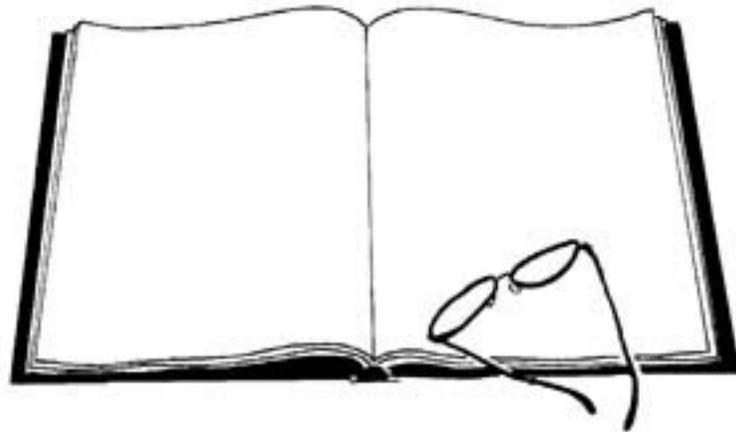


# **Alamo City Apostolic Church**

**The “What the Bible Says” Discipleship Series**

## **Unit 2**



**What the Bible Says About**

# **FAITH**

**BY PASTOR KELLY NIX**

## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT FAITH

### ***Lesson objective:***

To introduce the student to the power of faith in God; to demonstrate how faith works together with obedience and grace to produce salvation.

### ***Key verse:***

#### **Hebrews 11:1, 6**

1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
6. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

### **SECTION 1: WHAT IS FAITH?**

Faith is one of the most valuable resources you can possess in your walk with God. In fact, the Bible goes so far as to say that, if you don't have faith, you can't even please God! Obviously, since faith is so important, we need to be sure we have a clear understanding of the subject of faith.

Hebrews 11:1 gives us a good definition of faith. It says faith is two things: “substance” (of things hoped for), and “evidence” (of things not seen). Let's take a look at the meanings of these words. According to the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, the definitions of “substance” include: 1. essential nature, 2. a fundamental or characteristic part or quality, 3. ultimate reality that underlies all outward manifestations and change, and 4. physical material from which something is made or which has discrete existence. From all this complicated language, the basic truth we need to learn is that faith is something *solid*.

The same source tells us that the word “evidence” means, among other things: 1. an outward sign, 2. something that furnishes proof, and 3. one who bears witness. In other words, this means faith is *indisputable*.

Now, we begin to see what a mighty force faith is. When we have real faith in God, even though we don't yet see what He will do, we still consider His promises to be fact – something solid and indisputable. The things we hope for and the things we don't yet see are, to us, just as real as if we had them in our hands. We have no doubt that God will do just as He said. This is the kind of trust God rewards!

Remember, it is impossible to please God without faith. Perhaps you are thinking, “I could never have the kind of faith it takes to please God!” Don't despair! The Bible assures us that God has given to each of us a measure of faith.

#### **“...God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3)**

Therefore, since God has already provided you with a measure of faith, it is your responsibility to develop it, nurture it, and exercise it.

## SECTION 2: THE FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD IS BLIND FAITH

Too often, we refuse to believe anything we have not seen for ourselves. While this may be a wise practice in matters of this world, it will not work in our dealings with God. The faith God accepts from us is a blind faith, the simple, undoubting faith of a small child. If we want to please God, we must believe that God’s promises are true, even when we don’t see an immediate result. Consider the example of the Roman centurion, who refused to bring Jesus to his home, believing instead that all Jesus had to do was speak the word right where He was, and his servant would be healed:

**“The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel...And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour” (Matthew 8:8-10; 13).**

Consider the words Jesus spoke to Thomas:

**“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29).**

It is hard to imagine God being impressed by anything. After all, all He had to do was speak the word, and the universe came into existence. When He wanted His people to pass through the Red Sea on dry ground, He just blew on the waters and they opened. He sent fire from heaven on a number of occasions. So, what could a mere human being do to impress such a God?

The answer is simpler than you might think. The Almighty God has a great soft spot in His heart for faith! If you will simply believe Him, without doubting, you will make a powerful impression on God! There is nothing that hurts Him more than for someone to doubt His word, and there is nothing that pleases Him more than for someone to believe it!

**“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour” (Matthew 15:28).**

### SECTION 3: FAITH PUTS GOD IN ACTION

If you want to discover how to put God in action, use your faith! Nothing gets Him to respond more effectively than faith. Notice how He responded to the woman who reached out to Him for healing:

**“But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.” (Matthew 9:22).**

Another good example of the way faith encourages God to move is the story of Bartimaeus. He put aside personal pride, embarrassment, and all other hindering factors, and cried out to Jesus in faith. Once again, his faith captivated Jesus’ attention, and he received his healing.

**“And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way” (Mark 10:52).**

The same is true of the sinful woman, in Luke 7:50:

**“And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”**

One critical fact to remember is that, in order for faith to be effective, it must be expressed. God responds to our expression of faith. In Mark 2:5, it specifically says, “When Jesus saw their faith.” In fact, the results of our prayers are determined by the level of our faith.

**“Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you” (Matthew 9:29).**

Lest we create the wrong impression, it would be good to establish that God does not expect us to possess “super faith”. Rather, we should realize that He will give us enough faith to believe for what needs to be done, because *it is His will to do it*.

**“... For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:20).**

### SECTION 4: FAITH WORKS TOGETHER WITH GRACE FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION

Let’s talk for just a little about how faith affects our salvation. Many people are confused about salvation by faith. Before we address this issue, however, let’s make sure we have a clear understanding of the roles of faith and grace in justifying us from our sins.

The following verses all go together to demonstrate how faith and grace work together. We are saved by the grace of God (the unmerited favor of God towards men), but we can only enter into that grace by faith. Therefore, faith and grace are mutually dependent. The one does no good without the other.

**“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins**

**that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:24-28).**

**“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2).**

**“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).**

Now that we have established Biblically that salvation is by faith through grace, let’s take a closer look at salvation by faith. It is safe to say that the vast majority of people in most of the major denominations of Christianity do not fully understand this topic. Because of this, many are basing their salvation on an unsure foundation. We must be certain that our salvation experience exactly matches the Bible plan of salvation, because a mistake in this area could have eternal consequences!

## **SECTION 5: INWARD FAITH IS REVEALED BY OUTWARD OBEDIENCE**

Most Christian denominations today teach that salvation is obtained merely by professing your faith in Jesus as your Savior, or “accepting the Lord as your personal Savior”, or “receiving Christ”. They even go so far as to say that such things as being water baptized or receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost are “works” and, therefore, are not a part of salvation. This is based on an incorrect and highly irresponsible interpretation of Ephesians 2:8-9 (see scripture above).

One of the most valuable principles of *hermeneutics* (the rules of Biblical interpretation) is that *a text without a context is nothing but a pretext*. The “context” could be defined as what else the Bible has to say about a particular subject. If we take an individual verse of Scripture by itself, without bothering to compare it to everything else the Bible has to say about that matter, it is easy to create erroneous doctrines. Remember, the whole truth about a subject is not always contained in a single verse or passage. Sometimes pieces of the puzzle are spread all through the Bible, and God expects us to diligently search them out and put them together before formulating any doctrines.

In the case of salvation, many have seized upon “for by grace are ye saved through faith”, without seriously considering the implications of faith. While Paul went on to say that we are not saved by works, the context of that scripture clearly indicates that he was referring to the ceremonial works of the Law of Moses. To say that we have to do nothing in order to be saved is a direct contradiction of the Scripture, because the Apostle James wrote that faith without works is dead. In other words, if you really have faith, this

will be demonstrated by your obedience to the Word of God. The works James is talking about are not works of the Mosaic Law, but works of obedience to God.

**“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:17-26).**

Therefore, it is clear that, when Paul wrote that we are saved by grace through faith, he was not simply speaking of making a verbal confession. True faith will be validated by our actions. If we do not obey the Word of God, we are demonstrating that we do not really believe it.

In fact, Jesus made it plain that salvation involves believing **and** obeying, and not simply professing faith:

**“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).**

He also condemned those who make verbal professions of faith, yet do not experience a change in their hearts and lives.

**“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:8-9).**

We will talk more about repentance and water baptism as works of obedience that demonstrate true saving faith, and the wonderful gift with which God rewards that obedience, in future lessons.

For now, hide these scriptures in your heart, and spend time meditating on what they have to say about faith and salvation:

**“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).**

**“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).**

**“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31).**

**“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).**

### CONCLUSION

Faith is the key to approaching God. Without it, you cannot please Him. He has provided every person with a basic measure of faith. However, sometimes we find that we need greater faith. How can we go about increasing our faith?

The way to obtain greater faith is to simply ask God for it. As you pray and read His Word, you will find your faith increasing. Ask him to give you greater faith – He will!  
**“Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:23-24).**

**Student Exercises – Unit 2**  
(Please complete, detach, and give to teacher)

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

1. What verse says that it is impossible to please God without faith?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Explain what this means, in your own words:  
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3. How can a human being impress God? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Does the fact that we are "saved by grace through faith" mean that all we have to do in order to be saved is profess faith in Jesus? Explain your answer:  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. The Apostle James said that \_\_\_\_\_ without \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.