



INSIDE

VERSE OF THE WEEK

Hebrews 11:6..... 2

ABOUT

Capitol Ministries®..... 4



✦ THE BASICS OF CHRISTIANITY | PART 5

Knowing Jesus: Faith



Noah's Ark, Edward Hicks, Philadelphia Museum of Art

THE INTENTION OF OUR STUDY THIS WEEK is to expand our understanding and the implications of what the Bible instructs the believer regarding faith. We will see that *“without faith it is impossible to please Him”* (Hebrews 11:6) and that properly understood, the biblical concept of the believer and faith extends far beyond the walls of soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. In other words, *“without faith it is impossible to please Him”* means much more than placing our trust in Him relative to salvation.

Remember, in this present Bible study series we are examining the basic building blocks of our Christian faith. That is to say this: walking by faith—taking risks to expand God’s Kingdom—is essential to living the Christian life successfully. What are you doing to expand the good news of Jesus Christ?

Read on, my friends, and learn more about what faith in Jesus means, not only in terms of your salvation, but your present activities in the here and now.

Ralph Drollinger

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

CABINET: 7:00 AM Wednesdays, location undisclosed, refreshments served.
 SENATE: 8:00 AM Tuesdays, rotating offices, hot breakfast served.
 HOUSE: 7:45 AM Thursdays, The Capitol Hill Club, hot breakfast served.

The views expressed in each Bible study are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study Sponsor.



♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

Hebrews 11:6

“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”



Believe God by faith to do great and mighty things through your life!



I. THE INTRODUCTION OF FAITH

The biblical injunction to the believer relative to faith means we are to both pioneer and build the Kingdom of God by taking risks. It means that to *please Him*, we must in obedience step outside our comfort zone and journey into territories perhaps presently unfamiliar.

The primary reason Jesus keeps us here post salvation is to build His Kingdom. This is depicted by Jesus’ last words to the disciples. He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” (Matthew 28:19)

Notice the word *go* (*proeuthentes*). Jesus is not making a suggestion for their consideration. He is commanding them to do this in an ongoing sense as an ingredient necessary to *make disciples* (which is the main verb in the Great Commission). Specifically, the word *go* was used by a civil judge in biblical times to mark the close of a court case.¹ Once the facts were in and the verdict rendered, it followed that all involved were to *go* and live according to the facts. In parallel, if Jesus had risen from the dead and is validly the Messiah (in Matthew this commanding passage is found after the resurrection) then the conclusion is to *go* and tell the world! Look up the following passages which expand upon this. Who is and what is the believer to do?

A. JOHN 15:16

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

B. EPHESIANS 1:4

“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”

C. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:18–20

“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against

them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

This action of continually *going* (going is a participle in the Greek) requires continual faith. And the faith to *go* represents the very essence of fulfilling our identity and calling in Christ. To not *go* is to self-abort God’s mission in every believer’s life. Accordingly:

The question for the believer is not “if” I should go. Rather, “Where and when?”

The need to *go* and develop ministries among public servants throughout the world is easily seen by the evidence depicting the needs in this people group. Consider the following statistics relative to our United States Congress:

***The Washington Post* reported in 2015 that more than two dozen members of Congress have been indicted since 1980 involving multiple counts of:²**

- Racketeering
- Child pornography
- Aggravated criminal sexual abuse of a child
- Sexual charges
- Misappropriation of funds
- Bribery
- Accepting bribes
- Soliciting bribes in return for official favors
- Mail fraud
- Wire fraud
- Filing false tax returns
- Conspiracy
- Money laundering
- Conspiring with political associates to influence state legislative races
- Accepting illegal gifts
- Lying about military service in official voter guide
- Misuse of office for private gain
- Misuse of public funds
- Improper reimbursement



- Extortion
- Extorting money from a business
- Corruption, including having 14 “ghost employees” on the public payroll
- Using government workers for personal and political efforts
- Embezzling taxpayer money
- Using office for criminal racketeering
- Laundering drug money
- Filing false financial disclosure statements
- Not reporting major financial transactions

This so breaks my heart. Herein are the most influential people in our culture, and yet they lack an effective life-changing ministry of the gospel.³ It reveals that believers had not gone and made disciples. I want to believe that things have drastically changed and that there are now strong biblical ministries on the Hill that are *making disciples*. What a huge difference the light of the Word can make in any affinity group! But it starts with a willingness to go by faith!

The writer of Hebrews employs an athletic metaphor echoing the need of every believer to *go* most efficiently by faith and make disciples: *“let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”* (Hebrews 12:1) What specifically is faith?

II. THE INTERPRETATION OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:1 interprets or defines what biblical faith is. *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”* This passage is written in the style of the Old Testament Psalms which incorporates Hebrew poetry—stating the same thing twice, each stanza in a slightly different manner.

Substance (*hupostasis*) means “a standing under.” It connotes a title deed, or guarantee. It is the assurance of reality. The Greek word for the phrase *of things hoped for* is not like it may appear here in English, as though the biblical writer is describing a whimsical, self-fulfilling desire that I might possess—as if faith is the vehicle by which I get what I want.⁴ Rather in context to the whole of Scripture it is best understood as those things which God places on our hearts in concert with His written, divine will. Let me explain what I mean.

Psalms 37:4 states, *“Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”*

Paul, in Philippians 2:13 says to believers, *“for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”* Both of these passages reveal that God directs believers in and through their hearts. It follows then that if the direction is from Him, it will always be toward His purposes and glory. This is amplified by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12 where he says to the believers at that church, *“To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness ... so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you ...”* In other words, because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the things which the believer *hopes for* are synonymous with his internal *desire for goodness ...* and God’s glory.

Faith is the present assurance of a future reality (which God has placed on your heart, and is in harmony with Scripture) which He intends to do through you in the future.

Having defined it, I am uneasy when I hear someone tell me, “God told me ...” only to hear what He supposedly told them is outside the revealed will and purposes of God! God’s will as manifest through His servants is primarily related to redeeming lost sinners from the wrath due them via a lack of faith in the substitutionary atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. If what you are believing God has laid on your heart does not somehow include this element, then is your desire from Him or is it simply one of your selfish desires—and has nothing to do with Him?

Believe God by faith to do great and mighty things through your life relative to propagating the message of salvation and you will be in for a fulfilling adventure surpassed by nothing else.

III. THE INFUSION OF FAITH

The faith spoken of in Scripture is not derived from one’s self. The ability to trust in Christ for salvation and the ability to believe in Him for future ministry expansion are the result of His infusion of faith (cf. Romans 3:20–26; Galatians 2:16). Ephesians 2:8 states that faith *“is the gift of God.”* Hebrews 12:2 states, *“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith ...”*

The word *author* (*archegos*) means “originator,

source or initiator.” The *Author* of life infuses us with His life at the time of our salvation. In this regard, Paul stated to the Galatian church, *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.”* (2:20)

In a full-picture sense, the believer remains on earth post-salvation to accomplish all that God intends, and to the degree that he is obedient to follow God’s promptings, he will achieve his or her life purpose. This is why Paul could confidently say at the end of his ministry and life, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course. I have kept the faith.”* (2 Timothy 4:7) Elsewhere in Ephesians 2:10 he states classically,

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

The question then becomes are you willing to fulfill the *Author’s* preordained purposes for your life?

IV. THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAITH

The following are biblical illustrations of men and women who walked by faith. But first is the classic illustration of faith. *“By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”* (Hebrews 11:3)

Herein we see that God created everything out of things not visible: faith. He has given us that same kind of ability, an ability called faith: to possess mental convictions about things He wants accomplished and then the ability and power via the indwelling Holy Spirit to work toward their actual accomplishment! Such can consume your whole life!

Nothing is more exciting than to look back and see how God matured a particular person or ministry through your obedient faith. It is very fulfilling!

How do the following illustrate faith in the sense of Hebrews 11:1: *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

- A. NOAH: *“By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an*



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heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” (Hebrews 11:7)

B. ABRAHAM: “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.” (Hebrews 11:8)

C. SARAH: “By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.” (Hebrews 11:11)

D. MOSES: “By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.” (Hebrews 11:29)

E. JOSHUA: “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.” (Hebrews 11:30)

V. THE INTENTION OF FAITH

Lastly, in our study of faith we learn that, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

We will never know salvation by reason, calculation, merit, or achievement. Nor will we ever experience the richness of having God use our lives until by faith we will yield.

This is no different than the scientist who must first hypothesize that his axiom is correct and then experiment to prove or disprove his belief. He must incorporate faith to affirm the assurance of the things hoped for.

It is this life of calculated risk—all with the intention of glorifying Him—which pleases Him. And He will guide you in His perfect will all along the way. cm

- 1. W.E. Vine An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1939), 486.
2. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/07/29/more-than-two-dozen-members-of-congress-have-been-indicted-since-1980/
3. To quote myself from the cover letter in a Pastors’ Day at the Capitol invitation brochure, no longer is the church message or methodology about achieving “liberty from sin,” rather it’s “lobby to win.” The 20-year siphoning off of its energy away from pure, biblical ministry has in part created this tremendous void depicted by these statistics. Herein illustrated is a need to go and place non-political, effective ministers and ministries in every capitol of our country.
4. This is a description of those who would preach what has become known as “the prosperity gospel”—as if God exists solely to fulfill my desires.

MINISTRIES ESTABLISHED & BUILDING

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Annapolis, Maryland
Atlanta, Georgia
Austin, Texas
Boise, Idaho
Boston, Massachusetts
Denver, Colorado
Dover, Delaware
Carson City, Nevada
Charleston, West Virginia
Cheyenne, Wyoming
Columbia, South Carolina
Columbus, Ohio
Concord, New Hampshire
Hartford, Connecticut
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
Honolulu, Hawaii
Jefferson City, Missouri
Lansing, Michigan
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