreads to the various areas of our life causing God to be pleased.

The Outcome of our Faith is the Salvation of our Soul

Verses: Romans 10:17, 1 Peter 1:9,10,13 Heb 11:6, Hebrews 12:2, James 2:22-24

When we hear the word of God, the Spirit brings faith to the hearer. This faith in the spoken word always results in action; first initial belief and then a life of working out our own salvation. This is placing full trust in the Lord. This full trust spreads to more and more areas of our life, until faith in Christ saturates every aspect of our life. Faith must be applied to our disposition, family life, personal life, church life, finances, suffering, loss, hopes and dreams. Eventually

these faith-based actions produce in us the deep sanctifying work that eventually ends with the complete salvation of our souls.

Faith Principles

Hebrews 11:1-2, 11:39-40, Heb 12:1-2,

There are some principles we must understand to apply faith correctly. Firstly, faith must have accurate knowledge as its base. Secondly, Faith is based on a History with God. In the bible and our experience we do have a history of God's faithfulness and good reason to trust the All-mighty God completely. Because of this the tired accusation that Christians have blind faith, doesn't hold water. God's History of complete and absolute faithfulness is especially helpful during the waiting periods between faith and its result. Thirdly, Faith does not provide instant gratification since the results of faith often come after a period of time and in some cases only in the next age.

The Breastplate and Fruit of Faith

Verses: 1 Thes. 5:8, Matt. 14:31, Acts 26:18, Gal. 5:6, Eph. 6:16, Col 2:5, 1 Peter 5:9, 1 John 5:4

Faith is a safeguard for the Christian Life. The bible speaks often of our faith protecting our heart in the midst of hardship. Without faith, we lack the protection from sin, the devil and the outside forces of this world. One clear fruit of faith, is Love. Love and faith go together and are inseparable. When we have faith, it is manifested in action, and that primarily is love. The bible's exhortations regarding faith are to not waver, stand firm in your faith and continue in the faith stable and steadfast.

Labor of Love

Labor of Love- Our love to God

Verses: Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Mark 12:29-31, 1 Corinthians 8:3, 1 John 4:19

God commands us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. What this means is that we are to love God more than any one or any thing else - which specifically and inevitably means loving Him more than ourselves. He is to be the supreme love in our life. Though God's command to love Him only addresses our love for Him, He is not looking for one-sided love. He wants a relationship with us. He wants a reciprocal relationship where each side seeks the good of the other. He wants each side to feel cherished by the other. He wants each side to trust the other. He wants each side to be confidently secure in the love of the other.

Increasing & abounding in love- Our love to others

Verses: 1 Thessalonians 3:12, Mark 12:29-30, 1 Timothy 1:5, Matt. 5:43-48, 1 Thessalonians 4:1

Loving your neighbor as yourself is a vital part of any Christian living. In fact, the Apostle Paul told Timothy that the goal of their instruction (preaching and teaching) was to love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. However, in order to rightly and consistently love your neighbor as yourself, you must first love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. You may be wondering what it means to love others for God's sake. Think about it this way: who or what you love the most, you please the most. This means that when you love God the most, you will consistently love others in the same way you love yourself regardless of how they are treating you, because that is what pleases God.

God's love toward us

Verses: 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 3:5; 1 John 5:9-10, Ephesians 2:4-7, John 16:7-11

God who is over all that has been, is, and will be, wants an intimate, never-ending, mutually satisfying relationship with us. He wants this so much that He has already sacrificed the life of His son to make it possible. He wants this so much that He patiently waits for us to repent of our sin, and be reconciled to Him. He wants this so much that He has given His Spirit the task of convicting us of sin, righteousness, and the coming judgment so we will be even more inclined to accept His invitation to a reconciled relationship of mutual love and trust (faith). The point is, choosing to love God supremely brings us into an unequalled, intimate, meaningful, serious, mutual, and eternal relationship of love and trust (faith) with Him.

Most excellent way

Verses: 1 Corinthians 12:31b; 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13; 1 John 4:8,16, Matt. 5:43-48

The love spoken of in 1 Corinthians 13 shows the quality of the divine love expressed through our human virtues. This love is Unconditional love, A steadfast love that does change, regardless of the response from the recipient. We love people, even our enemies, without expecting any response, and we love even if people don't respond well. This love is eternal! This love never fails! That is because God Himself is love.

Hope's Steadfastness

Hope

Key Verse: Constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father (1 Thessalonians 1:3)

Supplemental Verses: Acts 23:6; 24:15; 26:6; Rom. 5:2; 2 Cor 10:15; Eph. 1:18; 4:4; Phil. 1:20; Col. 1:20, 27; Titus 1:2; Heb 7:19; 10:23; 1 Pet 1:3; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 Tim 6:17

The Strong's definition for the primary Greek word used for hope in the New Testament is to have a pleasant and confident expectation of something coming in the future. In the divine seed we received a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). This hope is mentioned throughout the New Testament (see the supplementary verses). We have hope in God and the glory of God. We have hope that our faith will grow. We can see the hope of our calling which Christ in us the hope of glory. The hope within us encourages us to persevere through affliction and persecution so that we are not put to shame and look forward to seeing the Lord face to face at His return.

Our hope, joy, & crown of exultation

Key Verse: For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? (1 Thessalonians 2:19)

Supplementary verses: Romans 15:15-16; Philippians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:20; Romans 15:15-16; 2 Timothy 2:10

To Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy the believers in Thessalonica were their hope, joy, and crown of exultation at the coming of the Lord Jesus. The Thessalonians became dear children to them. The three brothers were a nursing mother and an exhorting Father to the Thessalonians. From the supplementary verses we can see Paul had the same feeling for all the believers he preached the gospel to. Paul's hope in the believers he gave birth to and shepherded was the reason he endured all things.

Hope in the Lord's return

Key Verses:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. (1 Thess. 4:13)

But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. (1 Thess. 5:8)

Supplementary verses: 1 Cor. 15:19; Gal. 5:5; Eph 2:12-13; 1 Thess 4:13-14; Tit 2:11-13; 3:7; Heb 6:11,19-20; 1 Peter 1:13; 1 John 3:2-3

In 1 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul uses the phrase 'steadfastness of hope'. Steadfastness is also translated as patience, perseverance, endurance, and enduring constancy. The hope we received in our regeneration generates and supplies our steadfastness. One of the chief reasons for this is our belief in the Lord's promise that He will come again. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy reminded the Thessalonians of this at the close of every chapter in their first letter. As the supplementary verses point out, there are many things to hope in when the Lord returns — his presence, righteousness, and eternal life are just a few of these items. The way to guard ourselves so that we remain faithful is through putting on the armor of faith, love and hope.

Hope in the midst of Persecution

Key Verse: *Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. (2 Thessalonians 1:4)*

Supplement Verses: Rom. 5:1-5; 12:12; 2 Cor. 1:5-7; 6:4; Heb. 10:32; 12:1-3, 7; James 1:12; 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:20; Rev. 3:10; 13:10; 14:12

From the verse above, it might be good to ask, how can hope strengthen our resolve to endure persecutions and afflictions. Romans 5 and Hebrews 12 tell us to fix our spiritual 'eyes' on the author and perfecter of our faith and to appreciate the love of God that has been poured out into our heart. By experiencing these two truths we receive a rich supply that gives us the endurance and hope unto the Lord's return!