

Key Teachings of the Christian Faith

Vision: Strengthen our faith by examining key teachings of Christianity

Goals of today's class:

1. To Understand the three components of Grace
2. To Understand the need to Grow in the Grace of Faith

Be Strong In Grace & Faith

2 Timothy 2:1

You therefore, my son, **be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.**

1. This grace is in Christ.

John 1:16-17

For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. **17** For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:1-10

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, **2** in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. **3** Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. **4 But God**, being **rich in mercy**, because of **His great love** with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive** together with Christ (**by grace** you have been saved), **6** and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, **7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.** **8** For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith**; and that **not of yourselves**, *it is* the gift of God; **9** not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

2. God is rich in mercy and has great love.
3. God made us alive with Christ.
4. God's purpose is to show forth the surpassing riches of His grace.
5. He does this in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
6. We are saved by this grace through faith.
7. It is not of ourselves; we should not boast.

God's purpose in our salvation is to display the riches of His grace.

We need to grow in this grace to further display God's attributes for His glory.

God is glorified as He is made known and He is made known through His church.

Let's now look at faith, sometimes called "the grace of faith".
Faith and grace are linked together in verse 8.

Three parts of faith:

1. Knowledge
2. Agreement
3. Trust

Faith & Knowledge

You cannot believe something you do not understand. Faith needs content.

Faith reaches beyond our natural understandings but it is rational, understandable.
God is a God of reason, He is reasonable

1 Corinthians 2:14-15a

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. [15](#) But he who is spiritual appraises all things,

The spiritual man is able to understand spiritual things. The spiritual man has faith that the natural man cannot have. The spiritual man has been born again from above.

John 3:1-15

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; [2](#) this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

[3](#) Jesus answered and said to him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"

[4](#) Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" [5](#) Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. [6](#) "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. [7](#) "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' [8](#) "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

[9](#) Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" [10](#) Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? [11](#) "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. [12](#) "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? [13](#) "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. [14](#) "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; [15](#) so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

1. **Truly, truly** – anytime scripture gives emphasis, we should take earnest heed. In this case, the verity, the truthfulness of what Jesus is about to say is emphasized.
2. **Unless** specifies a necessary condition (verse 3). There is no other way. There are no exceptions. You must be born again by the Spirit of God.

3. Jesus wants Nicodemus to **understand** these things (verse 10). Jesus is not asking Nicodemus to have a blind or irrational faith.

To illustrate the importance of content, consider someone saying “I know and deeply believe that Jesus had a special relationship with God.” They express a deep conviction that may be very dear to their heart and very clear in their mind. However, the content is weak. What is this “special relationship”? What kind of relationship is it?

In the above, there is no confession of Jesus as God, Son of God, Savior, Lord, or Son of Man. Now, consider someone saying “I know and believe deeply that Jesus was the Savior of the world, the Son of Man and Son of God.”

Now there is much more content to this confession of faith. However, this content relies upon titles that can mean various things. One of the first items to notice is the verb tense. Jesus “was” the Savior? This may be a simple grammatical slip of which we are all guilty. Or it may reveal a faith in a historical Jesus with no knowledge about where Jesus is today.

Beware of titles or other doctrinal, religiously correct language. There are many denominations and Christian traditions that have severely twisted the scriptures.

For example, what if the next statements from the person above are along these lines? “Jesus was the Son of Man. He showed that any of us can be Sons of God. He was human and had his problems just like us but He realized God loved Him and all of His creation. God made a Son of God from a Son of Man.”

By now, hopefully, you realize that this person may not (and definitely appears to not) have true faith based upon a solid, comprehensive understanding of the Bible.

How do you know this? The content of their faith reveals it.

Faith does not require full comprehension but faith must comprehend something, some knowledge, some content.

Faith & Agreement

Faith agrees, accepts, acquiesces, and embraces the knowledge, the truth perceived.

If there is no knowledge, no truth, no specific details but only general ambiguities, there is not much content for faith to embrace. Faith in generalities is weak faith.

Consider again the person above who deeply believes that Jesus had a special relationship with God. We consider this a weak content and therefore a weak faith.

Faith embraces the knowledge, the doctrinal details. The first stage of this embrace is a mental assent, an agreement in the mind. The mind processes the data and accepts the claim of truth. If the mind rejects the truth claim, the next step to a complete faith is not possible.

Faith & Trust

A complete faith includes all three: knowledge, agreement, & trust.

Trust is a personal reliance that is seen in our daily lives. Our thoughts and actions are governed by what we trust. Trust and obedience are intimately related.

We will not obey if we do not trust. We do not trust if we do not agree. We cannot agree if we do not understand.

Trust involves the affections, the heart. Full, complete, true faith in Christ involves both the head and the heart. With all of our being, our mind, will and emotions we experience the sweetness and loveliness of Christ, His teachings, His Law, His ways.

If we think we love Christ yet dislike some of His teachings, we must grow in our faith in His teachings lest a root of bitterness grow from this lack of faith. We must ask for the Holy Spirit to increase our faith, to help us more fully embrace the wonderful teachings of our Lord, His Word. If we do not ask for help in our unbelief, we may be taken captive by a vain philosophy or another snare of the devil. Our lack of faith may solidify into a rebellion, a stubborn resistance to the truth. We may harbor and entertain this in some obscure area of our lives. We may attempt to keep it hidden. But if we do not repent, if we do not change our minds, our faith may be shipwrecked.

Repentance is not simply feeling very sorry. The Greek work for repent in the New Testament is very clear about this. To repent is to change one's mind. Change the content of what you believe to be true. And then fully trust.

We must inform our minds by faithful study. The heart cannot embrace what the mind does not know.

We must enlarge our hearts by passionate prayer. Faith increases when we pray rightly.

Faith increases by hearing the Word of God preached. (Romans 10:8-18)

Of Saving Faith

Chapter XIV Section II – Westminster Confession of Faith

II. By this faith, a Christian believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein;[\[5\]](#) and acts differently upon that which each particular passage thereof contains; yielding obedience to the commands,[\[6\]](#) trembling at the threatenings,[\[7\]](#) and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come.[\[8\]](#) But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.[\[9\]](#)

Let's close by looking at **Hebrews 11**, the **Hall of Faith**.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the content of my faith in Jesus Christ?
2. Do I have real faith? Does my mind agree and my heart embrace clear content?
3. Why do I believe? How did my faith come to exist?
4. Is my faith growing?
5. What are the common ways God has provided for increasing our faith?
6. Is faith a grace?
7. How does the faith of the saints in Hebrews 11 demonstrate agreement and trust?