

Am I saved?

Knowing and believing the truth about your
salvation through Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Have you ever wondered, “Am I really saved?” Unfortunately there are many Christians today, even with all of the resources at hand are unsure what the bible says salvation is and even more importantly are unsure about their own salvation. I didn’t begin this study intentionally but while completing another study regarding eternal security it became necessary to first define what salvation really is before discussing if it can be lost or not. This writing is an in depth review of what the bible says salvation is, how you receive it and how to be sure based on scripture (mainly the American Standard Version).

It is very important for you to know what salvation really is according to God's Word and to have complete confidence in your walk with God and your eternal destiny. Many people who call themselves Christians, say they are saved and believe in God but do not live the full life that God desires for them nor do they walk in His promises. A popular verse quoted in today’s society is Jeremiah 29:11, which states "'For I know the plans I have for you' declares the Lord 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, Plans to give you hope and a future.'" However, the scripture then goes on to say that "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart. I will be found by you." God does not only have salvation in store and ready for us but also hope and a future, when we follow His Word and seek Him with our hearts. This not only has powerful implications in our daily lives but our eternity as well. We have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), but God’s has provided salvation for all who accept is as this document will explain.

What is Salvation?

Therefore, the first and most important question to ask for anyone who seeks the truth regarding salvation is “What is salvation according God's Word?” A good verse to start with is found in Romans 10:9-13 and reads " because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus (as) Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God 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. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same (Lord) is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him: for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

So what is this word "Save"? Zondervan Student Bible defines Salvation as "Deliverance from danger or evil; especially deliverance from all that separates people from God." There are many verses in scripture that relate being saved or having salvation to eternal significance, specifically saving from eternal suffering to be saved for eternity with God, through Christ, such as John 3:15-18 "that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into

the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

As we discuss salvation here, it will relate mainly to eternal salvation with God, as opposed to alienation from Him forever more. There are many, many times in scripture where Jesus is asked what must be done to have eternal life and Jesus calls the person to take some kind of action (such as in Matthew 19:16-21, Matthew 19:29, and Luke 10:25-29). These scriptures that call to action are based on faith and belief (such as John 5:24, John 6:40). Some scriptures have elements of both belief and action in them, such as John 3:36. I believe one of the best and most straightforward explanations on how a person receives eternal salvation is found in Ephesians 2:8, which reads: "for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, (it is) the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory." This scripture directly reveals that none of us can be saved by what we do, or in other words trying to earn our way to heaven by doing the right things. This is because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Therefore God is the one that had to provide a way for us to come into His presence and have a relationship with him. We severed the relationship through doing wrong (sin) and the only person who could allow for a renewal of that relationship is God, the one who has been wronged. The bible from cover to cover has the exact same message throughout, which is that of God's love for us and His desire for us to be reconciled to him through (our) faith.

The Importance of Faith

Throughout the Old Testament God provided different methods showing faith in Him (or should I say ways to express or enact that faith), then God sent His son Jesus as the final sacrifice for sin. If you are already a Christian, this is not new understanding for you. If you read the 11th chapter of Hebrews, it is very clear that throughout all of history, man was reconciled to God by grace through faith. The way Rick Warren, the Pastor of Saddleback Community Church puts it is this way "grace is receiving what you do not deserve (from God)", through faith. Without God's grace (willingness to forgive us our sins and reconcile our relationship with Him), I would be done writing and none of us would have any hope. The first step had to be taken by God for us to be saved. This step is an extreme act of grace through Christ's death. We first must understand that we are saved by the Grace of God and without this grace each of us, and all of creation, would be eternally condemned to the fiery pit of burning sulfur, or hell.

It is also important to understand that there is a "vehicle" by which God's grace saves our lives. It is the means by which grace can be accepted into our hearts, reconciling us to God for eternity. This most important factor is faith (or many times stated as belief). As the scripture above points out, "we are saved by grace, through faith." The word "through" signifies that grace must be realized in a person's life by the means of something else. For example, if I were to say "the water fountain is through the green doors", what I am saying is that the water fountain exists there, resides there, has been

and will continue to be through the green door. However, for you to get to the water fountain you must move through the doors that separate you from it. The doors are the passageway to the water that you so desperately need. If you do not go through the doors, you will not have relief for your need. The doors are not your destination, they are what allow you to reach your destination, but can also prevent you from arriving there. You must be willing to go through the doors, but you also must take the action to go through them. Keep in mind that in this scenario, there is no other way to get to your desired destination except through those green doors.

Although this is a simplistic explanation of the importance of the word "through" in the verse above, it is a practical comparison. Something very important to note is that receiving God's grace and salvation does require something from each of us. In every scripture that refers to salvation, action is required on the part of the individual and in every verse the required action is worded as either "faith" or "belief". Even John 3:16, probably the most well known new testament scripture states "...whosoever BELIEVES in him...". Understand that this call to action is not a specific work to do, like an initiation into a fraternity or a way to earn God's favor. Faith is something much simpler yet at the same time much deeper than a work to do.

The bottom line is this, "What is this thing called faith that is required of me (to receive God's grace and salvation)?" or to simply restate what so many asked Christ himself when He walked the earth "What must I do to be saved?" This is the crux of salvation, what is required of us, how we receive it, how we can be assured that we have it, and where it comes from. What is faith and belief? When studying the Greek and Hebrew meanings for these words, the base root word of "belief" is literally "faith". In essence, they are the same word with the same direct meaning. In order to really understand how we are saved, as well as experience the fullness of life God desires for us here on earth, we must really understand God's meaning or definition of faith. As a friend of mine says "words have meaning." I saw a great interpretation of faith on a church billboard once, which stated "Faith is taking God at His word, whatever He says." There are also a couple of great quotes that explain this word the first from John Maxwell being "Faith is belief in action" and W.T. Perkheiser said "Faith is more than thinking something is true, it is thinking something is true to the extent we act on it."

Is Faith a Noun or Verb?

First of all, what type of word is faith? Is faith a verb or a noun, or in other words is faith something to be, to do or to have. As described below in the original meanings and translation, faith is all three of these. It originally starts as something you do, transitions into something you have and over time is something you are at the core. A good example to explain this is saying someone is a firefighter. Is a firefighter something that someone does or is? It is both. If someone helps fight a fire one time, does that mean he is a firefighter? At the same time, if a person has the title of a firefighter but does not know how to put out a fire, was never trained, has never done it and has no desire to do it, is he

really a firefighter or just someone who works for the fire department. This is a similar comparison to faith. The very definitions of faith are both nouns and verbs so it is not just something someone has but what they do and who they are at the core. Faith is not works but an obedient following.

I will try to give you a very clear understanding of what faith is and the absolute necessity for anyone to have a relationship with God, receive His promises and even secure eternal life. I will review faith (and belief) by two methods. The first is defining this word through its understood meaning in its original languages. This would be the “dictionary” meaning of the word as it would have been understood by those speaking the original languages. The second way we will review faith is by dissecting the only verse in the bible that explains what faith “is”. Before going into what faith is, it is also important to know where faith comes from. Turning to God’s word, we find that “faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of God” (Romans 10:17). In order for us to even have faith, we must be listening and in order for our faith to grow, we must continue to be listening. Romans 1:17 says that “the just shall live by faith”, not just have faith.

The word faith is used both in the Old and New Testament, but mostly in the New Testament. The word faith (or believe) was only used 21 times in the Old Testament Hebrew writings. The two concordance references for these words used are numbers 529, 530 and 539. The primary root word of both 529 and 530 is 539 (aman), which means “to build up or support, to be firm, to trust, to be permanent.” If you notice, all of these definitions are verbs. They are not nouns but require action on the part of the person who claims to believe or have faith. Interestingly enough the word trust is used much more extensively in the Old Testament, similar to the word used in the New Testament “faith” or “believe” and as a matter of fact is a synonym for the root word of faith in the Greek language. The root word for trust in the Hebrew is #982 and #2620 and they mean to “hurry for refuge” or “flee for protection”. Faith has been the thread throughout the entire bible as Paul states in Hebrews 11 that the patriarchs (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses) all lived by faith and belief (Greek #4102). Habakkuk (2:4) even taught “the just shall live by faith”. Faith is not something new or only contained in the new testament, it has been a requirement to come close to God all throughout history, however, after Christ walked the earth the way in which we follow God in faith changed from following the law by faith to accepting God’s grace and committing to following Christ’s commandments (as noted in many verses, including Matthew 28:18-20). Three words are the same in the Greek and Hebrew definition of the word faith – “assure, believe and trust.” A great way to understand more fully the meaning of faith is to take the scripture “We are saved by grace through faith” and substitute any of the definitions for faith in this scripture, for example “We are saved by grace through reliance (upon God)”.

A very powerful example of faith, or lack of faith, in the Old Testament is found in Deuteronomy 1 and 2. These chapters explain the point in Israel’s history where they just left Egypt, spent some time in the desert and were at the doors of the Promised Land. God told Moses in Deuteronomy 1:19-21 that the Lord has already given them the land

and to go and take possession of it and do not be afraid or discouraged. At that point the people asked Moses if they could just scout out the land to find the right route and get a description of the towns. Moses allowed them to do so, and the rest is history. The 12 came back with a great report of the land but a fearsome report of the inhabitants, deciding that they could not overtake them or the land. Instead of having faith, they had fear, great fear and instead of doing what the Lord said they backed down because of what they saw and what they did was against God's will and direction and spent 40 more years in the desert and none of them entered into this promised land. The cause of all these problems for the Israelite nation is summarized in Deuteronomy 1:32, which states that "... In spite of all of this, you did not trust in the Lord your God."

To give a very strong comparison between obedience (or faith based on trust) and works in the old testament can be found in 1 Samuel 15 where God rejects Saul as king of Israel. Saul had very specific instructions to completely destroy the Amalakitites and everything they owned. However, he decided to keep their king alive and to keep alive the best of the livestock to keep as plunder and sacrifice them to God in thanks. Samuel replied in verses 22-23, that the Lord does not delight so much in offerings and sacrifices (works) as much as obeying the Lord. He said that to obey is better than sacrifice (or actions in an attempt to please God) and that by rejecting God's Word, Saul was rejected as king, as well as the future inheritance to the throne.

The word faith itself is used 244 times in the New Testament. In 238 instances the word faith matched up to concordance #4102 (Pistis), which means that in almost every instance that faith is talked about in bible, it means that same. This definition is detailed further in the footnotes, but is actually a noun that means "conviction, trust, belief, reliance on God and his Word." The word believe (such as found in John 3:16) is mainly the Greek concordance #4100 and means to "have faith in or to entrust." Greek word #4100 (pisteuo) is actually derived from #4102 and both of these words come from #3982 (pietho) which is a verb meaning "to convince, assent, rely, believe, be confident, trust and obey." When these definitions are all viewed under one light, it portrays that faith (and belief) are not just things a person has, but how a person lives based on their beliefs, confirming the book of James.

If we look to God's Word for scriptures that define faith, there is only one. Although there are many verses in the Bible discussing the importance of faith, such as what we can do through faith (**for a list of these new testament scriptures see appendix**), the requirement to have faith as Christians, and that without faith we cannot please God, there is only one verse in the bible that defines what faith IS. That verse is Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is assurance of [things] hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." The bottom line to not only a relationship with God but salvation for eternity is summed up in "assurance" and "conviction".

Faith - assured by God through conviction

Let's dig deeper into this meaning of faith by looking at two words, "assurance" and "conviction". Assurance and conviction - What do they mean? A great quote based on this passage is found in the Hayford Handbook and says that "The validity of faith does not rest on the sincerity of the believer but on the reliability of what is believed". These two words are the best translation into the English language from the original Greek. Although Webster's Dictionary may give some insight into their meanings, the very best place to reference their intent is back in their original language.

Something that is extremely important to understand is that GOD IS FAITHFUL. He is faithful to us, whom He created and loved, but more importantly He is faithful to His Word. God's word says that he MUST punish sin. The punishment for sin is death – eternal death. In relation to our salvation, when we accept Christ into our lives, we are forgiven for all of our sins and are now NOT accountable to "the Law", or at least man's interpretation of the law, and all the things a man must do in order to earn his/her way to heaven. We now have the Holy Spirit living within us and are responsible to live by faith in the spirit (Romans 7:6). Let me say that again, we are responsible to live by faith in following the Holy Spirit. Although there are many, many scriptures that talk about this matter specifically, one that is strongly stated is Romans 8:5-8.

God's Word is very clear in how you know who the children of God are versus children of the Devil (1 John 3:10). However, there is a strong word of caution needed to be given here, which is that this determination of doing right and wrong goes beyond what man can see, but it is a reflection of the heart, which only God can see. This once again comes down to a Word that determines if we are saved, if we are living our life right, if we are in right standing with God, and even if we will have eternal life – FAITH. Does this mean we are or must be perfect? Absolutely not! If we were perfect (in accordance with God's Word) there would have been no reason for Christ to come and die for us. However, we are expected to walk with God and to strive to listen to His Spirit within us and also to strive to live in accordance with our faith being obedient to God. As we grow in faith, which we should always be doing, new challenges face us that we stumble and fall though, but we should always be growing to overcome sins and temptations. Will we trip up and fail through life? YES. Does that mean we are not saved? NO. Please understand though that there were many people in the bible who were Godly who sinned, but here is what is of absolute importance, what did they do when they realized they sinned? They repented then grew in faith and obedience. Some of the Holy men and women we read about, time and again (such as David), fell into sin. When these people sinned (David, Abraham, Moses, Elijah and many others) were still committed to God through faith. A New Testament example is Peter, who disowned Christ. In Luke 22:21 Jesus said "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³²But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." What did Christ pray for? It was Simon's faith so that it would not fail and that when he turned back (repented) that he would continue on with the work of the gospel.

Faith is the foundation and corner stone for all things in life, including our walk with God and Christian growth, even while on this earth. The steps and process of Christian growth and maturity are found in **2 Peter 1:4-7** - "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promise, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love." This section of scripture goes on to say that these will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive and if a person does not have these he is nearsighted and blind, forgetting the cleansing of his past sins and that we are to make our calling and election sure and by doing these things we will never fail. The foundation stone for any relationship with God and growth in life begins with faith first. Faith does require action, as James points out "faith without works is dead" or in other words, faith without works is not really faith at all. The faith in following the Holy Spirit should continue to be the driving force for our lives as Christians. When we fall off the track faith should bring us right back humbly to God's feet.

Faith is deeper than just knowing and accepting, for even the Demons believe there is one God and shudder (Jas 219). Incidentally, the same root word for believe is used in this verse as describe that the demon's themselves have faith. Faith does not just apply to Christianity but faith is involved in everything that we do. We must have faith to do anything, such as drive a car, go to work, take a test, etc. If that faith is negative or disbelief, it is called fear. All of our actions are based on some type of faith (or fear) and the bible talks about the most important place to have faith – in Jesus Christ (the Word of God in the flesh).

Faith is very important and is the basis for being saved through trusting and obedience of Christ through the Holy Spirit, as described above. However, it is important to realize that something else must be coupled with this faith, especially as we grow in maturity, in order to make it real effective towards God and that something is love. A biblical outline of the growth steps from faith is found in 2 pet 1:5-7. This passage describes the process of making your election secure, it is the growth process of growing with God in true faith and obedience. As a matter of fact, love is even greater than faith, as described in 1 Cor 13. The King James Version of the New Testament directly describes that faith and love are both needed for salvation. As a matter of fact, 1 Corinthians 13:1-4 talks about faith without love, even faith to move mountains and say that without love as the driving desire, this faith means NOTHING. The deepness of love is described in 1 John 3:16 and the importance of love for salvation is described in 1 John 4. Moving to 2 John, the description of love is really obeying God's commandment – doesn't this sound similar to the same requirement as – faith. Even Jesus told Peter – If you love me, feed my sheep, which required action. Fear is faith in reverse and stops you from taking action while faith causes you to have action.

Everyone Has Faith – Just Not in God

When it comes to this word faith, the question arises; do people other than Christians have faith in their lives? Can you have faith but not in God? Does faith work without having God? The answer to all of these is yes. It takes a certain amount of faith for anyone to get through a day. You must have faith that putting one step in front of the other will take you somewhere. You must have faith that picking up a ringing phone will have a voice on the other end, etc. These are actions based on beliefs, but not particularly God. Even in 1 Corinthians, Paul states that “even if we have the faith to move mountains but have not love, it is useless.” Does faith work – yes! There have been many instances where people have had faith to be healed in life, without specifically trusting in God, and were healed. Faith is a principal that works, just like gravity, however if you don’t base your life on the truth, your faith is for nothing. The saving faith discussed here is based on faith in and love for God through Christ alone.

When discussing the importance of action, does that always mean ministry, serving, doing things at church or for others? Does it always mean being on the go? What does it mean? Sometimes that action means resting in God or falling at His feet in prayer. Sometimes it means waiting patiently upon Him or remaining quiet for a time. Don’t confuse action with productivity. All that matters is that we walk in faith and love through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If your life is filled activity for God, but no time to really sit at Christ’s feet and listen or dedicate yourself to hearing Him throughout the day, are your actions really based on faith, or on what you think will earn God’s favor?

A critical part of faith is obedience. As state above, faith without works is dead. Also, 1 John 2:15-17 says that He who does fathers will lives forever (Eph 5:17 tells us that we should understand the Lords will). Even when the rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked him what he needed to do to be saved, Jesus finally said that he needed to sell all that he had and give to the poor. The works explained here are not based on the law, in other words, you are not saved by works. You can’t just work to earn your salvation, just as you cant go to an auto shop and start repairing cars and just expect to get a pay check. You must first be hired then obey those you report to. Obedience to Christ may mean just to sit at his feet, just to rest, just to pray – it does not mean you are constantly working to gain favor, but instead you are constantly praying and listening for God’s will then following where ever he calls. Romans 12 says that anything not done in faith is sin. You don’t work to earn salvation but instead you follow in love.

Where Does Love Fit Into Salvation?

Two words are the common thread throughout the entire bible, from Genesis to Revelation, from the beginning of time to the end of time. These two words are faith and love. Before, during and after the law, all men came to God through faith. It is all a matter of the heart and the reflections of the heart in a person’s life. Hebrews chapter 11

discusses men who walked with God, from the beginning of time, through faith. These were the bible's righteous examples and were before and during the Law of Moses. Faith in God is what saved their lives for eternity. The Lord even condemned Israel in Deuteronomy chapter 9 because of their rebellion and was very angry with them because they did not trust or obey Him (Deut 9:23). Again in Romans, Paul points out that the Gentiles obtained righteousness not through pursuing it, but because of faith, and the Jews did not receive it because they pursue God's favor through works. What does this mean? Faith is not works, faith is following. Faith is a reflection of the heart. Doing things to win God's favor is not focused on God, but focused on what you can get from God. Living life in a certain way because God loves you and you love Him is not selfish, but serving out of love. The key is the motivation of the heart.

Every person has faith, in something, someone and some way. The saving faith is faith in God through Christ (God's living Word). Faith is not what is spoken, it is what is lived. Additionally, every person has a measure of faith (a certain amount) in each area of life. The level of faith a person has determines the extent of their actions. For instance, if I have faith and confidence that I can speak in front of 10 people with out fear, but no more, then the size of my audience is limited by the level of my faith. There are many Christians who believe in God and have accepted Christ who live by faith and continue to grow, but their measure of faith may be much different than another child of God.

As mentioned in an earlier scripture from Hebrews, "faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." What is it that we really hope for if we are children of God? Paul answers this in Romans 8:22. Our real hope is for our adoption as sons and the redemption of our bodies. The true faith in God through Christ is the hope of our salvation not the temporary things in life. We are called to live in and use things within this temporary world, but if our higher hope (faith) is in God then we do and use things on this earth in an obedient and eternally significant way. Faith is simple, but living by and growing in faith is needless to say – challenging.

This leads to the second thread throughout the bible – love? Love is the core of who God is. 1 John 4:8 says "whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." How does this relate to faith. Once again, every person has faith – in something. This scripture states that if you do not love, then your faith is not really based on God. A very strong summary of God, love and faith are given in 1 John 4: 7 – 21. As stated above, the word faith is a verb and requires action, or following through hope. Love also requires obedience. 1 John 5: 1 –5 discusses the fullest deepest connection between us and God through Christ and the focal point of faith and love being the only two determinants of what our relationship really is with the God. This section fully describes that faith and love are joined together at the hinge called obedience. If we truly have faith and are saved and truly love God and are saved, we are obedient to Him. In other words, working to gain favor with God, without love for Him and a relationship with him, is useless (1 Corinthians). On the same token, saying we love God and who He is and what he desires for us but never following His directives does not really reflect love.

Where does it all start? It all starts with Faith in God through Christ. Going back to our earlier discussion, “we are saved by Grace through Faith.” Where does love come in? Once again, refer to 2 Peter 1:4 – “Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.” This is the process of maturity for a Christian. Later in verse 10, Peter goes on to say that we should practice these things to make our calling and election sure. It does not start with love because when we first come to God we do not know Him or His nature well enough to love Him, we are drawn to His love to us through faith. Did the sinner on the cross next to Jesus have time to grow in love for Christ and God? No, he only had time to recognize that love and accept it through faith by telling Christ he believed. However, for those who have time on this earth as Christians, that love in God should and must develop through growth with Him. There may be some challenging growth areas along the way, just like growing up at home through the teenage years, but the true desires of your heart and love for God evident given time.

What if someone builds their foundation on Christ and lives by faith in love but their faith is not growing and moving forward in the right way of maturity – into love for God and others. Their words and works will be tested by God to see if they based their life on faith in Him. As 1 Corinthians 3:10–15 says that if someone builds by faith on the right foundation but in wrong way, these works will be tested and burned up with no reward. Only the person will be saved, “but only as one escaping through the flames.”

Does that mean we are perfect? In order to answer that question, you must answer this question – Is a baby and growing child perfect? When we are born again, it is like a brand new baby coming into the world. A baby does not come out of the mother’s womb knowing how to walk, talk, live correctly and play basketball. All of these things happen through steps, growth, trial and error, failed attempts and successes and perseverance. Because a teenager falls to drive a car perfectly the first time, is he evil? But if the teen doesn’t care about learning the right ways, following a teacher, desires to run people and cars over that is an evil heart.

When we are first saved through faith, do we have much love? Some may but others may not. However, as 2 Peter 1:5–7 describes above, a person who is a true Christian based on faith, over time, must reflect love in their life or their faith really means nothing. The word love that is used an overwhelming amount of the time in the New Testament is the Greek word “agape” (Strong’s number 25 and 26). In 1 John 4:8, 16, the Bible says that God Himself is love. The word used in this passage is the one used to direct us how to live a Christian life of love. This love is “the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety.” The word means affection or benevolence. In the Hayford Handbook, the deeper meaning of this word is defined as “an undefeatable benevolence and unconquerable goodwill that always seeks the highest good of the other person, no matter what he does. It is the self-giving love that gives freely without asking anything in

return and does not consider the worth of the object. Agape is more love by choice than Philo, which is love by chance; and it refers to the will rather than the emotion. Agape describes the unconditional love God has for the world.” In John 13:34-35, our love for one another shows the world true discipleship. A quote that summarizes this love, from Hayfords Handbook, is “love is like oil to the wheels of obedience.”

In the comparison between the faith and love, their value is described in 1 Corinthians 13:13 “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” James 2:19 explains that even the demons believe (or have faith in) God and his word, so why are they not saved? The answer is because they do not obey God out of love. They do obey God at times when he forces them to obey him (just like us at times), but they do not obey God willingly and out of love. Love is not the starting point, but as described above the highest growth through faith (as the foundation) results in true love (for God and others). For a Christian of much time, love is the underlying factor of salvation. What really is love?

Love is a Verb!

Once again, love is a verb, meaning it is action. The full Chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 describes love and its importance. Verse 4 says that “love is patient, love is kind” The rest of the chapter goes on to say what love does or the results of love, but you can substitute “patient” or “kind” for the word love anywhere in the bible. Both in the typically word used in Hebrew (ahab #157) and Greek (agape #26) for love (of God from man, man for God and man for man), it is described as a “affection for” and a “deliberate assent of the will.” Love is deeper than emotion, it is a commitment at the core of who someone really is, much the same as faith. Faith is logical outpouring of the heart while love is the emotional out pouring of the heart. They both meet at the core will of a person and result in action (or in action). Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him and each time Peter said “yes”, then Jesus said – “feed my sheep.” Peter’s love for Christ requires action on his behalf. Once we are walking in the fullness of love, 1 Corinthians 13:7 states that love believes and hopes, which literally means that love drives our faith and our hope. Wouldn’t that make sense that God, who is love and the author and perfecter of our faith, would be the driving force behind our faith and hope as we grow in love with him.

How important is love for life and salvation? When Jesus was asked the greatest commandment in all the bible he quoted in Matthew 22:37, Mark 1:30 and Luke 10:27 the old testament command to love God first and foremost and secondly to love you neighbor as yourself. In John 14:15, Jesus states “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” He then goes on through verse 21 to explain the result and importance in the love for him first and foremost. 1 John 3:16 shows us how we can know what love is, which was God sacrificing His son for our sins (it was the action and accomplishment of this that is indeed action). God didn’t just say he loved us, He showed it.

Love grows and flourishes in the Christian life as the Holy Spirit grows and leads. As a matter of fact, one of the fruits, or products, of the Holy Spirit is Love as discussed in Galatians 5:16 - 22. In other words, we are saved by grace through faith. Once we have faith in God through Christ, the Holy Spirit enters our hearts (the deepest part of who we are). As we learn to live by the guidance of God's Holy Spirit through faith, we will grow in love for God and others. Thus as mentioned earlier faith, hope and love are the deepest parts of spirituality and the most important is love.

Choose Love – Choose Christ!

For anyone reading this who is learning about salvation for the first time, I do want to give the invitation to accept this free gift of salvation through God's grace. As stated above, it is not anything we can earn, but if you will believe in your heart that God sent Christ, his sinless son, to die for you and he raised him from the dead and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, then you will be saved. Accepting God's free gift is that easy and if you meant it from the heart and asked God to forgive you of your sins, He did it. Congratulations and welcome to the family. You have been made new and it is like a re-birth (spiritually). To learn more about who you are now and how to grow closer to your heavenly Father, I would suggest reading the letter he sent to you – The Bible. Start with the book of John (near the end of the Bible) and before you begin reading ask God to show you what the words mean for you. God's Spirit now lives in your heart and as you learn to listen to Him and live accordingly, you will see your heart and life change over time.

Continue to believe what you read in God's Word. Ask God to help you walk it out in your daily life. Let your truest ambition in life be to love God with all your heart by turning to Him with every matter of your life and loving others by letting the love of God flow through you as you grow closer to Him. No-one can ever take away your salvation so continue to work it out on a daily basis by doing the best you can to walk closely with your Father by following the guidance of His perfect Word (Jesus Christ) and Spirit. May God bless you and keep you in your journey!

Footnotes:

Hebrew #539 (aman) - build up or support – V, foster as – V, render (or be) firm - V
trust (or believe) – V, to be permanent – V, true (ADJ), go to the right hand – V,
assurance (Noun), believe – V, bring up – V, establish - V

Elpis (1680) - anticipate – V, expectation - (Noun), confidence - (Noun)

Oligopistos (3640) negative tense incredulous - (Noun), lacking confidence (in Christ)-
(noun)

Pistis (#4102) from peitho (#3982). persuasion (noun), credence (noun), conviction -
(noun), reliance (upon christ) - V, constancy - (noun), truth - (noun), assurance - (noun)
belief - (Noun), believe – V, faith - (noun), fidelity.- (noun)

Peitho (3982) Root word faith/belief convince – V, pacify – V, conciliate – V, assent – V
rely (by inward certainty) – V, agree – V, (Synonyms), assure – V, believe – V, have
confidence – V, be confident – V, make friend – V, obey – V, persuade – V, trust - V
yield – V

Ahab (157) To have affection for (sexually or otherwise), like, friend

Agapao (25) to love (in a social or moral sense), This is the judgement & deliberate
assent of the will as a matter of principal, duty & propriety (stands related with 5368).

Agape (26) Affection, benevolence.

Supporting scriptures of faith (and works)

1) Hebrews 11

Abraham Justified by Faith

¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?
²If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but
not before God. ³What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it
was credited to him as righteousness."
⁴Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an
obligation. ⁵However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies
the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶David says the same thing
when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness
apart from works:
⁷"Blessed are they

whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

⁸Blessed is the man
whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

⁹Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.

¹⁰Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹²And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

¹⁴For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²²This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." ²³The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

2) **Romans 3**

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Righteousness Through Faith

²¹But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to

which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- ²⁶he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

²⁷Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. ²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. ²⁹Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. ³¹Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

3) **Romans 2**

⁷To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. ⁹There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹For God does not show favoritism.

¹²All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

4) **Romans 11**

³²For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

5) **3 John 1**

¹¹Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.

6) **2 John 1**

⁶And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

⁷Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

⁸Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. ⁹Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of

Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

7) **Ephesians 2**

Made Alive in Christ

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

8) **2 Timothy 2**

¹⁹Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

9) **2 Corinthians 5**

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

10) **1 John 2**

¹My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

³We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. ⁴The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

11) **1 John 2**

Do Not Love the World

¹⁵Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

12) **1 John 3**

⁷Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. ⁹No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

13) **1 John 3**

¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. ¹⁹This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

14) **1 John 5**

Faith in the Son of God

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ²This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

15) **1 John 5**

¹⁶If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. ¹⁷All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

16) **1 John 5**

¹⁸We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was

born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. ¹⁹We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. ²⁰We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true--even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

17) **Ephesians 4**

¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

18) **John 14**

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

¹⁵"If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- ¹⁷the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

19) **James 2**

²⁴You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

20) **James 2**

¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

¹²Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Faith and Deeds

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

¹⁹Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.

²⁰You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?

²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

²⁵In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

21) **2 Corinthians 13**

⁵ Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?

⁶ And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.

⁷ Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed.

⁸ For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.

22) **2 Peter 2**

⁴ For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;

⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;

⁶ if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

⁷ and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men

⁸ (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)--

⁹ if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

¹⁰ This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings;

23) **1 Thessalonians 1**

⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,

⁵ because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

24) **Colossians 3**

¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.