

Faith is not the only thing involved in being a Christian; but the element of faith is a most significant thing. When you obeyed the gospel, you responded to the faith (Jude 3). When you were baptized, you became faithful to the Lord (Ac 16:15). Local churches can be called "faithful" (Col 1:2). All who are Christians are "of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10). It is by faith that we live (Rom 1:16-17; Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:7). Hence, the nature of faith and its importance in the life of the Christian must be clearly understood.

1) The meaning of faith involves the idea of belief; i.e., the

Gal 2:20 "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, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

certainty or the **confidence of conviction** that one has in something or someone. Our believing is in things concerning Jesus and His Kingdom (Ac 8:12). That faith (conviction) comes always from the word of God (Rom 10:17). Believing was the purpose of what the Bible says about Jesus Christ (Jn 20:30-31). Faith involves personal confidence in the truthfulness of the gospel message.

2) The idea of faith involves the willingness to place one's trust and reliance on someone else (God). Faith means that I am totally willing to rely on God in all things. (Rom 4:3). Abraham was fully assured that God was able to perform what he had promised (Rom 4:20-21). If I have faith personally, I have a similar trust in God (1 Pet 4:19)!

3) Faith involves the idea of fidelity. The Bible steward was faithful because he was loyal, committed, and trustworthy (1 Cor 4:2). Our faithfulness (commitment and trustworthiness) is to last even to the point of death (Rev 2:10, 13). Since "by faith we live;" what is involved in living by faith?

1. Living by faith involves confessing our faith; i.e., acknowledging our belief in Jesus Christ before others. This is a condition of our salvation (Rom 10:8-11).

Confessing Christ is not only a condition of primary obedience; it is a condition of the Christian's daily life. The life of faith is something we do throughout our lives. Living by faith is always confessing Him (Matt 10:32-39). Confessing Christ is not just some one time "I do," quickly forgotten or ignored; rather it is essentially the same thing as "losing my life for His sake." The daily confession of Christ is my tie to the fellowship of God (1 Jn 4:15). We who live by faith are never ashamed to admit it in word or in life.

2. So if by faith we live, we conduct our lives with trust in Jesus Christ (Gal 2:20). The life of faith trusts in the works of Jesus, esp. His death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor 15:1-4). Living by faith is a life with an awareness and concern for salvation. It always involves "holding fast" the word of God (Titus 3:5-7). I may say I believe in God, but if my life does not demonstrate that truth, my actions prove my words to be false.

3. So then, living by faith exercises good works (Titus 3:8). This is the very point of James two. A faith which is without good works is an un-saving, non-justifying, dead faith (James 2:14-26). Many say they have faith; but their ungodly lives and failures to do good deeds proclaim loudly a total deficit of faith. James two is written to them! The life of faith involves trusting in the words of Jesus, and living accordingly (Matt 6:33-34; Luke 6:46-48).

5. Living by faith involves benefitting from faith; i.e., enjoying the blessings that come from a life of faith. Faith brings blessings like joy and peace, hope and power (Rom 15:13). Through faith we receive our spiritual blessings. We are blessed because we believe that He hears our prayers (Eph 3:12; Phil 4:6-7). Again, the blessing of personal confidence ourselves comes through faith in Christ

(Phil 4:13). The life of faith does not go unrewarded in this life, even though its primary concern is the life to come.

6. Living by faith involves maintaining our faith; i.e., remaining steadfast in the faith we have in Christ. There is a need to stand fast, for faith, if left alone, will die (1 Cor 15:1-2). We must take care to hold fast so that unbelief not replace faith and we fall away (Heb 3:12-14). Otherwise, we might not get to enter into the promised land because of unbelief (Heb 3:15-19). If we should come short of entering His rest, it will be because the gospel was not united by faith in us (Heb 4:1-2). Faith comes by the word; but the word must also be united with personal faith in those who hear it!

7. We live by faith when we add virtues of Christian character to it (2 Pet 1:5-7). How can one say that he has faith or is faithful, when year after year he continues to woefully lack in these virtues of Christian character? Living by faith means the addition of these virtuous traits. For that reason we need to be all the more diligent in the increasing of those qualities (2 Pet 1:8-11). To be sure we do not fall from our own steadfastness, we need to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:17-18).

To summarize: A "faithful" Chris-

tian is one who takes his faith very seriously... because (1) it is essential to his salvation, and because (2) it is essential to receive God's blessings now and ultimately eternal life! A "faithful Christian" is one who lives by faith. Are you "living by faith?"

2 Peter 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge;
6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness;
7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.