

## ***Free To Be – Just a Christian***

All over the world today, there is a vast renewal of interest in studying the Bible. Thousands of people are reading the Bible to find the answers as to where they come from, why they are here on earth, and where they are going after this life is over. Searching the Scriptures with an open and honest heart toward God will enable you to gain knowledge of God's total plan for all of His people.

The Bible is divided into two major parts – the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament tells of the beginnings of the earth, of man, of sin, and of God's way of salvation in Christ. Abraham was selected to become the father of the Hebrew nation and these people, when they were about seventy in number; they went into Egypt to live. There they grew, prospered, and became great in numbers.

The Egyptians made slaves out of them, but God led them out of Egypt through Moses, and after a while into the land of Canaan, which we know better as Palestine. God gave them His laws, including the "Ten Commandments", and they became the chosen nation through whom Jesus Christ, the Son of God was born into human flesh, came into the world.

The Old Testament also gives us the many words of men called "prophets", who foretold of the coming of Christ and of His spiritual kingdom on this earth.

The New Testament tells of the birth, life, death for our sins, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the fifth book of the New Testament, we read of the beginning of Christ's kingdom or spiritual body. This book is called the "Acts of the Apostles" and shows us how men and women became Christians, or members of His body.

This means that when a person becomes a Christian, God adds that person to his "church" or assembly: thus, he does not have to look for a church to join, for the very same gospel obedience that made him a Christian makes him a "church" member.

The rest of the New Testament is made up of letters written to help show people how to live the lives that God would have them live. God would have everyone study the Bible to learn of Him and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to come to know Him in a personal way, as a friend and a savior.

Welcome to this study of the Bible. Remember that God speaks to each of us through the Bible. This makes it possible for each of us to know Him if we will but study and live what we learn.

My prayer for each of you is that you will be guided by the Bible and not by men. May God bless you richly with wisdom and understanding?

Are you a Christian? Are you saved? Do you have a close relationship with God? Are you willing to give up for Him the life of sin you now lead?

## Questions

Someone is always asking us questions. The questions above are usually grouped with others, such as:

“What church do you attend? “

“Have you been baptized? “

“What kind of baptism did you have? “

“Are you willing to join a church in order to be saved? “

It is my hope that the material presented here will take some of the pressure off and allow you to deepen your relationship with God. Or, if you don't know Him, free you to begin to know Him as your Father.

At any rate, I hope you will give this information a fair hearing and if you find yourself agreeing with it, use it to teach others and free them from bondage. You will find these teachings quite a bit different from those you've seen in the past. I pray that they help everyone to be free in Christ.

## Are You Free?

This question is not asked very often, especially by church leaders. However, there are several references to freedom in the Scriptures. Let's look at a few of them:

[\(Luke 4:17-21\)](#) 17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

[\(John 8:31-36\)](#) 31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

(2 Corinthians 3:17) Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

(Galatians 5:1) It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Note that Jesus sets us free; period. Sometimes real freedom is scary and men, afraid of this freedom, tend to make limits for themselves and others in order to regulate this freedom. God put only one limit on our freedom in Christ:

(1 Corinthians 8:9) Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.

(Galatians 5:13) You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

(1 Peter 2:16) Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.

See? We are not to use our freedom for evil purposes that would hurt others. In many religions today, men tell us what to do or not to do in order to be pleasing to God. God Himself tells us what is acceptable religion in James 1:27.

(James 1:27) Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

It would seem that God wanted to keep the concept of religion simple so that all people everywhere could understand it at once, without a lot of teaching.

## **Are you a Christian?**

To be a Christian is to be "of Christ" or to be a follower of Jesus. The word Christian is all inclusive. It needs no other word added to it for explanation or definition. Men have created denominations (churches) in order to separate and regulate those who profess to believe alike.

In reality, all faith is individual. No person believes exactly like another person. We all have a unifying point of faith and brotherhood: the Lord Jesus. He calls us to love and

respect each other, but never to believe exactly alike. A person who has accepted Jesus as his or her personal Savior has done so just like all other Christians throughout history.

1. They have heard of Him.
2. They have come to believe He is who he says.
3. They have obeyed the condition he set down.

(Mark 16:15-16) He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

(Matthew 28:19-20) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

See how simple? As you go through this world, teach others what you have been taught. Those who believe baptize (immerse) them making them disciples. Then help each other to live a life pleasing to God.

## **What Church do you attend?**

Is this question important? Is there scripture that supports one church over all others, or does Scripture only speak of one church of which all believers are part? Is there any such thing as a "church?" To answer the last question, it will require a short lesson in Greek.

In the original Greek in which the New Testament was written the word *ekklesia* has been translated church. However, this word never had the meaning that is meant by the word church as used today. Note the accepted definition as laid down by all leading Greek scholars:

EKKLESIA – A calling out, i.e. a popular meeting, espec. a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth, or saints in heaven, or both): - assembly, church

Notice that the most accurate definitions are – congregation and assembly. The least is church. The concept of the church today is that of a power structure with its leaders and rulers. This also means that there are those who are ruled. In the New Testament there are 114 passages that contain the word church. They are listed here to make it easy for you to find them. Read each one in its context then read them again, this time using the word assembly instead of church. Decide for yourself which you think is most accurate.

(Matthew 16:18) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(Matthew 18:17) And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

(Acts 2:47) Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

(Acts 5:11) And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

(Acts 7:38) This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

(Acts 8:1) And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

(Acts 8:3) As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

(Acts 9:31) Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

(Acts 11:22) Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

(Acts 11:26) And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

(Acts 12:1) Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church.

(Acts 12:5) Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

(Acts 13:1) Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

(Acts 14:23) And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

(Acts 14:27) And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

(Acts 15:3) And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

(Acts 15:4) And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and *of* the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

(Acts 15:22) Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

(Acts 15:41) And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

(Acts 16:5) And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

(Acts 18:22) And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

(Acts 19:37) For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

(Acts 20:17) And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

(Acts 20:28) Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

(Romans 16:1) I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

(Romans 16:4) Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

(Romans 16:5) Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

(Romans 16:16) Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

(Romans 16:23) Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

(1 Corinthians 1:2) Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

(1 Corinthians 4:17) For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

(1 Corinthians 6:4) If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

(1 Corinthians 7:17) But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

(1 Corinthians 10:32) Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

(1 Corinthians 11:16) But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

(1 Corinthians 11:18) For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

(1 Corinthians 11:22) What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.

(1 Corinthians 12:28) And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

(1 Corinthians 14:4) He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

(1 Corinthians 14:5) I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater *is* he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

(1 Corinthians 14:12) Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

(1 Corinthians 14:19) Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that *by my voice* I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue.

(1 Corinthians 14:23) If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that are* unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

(1 Corinthians 14:28) But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

(1 Corinthians 14:33) For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

(1 Corinthians 14:34) Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

(1 Corinthians 14:35) And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

(1 Corinthians 15:9) For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

(1 Corinthians 16:1) Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

(1 Corinthians 16:19) The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

(2 Corinthians 1:1) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

(2 Corinthians 8:1) Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

(2 Corinthians 8:18) And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches;



(2 Corinthians 8:19) And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of* your ready mind:

(2 Corinthians 8:23) Whether *any do enquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren *be enquired of*, *they are* the messengers of the churches, *and* the glory of Christ.

(2 Corinthians 8:24) Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

(2 Corinthians 11:8) I robbed other churches, taking wages *of them*, to do you service.

(2 Corinthians 11:28) Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

(2 Corinthians 12:13) For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

(Galatians 1:2) And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

(Galatians 1:13) For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

(Galatians 1:22) And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

(Ephesians 1:22) And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,

(Ephesians 3:10) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

(Ephesians 3:21) Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

(Ephesians 5:23) For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

(Ephesians 5:24) Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing.

(Ephesians 5:25) Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

(Ephesians 5:27) That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

(Ephesians 5:29) For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

(Ephesians 5:32) This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

(Philippians 3:6) Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

(Philippians 4:15) Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

(Colossians 1:18) And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

(Colossians 1:24) Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

(Colossians 4:15) Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

(Colossians 4:16) And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

(1 Thessalonians 1:1) Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Thessalonians 2:14) For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:

(2 Thessalonians 1:1) Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

(2 Thessalonians 1:4) So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

(1 Timothy 3:5) (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

(1 Timothy 3:15) But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

(1 Timothy 5:16) If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

(Philemon 1:2) And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house:

(Hebrews 2:12) Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

(Hebrews 12:23) To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

(James 5:14) Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

(1 Peter 5:13) The *church that is* at Babylon, elected together with *you*, saluteth you; and *so doth* Marcus my son.

(3 John 1:6) Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

(3 John 1:9) I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

(3 John 1:10) Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

(Revelation 1:4) John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

(Revelation 1:11) Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

(Revelation 1:20) The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

(Revelation 2:1) Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

(Revelation 2:7) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

(Revelation 2:8) And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

(Revelation 2:11) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

(Revelation 2:12) And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

(Revelation 2:17) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

(Revelation 2:18) And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass;

(Revelation 2:23) And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

(Revelation 2:29) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

(Revelation 3:1) And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

(Revelation 3:6) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

(Revelation 3:7) And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

(Revelation 3:13) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

(Revelation 3:14) And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

(Revelation 3:22) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

(Revelation 22:16) I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star.

There are practices which almost all churches have in common – from the largest to the smallest. Hers is a list. Search your Bible and see if they are tradition or if they are found in Scripture.

1. Worship Services
2. The Collection
3. Placing of Membership
4. Sermons
5. Men only as Deacons
6. Deacon as an office

There are others to be sure, but I think this list will keep you busy for a while.

## **What do I do with my contribution?**

I suppose that this will trouble most people at first. We are so used to placing money in the plate that we hardly know what to do with it otherwise.

The Bible calls for us to help those in need. We are commanded to help the orphan and the widow. (James 1:27). This can be done on an individual basis. To “set aside” originally meant to “keep by ones side, usually at home. Nowhere in the New Testament is the concept found of Christians placing money in a church treasury.

(1 Corinthians 16:2) On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

Money, like all things, was given to us, as Christians, to enjoy:

(1 Timothy 6:17) Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

However, like all things, it was meant for our sole pleasure. God gives generously and gets much pleasure from it.

(Malachi 3:10) Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

In concept and example we are taught that more pleasure is derived from giving than from receiving.

(Acts 20:35) In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

In 1 Corinthians, the collection being made was to help the poor and needy in Jerusalem. It was not to be used for the pleasure of those saving the money. It was also not to be used for a building or for salaries.

When you use the money you earn (by God's grace), spend it well. Get your money's worth and remember that you are just God's caretaker for all that you possess.

## **What works will I do?**

Jesus listed one work when he was asked this question:

(John 6:29) Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

Other "works" that we do today will not be considered work if we follow this teaching. We will give to the poor, we will meet with other Christians often, we will teach, we will love the brothers and sisters.

All this will be what we are – not what we do. Can you see the difference?

## **Salvation, God's gift to mankind**

Spiritually, to be saved is the single most important thing that a person can desire. To be with Christ for all eternity: to be with loved ones forever: to be in a place of never ending love; is something that we have all dreamed of.

God made this possible when he chose to live and die in the person of Jesus Christ on a Roman cross. By being lifted up, He drew all those to Him who are willing to surrender their lives to His direction.

Those who willingly devote their lives to Him find that they are doing more than just following His directions; they find themselves developing a loving relationship with Him. They call upon Him as a friend in times of need and times of joy. He is their constant companion.

Now, if you have felt that God has abandoned you and that probably everyone else is enjoying this relationship but not you – don't despair. God has promised never to leave you.

[\(Hebrews 13:5\)](#) Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

He is as good as his promise. We may not be aware of Him all the time, but He is there. I hope that this lesson has helped you to grow closer to Him.

This closing section tries to simplify our understanding of faith. It is intended to show you that you are not alone; and possibly (hopefully) to strengthen your belief in God.

## **The gift is accepted through Faith**

The Bible tells us more about the gift of eternal life in Ephesians 2:8-9

"You have been saved by God's gracious love through faith. Salvation does not come from you: it is God's gift. It does not come from human effort. If that were true, someone could brag about earning it."

Notice that this scripture does not say that we are saved by grace alone but that we are saved by grace through faith. We must have enough faith in Jesus Christ to obey Him or God will not save us by His grace (Unmerited favor.)

## Salvation by grace does not exclude obedience.

To help us understand that being saved by God's grace does not exclude the necessity of obedience – the Bible declares in Hebrews 5:9 that:

“After Jesus was made perfect, he became the Source of eternal salvation for everyone who will obey him”

### What is saving faith?

Faith is your first step. If someone doesn't believe in God, he cannot please God, because the person who comes to God must believe that he lives. That person must believe that God will give rewards to the people who are searching for Him.

(Hebrews 11:9) By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

Many people feel they have faith, without really knowing what faith is. It is not a mere intellectual believing, for the devils do that. James 2:19 declares:

“You say that you believe there is one God? That's fine. The demons also believe this and shake with fear.”

Faith is trust and trust is faith. Webster defines faith this way:

1. Confidence or trust in another person or thing: faith in another's ability.
2. Belief that is not based on proof: He had faith that the hypothesis would be substantiated by fact.
3. Belief in God or in the doctrines or teachings of religion: the firm faith of the Pilgrims.
4. Belief in anything, as a code of ethics, standards of merit, etc.: To be of the same faith with someone concerning honesty.
5. A system of religious belief: the Christian faith, the Jewish faith.
6. The obligation of loyalty or fidelity to a person, promise, engagement, etc.: failure to appear would be breaking faith.
7. The observance of this obligation; fidelity to one's promise, oath allegiance, etc: He was the only one who proved his faith during our recent troubles.
8. Christian Theology – the trust in God and in His promises as made through Christ and the Scriptures by which humans are justified or saved.
9. In faith, in truth; indeed: In faith, he is a fine lad.



OK, now that we have that out of the way, let's see just how a simple definition of faith we can come up with. The major points of Webster's definition are: confidence, trust, and belief.

Confidence: 1. full trust; belief in the powers, trustworthiness or reliability of a person or thing.

Trust: 1. reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence.

Belief: 2. confidence in the truth or existence of something not immediately susceptible to rigorous proof.

It would seem that to have faith in God would be to trust Him and believe what he says.

Learning to trust or have faith in something or someone always takes time. God called you to Him and He wants you to take the time to know Him, as a friend. Talk to Him about everything that happens to you.

You will find that He is very interested in your daily struggles and triumphs. He gives you strength to live for Him everyday if you but ask. He delights in your close walk with him (Psalms 149:4, Isaiah 65:19, Zephaniah 3:17.) Think about it: don't you enjoy the company of those who you love? Aren't you happiest when with them?

To have saving faith ask God, then believe that he is concerned enough about you to guide you in this walk of faith. He wants you to be saved (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9). He will work harder in your behalf than you can ever imagine, if you but give Him a chance.

This does not mean that you will never have hard times. There will come the trials that are a part of living in an imperfect world. God will teach you to act during any crisis in a way that will bring Him the glory. Because it is from Him that your strength comes. He will shoulder the cares of living if we will learn to have faith in Him.

If we remember that without God, we would be nothing (Acts 17:28) then we will let Him take the foremost place in our lives.